

Policy Shapes Partisan Identification:

How *Dobbs* made pre-existing abortion policy preferences relevant to partisanship

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What explains partisan identification in the mass public? On the one hand are perspectives that view partisanship as a social identity formed early in life that subsequently causes many other salient political outcomes like voting, issue positions, and evaluations of the other party (Campbell et al 1960). On the other hand are perspectives that view partisanship as a marker of evaluations of the parties, where such evaluations may be driven by issue positions, value commitments, and party performance while in office (Carsey & Layman 2006). Distinguishing between these two perspectives, particularly when focusing on the relative role of issue positions in explaining partisanship, is difficult because they are often observationally equivalent (Green 2013). For example, if one believes that partisanship shapes issue positions then one would expect individuals to have stable partisan orientations and adopt their party's issue positions. Alternatively, if one believes that issue positions shape partisanship, given that party positions on issues are generally stable, one would also predict that issue positions and partisanship would both be stable. In either account, issue positions should be tightly correlated with partisanship.

To disentangle this observational equivalence, we take advantage of an unexpected shift in the policy landscape in the United States. That shift was caused by the United States Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs V Jackson Women's Health Organization*, in which the Court overturned the precedent from *Roe V Wade* that recognized a Constitutional protection for abortion rights. Following this decision many states adopted substantially more conservative abortion policies than had been in force since the *Roe V Wade* decision. More generally, abortion policy preferences and party positions on abortion became policy consequential in a way that they had not previously been when *Roe* was in force. This provides a unique opportunity to understand whether individuals whose abortion policy preferences were at odds with their pre-Dobbs partisanship changed their partisanship in response to the change in the policy relevance of the parties' abortion positions.

Using unique large panel data that spans the period from before the Dobbs decision to after, we assess how partisan affiliations change following Dobbs. Prior to Dobbs, many individuals held abortion policy preferences at odds with their stated partisanship, likely for reasons apart from abortion (Killian & Wilcox 2008). The parties already held distinct policy positions on this issue, so if one expects individuals to bring their policy positions into alignment with their partisanship, this pattern is unexpected. Nonetheless, because of *Roe*, those party positions had limited policy consequences.

We assess whether individuals who were at odds with their party's now policy consequential positions changed their partisanship to resolve this misalignment. If issue positions are an important explanation for the choice of party affiliation, individuals may have changed their partisanship to address the newfound policy salience of abortion. In this perspective, for example, a pro-life Democrat who previously had little reason to believe either party could implement their preferred abortion policy now faced a salient tradeoff: They could shift to identifying as a Republican to pursue their abortion policy preferences or continue to align with the Democratic Party, either because partisanship is static or because they agree with the Democratic Party's other policy commitments.

We find clear evidence that the change in the abortion policy landscape has caused Americans to change their party identification. Comparing those with the most liberal abortion attitudes to those with the most conservative attitudes, the average net move in the Democratic direction minus the average net move in the Republican direction is 5.7 points. This effect is even larger among those

who report abortion to be important and persists when controlling for demographic characteristics and past issue positions.

Using a newly relevant issue position to assess how issues shape partisanship.

To gain leverage on the role of issues positions in explaining changes in partisanship, we take advantage of an unexpected change in the relevance of party positions on an issue where individuals likely have longstanding policy commitments.¹ To make this exposition more straightforward, we begin with a theoretical model as follows:

$$\text{PartyID}_{i,t} = \sum_j (\text{IssuePosition}_{i,j,t} * \text{Issue Weight}_{i,j,t}) + \varepsilon. \quad (1)$$

In this model party identification for person i is shaped by issue positions j , weighted by how they value them (which may be shaped by policy importance, policy confidence, or knowledge of party positions on the issues, for example). The error term, ε , includes all other factors that might explain partisanship (e.g. Palmquist et al 2002). All items are measured at the same time t .

The threats to inference from such a specification are factors that explain both partisanship and issue positions (e.g. social identification, habit) as well as the fact that issue positions may be endogenous to partisanship (Lenz 2012). Similarly, the problem with exploiting individual-level variation in issue weights is that those weights may themselves be affected by those factors. Now suppose all such individual-level factors are static over time, including issue positions. Setting aside measurement error and focusing on only a single issue (dropping the j subscript), this means that lagged partisanship will account for those factors, which yields a first difference:

$$\text{PartyID}_{i,t} - \text{PartyID}_{i,t-1} = \text{Issue Position}_{i,t-1} * \text{Change in Issue Weight}_{i,t-(t-1)} + \varepsilon. \quad (2)$$

Here, we model the change in partisanship from $t-1$ to t as caused by issue positions measured in period $t-1$. But we still face an estimation problem: What explains variation in the weight given to issue positions over time that can rule out the endogeneity concern? Our approach is to use a case where there is an exogenous event that, on average, increases the weight given to a specific issue.

In our case, as explained above, we posit that the Dobbs decision increased the weight individuals would give to their abortion issue positions. While each party staked out distinct positions on the abortion issue pre-Dobbs, the actual viable policy proposals of both sides largely “chipped around the edges,” focusing on issues like rare late-term abortions and doctors’ admitting privileges. After Dobbs abortion policy positions became immediately policy relevant, increasing the weight individuals likely gave to this policy consideration. As a result, we estimate:

$$\text{ChangePartyID}_{i,t-(t-1)} = \text{Issue Position}_{i,t-1} + \text{IndicatorForPriorPID}_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon. \quad (3)$$

¹ This is in contrast to approaches that rely on cases where parties either adopt issue positions on novel issues (e.g., Levendusky 2010) or switch positions over time (e.g., Lenz 2012). Those are often policy domains where individuals do not have deeply held value commitments or the mapping of policy to values changes over time.

This is a change in partisanship model with covariates. We control for prior partisanship (as indicators) to account for average differences in changes by prior partisanship (for example, Strong Democrats at t-1 can only move to the right).²

Prior work has found mixed evidence of how abortion issue positions explain over-time changes in partisanship. Carsey and Laymen (2006) estimate a structural model where both partisanship and issue positions may change as a function of one another. Analyzing the 1992-1996 three wave ANES panel, they estimate that 1992 (1994) abortion positions are correlated with changes in 1992 to 1994 (1994 to 1996) partisanship. Their analysis relies on a small sample (N=597) and does not control for other factors that may explain this change, such as other issue positions or demographic factors (but see footnote 12). They show effects are larger among those who viewed abortion as more important and were better informed about the parties' positions.

Similarly, Killian and Wilcox (2008) use two types of panel data to examine how abortion attitudes measured on a 4-point scale predict changes in partisanship over time separately for Democrats and Republicans. Using various ANES panels, they find that in certain year comparisons, more pro-choice Democrats (pro-life Republicans) were more likely to switch parties, but that the same pattern does not hold in all years (They estimate 6 statistically significant coefficients across 20 party x time period comparisons spanning 1990-2004). In the Youth Parent Socialization Panel Study, they find that abortion attitudes predict changes in partisanship for those previously identifying with either party between 1982 and 1997. In their analyses, sample sizes are small (a maximum of 435 partisans in any comparison) and the range of other issue positions and factors that are accounted for is limited, making it difficult to rule out the possibility that other issue positions or social factors correlated with issue positions explain changes in partisanship. Additionally, their analysis sets aside independents and collapses partisanship to binary categories, leaving open the question of whether abortion attitudes also explain changes in relative strength of partisan identities or changes among independents.

Data and analysis approach

Our primary data source is a large-scale public opinion survey spanning pre- and post-Dobbs public opinion. These data were collected by YouGov as part of past public opinion surveys and a survey focused on the 2024 election. Further details about the survey are in the appendix, including full question wording and summary statistics (Table A1). Pre-Dobbs, we have measures of partisanship, multiple measures of abortion policy opinions, a measure of abortion importance, and other issue positions. Post-Dobbs, we have contemporary (late 2023) partisanship, a novel abortion policy preference battery that maps on to the current policy landscape (Hernandez n.d.), measures of abortion policy confidence and importance, and a rich battery of demographics. All analysis is weighted to a national sample using weights provided by YouGov.

We conduct two key tests in line with the model above. First, we present a transition analysis of changes in partisanship, measured using a standard 7-point scale, from before Dobbs to after it, for

² We find nearly identical results if instead of estimating a first difference model we predict current partisanship controlling for lagged partisanship (see appendix Table A10). The risk from that specification is that measurement error may inflate apparent effects of lagged issue positions (see Fowler 2020). A first difference addresses this concern since random measurement error in both lagged and current partisanship would on average produce no change in partisanship.

those with different abortion policy positions. Our key prediction is individuals with liberal abortion attitudes will be more likely to move their partisan in the Democratic direction than are those with conservative attitudes, who we expect to move towards Republican. Additionally, we expect these effects to be larger for those who view abortion as more important and are more confident in their abortion opinions (Carsey & Layman 2006; Gerber et al. 2011).

Our second analysis is regression-based and builds on the transition matrices results while allowing us to leverage all our data and account for other factors that might explain perturbations in partisanship. For example, our transition analysis only examines differences between those with relatively extreme views. Additionally, it does not account for other factors, like gender or other issue positions, that may also be correlated with changes in partisanship during this period.

Results

Transition Analysis

Table 1 presents (1) the distributions of current partisanship by pre-Dobbs partisanship for those with the most liberal attitudes for each measure, (2) the same for those with the most conservative attitude, and finally (3) the difference between the two, which is a difference estimator. These transition matrices are transparent representations of the data and are functionally flexible (non-parametric) in how they show change in partisanship.

Table 1. Post-Dobbs PID by Pre-Dobbs PID (Cells sum to 100% by row).

Panel A: Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Preferences. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.) = Legal in all cases.

Pre-Dobbs PID	Current PID						
	SD	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
S. Dem	92.2	3.8	3.2	0.7	0.0	0.1	0.0
W. Dem	16.7	66.1	9.5	4.8	0.8	1.0	1.1
L. Dem	10.1	7.2	72.3	9.4	0.7	0.1	0.2
Independent	3.3	2.1	12.1	76.8	4.0	1.3	0.6
L. Rep	0.0	0.5	3.2	21.3	55.0	9.5	10.5
W. Rep	1.7	2.2	1.9	5.9	4.5	74.5	9.3
S. Rep	3.9	0.3	0.0	2.3	2.3	14.0	77.2

Panel B: Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Preferences. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.) = Illegal in all cases.

Pre-Dobbs PID	Current PID						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
S. Dem	74.1	12.6	1.3	8.5	1.1	0.2	2.1
W. Dem	8.0	64.4	2.7	15.8	3.3	3.5	2.3
L. Dem	5.8	12.4	46.0	27.6	5.3	1.6	1.3
Independent	0.9	0.8	1.2	74.5	12.9	5.7	4.0
L. Rep	0.0	0.0	0.3	12.7	66.4	5.7	14.9
W. Rep	0.5	2.3	0.5	6.2	10.0	63.5	17.0
S. Rep	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.6	3.4	4.4	91.5

Panel C: Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Preferences. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.) = Legal in all cases minus Illegal in all cases.

	Current PID						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID							
S. Dem	18.1	-8.8	1.9	-7.9	-1.1	-0.1	-2.1
W. Dem	8.7	1.6	6.9	-11.0	-2.5	-2.4	-1.3
L. Dem	4.3	-5.1	26.3	-18.2	-4.6	-1.5	-1.1
Independent	2.4	1.3	10.8	2.3	-8.9	-4.5	-3.4
L. Rep	0.0	0.5	2.9	8.6	-11.4	3.8	-4.3
W. Rep	1.2	-0.1	1.4	-0.3	-5.5	11.0	-7.7
S. Rep	3.8	0.3	0.0	1.7	-1.1	9.5	-14.2

We use the pre-Dobbs abortion policy question for which we have the largest sample (N=50,644). Approximately 14,000 respondents had the most liberal policy position, indicating they believed abortion should be legal in all cases (see appendix Table A2 for cell sizes). The fourth row in Panel A shows that among those who were Independents, 76.8% remain Independents, but of the remaining ~23%, 17.5%, or about three quarters of those whose partisanship changed, moved toward the Democratic Party. Among Leaning Republicans, the 5th row, there is lower partisan stability (55%), and 25% moved toward the Democratic party (about 55% of those who changed). Overall, for individuals whose liberal abortion policy preferences were misaligned with their prior partisanship, they moved toward the Democratic Party.

On the other end of the spectrum, of the 4,758 respondents who took the most conservative policy position that abortion should be illegal in all cases, Panel B shows that changes in partisanship are toward the Republican Party. Among Independents who opposed abortion, 75% had the same partisanship post-Dobbs. But of the 25% whose partisanship changed, 22.6% (90%) shifted toward the Republican Party.

Finally, in Panel C we calculate the difference in these two transition matrices, meaning how much more likely we are to see a given post-Dobbs partisanship conditional on a Pre Dobbs partisanship and liberal versus conservative pre-Dobbs attitudes. This differences out secular changes in partisanship across both groups. It is immediately apparent that having a more liberal rather than conservative abortion view is associated with a leftward shift in partisanship: The number below the diagonal (which represents static partisanship) are generally positive (average of 2.1 points) and those above it are negative (average of -3.8). Pay particular attention to the rows for partisan leaners, who are behaviorally some of the strongest partisans (Klar & Krupnikov 2016). Leaning Republicans who are strongly prochoice are 11.4 points less likely to remain Leaning Republicans than those who are strongly prolife. They are also 8.6 points more likely to have become Independents and 3.2 points more likely to have become some sort of Democrat. On the other side of the spectrum, Leaning Democrats who are Prolife (compared to those who are prochoice) are 18.2 points more likely to have become Independents and 7.2 points more likely to have become some sort of Republican. Finally, strongly pro-choice Independents are 14.5 points more likely to have some level of Democratic identification and 16.8 points less likely to have some level of Republican identification than strongly pro-life Independents.

In the appendix, we present two extensions to this analysis. First, in Table A3 we use our Post-Dobbs abortion policy index, which is constructed from a factor analysis of answers to preferred legal timing options for 6 different abortion reasons (Hernandez n.d.), to identify the 25% most liberal and 25% most conservative respondents. The advantage of these items is that they fit the contemporary policy space where the law can specify different timings for different reasons, although they are sensitive to concerns about post-treatment bias. We find highly similar, if not larger shifts, showing our results are not an artifact of the somewhat vague earlier policy questions.

Second, in Table A4 we repeat our initial transition analysis after restricting our analysis to two relevant subsamples: Those who thought abortion was maximally important pre-Dobbs and those who had the highest self-expressed confidence in their post-Dobbs abortion policy attitudes. In the overall sample, the average net move in the Democratic direction (the average of all cells below the diagonal) minus the average net move in the Republican direction (the average of all cells above the diagonal) is 5.7 points. In the high importance subsample it is 6.6 points, and in the high confidence subsample it is 7.9 points.

Regression Analysis

In our regression analysis, we examine the effect of abortion policy preferences on contemporaneous partisanship, controlling for Pre-Dobbs partisanship entered as indicators. This is equivalent to equation (3) above, with the accompanying identification assumptions.

We begin by examining the main effect of abortion policy preferences on changes from pre- to post-Dobbs partisanship in Table 2. We estimate all models using OLS with robust standard errors and weights provided by YouGov.³ For both measures of policy preferences used in the transition analysis, we present 3 different specifications. Our first specification is the effect of pre-Dobbs opinions on change in partisanship controlling only for levels of pre-Dobbs partisanship.⁴ Focusing on change in partisanship as the outcome allows us to mitigate concerns of measurement error. The second specification adds a rich array of demographic correlates, entered using indicators to avoid making strong functional form assumptions (Age in decades, gender, education, race/ethnicity, marital status, income, employment status, importance of religion, religious identity, immigrant status, census region, and political interest). These covariates account for important factors that may explain changes in partisanship over time due to social attachments (Palmquist et al 2002).

Our third specification includes 3 important issue positions measured pre-Dobbs for which we have answers from a significant portion of the sample. These are respondents' views on healthcare, immigration, and gun control. This specification is the most conservative, in that it controls for other issues that might also have explained changes in partisanship.

³ Models estimated using ordered probit appear in appendix Tables A6 and A7, where the dependent variable is post-treatment PID rather than change in PID because ordered probit models do not allow for negative outcome variables.

⁴ One key reason, per the transition matrix analysis, for controlling for pre-Dobbs partisanship is that certain groups (Strong Democrats and Strong Republicans) can only move in one direction. See appendix Table A11 for analysis broken down by prior partisanship, which shows we find the same pattern of coefficients for all partisan subgroups.

Table 2. The impact of abortion policy preferences on change in partisanship from pre- to post-Dobbs.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in 7-point Partisanship (+=More Republican)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for Demographics and other items		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Controls for other Pre-Dobbs issue positions			Yes			Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.118 [0.009]***	0.093 [0.009]***	0.046 [0.012]***			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.139 [0.007]***	0.131 [0.008]***	0.057 [0.011]***
Constant	-0.022 [0.015]	-0.099 [0.184]	-0.350 [0.176]**	0.293 [0.012]***	0.265 [0.188]	-0.194 [0.182]
Observations	50644	49328	21118	53696	52813	21158
R-squared	0.056	0.066	0.094	0.063	0.073	0.094

Robust standard errors in brackets; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Models 1 and 4 in Table 2, those that include no controls, suggest that the Dobbs ruling is associated with greater alignment between abortion attitudes and partisanship, consistent with the transition matrices presented above. A one unit change in abortion attitudes on the 4-point scale is associated with a 0.118 change in partisanship, equivalent to around 1 in 10 individuals moving their partisanship from weak partisan to strong partisan to align with their abortion attitudes. Models 2 and 5 suggest a small role for demographic variables in explaining that association because including those items has small effects on the estimated effect of issue positions. Finally, models 3 and 6 are the most conservative, including pre-Dobbs issue positions. In these models, the coefficients are reduced (though still substantively important). We estimate a coefficient around 0.05, suggesting a one unit increase in abortion conservatism is associated with around 1 in 20 Americans moving their PID towards the Republican party by 1 point.

In Table A5 we present models that hold the sample constant, using only the respondents for whom we have pre-Dobbs non-abortion issue positions. These results suggest the attenuation in coefficients between models 2 and 3 (5 and 6) are due to both the inclusion of these issues and the different sample used. In appendix Table A9, we present parallel models for seven additional measures of abortion policy preferences and find similar results

We also examine three theoretically-motivated heterogenous effects models in Table 3. First, we include the interaction between policy preferences and policy confidence. We expect the effect of pre-Dobbs opinions on changes in partisanship to be larger for those who are more confident in their views. Confidence is measured post-Dobbs using 5 response categories rescaled linearly on the 0-1 scale with larger values indicating greater confidence. Our next specifications replace confidence with importance. The first measure of importance is measured post-treatment on the same scale. Our last specification uses a pre-Dobbs measure of policy importance from 2014, almost a decade before this study was conducted, to address concerns that contemporary importance may be affected by the shifting abortion policy landscape. We have a much smaller sample size for this item, which is coded from 4 response categories and is also rescaled linearly to range from 0-1.

Table 3. The impact of abortion policy preferences on change in partisanship from pre- to post-Dobbs, by reported issue importance and confidence.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in 7-point Partisanship (+=More Republican)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.092 [0.017]***	0.039 [0.017]**	0.051 [0.031]			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.101 [0.014]***	0.061 [0.013]***	0.094 [0.022]***
Confidence, Abortion (0-1)	-0.120 [0.049]**			0.011 [0.018]		
Confidence * Opinion	0.041 [0.020]**			0.063 [0.018]***		
Importance, Abortion (0-1)		-0.416 [0.051]***			-0.119 [0.016]***	
Importance * Opinion		0.120 [0.021]***			0.116 [0.016]***	
Abortion Importance Pre-Dobbs (0-1)			-0.085 [0.065]			-0.001 [0.023]
Pre-Dobbs Importance * Opinion			0.041 [0.033]			0.041 [0.024]*
Constant	0.054 [0.039]	0.281 [0.043]***	0.015 [0.056]	0.290 [0.017]***	0.400 [0.018]***	0.206 [0.025]***
Observations	49269	49558	16696	52791	53075	17582
R-squared	0.056	0.061	0.047	0.063	0.066	0.056

Robust standard errors in brackets: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Examining the interaction between confidence and importance with abortion attitudes, we find that consistent with a model of attitudinal driven partisanship change, individuals who are more confident in their abortion attitudes and view the issue as more important are more likely to align their partisanship with their pre-existing abortion attitudes. The interaction effects in columns 1 and 4 suggests that the most confident individuals are around 50% more likely to move their partisanship than the least confident individuals. Columns 2 and 5 suggest that for importance this effect is even larger with those rating abortion as the most important being 2-3 times more likely to move their partisanship in the direction of their abortion attitudes. Finally, in columns 3 and 6 we look at pre-Dobbs importance of abortion. Our estimates have larger standard errors and are at best only marginally significant, although the coefficients are similar in size to the more precisely estimated interaction with confidence.⁵

Discussion/conclusion

What explains partisan identifications in the mass public? We take advantage of an unusual but important event, the overturning of Roe by the Supreme Court, to provide a novel window into understanding how preexisting issue opinions shape partisan identification. We estimate that when abortion attitudes became policy relevant, some individuals with partisan attachments at odds with their policy preferences adjusted their partisanship to reflect their increasingly relevant policy

⁵ As an alternative, we code importance and confidence relatively within respondents to account for variation in average confidence and importance across individuals. Results are similar, see appendix Table A8.

attitudes. Thus, partisanship does not appear to be purely an “unmoved mover” of issue positions, but instead a consequence for some individuals of those opinions. These effects are larger for those who are more confident in their policy attitudes and view the issue as more important. Naturalistic situations that will break the observational equivalence of theories of partisanship or issues as causes of the other will be rare, but in this case, we estimate that some individuals whose abortion attitudes were misaligned with their partisanship changed their partisanship as a consequence.

While generalizing from a specific case may be hard, we note above that abortion is both a tough and easy case for demonstrating the importance of issues. Against finding an effect, both parties have staked out clearly divergent issues positions on the issue for years, so if partisanship drives issues positions, then people should have aligned their abortion attitudes with their parties. On the other hand, abortion attitudes are deeply held for many (e.g., Luker 1985; Osbourne et al 2022), especially in comparison to other issues (although for those who already cared a great deal, there was likely already pressure to align their partisanship with their issue positions). In light of this, our average estimates are likely driven by those whose partisanship was previously misaligned with their now-salient issue positions (in the top or bottom 25% of our abortion factor score; see appendix table A12). Conservatively, we estimate this is about 1 in every 14 Pre-Dobbs Democrats and Republicans held misaligned preferences, and that about 1/2 of Independents held extreme abortion preferences. In short, while such situations may be rare, they provide powerful evidence that issues have an important role in shaping and reshaping partisan coalitions in the mass public.

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Appendix

Additional Information on Data Collected

Our data comes from a panel survey, conducted by YouGov. This survey includes a baseline sample of approximately 130,000 respondents in the United States recruited from YouGov's online survey panel. YouGov's panel is an opt-in panel where respondents are invited to take surveys in return for 'points' they can redeem for rewards. Samples are selected to be demographically diverse so that weighting can be performed to match targets, but in the case of this sample it is not designed to match national targets without weighting. Additionally, to ensure low attrition respondents in the SAY panel tend to have longer histories with YouGov which reduces the likelihood they will drop out of the sample.

The SAY panel provides a unique opportunity to study public opinion as it is one of the largest panels available with both high frequency re-contacts but also a large time span covered by the panel. Data is weighted to reflect national demographic characteristics and all results presented are with weights. Baseline information for this group was collected in December of 2023 and early January of 2024, with 4 follow-up surveys throughout 2024.

The demographic controls we use in our analysis are from the baseline survey and include age in decades, gender (4 categories), education (4 categories), race/ethnicity (8 categories), marital status (6 categories), income (16 categories), employment status (7 categories), importance of religion (4 categories), religious identity (12 categories), immigrant status (5 categories), census region, and political interest (4 categories).

Additionally, because the sample was recruited from YouGov's online panel, we can recover attitudes towards abortion and partisanship from 2022 and earlier for a very large subset of our respondents. A non-random subset of the 130,000 respondents have been taking surveys with YouGov since before the Dobbs decision, allowing us to retrieve their abortion attitudes and partisanship from before abortion was reintroduced as a major policy issue in 2022. We have 9 different measures of abortion policy attitudes which we summarize below.

In the main text, we rely on the two measures we have the most data for. Our pre-Dobbs measure is:

Which comes closest to your position on abortion? Do you think abortion should be...

- Legal in all cases
- Legal in most cases
- Illegal in most cases
- Illegal in all cases

Our post-Dobbs measure is:

Up to what point in a pregnancy do you think abortion should be legal for each of the following reasons?

Response options

- Never legal
- Legal up to 6 weeks into pregnancy
- Legal up to 12 weeks

- Legal up to 15 weeks
- Legal up to 24 weeks (fetal viability)
- Legal up to the point of birth

Reasons

- Mother develops a life-threatening medical condition that can only be treated if the pregnancy is ended
- Fetus is found to have a serious physical or mental disability, such as Down's Syndrome, that will have implications for the child's life
- The pregnancy is the result of rape or incest
- Mother can't afford to have the child
- The mother believes having the child would interfere with her educational or career aspirations
- Mother doesn't want a child of that specific sex

Additionally, we have 7 other measures of abortion attitudes measured pre-Dobbs with results reported in the appendix.

Which comes closest to your view on abortion?

- It should always be legal
- It should be legal most of the time
- It should be made illegal except in cases of rape, incest and to save the mother's life
- It should be made illegal without any exceptions

When do you believe abortion should be legal?

- Always
- Until the fetus can live outside the womb
- In the first trimester of a pregnancy
- Only in special cases (such as rape, incest, or when the health of the mother is at risk)
- Never

Would you call yourself "pro-life" or "pro-choice"?

- Pro-life
- Pro-choice
- Both pro-life and pro-choice
- Neither
- Not sure

Do you think abortion should be...

- Legal in all cases

- Legal in some cases and illegal in others
- Illegal in all cases
- Not sure

Abortion is morally wrong.

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree generally
- Disagree somewhat
- Agree somewhat
- Agree generally
- Agree strongly

Do you think abortion should be..

- Legal in all cases
- Legal in most cases
- Illegal in most cases
- Illegal in all cases

When do you think abortion should be legal?

- Abortion should always be legal. There should be no restrictions on abortion.
- Abortion should be legal, but with some restrictions (such as for minors or late-term abortions).
- Abortion should only be legal in special circumstances, such as when the life of the mother is in danger.
- Abortion should be illegal. It should never be allowed.

Description of survey sample

Table A1. Description of sample demographic characteristics and abortion attitudes.

Variable	(1)
Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in Partisanship (+=More Republican)	0.0366 [.8077]
Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)	4.041 [2.267]
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)	4.004 [2.2582]
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	2.305 [.9654]
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)	-0.067 [1.0137]
Importance, Abortion (0-1)	0.593 [.3469]
Confidence, Abortion (0-1)	0.587 [.3201]
Abortion Importance Pre-Dobbs (0-1)	0.595 [.3593]
Age in decades	5.368 [1.5681]
What is your gender?	1.540 [.5319]
Highest level of education completed (1-4)	2.315 [1.0487]
What racial or ethnic group best describes you?	1.592 [1.3779]
What is your marital status?	2.564 [1.798]
Thinking back over the last year, what was your individual annual income?	19.250 [32.9553]
Which of the following best describes your current employment status?	3.553 [2.2583]
Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?	4.415 [1.7443]
How important is religion in your life?	2.270 [1.201]
What is your present religion, if any?	5.509 [4.5753]
Which of these statements best describes you?	4.361

Derived from respondent's state of residence	[1.0242] 2.643 [1.0226]
Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most	1.750 [1.176]
Pre-Dobbs Immigration Att.	2.084 [.9386]
Pre-Dobbs Medicare for all	1.928 [.7812]
Pre-Dobbs Gun Policy	2.886 [1.2304]
Observations	55467
<hr/> Standard deviations in brackets	

Additional Transition Matrices Discussed in Main Text

Table A2: N's for Table 1 transition matrices.

Panel A: Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Preferences. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.) = Legal in all cases.

	Current PID						
	SD	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID							
S. Dem	7169	222	207	34	3	7	1
W. Dem	312	1071	191	59	10	11	7
L. Dem	214	115	1762	140	11	2	3
Independent	48	27	273	1168	58	15	10
L. Rep	0	2	10	52	146	22	15
W. Rep	11	11	20	28	31	288	41
S. Rep	11	1	0	7	11	54	305

Panel B: Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Preferences. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.) = Illegal in all cases.

	Current PID						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID							
S. Dem	195	31	4	10	2	1	4
W. Dem	20	114	7	20	5	7	4
L. Dem	5	8	52	17	5	2	1
Independent	12	7	12	550	120	27	28
L. Rep	0	0	3	65	565	38	95
W. Rep	4	7	2	18	61	330	84
S. Rep	2	1	0	9	104	93	2007

Table A3. Transition matrices similar to those in Table 1 but using the post-Dobbs abortion question instead. Post-Dobbs PID by Pre-Dobbs PID (Cells sum to 100% by row)

Panel A: Abortion Policy Scale Quantiles = 25% most liberal.

	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)							
S. Dem	92.1	3.9	3.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1
W. Dem	16.7	67.2	11.1	3.8	0.3	0.7	0.2
L. Dem	9.4	6.6	75.2	8.1	0.5	0.2	0.1
Indpt	2.5	2.3	14.9	73.4	4.6	1.8	0.5
L. Rep	0.6	0.8	4.4	13.9	64.6	10.5	5.2
W. Rep	2.3	2.2	3.0	4.5	7.4	75.4	5.2
S. Rep	0.9	0.0	0.5	3.6	3.4	11.8	79.7

Panel B: Abortion Policy Scale Quantiles = 25% most conservative.

	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)							
S. Dem	80.5	7.9	1.3	5.4	1.2	1.7	2.0
W. Dem	8.5	67.3	3.2	7.7	3.0	4.8	5.4
L. Dem	4.1	14.1	35.4	31.2	10.6	3.6	1.0
Indpt	0.4	1.5	1.6	73.9	13.4	5.0	4.3
L. Rep	0.0	0.0	0.4	10.3	68.6	6.6	14.0
W. Rep	0.2	1.1	0.2	3.5	8.3	70.7	16.0
S. Rep	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	4.0	4.9	90.6

Panel C: Abortion Policy Scale Quantiles = 25% most liberal minus 25% most conservative.

	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)							
S. Dem	11.6	-4.0	2.1	-5.0	-1.1	-1.7	-1.9
W. Dem	8.2	-0.1	7.8	-3.9	-2.8	-4.1	-5.2
L. Dem	5.2	-7.6	39.8	-23.1	-10.0	-3.4	-0.9
Indpt	2.1	0.8	13.3	-0.5	-8.8	-3.2	-3.8
L. Rep	0.6	0.8	3.9	3.7	-4.1	3.9	-8.8
W. Rep	2.1	1.1	2.7	1.0	-0.9	4.7	-10.8
S. Rep	0.8	-0.0	0.5	3.2	-0.6	6.9	-10.8

Table A4. Transition matrices similar to those in Table 1 but restricted to high importance and high confidence respondents.

Panel A: Net difference in change between those with the most liberal and most conservative policy attitudes among those who report abortion as the most important.

	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)							
S. Dem	11.8	-1.3	2.6	0.3	-11	-2.4	0
W. Dem	7.7	-2.8	1.8	-1.6	0	0	-5.1
L. Dem	12.1	1.9	9	-11.3	-12.3	0.6	0
Indpt	5.3	-0.7	18.3	-7.4	-8.1	-1.8	-5.6
L. Rep	0	0	2.5	12.6	-14.8	2.6	-2.9
W. Rep	0	3	0.7	2.8	-0.2	3.4	-9.7
S. Rep	-0.1	0	0	2.5	-1.7	7.6	-8.3

Panel C: Net difference in change between those with the most liberal and most conservative policy attitudes among those who are most confident in their abortion attitudes.

	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)						
	S. Dem	W. Dem	L. Dem	Indpt	L. Rep	W. Rep	S. Rep
Pre-Dobbs PID (1=SD; 7=SR)							
S. Dem	16.6	-4.2	1.8	-8.6	-3.3	-0.6	-1.8
W. Dem	17.6	-20.7	12	-9.7	0.8	-0.9	0.8
L. Dem	12.1	-8.3	41.1	-35.2	-7.9	-2.2	0.3
Indpt	2.1	0.8	19.6	-0.9	-14.5	-0.3	-6.7
L. Rep	0	0.9	1.3	12.9	-7.8	3.4	-10.7
W. Rep	2.5	3.9	3.4	4	-6.7	-6.8	-0.3
S. Rep	2.3	-0.1	0	4.4	-4.5	10.8	-13

Additional Regression Results Discussed in Main Text

Table A5. Results from Table 2 holding the sample constant across models.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in Partisanship (+=More Republican)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for Demographics and other items		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Controls for other Pre-Dobbs issue positions			Yes			Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.092	0.072	0.046			
	[0.012]* **	[0.011]]***	[0.012]]***			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.1	0.083	0.057
				[0.011]]***	[0.010]]***	[0.011]]***
Constant	-0.057	-0.336	-0.35	0.176	-0.109	-0.194
	[0.020]* **	[0.184]]*	[0.176]]**	[0.014]]***	[0.187]]	[0.182]]
Observations	21118	21118	21118	21158	21158	21158
R-squared	0.047	0.075	0.094	0.05	0.076	0.094

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A6. Ordered Probit Models similar to Table 2 in the main text (not first-differenced).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for Demographics and other items		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Controls for other Pre-Dobbs issue positions			Yes			Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.186 [0.012]* **	0.148 [0.013]* **	0.090 [0.021]* **			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.207 [0.010]* **	0.195 [0.011]* **	0.103 [0.020]* **
Observations	50644	49328	21118	53696	52813	21158

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A7. Ordered Probit Models similar to Table 3 in the main text (not first-differenced).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.122 [0.025]* **	0.046 [0.025]*	0.101 [0.057] *			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.126 [0.020]* **	0.072 [0.018]* **	0.159 [0.038]* **
Confidence, Abortion (0- 1)	-0.294 [0.080]* **			0.009 [0.028]		
Conf * Opinion	0.107 [0.033]* **			0.137 [0.028]* **		
Importance, Abortion (0-1)		-0.722 [0.080]* **			-0.177 [0.025]* **	
Impt * Opinion		0.220 [0.032]* **			0.210 [0.025]* **	
Abortion Importance Pre-Dobbs (0- 1)			-0.212 [0.135]			-0.016 [0.042]
Pre Dobbs Impt * Opinion			0.093 [0.064]			0.096 [0.046]* *
Observations	49269	49558	16696	52791	53075	17582

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A8. Table 3 from the main text with relative confidence and importance substituted.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in Partisanship (+=More Republican)			
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.062	-0.001		
	[0.029]**	[0.021]		
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)			0.056	0.023
			[0.024]* *	[0.018]
Relative Confidence abortion	-0.067		-0.029	
	[0.016]***		[0.006]* **	
Rel. Conf * Opinion	0.014		0.021	
	[0.007]**		[0.006]* **	
Relative Importance abortion		-0.12		-0.034
		[0.014]* **		[0.005]** *
Rel. Impt * Opinion		0.034		0.033
		[0.005]* **		[0.005]** *
Constant	0.255	0.418	0.413	0.433
	[0.072]***	[0.055]* **	[0.029]* **	[0.022]** *
Observations	49269	49558	52791	53075
R-squared	0.058	0.06	0.064	0.066

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A9. First main effect specification using 7 different measures of abortion preferences.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in Partisanship (+=More Republican)						
Controls for Pre-Dobbs							
Partisanship (as indicators)		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Abortion policy	0.086						
Prefs. #2 (4 pt; +=Consv.)	[0.007] ***						
Abortion policy		0.046					
Prefs. #3 (5 pt; +=Consv.)		[0.007] ***					
Identify (1) Pro Choice (2) Other (3) Pro Life			0.09 [0.013] ***				
Abortion morally wrong (6pt; +=Consv.)				0.041 [0.006] ***			
Abortion policy					0.092		
Prefs. #4 (3 pt; +=Consv.)					[0.011] ***		
Abortion policy						0.059	
Prefs. #5 (4 pt; +=Consv.)						[0.011] ***	
Abortion policy							0.062
Prefs. #6 (4 pt; +=Consv.)							[0.015] ***
Constant	-0.004 [0.013]	0.02 [0.017]	-0.008 [0.020]	0.014 [0.015]	-0.02 [0.017]	-0.016 [0.019]	0.037 [0.028]
Observations	41540	21939	19234	18745	18124	9281	8973
R-squared	0.047	0.044	0.044	0.048	0.046	0.042	0.04

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A10. Not first differenced version of Table 2

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Current PID (1=SD; 7=SR)					
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for Demographics and other items)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for other Pre-Dobbs issue positions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.118	0.093	0.046			
	[0.009]	[0.009]	[0.012]			
	***	***	***			
Abortion Policy Preferences Scale (+=Conservative)				0.139	0.131	0.057
				[0.007]	[0.008]	[0.011]
				***	***	**
						*
Constant	0.978	0.901	0.65	1.293	1.265	0.806
			[0.015]	[0.184]	[0.176]	[0.012]
			***	***	***	***
Observations	50644	49328	21118	53696	52813	21158
R-squared	0.889	0.893	0.923	0.882	0.885	0.922

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A11. Table 2 column (2) specification, partitioned by prior partisanship

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Pre- to Post-Dobbs Change in Partisanship (+=More Republican)						
	Pre- Dobbs PID=S. Dem	Pre- Dobbs PID=W. Dem	Pre- Dobbs PID=L. Dem	Pre- Dobbs PID=Indp t	Pre- Dobbs PID=L. Rep	Pre- Dobbs PID=W . Rep	Pre- Dobbs PID=S. Rep
Controls for Pre-Dobbs Partisanship (as indicators)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls for Demographics and other items)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-Dobbs Abortion Policy Prefs. (Preferred measure, 4 pt; +=Consv.)	0.095 [0.015]** *	0.136 [0.037]** *	0.107 [0.027]** *	0.126 [0.019]** *	0.056 [0.025]* *	0.013 [0.031]	0.058 [0.012]** *
Constant	-0.217 [0.123]*	-0.205 [0.290]	-0.942 [0.457]**	0.079 [0.311]	-0.183 [0.265]	-0.342 [0.262]	-1.421 [0.359]** *
Observations	14869	4590	5197	7111	4842	3876	8843
R-squared	0.092	0.096	0.060	0.090	0.057	0.099	0.059

Robust standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table A12. Abortion Factor Score Extremity by Pre-Dobbs Partisanship

	(1) 25% most liberal	(2) middle 50%	(3) 25% most conservative
Dem. (w/ lean)	55.79	36.65	7.56
Indpt.	23.73	48.65	27.62
Rep. (w/lean)	7.60	49.95	42.45

Regression sample. Row percentages sum to 100%.