



Nowhere to Go: Maternity Care Deserts Across the U.S.

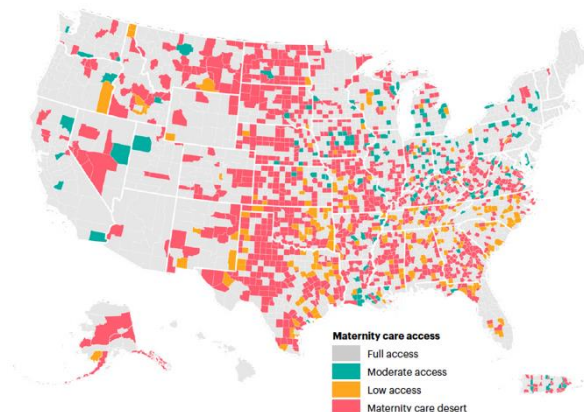
2026 REPORT

Where you live determines whether you can access maternity care

“Nowhere to Go” reveals that access to maternity care remains out of reach for millions of families. While some communities have made progress over the past decade, nearly 100 labor and delivery unit closures since 2024 and recent healthcare policy changes threaten to reverse those gains. Too many families continue to face long travel times, clinician shortages, and barriers to timely prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care.

Key findings

- **1 in 3 U.S. counties** remains a maternity care desert, with no obstetric clinicians or birthing facilities.
- These counties are home to 2.4 million women of reproductive age and 149,000 infants born each year.
- In total, **5.8 million women and 358,000 infants live in counties without full access to care.**
- Residents of maternity care deserts travel about 3x longer, on average, to **reach labor and delivery services than residents of full-access counties.**
- Obstetric clinician shortages are more severe in rural areas, where nearly **58%** of counties lack obstetric clinicians, compared with about **19%** of urban counties.



Why it matters

Access to maternity care affects every stage of pregnancy. Longer travel times and fewer providers can delay prenatal care, increase pregnancy complications, contribute to poor birth outcomes, and make it harder for families to receive the care they need before, during, and after birth.

Our response

March of Dimes is working to improve maternity care access by advancing evidence-based policy solutions, investing in innovative models of care, supporting community partnerships, and publishing data that helps leaders identify gaps and drive action.



Call to action

Read the full report, explore your state's data, and learn how you can help ensure every family has access to quality maternity care: marchofdimes.org/mcdr



National support for this report is provided by Ob Hospitalist Group (OBHG). As the nation's largest employer of OB-GYNs, OBHG partners with hospitals and community clinicians to expand access to maternal healthcare, building a new standard of care that is connected, equitable, and always within reach. Their sponsorship reflects a shared commitment to improving outcomes for moms and babies nationwide.

