Abortion Ballot Measures and Voting Behavior*

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Abstract

Can abortion ballot measures generate electoral spillover effects, and for whom? Abortion ballot measures have become an important aspect of US elections, with 16 states voting on measures since the 2022 Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*. Using nationwide electoral returns and survey data, we study the effects of abortion ballot measures on election outcomes in 2022 and 2024. We find no evidence that abortion ballot measures increase overall turnout. Results show that abortion ballot measures decreased the Republican vote margin in US House elections by 4.9 percentage points in 2022 but increased the margin by 4.5 percentage points in 2024. The increase in Republican votes in 2024 can be explained by a vote separation mechanism: ballot measures allow voters to separate the specific ballot issue from their choice of partisan candidate.

Keywords: Abortion, Voting, Elections

JEL Codes: D72, I18, J13

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1 Introduction

In June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned federal protections for abortion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health,* deciding that, "The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; *Roe* and *Casey* are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives." Since this decision, many states have turned to direct democracy to protect or restrict abortion access by including measures related to abortion on election ballots. These ballot measures offer voters the chance to directly affect abortion access in their state. In 2022 and 2024 combined, over $404 million was spent on campaigning about abortion ballot measures nationwide (Ballotpedia, n.d.-a; -b). As such, these measures are likely highly salient to potential voters and may affect voter behavior and thus the outcomes of same-ballot candidate contests.

This paper evaluates the spillover effects of abortion ballot measures (ABMs) in 2022 and 2024 on elections for the US House of Representatives and the US President. Our empirical design uses a two-way fixed effects strategy to compare states with ABMs to states without, relative to their typical difference in election years prior to *Dobbs.* This analysis produces surprising results. First, in 2022 we find no effect of ABMs on turnout. In 2024, we find that turnout decreased in counties in ABM states. We also find differing effects on partisan vote margin. The 2022 ABMs decreased Republican vote margin in House races by 4.9 percentage points. In 2024, however, we find a 4.5-percentage point increase in Republican vote margin in House races and a 3.2 percentage point increase in Republican vote margin in the presidential race. These results are robust to multiple sample definitions, concerns about pre-trends, and a range of policy, election, and demographic controls.

We evaluate possible mechanisms to explain these results. Perhaps it is the case that support for abortion access declined between 2022 and 2024. If this were the case, then there would be fewer supporters of abortion rights to mobilize in 2024, decreasing potential new votes for Democrats. Though some measures to protect abortion failed in 2024 for the first time, we use an Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition to show that support for abortion rights increased from 2022 to 2024 after accounting for the different demographic and partisan composition of states voting on ABMs across the two elections.

We provide evidence that the contrasting partisan effects across 2022 and 2024 are due to differences in vote switching behavior. We propose two mechanisms via which ballot measures

could produce vote switching. The salience of ballot measures could encourage voters to align their choice of candidate with their position on the ballot measure ("vote alignment"). However, ballot measures could also allow voters to separate the specific ballot issue from their choice of candidate ("vote separation"). We show that vote alignment was more likely in 2022 while vote separation was more likely in 2024. In 2022, counties with a higher share of votes to protect abortion on the ABM became less Republican relative to previous elections. In 2024, counties with a higher share of votes to protect abortion became more Republican. Further, survey evidence shows that moderate voters living in ABM states in 2024 were more likely to prefer the Republican House Candidate relative to moderates in non-ABM states and prior elections. The differences in effects across 2022 and 2024 are likely explained by pre-existing differences in partisan lean in the 2022 and 2024 ABM states. 2024 states were more conservative ex ante, such that there were more conservative, pro-abortion swing voters who, given the opportunity, vote to protect abortion while simultaneously voting for Republican candidates. In contrast, the more liberal 2022 ABM states produce more vote alignment.

In addition to studying the effects of ABMs on election outcomes and their evolution from 2022 to 2024, we provide a discussion of post-*Dobbs* ABMs and the process via which they appear on the ballot. In some states with citizen-initiated measures, we obtain data on the number of signatures per county in support of the ABM petition. Using this data, we analyze whether existing access to abortion determines support for ballot measures. Prior research documents large increases in travel distance to abortion providers in some counties following the *Dobbs* ruling (Dench et al., 2024). We find that increasing travel distance to an abortion provider in the year preceding the 2024 election increases the number of signatories that left-leaning counties contribute towards getting an ABM on the ballot.

This paper builds on a large literature analyzing ballot measures in US elections (see for a review Smith and Tolbert (2007) and Childers and Binder (2016)). Relative to existing literature, we are the first to propose and provide evidence of a vote separation mechanism associated with ballot measures. The competing effects of vote alignment versus vote separation highlight that the partisan effects of ballot measures are theoretically ambiguous and depend on existing political opinions. Further, we not only study the outcomes of ballot measures but the process by which they are brought to ballot and who supports ballot petitions.

We also contribute to the growing literature on the downstream effects of abortion policies. In addition to the fertility effects of abortion access (Dench et al., 2025; Myers 2021; Myers and Ladd, 2020; Lindo et al., 2020), abortion policies have been demonstrated to affect health, socioeconomic, and family outcomes (Noghanibehambari et al., 2025; Crowe et al., 2025; Durrance et al., 2025; Gardner, 2024; Jones and Pineda-Torres, 2024; Durrance et al., 2024; Farin et al., 2024). Following a major change in the abortion access landscape post-*Dobbs*, we demonstrate how political participation and voting decisions change when individuals have an opportunity to vote directly on their access to abortion.

ABMs are of continuing importance in the current US political landscape. There are already three ABMs confirmed for the November 2026 election. Our results show that ABMs have effects on congressional elections by a magnitude large enough to determine key races and, as a result, partisan majority in the House of Representatives. However, the partisan beneficiary of ABMs depends on the existing political landscape in a state. These findings have implications for political strategy surrounding ballot measures.

Current political strategy assumes that abortion is a winning issue for Democrats and that ABMs are turnout-motivating. Two days after the November 2022 election *The New York Times* headlined, "How Democrats used the abortion debate to hold off a red wave. (Lerer and Dias, 2022)" In the lead-up to the 2024 election, the Associated Press headlined, "Democrats hope Harris' bluntness on abortion will lead to 2024 wins (Long et al., 2024)" and "Abortion is on the ballot in nine states and motivating voters across the US (Fernando et al., 2024)." Our results contrast with these prevailing opinions. In our prior work, we show that the *Dobbs* ruling and the abortion debate in general did not help Democratic candidates in 2022. Instead, Democratic advantages were concentrated in ABM states despite no effects of ABMs on turnout (Gardner et al., 2025). In this paper, we build on that research and show that even the Democratic advantage on ABMs is uncertain. Not only can ABMs decrease Democratic votes, we also show that states with ABMs experienced lower overall turnout in 2024, in contrast to the idea that ABMs are turnout-motivating.

2 Abortion Ballot Measures

Since June 2022, voters in 16 states have voted on referenda to amend their state's constitutional stance on abortion. Fourteen of these states had ABMs appear on the general election

ballots in November 2022 and November 2024.[1] These ABMs differ along multiple dimensions, including (i) the process via which the measure was included on the ballot, (ii) whether the measure would protect or restrict abortion access in the state, (iii) the specific wording of the constitutional amendment, and (iv) the vote share needed to pass the measure. Table 1 describes the characteristics of these ABMs and their outcomes.

As shown in Table 1, most of these ABMs would protect the right to abortion in the state if passed. Three states voted on measures to restrict abortion. In 2022, Kentucky's ballot measure would have amended the constitution to say that there is no right to abortion in the state. Also in 2022, Montana voted on a "born alive" ballot measure that did not explicitly restrict abortion but was related to the debate around abortion by granting legal personhood rights to infants and fetuses born at any stage of development. Both measures failed to pass. In 2024, two competing referenda appeared on the ballot in Nebraska – a measure to restrict and a measure to protect abortion. The measure to restrict abortion received a greater vote share (54.95% versus 49.01%) and was passed into law.

The ABMs that would protect abortion also varied in their wording and effects if passed. For example, New York's ABM did not explicitly use the word "abortion," but banned discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive healthcare and autonomy." Other states did not vote on unrestricted legal access to abortion but restored the pre-*Roe* legal status of abortion rights by guaranteeing a right to abortion up until viability.

The outcomes of ABMs reflect a preference among voters to protect abortion rights. Of the 16 ABMs studied in this paper, all but 3 resulted in greater or reaffirmed access to abortion. Nebraska, as mentioned above, voted to restrict abortion in 2024 after voting on competing measures. South Dakota voted to restrict abortion in 2024 after a measure to protect abortion failed by receiving only 41.41% of the vote. In 2024, Florida voted on a measure to protect abortion access that would have removed their existing 6-week abortion ban. While support for the measure received 57.17% of the vote, Florida requires that ballot measures receive a 60% vote share to pass, and the 6-week ban remained in place.

Given the growing ubiquity of ABMs, we study the process via which these measures appear on the ballot. Table 1 shows that 6 of the 16 ballot measures were legislatively referred and 10 were citizen-initiated. Of the 9 states with citizen-initiated ballots, 4 had abortion access at the

[1] Kansas voted on an ABM in an August 2022 primary election. Ohio voted on an ABM in November 2023.

time the citizen petition campaign began and 5 had banned abortion. This would seem to suggest that access to abortion is not a driver of ABMs. However, existing research documents significant effects of abortion access on a wide range of outcomes, including birth rates, contraceptive use, health outcomes, and financial well-being (Myers, 2017; Jones and Pineda-Torres, 2024; Gardner, 2024; Miller et al., 2023, Noghanibehambari, 2025). To motivate a political analysis of abortion and connect this paper to the existing research on abortion, we study the relationship between county-level distance to abortion, partisanship, and ABM petition signatures.

2a Abortion Access and Support for Ballot Initiatives

Citizen-initiated ballot measure campaigns require some minimum number of signatures for a referendum to appear on the ballot. Multiple factors may affect a voter's decision to add her signature to an ABM petition, including recent changes in abortion access. We collected data from Florida, Nebraska, Nevada, and Ohio on county-level number of signatures for ABM petitions.[2] Using this data, we evaluate whether existing access to abortion affects support for ABMs which would protect abortion access. We make use of data from the Myers Abortion Facility Database (2025) on county-level distance to abortion provider and estimate the following:

$$Y_c = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \Delta Distance_c + \beta_2 I(DemWin_c) + \beta_3 I(DemWin_c) * \Delta Distance_c + \epsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

where Y_c is number of signatures in the county per 10,000 population for the ballot measure. $\Delta Distance_c$ represents the change in distance in 100s of miles to the nearest abortion provider between October 2022 and October 2023.[3] A key challenge to isolating the effect of distance to providers on support for ABM petitions is that more rural areas are likely further from providers and more Republican ex ante. To account for this, we additionally control for whether the Democratic presidential candidate won the county in either 2016 or 2020 and allow the effect of

[2] Each of these states' ABMs would expand abortion rights if passed. For Nebraska, we use signatures in support of adding Nebraska Initiative 439 to the ballot, which would have established a right to abortion until fetal viability, rather than signatures in support of Nebraska Initiative 434, which restricted abortion access. We requested this data from each of the 9 states with citizen-initiated referenda. The other 5 states were unable to provide the data or unresponsive to our requests.

[3] We use this time frame because ballot petition signature collection generally begins a year prior to the November election. We measure change in distance to an abortion provider in the preceding year to capture more recent, salient changes. Ohio voted on their ballot measure in November 2023, so we define their change in distance variable to be the change in travel distance to an abortion provider October 2021 to October 2022.

distance to provider to vary depending on whether the Democratic candidate won. Results are shown in Table 2.

We find that losing access to abortion leading up to the election increases the number of signatures from a county by about 218 signatures per ten thousand adult residents (column 1), but the coefficient is not statistically different from zero. However, these effects are larger and statistically significant in Democratic-leaning counties (columns 2 and 3). These results confirm that political behavior can be affected by abortion policy and that political activity around abortion access may vary depending on partisanship. As such, abortion policy and related ballot measures could have spillover effects on the outcomes of partisan candidate contests.

3 Effect of Ballot Measures on Election Outcomes

3a Theoretical Relationship

ABMs may affect the outcomes of candidate contests in same-ballot elections via changes in behavior on both the extensive margin (whether to vote) and the intensive margin (how to vote). If ABMs produce differential turnout among people that are more likely to vote for one party, then the outcomes of candidate contests may change. Existing research on ballot measures and turnout find conflicting effects. Ballot measures on social issues in midterm elections increased voter turnout between 1992 and 2006 (Biggers, 2011). Evidence is mixed regarding the effects of ballot measures on turnout during presidential election years (Smith, 2001; Tolbert et al., 2001; Donovan et al., 2009; Lacey, 2005; Grummel, 2008; Garretson, 2014). Donovan et al. (2009) argues that ballot measures make elections more salient to low-propensity voters in midterm years, leading to an increase in turnout. Given the higher ex-ante awareness of elections in presidential years, ballot measures are unlikely to affect turnout choice of low-propensity voters, for whom presidential elections are already salient.

However, ballot measures may also decrease turnout. Augenblick and Nicholson (2016) show that voters are more likely to abstain from voting on a specific ballot item when it appears further down on the ticket. While they study choice fatigue in relation to the number of items on a ballot, it is also possible that heavy campaigning around a ballot measure can create a similar type of election fatigue and discourage turnout altogether among low-propensity voters. This is particularly true if campaigning around ABMs had an overall negative tone, as prior research

shows negative campaigning can decrease voter turnout (Fridkin and Kenney, 2019). As such, the effects of ABMs on turnout, and as a result partisan vote margin, are theoretically ambiguous.

Vote switching, or behavior changes on the intensive margin, in response to ABMs also have theoretically ambiguous effects on election outcomes. First, it could be that ABMs increase the salience of the abortion debate such that people become more likely to vote for candidates whose views on abortion align with their own ("vote alignment"). For example, a hypothetical swing voter who is in favor of abortion rights but whose other political opinions lean conservative may, in the absence of an ABM, vote for a Republican candidate. However, if ABMs increase the salience of the abortion debate and, given traditional party positioning, the Democratic candidate supports abortion rights, this hypothetical voter might instead vote for the Democrat. This form of "vote alignment" is likely to increase Democratic votes and decrease Republican votes.[4] While vote alignment predicts that ABMs would favor Democratic candidates, we also propose a mechanism of "vote separation" via which ABMs would favor Republicans. By giving voters the opportunity to directly exercise their policy preference on abortion, ballot measures may allow voters to separate the specific ballot issue from their choice of partisan candidate. In this case, a pro-abortion, conservative-leaning swing voter may, in the absence of an ABM, vote for the Democratic candidate to protect abortion rights. However, an ABM allows them to support abortion rights directly on the ABM while concurrently voting for a Republican candidate whose position on other issues better matches their own ideology. In contrast to vote alignment, vote separation in response to ABMs is likely to decrease Democratic votes and increase Republican votes.

Existing research and news coverage support our theory of competing vote alignment and vote separation mechanisms associated with ABMs. Meisels (2025) shows that Democrats became more likely to campaign on abortion in 2024, while Republican candidates increasingly obfuscated their position on the issue. This would be consistent with Democratic candidates seeking to produce vote alignment while Republican candidates sought to produce vote separation. In Florida in 2024, Republican women organized to support abortion rights on the ABM while

[4] We might imagine a hypothetical swing voter who instead is opposed to abortion rights, but whose other political opinions lean liberal. However, this voter is rare in the population. 85% of Democrats and those who lean Democrat believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases and are aligned with their party's position on abortion. In comparison only 59% of Republicans are aligned with their party's position abortion: 41% of Republicans and those who lean Republican believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases (Nadeem, 2024).

simultaneously promoting Republican candidates. (Carter, 2024; Sarkissian and Leonard, 2024). Also in 2024, the Trump campaign's political director told reporters that ABMs may allow voters to support abortion rights and then vote for the president based on other factors (Durkee, 2024). We test whether these anecdotes of vote separation in 2024 are supported by evidence from empirical data on election returns.

3b Empirical Analysis

We use county-level election returns to create three main outcome variables to measure voting behavior: voter turnout (total votes / voting age population), Republican vote margin (Republican vote share - Democratic vote share) in House elections, and, in 2024, Republican vote margin in the presidential election (Leip, 2025).[5] We compare consistently across midterm and presidential elections: 2024 election outcomes are compared to presidential elections in 2012, 2016, and 2020; 2022 election outcomes are compared to midterm elections in 2010 and 2014. We exclude 2018 from the midterm election comparison as it was the only midterm election in our sample with a sitting Republican president. Existing research shows that voting behavior in midterm elections tends to favor the non-Presidential party (Tufte, 1975; Charles and Stephens, 2013; Jacobson, 2023).

We estimate the effects of ABMs using the following two-way fixed effects equation,

$$Y_{ct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * I(ABM_{ct}) + \beta_2 X_{ct} + \delta_{dt} + \gamma_s + \epsilon_{ct} \quad (2)$$

where Y_{ct} is county-year turnout or Republican vote margin. $I(ABM_{ct})$ indicates whether the county is in a state with a post-*Dobbs* ABM in that year. β_1 is the coefficient of interest and describes the effect of having the opportunity to vote on an ABM on election outcomes. γ_s are state fixed effects and δ_{dt} are census division-by-year fixed effects. Controlling for division-by-year fixed effects nets out any nationwide effects, such as changes in voting patterns in specific election years due to characteristics of presidential candidates, as well as differential regional trends in political opinions and behavior as documented in Cooper et al. (2025).

[5] We limit our analysis to House and Presidential election results. We do not consider Senate elections since Senate elections occur only every 6 years and would exclude many counties from our analysis.

We also control for state-by-year and county-by-year factors with X_{ct}. In every regression, we control for whether the House election is uncontested with a Republican or Democratic candidate. In specifications with controls, we add a series of state-by-year controls, including whether the state was a presidential battleground in the 2024 analysis, the number of other statewide ballot measures in each state's election, indicators for abortion-related ballot measures occurring in elections prior to *Dobbs,* and a categorical variable describing the abortion policy environment in each state at the time of the election.[6] These categories include whether abortion was banned, at risk of a ban, or safe from bans by nature of state law or legislative composition. We also control for a wide range of county-by-year characteristics, including distance to the nearest abortion provider from the Myers Abortion Facility Database (Myers, 2026) and county-by-year demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.[7] For turnout, we weight by voting age population. For vote margin, we weight by total ballots cast. Standard errors are clustered at the state level.

Despite the inclusion of division-by-year fixed effects, we might be concerned that differential regional trends in political behavior are confounding results. To address this concern, our empirical analysis compares estimates across three geographic samples shown in Figure 1. First, we estimate equation (2) using data for the entire country.[8] Second, we re-estimate equation (2) using a control group comprised of states that directly border ABM states. Third, we estimate a version of equation (2) that makes use of the geography of Designated Media Areas (DMAs).

DMAs determine by location what advertisements are shown on broadcast and cable television. Using DMAs to select counties for our third sample has two main benefits. First, we maintain the benefits of a border county analysis such that the treated and control counties are geographically close and demographically similar, but we include a larger sample than if we limited the sample to only those counties on state border lines. Second, the geography of DMAs creates a natural experiment that allows us to control for the effects of television advertising in our analysis. The political ads that a voter sees on television will depend on their DMA, which can cross state boundaries. A voter in a border county may see ads related to an ABM in the

[6] We categorize states' abortion policy environment following the method in Gardner et al. (2025) and making use of data from *The New York Times* abortion policy tracker (McCann and Schoenfield Walker, 2025).
[7] Demographic and SES controls include poverty rate, unemployment rate, median income, and population share college educated, white, Black, Hispanic, female, aged 18-29, 30-49, 50-64, and 64 plus.
[8] We exclude Alaska and Connecticut due to changing county geographic and congressional district definitions. We also exclude Kansas in the 2022 analysis due to their August 2022 ABM.

neighboring state, even though they are not voting on an ABM in their own state. As such, a voter's exposure to TV ads on ABMs is exogenously determined by their DMA. While this approach does not allow us to control for political ads on social media, it does capture a large share of political advertising. In the 2024 election, the Wesleyan Media Project concluded that, "Television ads continue to dominate federal and statewide election campaigns," with over $4.5 billion spent in television and radio advertising (2024). Further, while advertisers can select more granular geographies for streaming advertisements, DMA can also be used to determine targeting of streaming ads.[9]

To create a comparison group of similar counties with identical television advertising, sample 3 includes only border counties in and next to ABM states that share a DMA. All counties in the sample are exposed to ABM campaign TV advertisements, but only counties within ABM states are "treated" and get to vote on the measure. For this analysis, we re-estimate equation (2) using DMA-by-year fixed effects instead of census division-by-year fixed effects. In addition to creating a more comparable control group, the DMA analysis allows us to isolate the effects of being able to vote on an ABM from being exposed to television advertising related to ABMs. Similar estimates across the three samples would suggest that results are robust to more narrowly defined control groups and that estimates are driven by the direct effects of having the opportunity to vote on an ABM, not the related television advertising. However, we note that as we restrict the sample, we also lose statistical power. A coefficient of a similar magnitude with lesser significance in the DMA sample may just reflect lower power in that sample.

We also test whether results in the full sample are robust to dropping observations with uncontested House races, controlling for whether the House race includes an incumbent candidate, and including county fixed effects as opposed to state fixed effects. Finally, to assess whether state and division-by-year fixed effects are successful in controlling for differences between ABM states and control states, we conduct the covariate balance test proposed by Pei, Pischke, and Schwandt (2019).

[9] As of December 15, 2025, Netflix's advertising webpage stated: "Find audiences wherever they are. Where your viewers are located shapes what they see. From quiet suburbs to places best left undiscovered, Geo-targeting lets you connect with audiences by country, state, DMA, region or ZIP code." https://advertising.netflix.com/en-us/targeting#demographics-location

3c Results

We find contrasting effects of ABMs across the 2022 and 2024 elections. Table 3 shows results for turnout. In 2022, we find no effect of ABMs on turnout across any sample, regardless of the inclusion of controls (Panel A). In 2024, counties in ABM states see a statistically significant decrease in turnout relative to controls (Panel B). Coefficients show an approximately 1.8 percentage point decline in turnout and are similar in magnitude across the three samples, though significance in the DMA sample relies on the inclusion of controls (columns (5) and (6)).

The effects of ABMs on partisan vote margin also differ across the two elections. Results are shown in Table 4. In 2022, counties in ABM states see a decrease of between 3.7 and 5.9 percentage points in Republican vote margin in House races (Panel A). These findings are consistent with results from Gardner et al. (2025) that uses a different empirical method to study ABMs. In 2024, we find the opposite effect: an increase in Republican vote margin in House races of approximately 4.5 percentage points (Panel B). We also find evidence of an increase in the Republican presidential vote margin in 2024, though coefficients are smaller in magnitude and not robust to the DMA sample restriction (Panel C).

Because coefficients are largely stable across the three samples, our preferred sample and specification includes the full country for greater statistical power and the full set of controls to account for differences across treatment and control groups (column 2 in Tables 3 and 4). In Appendix Table A1, we show that these results are robust to dropping uncontested races, controlling for House candidate incumbency, and including county fixed effects.

The key identifying assumption in equation (2) is that in the absence of ABMs treated and untreated counties would trend similarly. To provide support for this assumption, we interact ABM status with prior election years to directly estimate pre-trends. We find no significant pre-trends (see Appendix Table A2).[10]

To test whether confounding differences across ABM states and control states are driving results, we perform a covariate balance test. For comparison across coefficients, we standardize all time-varying control variables. If state and division-by-year fixed effects are successful if netting out confounders, then regressing standardized covariates on an indicator for ABMs while

[10] Note that our setting is robust to recent advancements in the difference-in-differences literature (see Roth et al., 2023 for a review). ABMs create a binary treatment with only one treated year in each specification and no post-untreated years. As such, bias created by staggered treatment timing or continuous treatment measures is not a concern.

controlling for fixed effects should produce null results. Appendix Figure A1 shows the results of this balance test for both the 2022 and 2024 analysis.

Of the 16 covariates, only 3 in 2022 and 1 in 2024 fail the balance test.[11] Unbalanced covariates can bias estimates of β_1 in equation (2) if they are simultaneously related to the outcome variable, such that regressing the outcome on both the unbalanced covariate and the treatment variable attenuates the coefficient on the unbalanced covariate and instead attributes the effect to the treatment variable. To test this, we repeat equation (2) alternatively including the unbalanced covariate, the treatment variable, and then both. Results are robust to this test and shown in Appendix Table A3.

Building on our DMA analysis, we provide further evidence that TV campaign ads about ABMs cannot explain the results of Tables 2 and 3. For this analysis, we limit the sample to counties in a state bordering an ABM state. Some of these counties share a DMA with ABM counties and form the treatment group. The control group is comprised of counties within the same state that border the treated counties and counties that are contiguous with those border counties. As such, all the counties in the sample are in non-ABM states, but only the treated counties see ABM TV campaign ads from the neighboring state. Results are shown in Appendix Table A4. Consistent with the stability of coefficients across our full sample and DMA sample in Tables 2 and 3, we find no effect of ABM TV ads on any outcome in either election.

Finally, we note that magnitude of estimates we find in Table 4 are politically significant. In both 2022 and 2024, the magnitude of our estimates is large enough that the presence or absence of an ABM in a state could flip the partisan control of the House of Representatives. In 2024, Republicans won 220 seats in the House of Representatives, just 2 seats more than the 218 needed for control of the House of Representatives. Four seats in ABM states were won by Republicans by a vote margin of less than 4 percentage points. Our estimates imply that these seats may have been won by the Democratic candidate in the absence of an ABM, giving control of the House to Democrats. Similarly, in 2022, Republicans won 222 seats, only 4 seats more than the 218 needed to control the House. 14 seats in non-ABM states were won by Republicans by a vote margin of less than 4 percentage points. Our estimates for 2022 imply that these seats may have been won

[11] Note that we find no effect of ABMs on voting age population. Existing research has found that people might move out of states with abortion bans (Dench et al., 2025; Dench et al., 2026). While Table 1 shows that ABM states vary in their abortion status, to the extent we are concerned that this may confound effects, we find no evidence of any population changes large enough to explain effects on election outcomes.

by the Democratic candidate if those states had voted on an ABM that year, flipping control of the House.

4 Mechanisms

We evaluate the potential mechanisms which could explain the differing effects of ABMs on Republican vote margin in 2022 and 2024. Theoretically, ABMs could affect candidate contests by (1) motivating people who would otherwise not vote to turn out, (2) discouraging turnout by inducing choice or election fatigue, or (3) inducing people who vote to switch their vote to a different party, either via vote alignment or vote separation. Given that we find no increase in turnout across either election, we more carefully evaluate the latter two mechanisms in sections 4b and 4c. However, these theoretical predictions assume that opinions on abortion rights are fixed. Given the differences we find across 2022 and 2024, we might wonder whether the results in Section 3 reflect changing opinions on ABMs themselves, and, as a result, changing effects of the measures on turnout and candidate contests.

4a Did Support for Abortion Rights Decline Between 2022 and 2024?

The failure of 3 ballot measures to protect abortion in 2024 could reflect waning support for abortion rights. Across all ABM states in 2022 and 2024, 62.7% of voters voted to protect abortion in 2022 versus 60.2% in 2024. However, the demographic composition of the population voting on ABMs also varied across the two elections. It is unclear whether lesser support for abortion rights in 2024 is attributable to lower support within demographic groups or a shift towards a voter base with lower support ex ante.[12] We evaluate this with the following Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition,

$$\bar{Y}_{2024} - \bar{Y}_{2022} = [\beta_{2024}(\bar{X}_{2024} - \bar{X}_{2022})] + [(\beta_{2024} - \beta_{2022})\,\bar{X}_{2022}] \quad (3),$$

[12] We might also wonder whether the outcomes and spillover effects of ABMs depended on whether a state's ABM was expected to have tangible effects on abortion access. However, it is difficult to classify, without the benefit of hindsight, the anticipated effects of an ABM on abortion access. For example, New York's ABM may now be viewed as performative given abortion was already legal in the state in 2024. However, voters in New York may have viewed the ABM as critical for protecting abortion access in the state in the event Trump won the presidency and implemented a nationwide ban. Similarly, Florida's ABM may have legalized abortion in the state if passed. However, it is possible Florida's legislature would have found a way to circumvent that outcome, as was the case with Amendment 4 – restoring voting rights to felons – in 2018. We cannot know how voters perceived these possible scenarios and the relative importance of an ABM on their state's abortion policy.

where $\bar{Y}$ is the mean vote share to protect abortion rights across counties in ABM states in the given year and $\bar{X}$ represents the mean of demographic characteristics.[13] The first term represents the "explained" portion of the gap in vote share to protect abortion rights across 2022 and 2024 and the second term represents the "unexplained" portion. In other words, the first term is the portion of the vote share gap that is due to varying demographic composition of ABM states across 2022 and 2024, holding fixed voting patterns within these groups. The second term is the portion of the vote share gap attributable to changing vote patterns by demographic group. Results are shown in Table 5.

After accounting for differing demographic composition (the explained portion), we find that support for abortion rights was 0.03 percentage points *higher* in 2024 compared to 2022. 161 percent of the gap across the two elections can be explained by the fact that the population voting on ABMs in 2024 was more conservative, ex ante, than those voting on the measure in 2022, as measured by 2020 presidential vote margin. However, there was changing support for abortion protections among some demographic groups. For example, -12% of the gap is explained by a larger population share female in 2024. Holding fixed the effect that women voters had in 2022, we would have expected higher female population share in 2024 to narrow the gap between the two elections, not widen it. While these results do provide evidence of waning support for abortion rights within some demographic groups, the effect is not large enough to offset the ex-ante partisan lean.

Overall, the difference in vote share to protect abortion rights in 2022 and 2024 is explained by a differing demographic composition of ABM states across the two years, not waning support for abortion.[14]

4b Heterogeneous Effects by Partisanship

Given that the 2024 ABM states were more conservative than 2022 ABM states, we might wonder whether the effects of ABMs are similar within partisan groups. Do Republican

[13] We define mean vote share to protect abortion rights consistently across states such that Y is share "yes" in states with measures that would protect abortion and share "no" in states with measures that would restrict abortion. Since Nebraska had two ABMs in 2024, we use votes on the ABM to protect abortion.

[14] Given these findings, we might wonder whether the decrease in turnout in 2024 is due to a decrease in turnout within one specific demographic group. We use data from state voter files to test this possibility. See Appendix B. We find that ABMs are associated with decreases in turnout in both men and women, and in all age groups.

(Democratic) counties with ABMs in 2022 have similar outcomes to Republican (Democratic) counties with ABMs in 2024? To test this, we repeat the analysis of equation (2) using the full sample with all controls and interact ABM with discrete bins of partisan baseline as measured by the Republican presidential vote margin in 2020. Results are shown in Table 6.

In 2022, we find no significant effects on turnout regardless of partisan baseline (Panel A). In 2024, we find evidence of an increase in turnout in Republican counties that is offset by a much larger decrease in turnout in Democratic counties (Panel B). This once again shows that, on average, ABMs do not increase turnout.

We find a large and significant decrease in Republican House margin in Democratic counties in ABM states in 2022 (Panel A). In net, this large decrease dominates the increase in Republican House margin in Republican counties. However, the increase in Republican vote margin in Republican counties does match the pattern seen in 2024. In 2024, both counties that lean Republican and strongly Republican counties in ABM states see an increase in Republican vote margin. Two patterns emerge from this analysis. First, any effects on turnout, when significant, are too small to explain the effects on vote margin. This suggests that behavioral changes on the intensive margin, such as vote alignment or vote separation, are the primary driver of the effect of ABMs on vote margin. Second, while there is evidence of a similar direction of effects on vote margin in Republican counties across 2022 and 2024, the overall magnitudes and pattern of results on vote margin further confirm the findings of the main analysis: states with ABMs experienced a decrease in Republican vote margin in 2022 but an increase in Republican vote margin in 2024.

4c Vote Switching in 2022 and 2024

If ABMs made voters more likely to pick candidates whose position on abortion aligned with their own, then we would expect counties with more votes to protect abortion to swing more Democratic. In contrast, if ABMs allowed voters to separate their opinion on abortion from their candidate selection, then we would expect counties with more votes to protect abortion to either swing more Republican or have no change in partisan lean.

To evaluate these possible mechanisms, we first use county-level data to descriptively compare changes in partisan vote margin with ABM votes to protect abortion. Specifically, we calculate a county's change in Republican US House vote margin relative to prior elections. In

2024, we calculate the change in Republican vote margin relative to an average of Republican vote margins in prior presidential elections (2012, 2016, and 2020). In 2022, we compare to prior midterm elections with a Democratic president (2010 and 2014). We find that the relationship between county-level support for ABM protecting abortion and change in Republican vote margin changes direction from 2022 to 2024. Figure 2 describes this relationship. In 2022, there is a negative association between the share of the voters supporting abortion access and the change in Republican vote margin relative to previous elections. Here, a 1 percentage point increase in votes to protect abortion is associated with a 0.115 percentage point decrease in the Republican vote margin relative to prior midterm elections. In 2024, the relationship is less than half as strong: a 1 percentage point increase in votes to protect abortion is associated with a 0.055 percentage point increase in the Republican vote margin relative to prior presidential elections.

These results present suggestive evidence that the vote switching mechanism operated differently in 2022 and 2024. In 2022, support for abortion rights on ABMs is correlated with increased support for Democratic candidates, while in 2024 support for abortion rights on ABMs is correlated with increased support for Republican candidates.

To provide further evidence for the vote switching mechanism in 2024, we make use of survey data from the Cooperative Election Survey (CES). The CES is a repeated cross-sectional sample of over 50,000 people surveyed nationwide from September to October in election years. In every survey year, respondents are asked to self-report their political ideology and whether they plan to vote for the Republican or Democratic House candidate in the upcoming election.

We first confirm that the 2024 ABM states are more conservative than the 2022 ABM states. Of respondents living in ABM states in 2024, 40% identify as conservative, 26% as moderate, and 34% as liberal.[15] For 2022, these shares are 35%, 26%, and 38%, respectively. If, as theorized, vote separation is more common among conservative-leaning, swing voters, then the potential for vote separation is higher in 2024 ABM states.

To directly test for evidence of vote separation, we estimate the following, individual-level logit regression,

[15] Respondents are asked to self-identify as very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, middle of the road, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative. Due to sample size limitations, we consolidate to liberal (very liberal, liberal, or somewhat liberal), moderate (middle of the road), and conservative (somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative).

$$\log\left(\frac{\Pr(Y_{ist}=1)}{1-\Pr(Y_{ist}=1)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * I(ABM_{st}) + \beta_2 X_{st} + \beta_3 Z_i + \delta_{dt} + \gamma_s + \epsilon_{ist} \quad (3),$$

where Y_{ist} is equal to 1 if a respondent reports that they plan to vote for the Republican House candidate in the upcoming election.[16] As with our main analysis, we estimate this regressions separately for 2022 and 2024, consistently comparing 2022 to 2010 and 2014, and 2024 to 2012, 2016, and 2020. $I(ABM_{st})$ is equal to 1 if the respondent lives in an ABM state in the given election year. X_{st} are state-by-year controls for the current status of abortion restrictions in the state, pre-*Dobbs* abortion-related ballot measures, the number of other ballot measures, and battleground status in presidential years. Z_i are individual level controls for age, gender, race, and college attainment. Consistent with our main analysis δ_{dt} and γ_s are census division-by-year and state fixed effects, respectively. We use individual survey weights and cluster standard errors at the state level. We run this regression separately for self-identified conservatives, moderates, and liberals. β_1 represents the log-odds that a conservative (moderate or liberal) who has the opportunity to vote on an ABM prefers the Republican House candidate, relative to observably similar conservatives (moderates or liberals) who do not get to vote on an ABM. Results are shown in Figure 3 and Appendix Table A5.

In 2022, there is no statistically significant effect of living in an ABM state on likelihood of preferring the Republican candidate. However, the log-odds for conservatives and moderates are both negative, suggesting that conservatives and moderates in ABM states in 2022 became more likely to prefer the Democratic candidate. In 2024, we find that moderates are 3.7 times more likely to prefer the Republican candidate if they live in an ABM state. We also find a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient for conservatives. Consistent with theory that liberals are less likely to be misaligned with their party on abortion, we find null effects of living in an ABM state on liberal respondents' likelihood of preferring the Republican candidate in both years. These results, in combination with the partisan baseline analysis of Table 6 and the descriptive results in Figure 2, all confirm that vote alignment was more common in 2022 and vote separation was more common in 2024, producing contrasting effects on Republican vote margin,

[16] In some cases, survey respondents have voted early and instead report who they voted for, rather than their vote plans. We use this information to construct the outcome variable for those respondents.

5 Conclusion

Existing research has shown that ballot measures can increase turnout, particularly in midterm years. In contrast, we find no effect of ABMs on turnout in 2022 and an overall decrease in turnout in states with ABMs in 2024. Further, the beneficiary party of ABM spillover effects changed across 2022 and 2024. In 2022, the Republican vote margin in US House elections decreased by 4.9 percentage points in counties with abortion ballot measures, while in 2024 it increased by 4.5 percentage points.

We show that differences in the effects of ABMs across 2022 and 2024 are not explained by changes in television advertising, nor can they be explained by waning support for abortion protections. Indeed, after accounting for demographic differences across states voting on ABMs in 2022 and 2024, we find that support for abortion protections increased over time. The different demographic compositions of ABM states across the two years could explain why the vote switching mechanism operated differently in 2022 and 2024. In 2022, ABM state voters were on average more left-leaning than in 2024. These left-leaning voters may have had a higher propensity, ex ante, to link their vote on the ABM with their choice of candidate. In 2024, with a more conservative population voting on ABMs, voters may have been more likely to use ABM votes as an opportunity to vote to protect abortion while also voting for Republican candidates.

In addition to changes on the intensive margin via vote switching, we also find evidence of effects on the extensive margin via turnout in 2024. The decrease in turnout in ABM states in 2024 is not explained by TV advertising, decreasing support for abortion, nor decreases in turnout among only one demographic group. Further research is needed to understand the cause of the decrease in turnout in 2024 ABM states. While we hypothesize that this decrease in turnout reflects a form of election fatigue, it is unclear what exactly caused this fatigue. Our analysis accounts for changes in television advertising due to ABMs, but it could be that ABM campaigning via phone calls, text messages, door knocking, or social media ads were particularly likely to lower turnout.

Overall, our analysis finds effects of ABMs that are inconsistent with commonly held perceptions in political strategy and campaigning. Leading up to the 2024 election, Democratic campaigning focused on direct discussion of abortion rights (Meisels 2025; Long et al., 2024). This was likely in response to the perception that Democrats' success in the 2022 midterm was due to the focus on abortion following the *Dobbs* ruling (Lerer and Dias, 2022). However, Gardner et al. (2025) show that only ABMs, and not the broader salience of abortion issues, helped

Democrats in 2022. This, coupled with the findings of this paper that ABMs do not increase overall turnout and aided Republicans in 2024, question the widespread belief that abortion is a turnout-motivating issue and that focusing on abortion and related ballot measures is a winning strategy for Democratic politicians. Despite this, in recent months, Republican lawmakers in multiple states have brought forth legislation to restrict citizen ballot initiatives (Lieb et al., 2025). This is not the first instance of politicians seeking to leverage ballot measures for electoral gains. Prior research shows that 13 ballot measures on same-sex marriage in the 2004 Presidential election increased votes for Republicans (Campbell and Monson 2008; Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2008). In response, Democrats promoted ballot measures in the 2006 midterms on issues such as the minimum wage that were expected to increase liberal votes (Hunter, 2006).

We conclude that ABMs do not motivate turnout. This finding builds on the results of Gardner et al. (2025) which show that abortion as a broader political issue does not affect turnout or partisan vote margin. The lack of evidence that ABMs are turnout motivating is relevant to strategic campaign choices, since large sums of campaign funds have been dedicated to advertising around ABMs in recent years. Further, we argue that the spillover effects from vote-switching related to ABMs depend on the existing partisan swing of the voting bloc and could benefit either party. More broadly, our research shows that ballot measures can allow voters to separate their opinion on specific issues from their choice of partisan candidates, producing unexpected effects on election outcomes.

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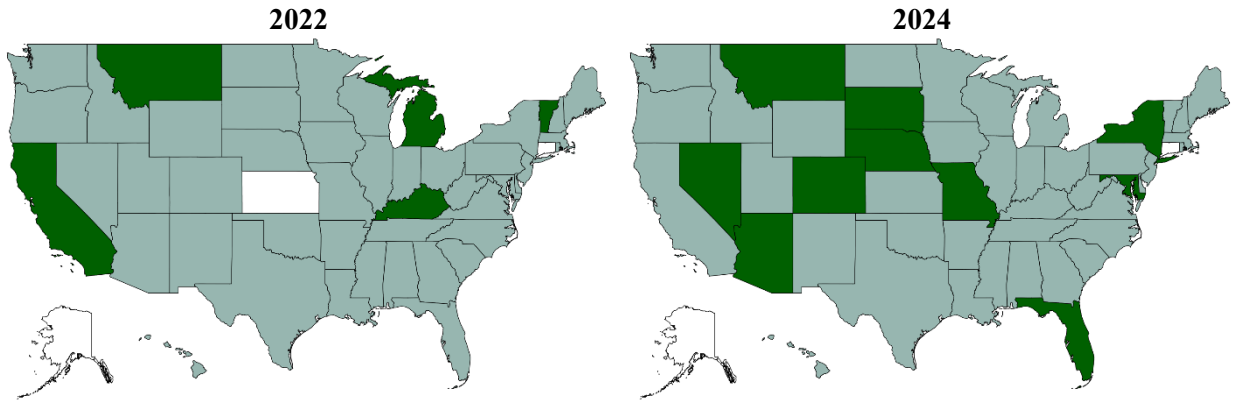
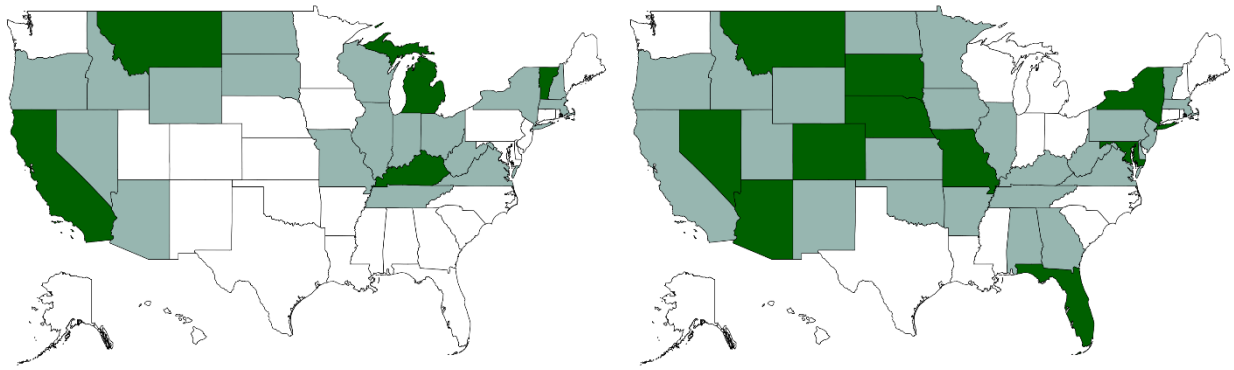
Figures and Tables

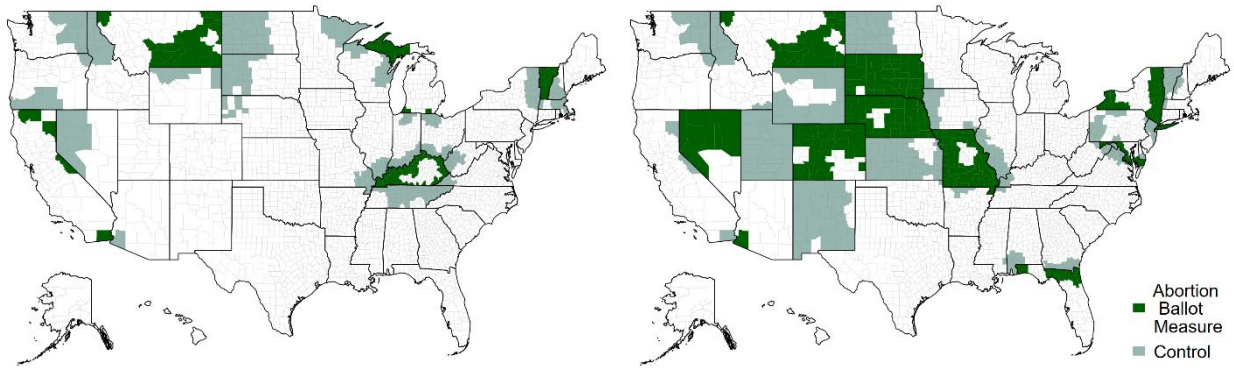
Figure 1: Sample Definitions



Panel A: Nationwide Sample



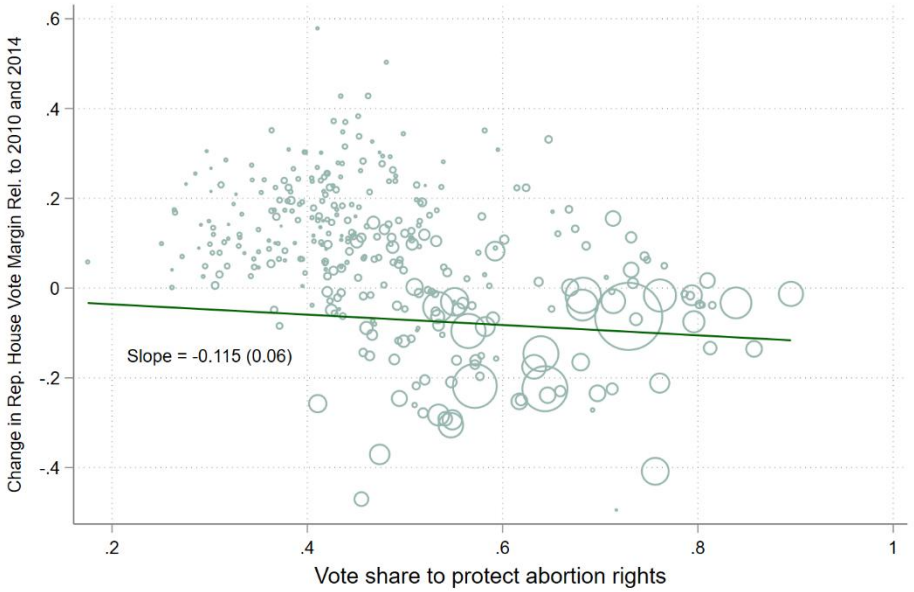
Panel B: Abortion Ballot Measure and Border State Sample



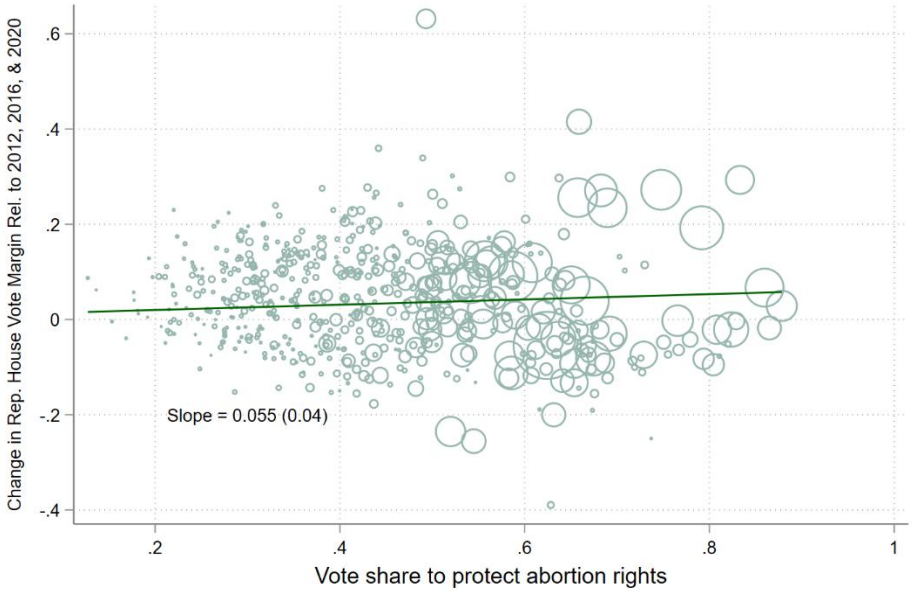
Panel C: Same-DMA Abortion Ballot Measure and Border Sample

Notes: This figure shows treatment and control counties for each of the three sample definitions used in Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Vote Switching in Election Returns



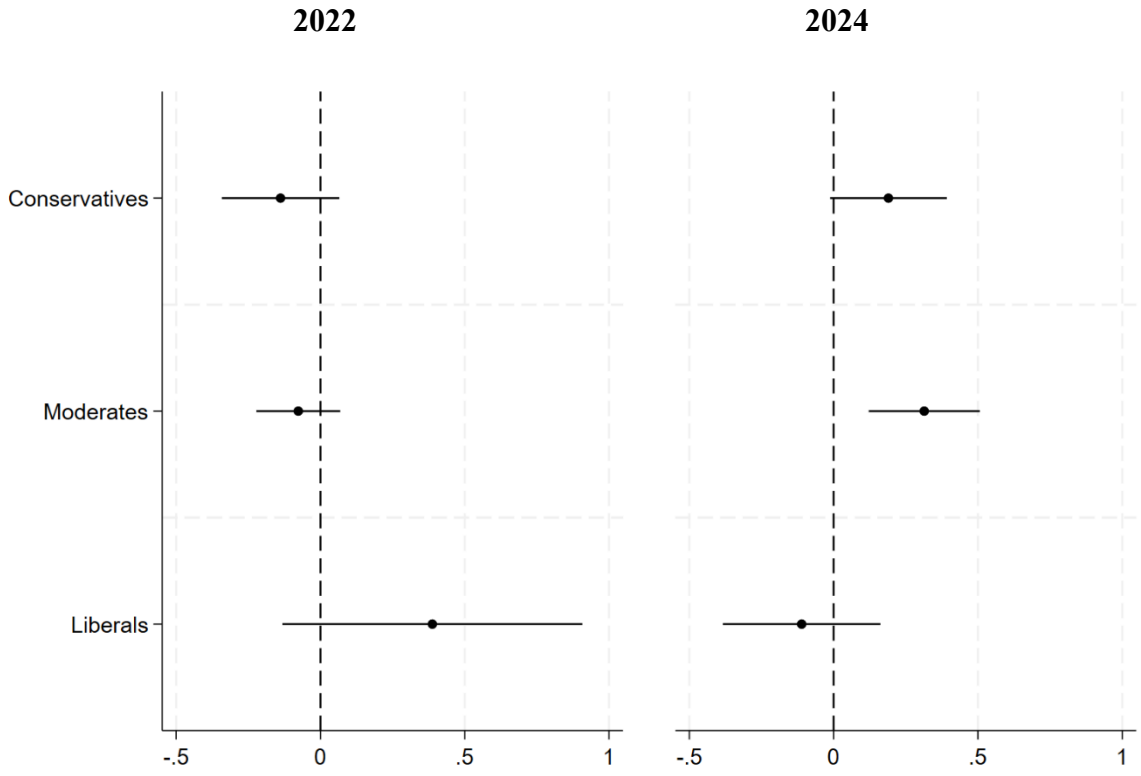
Panel A: Ballot Measures in 2022



Panel B: Ballot Measures in 2024

Notes: This figure shows the correlation between county-level ballot vote share to protect abortion rights and the change in Republican vote margin in House elections. Panel A shows results for 2022 where the change in vote margin is relative to average Republican vote margin in the 2010 and 2014 midterm elections. Panel B shows results for 2024 where the change in vote margin is relative to average Republican vote margin in the 2012, 2016, and 2020 presidential elections.

Figure 3: Vote Switching in Survey Data



Notes: This figure uses individual-level survey data from the CES to show the effect of being able to vote on an ABM on the log-odds of preferring the Republican House candidate in the upcoming election, disaggregated by respondents' self-reported ideology. All regressions include census division-by-year and state fixed effects and control for state-by-year abortion policy status, pre-*Dobbs* abortion ballot measures, number of other ballot measures, and presidential battleground status, as well as individual-level controls for age, gender, race, and college attainment. We use individual survey weights. Standard errors are robust and clustered at the state-level. 90% confidence intervals are shown.

Table 1: Abortion Ballot Measures

Year	State	Abortion policy status at time of election	Protect/ Restrict	Vote Share (%)	Pass Threshold	Measure Passed?	Ballot Initiative Process
2022	California	Legal	Protect	66.88	50	Y	Legislatively referred
2022	Kentucky	Banned	Restrict	47.65	50	N	Legislatively referred
2022	Michigan	Unenforced Ban	Protect	56.66	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2022	Montana	Unenforced Ban	Restrict	47.45	50	N	Legislatively referred
2022	Vermont	Legal	Protect	76.77	50	Y	Legislatively referred
2024	Arizona	Banned after 15 weeks	Protect	61.61	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	Colorado	Legal	Protect	61.97	55	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	Florida	Banned after 6 weeks	Protect	57.17	60	N	Citizen-initiated
2024	Maryland	Legal	Protect	76.06	50	Y	Legislatively referred
2024	Missouri	Banned	Protect	51.06	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	Montana	Unenforced Ban	Protect	57.76	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	Nebraska	Banned after 12 weeks	Protect	49.01	50	N	Citizen-initiated
2024	Nebraska		Restrict	54.94	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	Nevada	Legal	Protect	64.36	50	Y	Citizen-initiated
2024	New York	Legal	Protect	62.47	50	Y	Legislatively referred
2024	South Dakota	Banned	Protect	41.41	50	N	Citizen-initiated

Note: This table describes the characteristics of the 16 abortion ballot measures across 14 states that are studied in this paper. Two additional states had abortion ballot measures in off-cycle elections post-*Dobbs*: Kansas in August 2022 and Ohio in November 2023.

Table 2: Access to Abortion, Partisanship, and Support for Ballot Measures

	(1) Signatures per 10k population	2) Signatures per 10k population	(3) Signatures per 10k population
Δ Travel Distance (100s of miles)	218.8	226.7	236.5
	(126.8)	(119.7)	(120.6)
I(Democrat win 2016)		412.3***	
		(73.92)	
I(Democrat win 2016)* Δ Travel Distance		978.2***	
		(180.8)	
I(Democrat win 2020)			433.5***
I(Democrat win 2020)* Δ Travel Distance			(66.89)
			938.6***
			(171.6)
N	259	259	259
Outcome mean	372.2	372.2	372.2

Notes: This table shows the effects of change in distance to abortion provider in the previous year on the number of signatures in a county for petitions to add abortion measures to the ballot. Counties in Florida, Nebraska, Nevada, and Ohio are included. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 3: Abortion Ballot Measures and Voter Turnout

Panel A: Turnout 2022

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	0.0288	0.0203	0.0393	0.0114	0.000802	-0.00625
	(0.0213)	(0.0254)	(0.0271)	(0.0297)	(0.0164)	(0.00919)
N	8994	8994	4269	4269	1422	1422
Outcome mean	0.368		0.366		0.399	

Panel B: Turnout 2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	-0.0178*	-0.0177**	-0.0178*	-0.0210**	0.000314	-0.0106**
	(0.00951)	(0.00796)	(0.0103)	(0.00867)	(0.00665)	(0.00393)
N	12412	12412	8592	8592	3340	3340
Outcome mean	0.572		0.569		0.577	
Sample	All	All	Border	Border	DMA	DMA
Controls		X		X		X

Notes: This table shows the effect of living in a state with an abortion ballot measure on turnout (number of votes cast per voting age population) in 2022 (Panel A) and 2024 (Panel B). Columns (1) – (4) include census division-by-year and state fixed effects. Columns (5) and (6) include state-by-year and DMA fixed effects. Specifications with controls include the full set of controls described in Section 3b. All regressions control for whether the House race was uncontested and are weighted by voting age population. Standard errors are robust and clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 4: Abortion Ballot Measures and Election Outcomes

Panel A: House Margin 2022

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	-0.0271*	-0.0495***	-0.0292	-0.0375*	-0.0375*	-0.0592*
	(0.0157)	(0.0126)	(0.0219)	(0.0196)	(0.0209)	(0.0344)
N	8994	8994	4269	4269	1422	1422
Outcome mean	0.0512		-0.00225		0.0893	

Panel B: House Margin 2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	0.0458**	0.0450**	0.0474**	0.0447*	0.0458*	0.0336
	(0.0209)	(0.0200)	(0.0214)	(0.0221)	(0.0240)	(0.0216)
N	12380	12380	8560	8560	3340	3340
Outcome mean	0.00406		-0.0274		-0.0106	

Panel C: Presidential Margin 2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	0.0518**	0.0321**	0.0472***	0.0244*	0.0133	0.0147
	(0.0200)	(0.0129)	(0.0172)	(0.0142)	(0.0143)	(0.0139)
N	12412	12412	8592	8592	3340	3340
Outcome mean	-0.0185	-0.0185	-0.0448	-0.0448	-0.0318	-0.0318
Sample	All	All	Border	Border	DMA	DMA
Controls		X		X		X

Notes: This table shows the effect of living in a state with an abortion ballot measure on the Republican vote margin (Republican vote share – Democratic vote share) in 2022 House race (Panel A), 2024 House races (Panel B), and the 2024 Presidential race (Panel C). Columns (1) – (4) include census division-by-year and state fixed effects. Columns (5) and (6) include state-by-year and DMA fixed effects. Specifications with controls include the full set of controls described in Section 3b. All regressions control for whether the House race was uncontested and are weighted by total ballots cast. Standard errors are robust and clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 5: Decomposing Support for Abortion Ballot Measures in 2022 and 2024

	(1) **2022 mean**	(2) **2024 mean**	(3) **Difference**	(4) **Explained**	(5) **Unexplained**
Vote share to protect abortion	62.72	60.22	-2.5***	-2.535***	0.03***
			(0.87)	(0.004)	(0.002)

	2022 mean	**2024 mean**	**Difference**	**Explained Share**
2020 presidential vote margin (Rep % - Dem %)	-16.1	-5.01	11.09***	161.44%
			(2.15)	
Poverty rate	12.32	11.91	-0.40	-3.91%
			(0.28)	
ln(Population density)	5.41	5.48	0.08	2.12%
			(0.12)	
Population share…				
Female	50.18	50.58	0.40***	-12.77%
			(0.08)	
Hispanic	25.46	20.82	-4.63***	-10.50%
			(1.14)	
Black	7.97	13.02	5.05***	-6.71%
			(0.69)	
White	54.11	59.56	5.45***	7.58%
			(1.53)	
18-29	15.86	15.19	-0.67***	11.42%
			(0.21)	
30-49	26.47	25.98	-0.49**	20.80%
			(0.20)	
50-64	19.07	18.68	-0.39***	3.39%
			(0.12)	
65 and older	17.12	19.85	2.73***	-74.13%
			(0.34)	
with college degree	34.68	37.15	2.47***	2.44%
			(0.76)	

Notes: This table shows the difference in demographic characteristics and vote share to protect abortion across counties with abortion ballot measures in 2022 and 2024 (columns 1 and 2), as well as the results of an Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition of the difference in mean vote share to protect abortion on ballot measures in the 2022 and 2024 election (columns 3 and 4). Results are weighted by number of ballots cast. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 6: Heterogeneous Effects by Partisan Baseline

Panel A: 2022

	Mean 2020 Pres. Margin (1)	Turnout (2)	House Margin (3)
I(Abortion Ballot) *			
I(Democratic 2020)	-0.468	-0.00101	-0.151***
		(0.0250)	(0.0237)
I(Lean Democratic 2020)	-0.138	0.0264	-0.0272
		(0.0263)	(0.0245)
I(Lean Republican 2020)	0.147	0.0404	-0.00824
		(0.0251)	(0.0228)
I(Republican 2020)	0.456	0.0214	0.0436**
		(0.0186)	(0.0173)
N		8994	8955

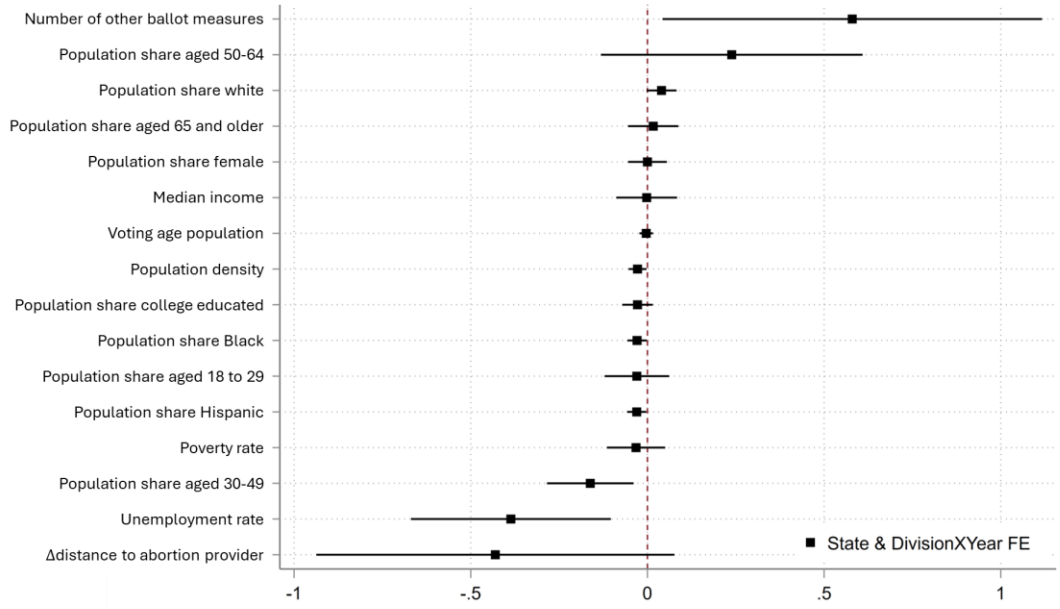
Panel B: 2024

	Mean 2020 Pres. Margin (1)	Turnout (2)	House Margin (3)	Pres. Margin (4)
I(Abortion Ballot) *				
I(Democratic 2020)	-0.578	-0.0588***	0.0596	0.0466
		(0.0139)	(0.0572)	(0.0517)
I(Lean Democratic 2020)	-0.126	-0.0145	0.0267	0.0240
		(0.0123)	(0.0250)	(0.0228)
I(Lean Republican 2020)	0.147	-0.00104	0.0451**	0.0144
		(0.00796)	(0.0216)	(0.0187)
I(Republican 2020)	0.463	0.0197**	0.0809***	0.0750***
		(0.00762)	(0.0249)	(0.0192)
N		12412	12380	12412

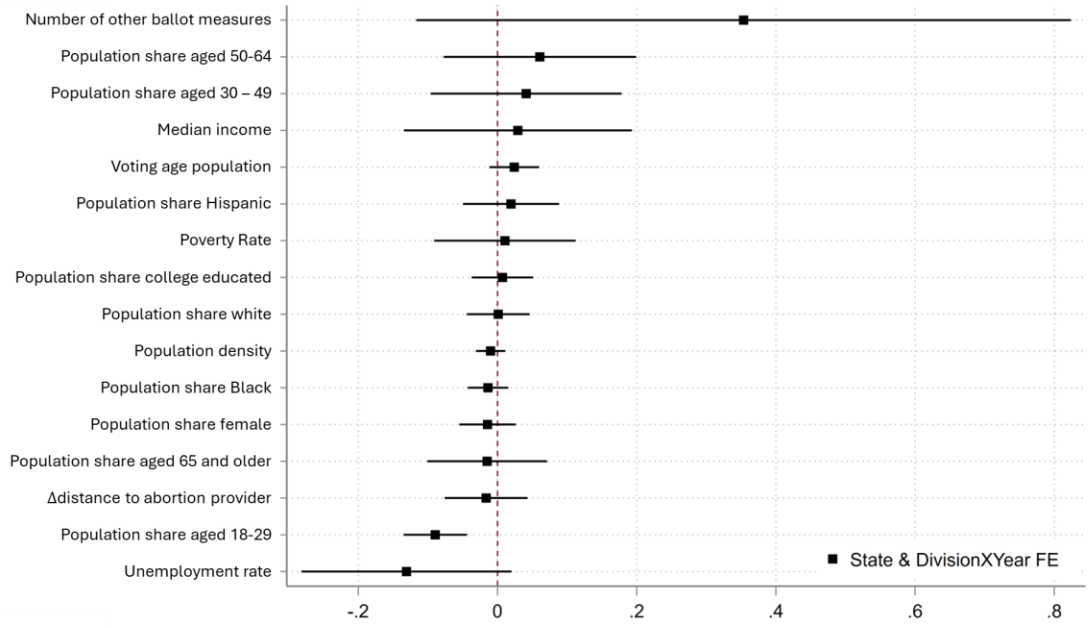
Notes: This table allows the effects of abortion ballot measures to vary according to the baseline partisan lean of a county, with bin cutoffs for baseline Republican presidential margin set at -0.3, 0, and 0.3. Columns (1) shows the mean 2020 Presidential Republican vote margin in treated counties within each baseline bin. Regressions in columns (2) - (4) include the full set of controls, state and census division-by-year fixed effects, and are weighted with standard errors clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Appendix A: Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Difference Between ABM and Non-ABM States



Panel A: 2022



Panel B: 2024

Notes: This figure shows the results of a balance test regressing standardized control variables on the presence of an abortion ballot measure including state and census division-by-year fixed effects. 95% confidence intervals are shown.

Table A1: Robustness Checks

Panel A: Turnout

	2022			2024		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	0.0227	0.0170	0.0258	-0.0169**	-0.0175**	-0.0120
	(0.0253)	(0.0251)	(0.0258)	(0.00796)	(0.00790)	(0.00833)
N	8233	8994	8994	11020	12412	12412

Panel B: House Margin

	2022			2024		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)	-0.0528***	-0.0455***	-0.0689***	0.0446**	0.0447**	0.0460*
	(0.0132)	(0.0128)	(0.0190)	(0.0203)	(0.0198)	(0.0242)
N	8233	8955	8955	11020	12380	12380

Panel C: Presidential Margin

				2024		
				(4)	(5)	(6)
I(Abortion Ballot)				0.0315**	0.0317**	0.0337**
				(0.0127)	(0.0126)	(0.0148)
N				11020	12412	12412
No Uncontested	X			X		
Control Incumbents		X			X	
County FEs			X			X

Notes: This table shows that results of Tables 2 and 3 are robust to dropping counties with uncontested house races (Columns (1) and (4)), controlling for the House race has an incumbent running (Columns (2) and (5)), and including county fixed effects instead of state fixed effects (columns (3) and (6)). All regressions include the full sample, full set of controls, census division-by-year fixed effects, and are weighted with standard errors clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table A2: Pre-trend Check

	2022		2024		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Turnout	Rep. House Margin	Turnout	Rep. House Margin	Rep. Pres. Margin
I(ABM State)* 2014	0.00709	-0.0526			
	(0.0185)	(0.0333)			
I(ABM State)* 2022	0.0237	-0.0736***			
	(0.0307)	(0.0181)			
I(ABM State)* 2016			0.00522	-0.0141	-0.00227
			(0.00512)	(0.0162)	(0.0190)
I(ABM State)* 2020			-0.00567	0.0174	0.0209
			(0.00678)	(0.0175)	(0.0176)
I(ABM State)* 2024			-0.0179*	0.0472*	0.0396**
			(0.00995)	(0.0256)	(0.0188)
N	8994	8955	12412	12380	12412

Notes: This table shows that the results in Tables 3 and 4 are robust to concerns about pre-trends. For the 2022 midterm analysis, 2010 is the omitted year. For the 2024 presidential analysis, 2012 is the omitted year. All regressions include the full sample, full set of controls, state and census division-by-year fixed effects, and are weighted with standard errors clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table A3: Robustness to Unbalanced Covariates

	Turnout			Republican House Margin		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 2024						
I(Abortion Ballot)		-0.0168**	-0.0177**		0.0492**	0.0450**
		(0.00816)	(0.00796)		(0.0189)	(0.0200)
Population Share 18-29	-0.0056***		-0.0056***	-0.0300***		-0.0299***
	(0.000751)		(0.000751)	(0.00631)		(0.00632)
N	12412	12412	12412	12380	12380	12380
Panel B: 2022						
I(Abortion Ballot)		0.0248	0.0203		-0.0532***	-0.0495***
		(0.0246)	(0.0254)		(0.0120)	(0.0126)
Number of ballot measures	0.00271*		0.00222	-0.00326		-0.00184
	(0.00156)		(0.00156)	(0.00285)		(0.00305)
Panel C: 2022						
I(Abortion Ballot)		0.0202	0.0203		-0.0387**	-0.0495***
		(0.0255)	(0.0254)		(0.0158)	(0.0126)
Unemployment Rate	-0.000206		0.0000832	-0.00874*		-0.00963*
	(0.00132)		(0.00127)	(0.00493)		(0.00495)
Panel D: 2022						
I(Abortion Ballot)		0.0220	0.0203		-0.0380**	-0.0495***
		(0.0240)	(0.0254)		(0.0172)	(0.0126)
Population Share 30-49	-0.0069***		-0.0069***	-0.0572***		-0.0574***
	(0.00149)		(0.00151)	(0.00714)		(0.00721)
N	8994	8994	8994	8955	8955	8955

Notes: This table shows the stability of coefficients with respect to unbalanced covariates. All regressions include the full set of controls described in Section 3b. Standard errors are robust and clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table A4: TV Advertising on Ballot Measures Cannot Explain Effects

	2022		2024		
	Turnout	House Margin	Turnout	House Margin	Pres. Margin
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I(ABM DMA)	-0.00849	-0.0186	0.00368	-0.00996	-0.00109
	(0.00551)	(0.0267)	(0.00427)	(0.0176)	(0.0127)
N	2055	2055	3184	3184	3184

Notes: This table isolates the effect of living in a non-ballot state that is exposed to ABM TV advertising due to DMA overlap with an abortion ballot measure state. All counties in the sample are in non-ABM states. A county is considered treated if it shares a DMA with a DMA state. All regressions include DMA and state-by-year fixed effects, as well as the full set of county-by-year controls described in section 3b. Regressions are weighted with standard errors clustered at the state level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table A5: Vote Switching in Survey Data

	2022			2024		
	(1) Conservative	(2) Moderate	(3) Liberal	(1) Conservative	(2) Moderate	(3) Liberal
I(Abortion Ballot)	-0.138			0.190		
	(0.124)			(0.123)		
I(Abortion Ballot)		-0.0768			0.314***	
		(0.0883)			(0.117)	
I(Abortion Ballot)			0.388			-0.111
			(0.316)			(0.166)
N	29825	17932	26141	51423	35383	50811

Notes: This table shows the coefficients for results shown in Figure 3. This analysis uses individual-level survey data from the CES to show the effect of being able to vote on an ABM on the log-odds of preferring the Republican House candidate in the upcoming election, disaggregated by respondents' self-reported ideology. All regressions include census division-by-year and state fixed effects and control for state-by-year abortion policy status, pre-*Dobbs* abortion ballot measures, number of other ballot measures, and presidential battleground status, as well as individual-level controls for age, gender, race, and college attainment. We use individual survey weights. Standard errors are robust and clustered at the state-level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Appendix B: Voter File Results

We study whether the turnout decrease in 2024 is due to a decrease in turnout within specific demographic groups. In order to observe individual voters' age and gender, we make use of data from voter registration and history files available in select states.

We construct two case studies comparing neighboring state elections with similar characteristics other than the presence of an ABM. Our first case study compares New York and Pennsylvania. In 2024, New York voted on an "Equal Protection of Law" amendment that would effectively protect the right to abortion by protecting the rights of pregnant people. There was no ABM in neighboring Pennsylvania. However, the two states' ballots otherwise look similar across prior presidential election years in 2012, 2016 and 2020. New York did not have any other ballot measures coinciding with presidential elections from 2012 to 2024, and Pennsylvania's only ballot measure, which would have raised mandatory judicial retirement age from 70 to 75 in 2016, was uncontentious and unlikely to affect turnout. Neither state holds gubernatorial elections during presidential years, and both states had legal abortion at the time of the 2024 election.

Our second case study uses Florida and Georgia in 2016 and 2024. In 2024, Florida had an ABM to amend the state constitution to protect the right to abortion, while neighboring Georgia did not have a ballot measure. The comparison between Florida and Georgia across 2016 and 2024 has several benefits. First, Florida had ballot measures related to marijuana legalization in both 2016 and 2024. Both states had existing abortion bans at the time of the 2024 election, and neither had gubernatorial elections in 2016 nor 2024. We exclude 2012 and 2020 from this case study as there were a wide range of differences in the two states' elections in those years.[17]

For every county, we create within-demographic group county-by-year measures of voter turnout (total votes by demographic group / total population in demographic group). We then estimate a two-way fixed effects specification to estimate the difference in turnout between the ABM state and non-ABM state in 2024, relative to a baseline difference between the two states in the comparison years. Specifically, we estimate,

$$Y_{ct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I(AbortionBallot_{ct}) + \alpha_c + \delta_t + \epsilon_{ct} \quad (5),$$

[17] Between the 2016 and 2024, Georgia purged their voters who had not voted in recent elections. As a result, in order to compare the two states, we limit the sample to those who voted in 2016. As a result, our sample for young voters in 2024 is only capturing those who were 18 at the time of the 2016 election and voted.

where $I(AbortionBallot_{ct})$ is equal to 1 in the ballot state in 2024 and is 0 otherwise. α_c and δ_t represent county and year fixed effects, respectively. We estimate robust standard errors and weight regressions by the population within the relevant demographic group in each county.

Results for the NY/PA and FL/GA case studies are shown below. Across both case studies, we find a statistically significant decrease in turnout for all age groups. We also find a statistically significant decrease in turnout for both male and female voters of similar magnitudes. These results show that the decrease in turnout associated with ABMs in 2024 is not concentrated within one age group or gender.

For these case studies, data on voters' race is not available in Georgia nor New York, so we cannot analyze effects by race. Similarly, we cannot observe effects by political party due to differences across states in whether voters report party when registering to vote.

Table B1: Turnout by Demographic Group

Panel A: NY vs. PA						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	18-29 years	30-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Female	Male
*I(*Abortion Ballot)	-0.143***	-0.0559***	-0.0777**	-0.122***	-0.0520***	-0.0455***
	(0.0000685)	(0.0000489)	(0.000183)	(0.000155)	(0.0000120)	(0.0000139)
N	516	516	516	516	516	516
Outcome mean	0.332	0.454	0.553	0.520	0.368	0.314
Panel B: FL vs. GA						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	18-29 years	30-44 years	45-54 years	65+ years	Female	Male
I(Abortion Ballot)	-0.0518***	-0.0300***	-0.0664***	-0.0575***	-0.0363***	-0.0307***
	(1.28e-16)	(2.82e-16)	(1.72e-16)	(1.78e-16)	(1.84e-16)	(4.75e-17)
N	452	452	452	452	452	452
Outcome mean	0.136	0.269	0.423	0.459	0.295	0.236

Notes: Panel A shows the difference in turnout between New York and Pennsylvania in 2024, relative to a baseline difference between the two states in 2012, 2016, and 2020. Panel B shows the difference in turnout between Florida and Georgia in 2024 relative to the difference between the two states in 2016. Regressions include state and year fixed effects and are weighted by the size of the relevant population in the demographic group. Standard errors are robust. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01.