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## Did Abortion Legalization Reduce the Number Of Unwanted Children? Evidence from Adoptions

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**CONTEXT:** The legalization of abortion in the United States led to well-known changes in reproductive behavior, but its effect on adoptions has not been investigated.

**METHODS:** Variation across states in the timing and extent of abortion legalization is used to identify the effects of changes in the legal status of abortion on adoption rates from 1961 to 1975. These effects are estimated in regression analyses that control for states' economic, demographic and political characteristics, as well as for health care availability within states.

**RESULTS:** The rate of adoptions of children born to white women declined by 34-37% in states that repealed restrictive abortion laws before

**CONCLUSIONS:** The estimated effect of abortion legalization on adoption rates is sizable and can account for much of the decline in adoptions, particularly of children born to white women, during the early 1970s. These findings support previous studies' conclusions that abortion legalization led to a reduction in the number of "unwanted" children; such a reduction may have improved average infant health and children's living conditions.

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