The Effect of Abortion Legalization on Fertility, Marriage, and Long-term Outcomes for Women

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We evaluate the short- and long-term effects for women of access to legal, subsidized abortion, by exploiting the Spanish legalization of abortion in 1985. We find robust evidence that the legalization led to an immediate decrease in the number of births, more pronounced for women aged 21 and younger. This effect was driven by provinces with a higher supply of abortion services. We also find that the affected cohorts of women were more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to marry young, less likely to divorce in the long-term, and reported higher life satisfaction as adults. We do not find significant effects on long-term labor market participation, employment, or earnings.