

# New survey examines status of abortion laws in Texas, California, Arizona

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In the year since the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its landmark Dobbs decision, the U.S. stepped away from a clearly defined national abortion policy for a mix of laws based on the

discretion of each state. How has that been working out?

The answer depends on where you stand on the issue and the politics that govern your state, according to findings released today from a new three-state survey.

The topic report—with public opinions from Texas, California and Arizona—is the first in a series of five to be examined this summer by a collaboration of researchers at the University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, Stanford University's Bill Lane Center for the American West, and the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR).

Upcoming polling analysis will examine and compare attitudes toward transgender issues, immigration, influence of political affiliation and perceptions of these national issues within each state.

"Concerning abortion, there is now a range of regulations across the 50 states, and they differ considerably," said Mark Jones, senior research fellow at the UH Hobby School and political science fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.

This is a contrast, Jones pointed out, to the previous Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) decisions, which established a single interpretation of the issue that held across the U.S. for half a century.

"That may have fit well for some states, including California. But its one-size-fits-all approach clashed with majority views elsewhere including Texas, and Arizona to a lesser degree," he said.

State lawmakers set about crafting new laws after—and some before, in anticipation—the announcement of the SCOTUS decision in *Dobbs v.*

Jackson Women's Health Organization on June 24, 2022.

"The California approach of allowing abortions through 23 or 24 weeks of pregnancy continues the Roe and Casey philosophy, with the majority of Californians not supporting change. Arizona now bans abortions after 15 weeks, which is closer in alignment with the average Arizonan than the Roe and Casey guidelines were," said Richard Murray, senior research fellow at the UH Hobby School of Public Affairs.

In Texas, the new law is among the nation's most restrictive. Abortion is banned except if the mother's life is at risk, with no exceptions for incest or rape.

"This is stricter than most Texans prefer, as our survey points out," said Jones. "But when you compare before and after, it actually comes closer to the average Texan's attitude than the national policy before the Dobbs decision."

Differences among these states' abortion regulations—with California representing liberal views, Arizona moderate and Texas conservative—mirrors the intense debate the issue sparks across the country, the research points out.

"In deep blue California, the current law aligns with Roe and Casey standards and the state's majority Democrat position. In purple Arizona, the 15-week [abortion](#) law agrees with the state's average voter. However, in deep red Texas the Republican legislature decided on one of the country's most extreme approaches, which 50% of the state's residents would like to make less strict," said political scientist Bruce Cain, director of Stanford's Bill Lane Center for the American West and a senior fellow at SIEPR.

For now, there is not much wiggle room for change in California and

Texas, where the dominant parties are firmly seated—an apt symbol of the country's polarization on the topic.

Arizona, with its division in Republican and Democrat leadership, presents more possibility of a tilt within one or two election cycles—but to which side? For now, that prediction is unclear.

**More information:** Report:  
[uh.edu/hobby/jointpollingproject\\_abortion](https://uh.edu/hobby/jointpollingproject_abortion)

Provided by University of Houston

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