



## Study: Fewer Doctors Willing to Do Abortions

The nationwide survey of 1,144 ob-gyn physicians, conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago, found female doctors more inclined to perform abortions than their male colleagues (18.6 percent versus 10.6 percent). Regarding age demographics, physicians 35 and under were the age group most likely to perform abortions (22 percent), with those 56 to 65 right behind them, and doctors between the ages of 35 and 45 the least likely to offer the procedure.



The study suggested that a reduction in training for abortion from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s may be a factor in the lower number of doctors willing to do the procedure. But researchers also discovered a significant religious element influencing physicians, with, predictably, a high percentage of Catholic, Protestant, and other religiously motivated ob-gyns unwilling to offer the procedure, compared to Jewish practitioners, who were more willing.

The survey also found significant geographic trends, with doctors in the Northeast and West more willing to offer abortion than those in the South and Midwest, and urban doctors more likely than rural ones to provide the procedure.

Significantly, reported [MedPageToday.com](#), researchers found that “providers living in rural areas, especially in the South and Midwest, may be less likely to provide the service, even if they don’t personally object to it, because of opposition in the community. Many try to avoid being a target of antiabortion activists, the researchers said.”

The [International Business Times](#) noted that the lowered number of abortion providers “can amount to a de facto ban on abortions even though they are legal,” with the study’s lead author Dr. Debra Stulberg of the University of Chicago writing: “Access to abortion remains limited by the willingness of physicians to provide abortion services.”

According to the [Los Angeles Times](#), in 2010 the ethics committee of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists issued an opinion arguing that “ob-gyns are obligated to refer their patients to abortion providers if they do not offer the service themselves.” However, the *Times* noted, the opinion paper “was met with controversy, according to the authors of the new survey.” The study’s authors wrote that “previous research has shown that substantial minorities of physicians do not believe they are obligated to refer patients for or provide information about how to obtain procedures to which



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 26, 2011

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the physician has a religious or moral objection.”



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