Youth's Political Identity and Fertility Desires

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Objective: This study examines the association between political identity and young adults' fertility desires from 1989-2019.

Background: Political identity (defined as seeing oneself as preferring or aligned with either Republican or Democrats) is likely a predictor of fertility desires. Moreover, the increased salience of political identity suggests that the association between political identity and fertility desires has strengthened over time. Declining fertility rates and the increasing importance of political identity underscore the need to understand how political preferences inform desired family size.

Method: Data come from the 1989–2019 waves of Monitoring the Future, a nationally representative study of 12th graders (N = 67,557). Regression models examined how political identity (measured by Republican or Democrat preference) predicts the desired number of children, measured both continuously and categorically.

Results: Regardless of the period, Republicans desired more children than Democrats—a difference that grew over time, from 0.07 in 1989–1993 to 0.29 in 2014–2019. Differences in religiosity and attitudes toward gender and childbearing explained pre-2004 partisan gaps. In 2004 and later, much of the gaps were explained by religiosity and gender and childbearing attitudes, but Republicans still wanted more children than Democrats: relative to Democrats, Republicans had a higher probability of wanting four or more children in 2004–2013 and a lower probability of wanting to be childless in 2014–2019.

Conclusion: Political identity has become increasingly salient for fertility desires, suggesting that identity might shape fertility preferences and future fertility behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Declining U.S. fertility rates have heightened the need to understand the correlates of fertility desires, an important precursor to completed family size (Schoen et al., 1999). Fertility desires are determined not only by one's material and economic context but also by cognitive notions of the self that are forged in the social world through identities (Marshall & Shepherd, 2018; Rackin & Bachrach, 2016). For salient identities internalized into one's self-concept, people seek positive evaluation by striving to be seen as prototypical group members through aligning their values, desires, and behavior with positively perceived in-group norms and distinguishing them from negatively perceived out-group norms (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner, 2010). For example, individuals who are more religious tend to have and want larger families than those who are not (Hayford & Morgan, 2008), in part because those who identify as religious may internalize norms that "good" religious people like themselves have more children than the "bad" nonreligious who have few or no children.

Political group membership, an identity often overlooked in fertility research, is likely relevant to fertility desires. Over the past several decades, political identity—an individual's alignment with or preference for a specific political party—has emerged as an important identity that is relevant to how people view themselves, others, and the world (De Bruin et al., 2023; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018b). Individuals are increasingly aligning their attitudes and behaviors with their preferred political party, contrasting them from the opposing party and amplifying social distance from and hostility toward political rivals (Greene, 2004; Huddy & Bankert, 2017; Iyengar et al., 2019). Relative to just a few decades ago, Republicans and Democrats have increasingly distinct attitudes and behaviors, extending beyond political boundaries into seemingly apolitical intimate behaviors (e.g., where to live, what goods to buy, whom to date)

(Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018a; McConnell et al., 2018). Political identity may have become more relevant in nonpolitical domains as civic engagement and religiosity declined, magnifying the salience of party group membership (Huddy & Bankert, 2017; Mason, 2018). In addition, the rise of social media and the emergence of hyper-specialized media outlets have allowed Democrats and Republicans to communicate the norms of their own party but not the other, reinforcing perceived differences between the two (Iyengar et al., 2019).

Political identity may be related to fertility desires for several reasons. First, young adults tend to develop family size norms by observing the behavior and attitudes among people in their social group and may align their desires with those of a prototypical Republican or Democrat. Republicans' greater prioritization of having children and their larger family size (Caplan, 2013; Taylor, 2008) may propagate the notion that Republicans should want to have children and more of them. Second, people may hear divergent Republican or Democratic messaging around fertility. Republicans, for example, may believe that having large families is consistent with messages of "traditional family values" from party leaders. In contrast, the Democratic party is more aligned with environmental activists, whose messaging highlights having fewer children to mitigate climate change and the moral or practical burden of bringing children into a harsh climate. Regardless of the viewpoint, people may take fertility cues from their preferred party's messaging. Third, behaviors and beliefs that shape fertility views (e.g., religiosity, gender roles) are closely linked to political affiliation (Frejka & Westoff, 2008; Green, 2011; Shang & Yin, 2020). Although the direction of causality is unclear—e.g., religiosity may affect political identity or vice versa—political identity remains a key correlate of fertility-adjacent views.

Despite the likely import of political identity for fertility desires, prior research has largely overlooked this potential association. Some work has demonstrated that the state-level

vote share is related to family, with Republican areas having higher fertility than Democratic areas (Cahn & Carbone, 2010; Lesthaeghe & Neidert, 2017). But aggregate-level evidence is prone to ecological bias, and these state-level associations might not be seen for individuals. Other work has examined conservative–liberal orientation among individuals in samples including parents or older adults with completed fertility (Fieder & Huber, 2018; Guzzo, 2022; Stone, 2020; Teixeira, 2009). But political ideology is distinct from, albeit related to, political identity (Mason 2018) and may not capture the importance of political group identification. Also, including parents and older adults obscures inferences about whether political orientation shapes fertility or vice versa because parenthood may cause people to become more conservative (Kerry & Murray, 2021). To our knowledge, no study has shown partisan differences in fertility desires among young adults—a notable oversight given the high and rising salience of political identity.

To address this omission, we estimate how desired family size has changed over time by political affiliation (our political identity measure). Data come from the Monitoring the Future Study, a nationally representative sample of 12th graders and one of the few studies with data on political identity and fertility desires on repeated cross-sections of young adults. Using OLS and multinomial logistic regression, we calculate the partisan desire gap—the Republican–Democrat difference in the average number of children desired and the probability of wanting a specific family size (including no children)—from 1989 to 2019. Partisan gaps may be informed by religiosity, thoughts about childbearing, and gender role views. For example, Republicans are more religious and favor traditional roles (Margolis, 2018; Pew, 2014), which are related to fertility intentions (Hayford & Morgan, 2008; Jozwiak, 2022; Pew, 2014). Thus, along with testing whether gaps expanded over time, we show the degree to which religiosity and gender role attitudes explain these gaps.

We focus on young adults (12th graders) and their fertility desires for a few reasons. First, given that 12th graders generally do not have children, their fertility desires and political identity are unlikely to be biased by their fertility or endogenous factors (marital status or educational attainment). Rather, their fertility desires may reflect idealized norms and wants not yet informed by their own fertility-relevant behavior. By contrast, older adults may revise their fertility desires and party affiliation to reflect their current context (Kerry & Murray, 2021). Second, young adults' fertility desires inform future fertility (Schoen et al., 1999). Theoretically, fertility desires are the key determinant of intentions and these intentions, in turn, predict fertility behavior (Miller, 2011). Third, although some respondents may not yet be eligible to vote, their 12th grade party identity largely predicts how they will vote in adulthood (Peterson et al., 2020).

We propose three main hypotheses. First, consistent with prior aggregate level evidence, we expect that political identity correlates with fertility desires (Cahn & Carbone, 2010; Lesthaeghe & Neidert, 2017). Second, we predict that the partisan gap in fertility desires reflects Republicans' desires for larger families relative to Democrats. Young adults tend to develop family norms by observing behavior and beliefs within their social group, aligning their desires with what they perceive a typical partisan should want. As such, Republicans might want more children because they see that in-group members prioritize parenthood and have large families, and they hear party elites' messages embracing traditional (and larger) families. Republicans may also want more children because, relative to Democrats, they hold more traditional gender roles, think more about fertility, and are more religious (Frejka & Westoff, 2008; Green, 2011; Shang & Yin, 2020).

Third, we expect that partisan gaps in fertility desires have grown over time. Political identity has increased in salience and is more connected to intimate behaviors than in the past

(West & Iyengar, 2022). Thus, associations between fertility desires and political identity may have similarly increased. Changing political contexts have likely also led to increased fertility desire gaps. In the 2000s, partisans diverged on climate issues: Democrats detailed future climate problems, and Republicans denied them (Dunlap et al., 2016). Democratic youth, internalizing messages about the future, may feel a growing ambivalence about having children in a world with climate issues (Rackin et al., 2023; Schneider-Mayerson & Leong, 2020). Finally, partisan gaps in religiosity and gender role attitudes have widened over time (Green, 2011; Jozwiak, 2022; Mason, 2018), likely leading to larger gaps in fertility desires.

Recognizing that partisan differences are informed by levels of religiosity and beliefs about gender roles, we test the extent to which these factors explain partisan gaps. Republicans tend to be more religious and more likely to endorse traditional gender roles than Democrats (Jozwiak, 2022; Pew, 2014), and religiosity and gender attitudes are related to fertility intentions (Hayford & Morgan, 2008). By comparing partisan gaps before and after adjusting for these factors, we assess the extent to which gaps are influenced by variables closely tied to both political identity and fertility (although unmeasured factors could drive partisan gaps).

Our study makes several contributions. We provide insights into how young adults think about and view childbearing by considering the unexplored factor of political identity. Mapping the determinants of fertility is critical, given record-low U.S. fertility rates (Hartnett & Gemmill, 2020). Also, by showing how much of the partisan fertility desires gap is explained by religiosity and attitudes about childbearing and gender, we assess whether and when political identity is directly and independently associated with fertility desires. Finally, if political identity is becoming a stronger predictor of fertility desires, then we highlight an intimate area in which Americans have become more polarized.

DATA AND METHODS

Data come from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, a nationally representative

survey of U.S. 12th graders that gathers information on their behaviors and attitudes. Drawing

from a probability sample of high schools, MTF collects data on roughly 350 students per year

per high school. Participation rates have been high, with school rates ranging from 66% to 85%

and a student rate of 80% in 2019 (Miech et al., 2020). This study uses data from 1989 (the first

year fertility desires were measured) through 2019 (the latest complete pre-pandemic year of

data collection). Our sample is restricted to students with nonmissing numeric fertility desire

responses ($N = 67,557$, 89% of the 12th graders surveyed).

The main dependent variable is fertility desires, taken from a question asking respondents

how many children they wanted. We measured fertility desires continuously (ranging from 0 to

6) and categorically (no children; one, two, or three children; and four or more children). A

"don't know" response category was available starting in 2003; in the Supplementary Analyses

section, we discuss results for the last half of the observation period using this response category.

The key independent variable is a measure of political identity based on a question asking

respondents to describe their political preferences. Those who described themselves as

"strongly" or "mildly" Republican (Democrat) were classified as Republican (Democrat). Those

who described themselves as independent, had no preference, or belonged to another party were

classified as "other" (in 1996 and from 2000 onward, "other" also included those who said they

did not know their political preference or had not yet decided).

Key covariates include attitudes on gender roles, thought given to childbearing, and

religiosity. Gender role attitudes come from questions asking whether it is better for women to

care for children and whether children suffer if their mothers work; responses were coded as

disagree, agree, or neither. Childbearing thoughts are measured with a question asking how much respondents thought about the number of children they would like, with responses measured on a 3-point scale (1 = none, 2 = a little, and 3 = a lot). Religiosity is measured with two variables: religious attendance (ranging from 1 = never to 4 = once per week or more) and religious importance (ranging from 1 = none to 4 = very), with higher numbers indicating more religiosity. Gender roles are measured categorically; religiosity and level of thinking about childbearing are measured continuously, but categorically measuring them does not alter the results.

Sociodemographics include gender (1 = female), race (White, Black, or other), mother's and father's education (less than high school, high school, some college, or bachelor's degree or more), sibship size, living in a city (a population of 50,000 or more), and region (North Central, South, West, or Northeast). Except for sibship size, all variables are modeled categorically.

Time is measured as six 5-year periods (1989–1993, 1994–1998, 1999–2003, 2004–2008, 2009–2013, and 2014–2019). Akaike and Bayesian information criterion indicate a better fit with these divisions than other operationalizations (e.g., linear or quadratic measures).

To address missing data, we used multiple imputation, created by stratifying by year, with five imputations. For the 67,557 respondents in the analytic sample, the variables with the most missing data were religious importance and attendance (18%, where MTF intentionally removed responses), political identity (16%), and parental education (10%).

We use OLS regression to predict the continuous fertility measure. Model 1 interacts political identity with time and includes controls for sociodemographic variables. Model 2 adds the attitude and religiosity measures. The Republican main effect reflects the Republican–Democrat gap in average fertility desires in the omitted period (1989–1993). The interaction effects capture over-time variation in the size of that gap.

We use multinomial logistic regression for categorical fertility desires. This regression predicts Republican and Democrat probabilities (and the differences, or the average marginal effect [AME]) in each fertility desires category. Results are presented only for the fully adjusted models (e.g., Model 2); Model 1 results are presented in the Appendix. All models are weighted.

RESULTS

Descriptive Partisan Differences in Fertility Desires

Across all respondents, many changes have occurred over time. For one, fertility desires increased (see Figure 1 and Table 1). In 1989–1993, the average number of desired children was 2.36; by 2014–2109, this number had increased to 2.45. However, desired fertility did not increase linearly, rising between the late 1980s through the late 2000s and declining thereafter.

FIGURE 1. AVERAGE FERTILITY DESIRES OVER TIME BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION.
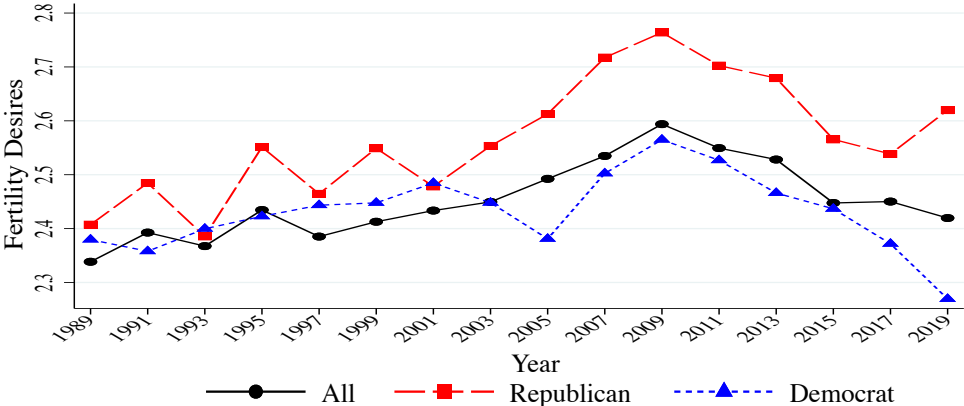
The over-time increase in fertility was driven by a shift toward people wanting three or more children. Political affiliation also shifted, with fewer young adults identifying as Republicans and slightly more as Democrats between the first and last periods. (The "other" category also increased, reflecting U.S. trends of more independents [Pew, 2015].) Similarly, attitudes and religiosity shifted over time: gender attitudes became more accepting of working mothers, and religiosity decreased. Finally, the sample became less White, maternal education increased (paternal education decreased slightly), and residence shifted to cities in the South and West.

Table 1. *Weighted Descriptive Statistics, by First and Last Period and Political Affiliation*

	All Political Affiliations			Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
	Overall	1989–93	2014–19	Overall		1989–93		2014–19	
Num. desires	2.45	2.36*	2.45*	**2.56**	**2.44**	*2.43*	*2.37*	**2.58**	**2.38**
	(1.15)	(1.13)	(1.19)	(1.14)	(1.14)	(1.10)	(1.12)	(1.13)	(1.20)
Categorical desires									
0 children	.05	.05*	.06*	**.03**	**.05**	.04	.04	**.04**	**.08**
1 child	.07	.08*	.06*	**.06**	**.07**	**.07**	**.10**	.05	.07
2 children	.49	.53*	.46*	.48	.48	.54	.51	.45	.45
3 children	.24	.20*	.26*	*.26*	*.25*	.21	.21	**.30**	**.25**
4+ children	.15	.14*	.15*	**.17**	**.15**	.15	.13	.16	.15
Political affiliation									
Republican	.23	.28*	.21*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Democrat	.22	.22†	.23†	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	.55	.50*	.56*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Women care for kids									
Disagree	.50	.56*	.48*	**.40**	**.60**	**.48**	**.62**	**.35**	**.65**
Neither	.21	.16*	.25*	**.21**	**.17**	**.17**	**.13**	**.28**	**.18**
Agree	.29	.29*	.26*	**.39**	**.22**	**.36**	**.25**	**.37**	**.17**
Mom work, kids suffer									
Disagree	.50	.41*	.58*	**.42**	**.58**	**.35**	**.50**	**.54**	**.67**
Neither	.21	.19*	.24*	**.20**	**.19**	.18	.17	**.23**	**.19**
Agree	.29	.40*	.18*	**.37**	**.24**	**.47**	**.33**	**.23**	**.14**
Religiosity									
Attendance	2.64	2.65*	2.50*	**2.95**	**2.58**	**2.81**	**2.69**	**2.90**	**2.39**
	(1.10)	(1.06)	(1.13)	(1.06)	(1.09)	(1.05)	(1.04)	(1.08)	(1.12)
Importance	2.73	2.71*	2.59*	**2.96**	**2.69**	2.81	2.79	**2.95**	**2.47**
	(1.07)	(1.02)	(1.12)	(1.00)	(1.08)	(0.99)	(1.02)	(1.05)	(1.13)
Think about kids	2.30	2.31	2.31	2.32	2.32	**2.29**	**2.36**	2.36	2.33
	(0.60)	(0.62)	(0.60)	(0.59)	(0.59)	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.58)	(0.59)
Siblings	1.98	1.99*	2.02*	**1.91**	**1.95**	1.95	1.99	**1.87**	**2.00**
	(0.95)	(0.96)	(0.96)	(0.94)	(0.97)	(0.94)	(0.98)	(0.95)	(0.96)
Female	.52	.51	.52	**.44**	**.56**	**.43**	**.55**	**.43**	**.59**
Race									
White	.62	.71*	.50*	**.83**	**.52**	**.83**	**.60**	**.78**	**.41**
Black	.12	.13*	.12*	**.03**	**.22**	**.04**	**.24**	**.03**	**.19**
Other	.26	.17*	.38*	**.14**	**.26**	**.13**	**.16**	**.19**	**.40**
Mother education									
Less than high school	.14	.15	.15	**.08**	**.13**	**.11**	**.16**	**.08**	**.13**
High school	.29	.36*	.23*	.27	.27	.34	.34	.20	.21
Some college	.21	.21	.20	**.22**	**.21**	*.22*	*.20*	.20	.20
College or more	.37	.29*	.42*	**.43**	**.39**	*.33*	*.30*	**.52**	**.45**
Father education									
Less than high school	.17	.17*	.21*	**.10**	**.17**	**.12**	**.19**	**.12**	**.20**
High school	.30	.29	.29	**.26**	**.29**	**.25**	**.31**	.26	.27
Some college	.18	.19*	.17*	**.19**	**.18**	.20	.19	*.19*	*.17*
College or more	.36	.35	.34	**.45**	**.37**	**.44**	**.32**	**.43**	**.36**
Large MSA	.79	.74*	.80*	**.76**	**.82**	.74	.72	**.74**	**.86**
Region									
Northeast	.18	.19*	.17*	**.14**	**.19**	.15	.16	**.13**	**.17**
North Central	.25	.27†	.21†	**.27**	**.24**	**.30**	**.25**	*.24*	*.22*
South	.36	.36*	.40*	**.39**	**.36**	**.34**	**.42**	**.46**	**.33**
West	.20	.19*	.22*	**.20**	**.21**	**.21**	**.17**	**.17**	**.28**
Observations	67,557	12,253	11,785	15,684	15,684	3,301	2,748	2,530	2,803

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses. Estimates are from the first imputation. †*p* < .10; **p* < .05 indicate first and last period differences. Bolded (italic) numbers show *p* < .05 (*p* < .10) differences between Republicans and Democrats in that period.

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Regardless of the period, Republicans and Democrats differed in fertility desires, and these differences grew over time (descriptive characteristics for the "other" category are shown in Appendix Table A1). As expected, on average, Republicans wanted larger families (2.56 children) than Democrats (2.44 children; Table 1). Democrats were more likely to report wanting small families (no children or one child), and fewer Democrats than Republicans wanted very large families (with four or more children). Partisan gaps in fertility grew over time, from a difference of 0.06 children in 1989–1993 to 0.20 children in 2014–2019. Figure 1 also shows that the partisan gap widened considerably in the mid-2000s. Before that time, Republicans vacillated between wanting more or similar average numbers of children as Democrats; after the mid-2000s Republicans consistently had much higher desires. Increases in the partisan gap in average fertility desires were driven by more Democrats wanting to be childless and more Republicans wanting three children.

Partisan differences in religiosity, attitudes, and sociodemographics were also apparent. Republicans were more religious (in both attendance and perceived importance) and more likely to endorse traditional gender roles (see Table 1). Partisan gaps in religiosity grew between the first and last period, as did gaps in agreeing that women should take care of children. But gaps narrowed regarding the idea that working mothers harmed children. Partisan gaps in thoughts about childbearing were not evident. Sociodemographically, Republicans were more likely to be White, have parents with more education, and live in the South or North Central region than Democrats; Republicans were less likely to be Black or another race, live in a city or the Northeast and West, and had fewer siblings. (Republicans had fewer siblings because more than 80% were White; conditional on race, Republicans had more siblings than Democrats.) Over

time, partisan gaps grew in nearly all sociodemographics, such as sibship size, being White or another race, parental college degree attainment, and residence (city, South, West, or Northeast).

Partisan Differences in Continuous Measures of Fertility Desires

In models that adjust for sociodemographic characteristics but not for religiosity, gender role attitudes, or childbearing thoughts, the Republican–Democrat gap in average fertility desires expanded over time (see Model 1 in Table 2 and Figure 2). In all periods, Republicans had higher average desires than Democrats, but the gap grew significantly after 2003. In 1989–1993, fertility desires were 0.07 higher for Republicans than Democrats ($p < .05$) and maintained this level in the next two periods (e.g., .09 in 1994–2003; 0.07 from main effect plus 0.02 for interaction effect). By 2004–2008, Republican fertility desires were 0.24 higher ($p < .001$). Gaps remained large after 2003 and plateaued at this high level [the largest partisan gap was seen in 2014–2019 (0.29), but it did not statistically differ from estimate for 2004–2013]. The gaps in the three periods after 2003 were substantively and significantly larger than those in the three periods before 2004.

The partisan gap in the pre-2004 period could largely be explained by variance in religiosity, thoughts about childbearing, and gender attitudes (Model 2 in Table 2 and Figure 2). After adjusting for these measures, Republican and Democratic fertility desires were nearly identical between 1989 and 2003. These covariates also contributed to partisan gaps after 2003, explaining more than half of the observed difference between Republicans and Democrats. However, the post-2003 gaps appear substantial even after account for these factors, with Republicans desiring 0.08–0.13 more children than Democrats (0.11 more in 2004-2008, 0.08 in 2009-2013, and 0.13 in 2014-2019, with all three post-2003 gaps being statistically significant at $p < .05$). In these fully adjusted models, the partisan gap in fertility desires observed in 2004–

2008 was significantly wider than those in all three early periods ($p < .10$ when compared with 1989–1993, and $p < .05$ when compared with 1994–1998 and 1999–2003). The 2009–2013 gap was marginally larger than the gaps in 1994–1998 and 1999–2003 ($p < .10$). And the 2014–2019 partisan gap was significantly larger than all pre-2004 gaps (1989–1993, 1994–1998, and 1999–2003). Thus, even after accounting for religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender attitudes, the partisan desired fertility gap increased significantly after 2003.

Table 2. *OLS Regression Predicting Fertility Desires, by Political Affiliation Over Time*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	SE	β	b	SE	β
Political affiliation (vs. Democrat)						
Republican	0.07*	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.02
Other	-0.06*	0.03	-0.06	-0.05	0.03	-0.04
Year (vs. 1989–1993)						
1994–1998	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.06†	0.04	0.05
1999–2003	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.06†	0.04	0.05
2004–2008	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.10**	0.03	0.08
2009–2013	0.12***	0.04	0.11	0.18***	0.04	0.15
2014–2019	-0.07†	0.04	-0.06	0.02	0.04	0.02
Affiliation × Year (vs. Dem. × 1989–1993)						
Republican × 1994–1998	0.02	0.05	0.02	-0.03	0.05	-0.03
Republican × 1999–2003	0.03	0.05	0.02	-0.04	0.05	-0.03
Republican × 2004–2008	0.17***	0.05	0.15	0.09†	0.05	0.08
Republican × 2009–2013	0.16**	0.05	0.14	0.06	0.05	0.05
Republican × 2014–2019	0.22***	0.05	0.19	0.11*	0.05	0.09
Other × 1994–1998	-0.01	0.04	-0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.02
Other × 1999–2003	-0.01	0.05	-0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.02
Other × 2004–2008	0.08†	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.04	0.04
Other × 2009–2013	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.00
Other × 2014–2019	0.14**	0.04	0.12	0.11*	0.04	0.09

Note: Model 1 includes sociodemographics. Model 2 adds religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs. The sample size for both models is 67,557. †$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

Figure 2. Predicted Average Fertility Desires, by Political Affiliation Over Time.
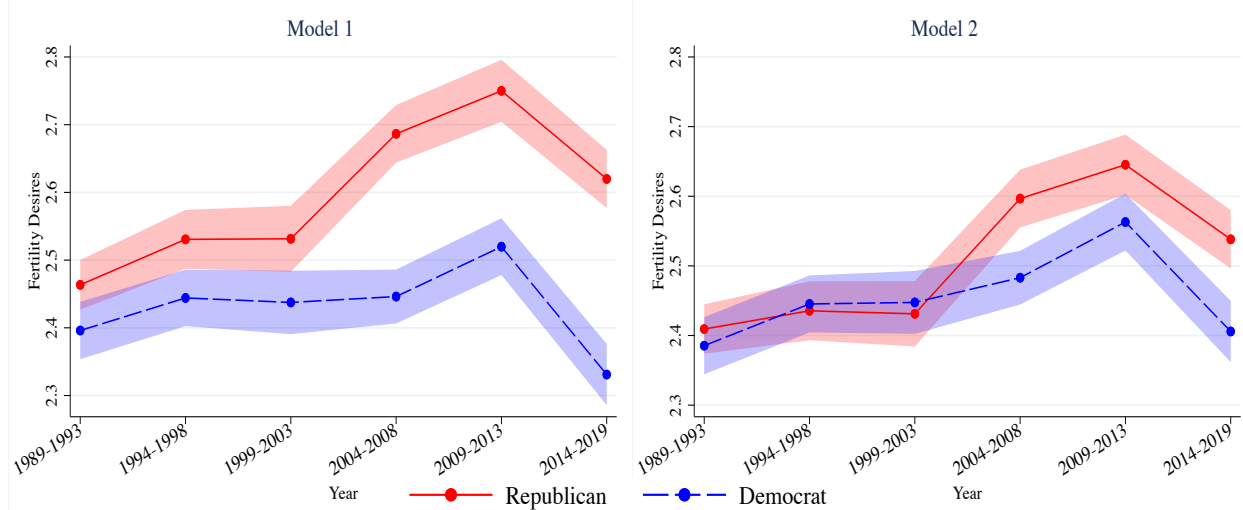
Note: Model 1 includes sociodemographics. Model 2 adds religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs. Shaded areas are 90% confidence intervals.

Political identity appears to be a particularly important predictor of fertility desires. The standardized coefficient for being a Republican versus a Democrat in 2014–2019 is 0.11 (the main effect plus interaction; see Table 2), which is higher than nearly all other variables in the model (residing in the South, other race, and childbearing thoughts are the exceptions). These coefficients were 0.07 and 0.11 in 2004–2008 and 2009–2013, respectively, similar to those found for gender role attitudes, religious attendance, and importance. Partial η_p^2 (the percentage of desired fertility variance attributable to each variable) similarly reveals that in the later periods, political identity was a stronger predictor of fertility desires than many other variables, including religious attendance, gender, parental education, and living in a city. Thus, in the mid-to late 2000s, political identity emerged as a relatively strong independent predictor of fertility desires on par with or surpassing many correlates of fertility preferences, such as religious attendance, gender role attitudes, and parental education.

Partisan Differences in Categorical Measures of Fertility

The partisan gaps in desired fertility that emerged after 2003 were due to differences in the tails of the distribution. AMEs using fully adjusted models reveal that Republicans' desires

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for large families grew, but Democrats' desires to avoid childbearing also grew (Table 3).

Table 3. *AME Categorical Fertility Desires by Political Affiliation Over Time: All Controls*

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Year differences[a]
A. 1989–1993				
No children	.041	.043	-.002	2014
One child	.075	.090	-.015†	1994, *1999*
Two children	.531	.510	.021	2004, 2009
Three children	.210	.221	-.010	*2014*
Four or more	.143	.137	.007	2004
B. 1994–1998				
No children	.043	.041	.002	2014
One child	.078	.068	.010	1989
Two children	.503	.510	-.006	*2014*
Three children	.228	.239	-.011	
Four or more	.148	.143	.006	2004
C. 1999–2003				
No children	.044	.042	.002	2014
One child	.086	.078	.008	*1989*
Two children	.491	.489	.002	
Three children	.239	.244	-.005	
Four or more	.141	.147	-.006	2004, 2009
D. 2004–2008				
No children	.038	.048	-.010	
One child	.061	.061	.000	
Two children	.451	.478	-.026†	1989
Three children	.254	.260	-.006	
Four or more	.195	.154	.042***	1989, 1994, 1999, *2014*
E. 2009–2013				
No children	.035	.034	.000	2014
One child	.063	.062	.001	
Two children	.417	.450	-.034*	1989
Three children	.283	.282	.001	
Four or more	.203	.171	.031*	1999
F. 2014–2019				
No children	.044	.069	-.024**	1989, 1994, 1999, 2009
One child	.061	.063	-.002	
Two children	.448	.462	-.014	
Three children	.283	.257	.025†	*1989, 1994*
Four or more	.164	.148	.015	*2004*

Note: Controls for sociodemographics, religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs are included. AME is the average marginal effect or the Republican–Democrat difference in probability of each desired family size in each period with significant party differences indicated at $p < .10$. †$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). The sample size is 67,557.
[a] AME statistically differs from the same category AME in year indicated. Plain (italic) typeface indicates a difference significant at $p < .05$ ($p < .10$).

Relative to Democrats, Republicans were significantly more likely to want four or more children in 2004–2008 (a .042 difference, $p < .001$) and 2009–2013 (.031, $p < .05$) and three children in 2014–2019 (.025, $p < .10$). Before 2004, similar percentages of Republican and Democratic young adults wanted four or more children (approximately 14%). Between 2004 to 2013, however, Republicans who wanted very large families increased to roughly 20%, whereas Democrats stayed at 15% (the desire for four children converged in the last period). In this final period, large partisan differences were instead found in the desire to avoid childbearing. In 2014–2019, approximately 7% of Democrats said that they wanted to be childless, relative to roughly 4% of Republicans ($p < .01$). Before 2014–2019, however, Republicans and Democrats had similarly low probabilities of wanting no children (at approximately 4%). The 2014–2019 Republican–Democrat difference in the probability of wanting to avoid childbearing was significantly larger than the differences found in every prior period except 2004–2008.

Supplementary Analyses

We investigated whether growing Republican–Democrat differences in fertility-adjacent factors (religiosity, gender attitudes, and childbearing thoughts) drove the increasing partisan gap in fertility desires (results not presented but available upon request). Models allowing these variables to interact with time showed results substantively similar to those presented earlier. These results indicate that the growing divergence in these factors did not explain the substantial and increasing partisan fertility desire gap observed after 2003.

Next, we explored whether post-2003 partisan gaps could be explained by the addition of the "don't know" fertility desires category. Including this category did not change our results, given that Democrats and Republicans were equally likely to provide this response (6% to 8% for both).

We also considered whether the observed trends were driven by a particular gender or racial group, but we found that gaps were similar across groups. Although Republican women had high fertility desires, especially after 2003, the partisan gap did not differ between women and men (i.e., the three-way interaction term of female, time period, and political party was not statistically significant). Further, partisan gaps did not vary across racial groups; the three-way interactions were not significant.

Finally, we analyzed whether the partisan gap that emerged after 2003 could be explained by Democrats' increased environmental concerns. Accounting for climate concerns (agreeing that the government should do something and that pollution had increased) did not substantively alter our results, although it did account for approximately a tenth of the gap in the last period.

Conclusion

Motivated by the increasing importance of understanding fertility determinants in an era of declining birth rates, this study examined how young adults' political identity is related to their family size desires. We proposed three primary hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that political identity is related to fertility desires. As a salient social identity (Mason, 2018), political party identification might prompt young adults to align their fertility desires with perceived family size norms in their political group and distinct from the opposing party. Results were consistent with this hypothesis. We found associations between young adults' political identification and their fertility that were robust to the inclusion of sociodemographic characteristics and, after 2004, to the inclusion of religiosity, gender role attitudes, and the amount of thought given to childbearing. Our study thus complements previous work finding that political identity predicts intimate behaviors seemingly unrelated to politics, such as dating and marriage (West & Iyengar, 2022), and shows that the families young adults hope to build differ

along party lines.

Our second hypothesis was that Republicans wanted more children than Democrats. We reasoned that young Republicans might believe that larger families are more consistent with Republican norms or that their greater religiosity and stronger tendency to embrace traditional gender roles could lead them to want more children (Hayford & Morgan, 2008; Jozwiak, 2022; Pew, 2014; Shang & Yin, 2020). Again, evidence supported this hypothesis. In every period, Republicans wanted more children on average than Democrats. Over the past 30 years, mean differences in desired fertility were small (roughly 0.12), but these average differences obscured variation in the tails of the fertility desires distribution. Democrats were more likely to want small families (no more than one child), whereas Republicans were more likely to want very large families (four or more children). At least part of this difference was explained by Republicans' higher religiosity.

Our third hypothesis was that differences in fertility desires between Republicans and Democrats expanded over time. This expectation arose from the growing salience of political identity found in various domains (Mason, 2018). Factors related to fertility, such as religiosity, gender role attitudes, and pessimistic messages about the future climate context, have also increasingly diverged by partisanship over time (Green, 2011; Jozwiak, 2022). Our results generally aligned with this hypothesis. The partisan gap in average family size grew from 0.06 children in 1989–1993 to 0.20 children in 2014–2019, or from 0.07 to 0.29 after we adjusted for sociodemographics. Republicans shifted toward wanting larger families after 2003, and Democrats shifted toward preferring childlessness after 2013.

Results also suggest that political identity has become an important predictor of fertility desires since the mid-2000s. Before 2004, the partisan fertility desire gap was explained by

differences in religiosity and thoughts regarding childbearing. After 2003, the gap was robust to the inclusion of these factors, suggesting that political identity's salience has grown and has become an independent predictor of fertility desires. Although we cannot explain the increasing import of political identity, our results are consistent with work showing that political identity is now more connected to intimate behaviors than it once was (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018a; Kaplan et al., 2022). Macro-level relations between state voting and family formation (e.g., fertility levels, timing, context) show trends such as those observed here, with increasing correlations that plateaued in 2000 and remained at high levels (Lesthaeghe & Neidert, 2017).

This study has limitations. First, the political affiliation measure had a high degree of missing data, perhaps because, like the American public, less than half (46% in the sample) identify with Republicans or Democrats. Second, we measure fertility desires, but other measures of fertility behavior (e.g., intentions or completed childbearing) may be preferred. The young adults in our sample have likely not yet formed intentions and likely have not completed childbearing (Rackin & Bachrach, 2016). Still, their desires reflect family size norms and can help us understand the processes that connect desires, identity, and social context (Bachrach, 2014). Third, the results can be generalized only to U.S. 12th graders. Young people who did not attend their final year of high school may have different fertility desires. Nevertheless, dropping out of school is associated with pregnancy (Shuger, 2012), and we were interested in young childless people because partisan fertility desire gaps among young adults without children would provide stronger evidence that partisan identity drives fertility desires rather than fertility behavior changing both desires and partisan identity. Fourth, this research is descriptive, and we cannot prove causality. The results may be biased by unobserved or unmeasured factors.

Despite these limitations, our study highlights the potential importance of political affiliations and social identities on fertility, an area typically regarded as apolitical. Resonating with emerging research showing the increasing import of political leanings, our findings suggest that desired and perhaps actual family size might increasingly distinguish political in-groups and out-groups. If partisans continue to want different family sizes and form them differently—for example, with Republicans tending toward having more children and Democrats delaying or eschewing childbearing—their starkly divergent everyday lives may make finding common ground more challenging and exacerbate polarization. This study also has implications for researchers trying to untangle fertility decision-making processes. Our findings underscore that fertility desires are shaped not only by identities clearly tied to fertility such as role-based identities (e.g., mother or worker) or group identities (e.g., religious affiliation) (Marshall & Shepherd, 2018; McQuillan et al., 2015; Rackin & Bachrach, 2016) but also by a social identity less explicitly linked to family building. Social identities provide a template for what "people like me" do (Mason, 2018) and therefore likely play a pivotal role in fertility decision-making. When coupled with declining fertility rates and soaring political polarization (Hamilton et al., 2021; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018b), findings indicate that demographers would be wise to delve into how and why political identities shape fertility.

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Table 1A. *Weighted Descriptive Statistics, by First and Last Period and Political Affiliation*

	Overall				1989-1993			2014-2019			Over Time Change for[a]
	Rep	Dem	Other		Rep	Dem	Other	Rep	Dem	Other	
Num. desires	*2.56*	**2.44**	**2.41**		2.43	2.37	**2.32**	*2.58*	**2.38**	**2.44**	Rep, Other
	(1.14)	(1.14)	(1.16)		(1.10)	(1.12)	(1.14)	(1.13)	(1.20)	(1.20)	
Categorical desires											
0 children	*.03*	**.05**	**.05**		.04	.04	**.05**	.04	**.08**	**.07**	Dem, Other
1 child	*.06*	**.07**	**.08**		.07	**.10**	**.09**	.05	.07	.06	Dem, Other
2 children	.48	.48	**.50**		.54	.51	.54	.45	.45	.47	Rep, Dem, Other
3 children	.26	.25	**.23**		.21	.21	**.19**	.30	.25	.24	Rep, Dem, Other
4+ children	*.17*	**.15**	**.15**		.15	.13	.13	.16	.15	.16	Dem, Other
Women care for kids											
Disagree	*.40*	**.60**	**.50**		.48	**.62**	**.57**	.35	**.65**	**.47**	Rep, Other
Neither	*.21*	**.17**	**.22**		.17	**.13**	.16	.28	**.18**	.27	Rep, Dem, Other
Agree	*.39*	**.22**	**.28**		.36	**.25**	**.27**	.37	**.17**	.26	Dem, Other
Mom work kids suffer											
Disagree	*.42*	**.58**	**.50**		.35	**.50**	**.41**	.54	**.67**	.56	Rep, Dem
Neither	*.20*	**.19**	**.23**		.18	**.17**	.20	.23	**.19**	.26	Rep, Other
Agree	*.37*	**.24**	**.28**		.47	**.33**	**.39**	.23	**.14**	.17	Rep, Dem, Other
Rel. attend.	*2.95*	**2.58**	2.53		2.81	**2.69**	2.55	2.90	2.39	2.39	Rep, Dem, Other
	(1.06)	(1.09)	(1.10)		(1.05)	(1.04)	(1.07)	(1.08)	(1.12)	(1.12)	
Rel. imp.	*2.96*	**2.69**	2.65		2.81	2.79	**2.61**	*2.95*	2.47	2.50	Rep, Dem, Other
	(1.00)	(1.08)	(1.07)		(0.99)	(1.02)	(1.03)	(1.05)	(1.13)	(1.11)	
Think abt. kids	2.32	2.32	2.29		2.29	**2.36**	2.31	2.36	2.33	**2.29**	Rep
	(0.59)	(0.59)	(0.61)		(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.63)	(0.58)	(0.59)	(0.62)	Rep
Siblings	*1.91*	**1.95**	**2.02**		1.95	1.99	**2.01**	*1.87*	**2.00**	**2.09**	Other
	(0.94)	(0.97)	(0.95)		(0.94)	(0.98)	(0.96)	(0.95)	(0.96)	(0.96)	
Female	*.44*	**.56**	.54		*.43*	.55	.54	*.43*	**.59**	**.52**	Dem
Race											
White	*.83*	**.52**	.58		*.83*	**.60**	.68	*.78*	**.41**	.44	Rep, Dem, Other
Black	*.03*	**.22**	.12		*.04*	**.24**	.12	*.03*	**.19**	.12	Rep, Dem
Other	*.14*	**.26**	.30		*.13*	**.16**	.20	*.19*	**.40**	.44	Rep, Dem, Other
Mother educ.											
<HS	*.08*	**.13**	**.16**		*.11*	**.16**	**.16**	*.08*	**.13**	**.19**	Rep, Dem
HS	.27	.27	*.30*		.34	.34	**.38**	.20	.21	*.24*	Rep, Dem, Other
Some coll.	*.22*	**.21**	.20		.22	.20	.20	.20	.20	.19	Other
Col+	.43	**.39**	.33		*.33*	*.30*	**.26**	*.52*	**.45**	.37	Rep, Dem, Other
Father educ.											
<HS	*.10*	**.17**	.20		*.12*	**.19**	**.19**	*.12*	**.20**	.25	Other
HS	*.26*	**.29**	.31		*.25*	**.31**	**.31**	.26	.27	*.31*	Dem
Some coll.	*.19*	.18	.18		.20	.19	.19	*.19*	.17	**.16**	Other
Col+	*.45*	**.37**	.31		*.44*	.32	**.31**	*.43*	**.36**	.29	Dem, Other
Large MSA	*.76*	**.82**	.80		.74	.72	.74	*.74*	**.86**	.80	Dem, Other
Region											
Northeast	*.14*	**.19**	**.20**		.15	.16	**.22**	*.13*	.17	.18	Rep, Other
North Cen.	*.27*	**.24**	**.24**		*.30*	.25	**.27**	*.24*	.22	**.20**	Rep, Dem, Other
South	*.39*	**.36**	**.35**		.34	**.42**	.33	*.46*	**.33**	**.41**	Rep, Dem, Other
West	*.20*	**.21**	**.20**		*.21*	**.17**	**.18**	*.17*	**.28**	**.21**	Rep, Dem, Other
Observations	15684	15684	36562		3301	2748	6204	2530	2803	6452	

Note: Standard deviations in paratheses. Other includes independent, no preference, other party, don't know, and missing.
Estimates from first imputation. Bolded, italic, and underlined numbers show differences (*p*<.05) from Republicans, Democrats, and other, respectively, in that period. [a]Which political affiliations significantly (*p*<.05) changed between 1989-93 and 2014-19.

Table 2A. *OLS Regression of Fertility Desires, by Political Affiliation Over Time: All Controls*

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	se	β	b	se	β
Political affiliation (vs. Democrat)						
Republican	0.07*	0.03	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.02
Other	-0.06*	0.03	-0.06	-0.05	0.03	-0.04
Year (vs. 1989-1993)						
1994-1998	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.06†	0.04	0.05
1999-2003	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.06†	0.04	0.05
2004-2008	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.10**	0.03	0.08
2009-2013	0.12***	0.04	0.11	0.18***	0.04	0.15
2014-2019	-0.07†	0.04	-0.06	0.02	0.04	0.02
Affiliation x Year (vs. Dem. 1989-1993)						
Republican x 1994-1998	0.02	0.05	0.02	-0.03	0.05	-0.03
Republican x 1999-2003	0.03	0.05	0.02	-0.04	0.05	-0.03
Republican x 2004-2008	0.17***	0.05	0.15	0.09†	0.05	0.08
Republican x 2009-2013	0.16**	0.05	0.14	0.06	0.05	0.05
Republican x 2014-2018	0.22***	0.05	0.19	0.11*	0.05	0.09
Other x 1994-1998	-0.01	0.04	-0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.02
Other x 1999-2003	-0.01	0.05	-0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.02
Other x 2004-2008	0.08†	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.04	0.04
Other x 2009-2013	0.04	0.04	0.03	0	0.04	0.00
Other x 2014-2018	0.14**	0.04	0.12	0.11*	0.04	0.09
Better for women to care for kids (vs. disagree)						
Neither	–	–	–	0.03*	0.01	0.03
Agree	–	–	–	0.11***	0.01	0.10
Mom work kids suffer (vs. disagree)						
Neither	–	–	–	0.02	0.01	0.02
Agree	–	–	–	0.08***	0.01	0.07
Rel. attend.	–	–	–	0.08***	0.01	0.08
Rel. imp.	–	–	–	0.10***	0.01	0.09
Think about kids	–	–	–	0.42***	0.01	0.22
Siblings	0.14***	0.01	0.12	0.12***	0.01	0.10
Female	0.13***	0.01	0.11	0.03*	0.01	0.02
Race (vs. White)						
Black	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.08***	0.02	-0.07
Other	0.15***	0.01	0.13	0.13***	0.01	0.12
Mom Educ (vs. <HS)						
HS	0.00	0.02	0.00	-0.00	0.02	0.00

Some college	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.00	0.02	0.00
College or more	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01
Dad Educ (vs. <HS)						
HS	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.02	-0.01
Some college	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01
College or more	0.09***	0.02	0.08	0.07***	0.02	0.06
Live in city	0.07***	0.01	0.06	0.09***	0.01	0.07
Region (vs. Northeast)						
North Central	0.01	0.02	0.00	-0.04**	0.02	-0.04
South	-0.11***	0.01	-0.10	-0.21***	0.01	-0.18
West	0.03	0.02	0.02	-0.08***	0.02	-0.07
Constant	1.93***	0.04	-0.22	0.62***	0.04	-0.16

Note: † p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed tests).

Table 3A. *Predicted Average Fertility Desires, by Political Affiliation Over Time estimated from Table 2A.*

	Model 1						Model 2						% Gap Change btw Model 1 & 2		
	Political Identity			Gaps			Political Identity			Gaps					
Time	Rep	Dem	Oth	Rep-Dem	Rep-Oth	Dem-Oth	Rep	Dem	Oth	Rep-Dem	Rep-Oth	Dem-Oth	Rep-Dem	Rep-Oth	Dem-Oth
A.1989-1993	2.46	2.40	2.33	$.07^*_{\text{DEF}}$	$.13^{***}_{\text{DEF}}$	$.06^*_{\text{dF}}$	2.41	2.39	2.34	$.02_{\text{dF}}$	$.07^{**}$	$.05_{\text{F}}$	65	47	28
B.1994-1998	2.53	2.44	2.37	$.09^*_{\text{DEF}}$	$.16^{***}_{\text{E}}$	$.07^*_{\text{DF}}$	2.44	2.45	2.38	$-.01_{\text{DeF}}$	$.05^†$	$.06^*_{\text{F}}$	111	67	14
C.1999-2003	2.53	2.44	2.36	$.09^*_{\text{DEF}}$	$.17^{***}_{\text{e}}$	$.08^*_{\text{DF}}$	2.43	2.45	2.37	$-.02_{\text{DeF}}$	$.06^†$	$.07^*_{\text{dF}}$	117	67	6
D.2004-2008	2.69	2.45	2.46	$.24^{***}_{\text{ABC}}$	$.23^{***}_{\text{A}}$	$-.01_{\text{aBC}}$	2.60	2.48	2.48	$.11^{**}_{\text{aBC}}$	$.11^{***}$	$.00_{\text{c}}$	53	50	100
E.2009-2013	2.75	2.52	2.49	$.23^{***}_{\text{ABC}}$	$.26^{***}_{\text{ABc}}$	0.03	2.65	2.56	2.52	$.08^*_{\text{bc}}$	$.12^{***}$	$.04_{\text{F}}$	64	52	-54
F.2014-2019	2.62	2.33	2.4	$.29^{***}_{\text{ABC}}$	$.22^{***}_{\text{AB}}$	$-.07^*_{\text{ABCDE}}$	2.54	2.41	2.47	$.13^{***}_{\text{ABC}}$	$.07^*$	$-.06^†_{\text{ABCE}}$	54	67	15

Note: Model 1 includes sociodemographics. Model 2 adds religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs. Other includes independent, no preference, other party, don't know, and missing.
$^†p<.10;$ $^*p<.05;$ $^{**}p<.01;$ $^{***}p<.001$ (two-tailed tests) showing if the fertility desires gap differs from zero (i.e., no gap).
Letters indicate over time differences between that the specified fertility desires gap (uppercase, $p < .05$ and lowercase, $p < .10$).
[A] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 1989-1993.
[B] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 1994-1998.
[C] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 1999-2003.
[D] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 2004-2008.
[E] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 2009-2013.
[F] Fertility desires statistically differs from the gap in 2014-2013

FIGURE 1A. PREDICTED AVERAGE FERTILITY DESIRES, BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION OVER TIME.
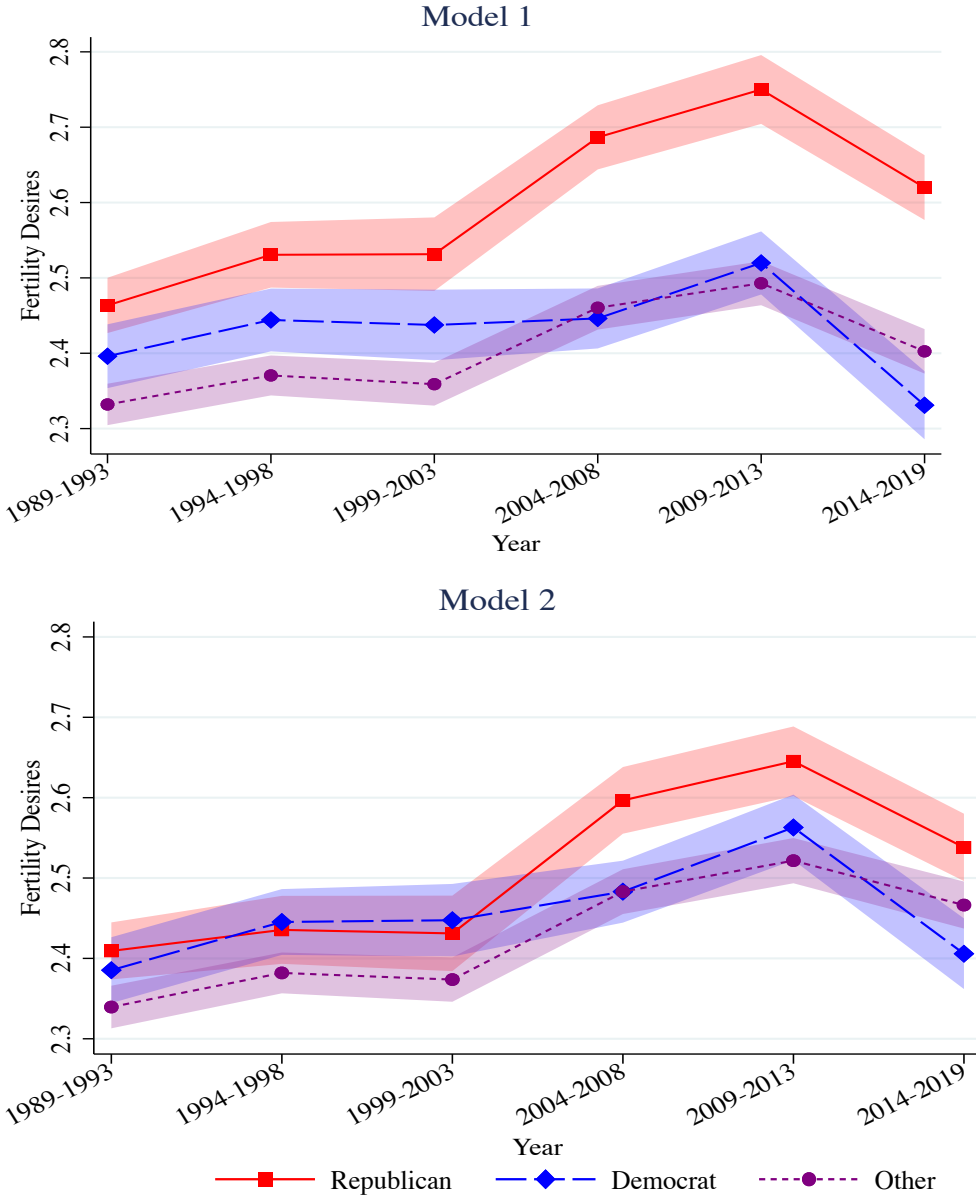
Note: Model 1 includes sociodemographics. Model 2 adds religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs. Shaded areas are 90% confidence intervals. Other includes independent, no preference, other party, don't know, and missing.

Table 4A. *Multinomial Model of Categorical Fertility Desires, by Political Affiliation Over Time*

	0 Kids (vs 2)		1 Kid (vs 2)		3 Kids (vs 2)		4+ Kids (vs 2)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Political affiliation (vs. Democrat)								
Republican	0.83	0.91	0.79*	0.80†	0.95	0.92	1.11	1.01
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Other	1.21	1.17	0.96	0.94	0.82**	0.83*	0.91	0.93
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Year (vs. 1989-1993)								
1994-1998	0.97	0.94	0.77*	0.75*	1.08	1.09	1.04	1.06
	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.11)
1999-2003	1.04	1.02	0.93	0.90	1.14	1.16†	1.08	1.14
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)
2004-2008	1.28	1.17	0.76*	0.71**	1.22*	1.28**	1.11	1.23*
	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)
2009-2013	0.97	0.88	0.84	0.77*	1.40***	1.48***	1.30**	1.50***
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.15)
2014-2019	2.12***	1.77***	0.85	0.77*	1.21*	1.30**	1.04	1.22†
	(0.31)	(0.26)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.13)
Affiliation x Year (vs. Dem. 1989-1993)								
Republican	1.03	1.18	1.37†	1.46*	1.10	1.05	1.12	1.04
x 1994-1998	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.14)
Republican	0.99	1.15	1.29	1.38†	1.13	1.06	1.05	0.93
x 1999-2003	(0.24)	(0.29)	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.13)
Republican	0.78	0.91	1.22	1.32	1.22†	1.14	1.55***	1.37*
x 2004-2008	(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.20)	(0.18)
Republican	0.97	1.19	1.24	1.37	1.31*	1.19	1.52**	1.29†
x 2009-2013	(0.25)	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.20)	(0.17)
Republican	0.56**	0.72	1.13	1.24	1.37**	1.25*	1.36*	1.15
x 2014-2018	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.16)
Other	0.96	0.99	1.28†	1.29†	1.00	1.00	1.01	1.00
x 1994-1998	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Other	0.87	0.88	0.98	0.99	1.03	1.01	0.86	0.84
x 1999-2003	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Other	0.72†	0.76	1.28†	1.30†	1.18†	1.15	1.14	1.08
x 2004-2008	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Other	1.07	1.13	1.09	1.12	1.13	1.10	1.07	1.02
x 2009-2013	(0.21)	(0.23)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Other	0.67*	0.71*	0.98	0.99	1.15	1.13	1.19	1.16
x 2014-2018	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.14)

Better for women to care for kids								
Neither	–	0.80***	–	1.01	–	1.02	–	1.00
		(0.05)		(0.05)		(0.03)		(0.04)
Agree	–	0.66***	–	1.08	–	1.06†	–	1.20***
		(0.04)		(0.05)		(0.03)		(0.04)
Mom work kids suffer (vs. disagree)								
Neither	–	1.00	–	0.87**	–	1.02	–	1.02
		(0.06)		(0.05)		(0.03)		(0.04)
Agree	–	0.91	–	0.90*	–	1.01	–	1.18***
		(0.06)		(0.05)		(0.03)		(0.05)
Rel. attend.	–	0.88***	–	0.89***	–	1.12***	–	1.18***
		(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Rel. imp.	–	0.77***	–	0.89***	–	1.08***	–	1.21***
		(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Think abt. Kids	–	0.43***	–	0.68***	–	1.50***	–	2.37***
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.03)		(0.06)
Female	1.20***	1.42***	1.07†	1.23***	1.28***	1.13***	1.68***	1.39***
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Race (vs. White)								
Black	0.92	1.16†	1.66***	1.87***	0.98	0.89**	1.19***	0.99
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Other	0.95	0.95	0.96	0.98	1.18***	1.18***	1.40***	1.40***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Mom Educ. (vs. < High school)								
High school	0.89	0.90	0.96	0.97	1.05	1.05	0.96	0.95
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Some college	0.99	1.02	0.94	0.97	1.09†	1.07	1.01	0.97
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
College+	0.98	1.01	0.90	0.93	1.17***	1.14**	0.98	0.96
	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Dad Educ. (vs. < High school)								
High school	0.92	0.93	0.95	0.96	0.99	0.98	0.94	0.94
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Some college	0.97	0.97	0.90	0.91	1.07	1.06	1.02	1.01
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
College+	1.00	1.01	0.80**	0.82**	1.16***	1.14**	1.23***	1.20***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Siblings	0.97	0.99	0.92***	0.92***	1.15***	1.14***	1.45***	1.41***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Live in city	1.04	0.99	1.02	0.99	1.10**	1.12***	1.28***	1.32***

	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Region (vs. Northeast)								
North Central	0.94	1.04	1.05	1.11†	0.99	0.94†	1.01	0.92*
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
South	0.75***	0.95	1.13*	1.27***	0.83***	0.75***	0.68***	0.56***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
West	0.87*	1.08	0.90	1.01	1.02	0.92*	0.98	0.81***
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	0.10***	1.35	0.20***	0.73*	0.23***	0.06***	0.08***	0.00***
	(0.02)	(0.26)	(0.02)	(0.11)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)

Note: Relative risk ratios shown. Model 1 includes controls for sociodemographics. Model 2 adds religiosity, childbearing thoughts, and gender beliefs. Sample size for both models is 67,557. Models used to calculate the average marginal effects in AME tables. † $p<.10$; *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$ (two-tailed tests).

Table 5A. *AME Categorical Fertility Desires by Political Affiliation: Socio-demographic Controls estimated from Table 4A, Model 1.*

Panel A. 1989-1993

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.036	.042	-.006	2004, 2014
One child	.070	.086	-.017*	*1994*
Two children	.522	.510	.012	2004, 2009, 2014
Three children	.215	.222	-.007	2014
Four or more	.157	.139	.018	2004, 2009, *2014*

Panel B. 1994-1998

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.034	.041	-.007	*2004*, 2014
One child	.069	.066	.002	*1989*
Two children	.488	.509	-.021	*2009*
Three children	.239	.239	.000	
Four or more	.170	.144	.027*	2004, 2009

Panel C. 1999-2003

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.034	.043	-.008	2014
One child	.076	.077	-.001	
Two children	.477	.492	-.016	2009
Three children	.251	.243	.008	*2014*
Four or more	.162	.144	.018***	2004, 2009, *2014*

Panel D. 2004-2008

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.030	.051	-.022**	1989, *1994*, 2014
One child	.054	.063	-.009	
Two children	.434	.484	-.051**	1989
Three children	.263	.256	.007	2014
Four or more	.219	.145	.074***	1989, 1994, 1999

Panel E. 2009-2013

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.026	.037	-.011[†]	2014
One child	.055	.066	-.011	
Two children	.395	.459	-.063***	1989, *1994*, 1999
Three children	.294	.277	.017	
Four or more	.230	.161	.068***	1989, 1994, 1999

Panel F. 2014-2019

	Republican	Democrat	AME	Differs from[a]
No children	.035	.083	-.047***	1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009
One child	.056	.068	-.012	
Two children	.433	.469	-.037*	1989
Three children	.294	.247	.047**	1989, *1999*, 2004
Four or more	.182	.133	.049***	*1989, 1999*

Note: Includes controls for sociodemographics. AME is average marginal effect. Sample size is 67,557.

[†] $p<.10$; * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$ (two-tailed tests).

[a]: AME in that desires category statistically differs from the AME in the same category in the period beginning in the year shown. Plain (italic) typeface indicates a difference significant at $p < .05$ ($p < .10$).

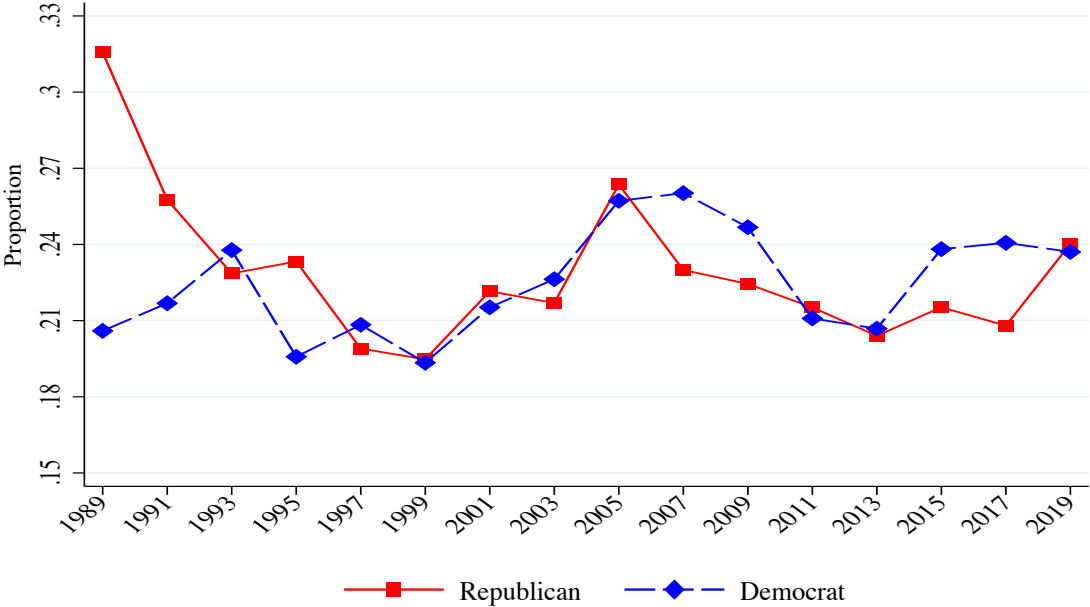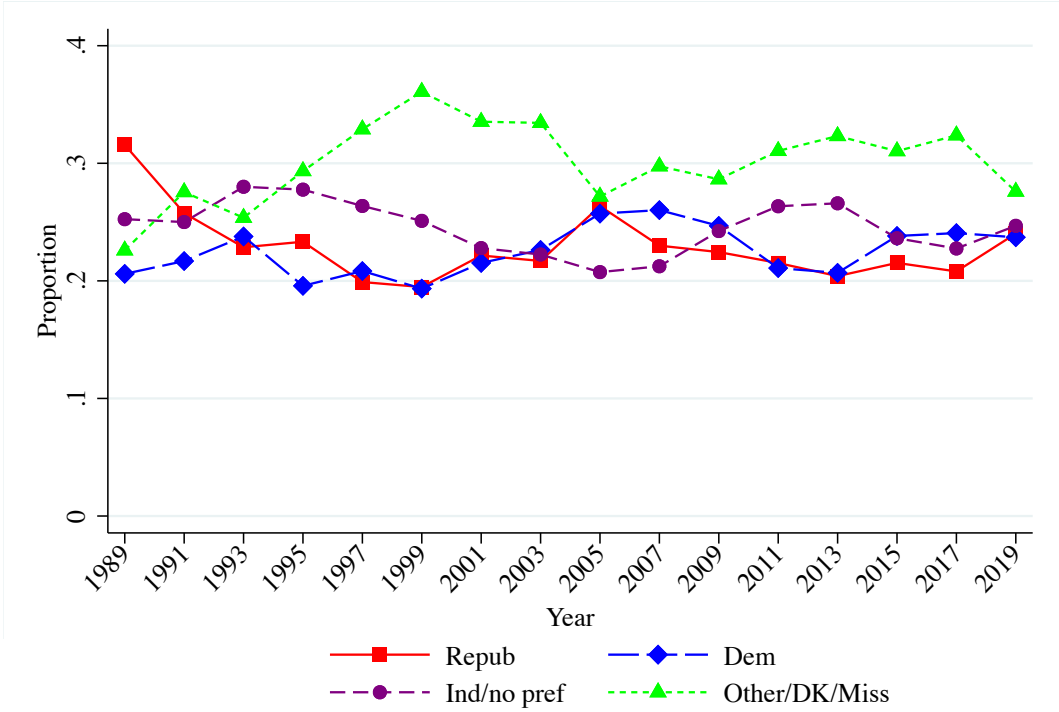FIGURE 2A. OVER TIME TRENDS IN POLITICAL AFFILIATION.

FIGURE 3A. OVER TIME TRENDS IN FOUR CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION.

Note: Ind/No pref includes independent and no preference. Other/DK/Miss includes other party, don't know, and missing.