

Study suggests larger families have more conservative views

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A pair of researchers, one with the University of California, the other Stanford University, has found that larger families tend to have more conservative views on social issues. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Tom Vogl and Jeremy Freese describe their analyses of data from the General Social Survey and what it revealed about a correlation between family size and conservative views.

Prior studies have shown that the population of the United States is slowly becoming more liberal, despite results of recent elections. Prior work has also shown that there are pockets of conservatism that retain their values over multiple generations. In this new effort, the researchers took a closer look at the possibility of a correlation between large [family size](#) and [conservative views](#) on two hotly debated social issues—abortion and same-sex [marriage](#). Their work involved analyzing data gathered as part of the General Social Survey (GSS.)

The GSS is an ongoing sociological survey first begun in 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. A team there continually collects and stores data from interviews with people across the U.S. regarding their opinions on [social issues](#). Vogl and Freese pulled information from the database that showed both family size and family values.

Prior research has shown that people are strongly influenced by other family members, particularly parents. What Vogl and Freese found was that [family size](#) can also strongly influence political and social views. More specifically, they found that people who were members of large families were more likely to hold conservative views regarding abortion and same-sex marriage. And they suggest that there is a correlation between the two—that membership in a large family can actually cause people to hold more conservative views.

They further suggest that people with more children or more siblings reflect a pattern of [larger families](#) tending to be more religious and less educated. And they contend that such families account for more opposition to same-sex marriage and abortions than there would be otherwise—by 3 to 4 percentage points, accounting for nearly 8 million of the U.S.'s 54.8 million opponents to same-sex marriage.

More information: Tom S. Vogl et al. Differential fertility makes

society more conservative on family values, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2020). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1918006117](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1918006117)

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