

Since Roe was overturned, fewer Michigan adults want to have children

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When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, it created uncertainty for Americans' access to abortion and other forms of reproductive health care. This uncertainty may have led to an increase in

the number of Michigan adults who said they never want to have children, according to Michigan State University researchers.

"Before the Supreme Court overturned Roe through the Dobbs v. Jackson decision, about 21% of Michigan adults did not want children, or were 'childfree,'" said Jennifer Watling Neal, MSU professor of psychology and co-author of the study. "But this number jumped to 26% after the Supreme Court decided that access to abortion is not protected by the U.S. Constitution."

The study, [published in PLOS One](#), used data from MSU's State of the State Survey, conducted by the university's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. It focused on a representative sample of 2,500 adults surveyed in the months before the Supreme Court's decision on Dobbs v. Jackson was leaked, and a representative sample of 2,000 adults surveyed in the months after the Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs was announced.

"We knew that childfree adults were a large group in Michigan, but with more uncertainty around [reproductive health care](#), even more adults don't want children than before," said Zachary Neal, MSU professor of psychology and co-author of the study. "After taking into account adults' sex, age, race and education, the probability that a Michigan adult never wants children increased by almost a third."

In late 2022, following the passage of Proposal 3, which protects the right to reproductive freedom, the Michigan Constitution was amended to protect access to abortion. However, Watling Neal explained, "That protection came only after a lot of uncertainty and legal chaos, which may have led potential parents to decide having children simply isn't worth the [health risks](#)."

Since the Supreme Court's decision on Dobbs, several other states have

either restricted access to reproductive health care or attempted to protect access in their constitutions.

"Our findings suggest that federal and state restrictions on access to reproductive health care may not only harm individuals' health, but also lead to fewer new births," said Neal.

The research team will next explore adults' desires to have [children](#) from a global perspective and the role that politics may play in this.

More information: Jennifer Watling Neal et al, Prevalence of childfree adults before and after Dobbs v Jackson in Michigan (USA), *PLOS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0294459](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294459)

Provided by Michigan State University

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