

Weeks Population

Dr. John Weeks' official demographic blog - just the latest post!

This blog is intended to go along with [Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues](#), by **John R. Weeks**, published by Cengage Learning. The latest edition is the 12th (it came out in 2015), but this blog is meant to complement any edition of the book by showing the way in which demographic issues are regularly in the news.

If you are a user of my textbook and would like to suggest a blog post idea, please email me at: john.weeks@sdsu.edu

About Me

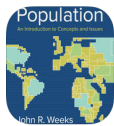


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Wednesday, March 2, 2016

SCOTUS and Abortion Rights--A New Chapter?

The U.S. Supreme Court today heard one of the most consequential abortion rights cases in the last few decades. The case came to the court from Texas, which in 2013 passed a law placing a lot of restrictions on clinics that performed otherwise legal abortions. This is, of course, part of a long-term strategy of anti-abortion groups to limit access to abortion at the local level, thus circumventing the Supreme Court's 1973 decision that legalized abortion in the country. This is also the first major case to come before the court since the death of Justice Scalia who, as a staunch Catholic, would almost certainly have voted in favor of letting Texas (and other states that have passed similar laws) go ahead with these restrictions. Today the court was apparently very divided, as the [NYTimes reports](#):

The court's four liberal justices were adamant that restrictions imposed by a Texas law on the state's abortion providers served no medical purpose and could not pass constitutional muster. But two of the more conservative justices said there was little evidence that abortion clinics in Texas had closed or would close because of the law.

Justice Kennedy also asked whether the law encouraged women to seek surgical abortions rather than ones induced by drugs.

"Because my reading indicated that medical abortions are up nationwide, but down significantly in Texas," he said, in a tone that suggested that this was a problem. "This may not be medically wise."

Justice Kagan asked a series of questions about how far women had to travel to obtain an abortion, rattling off data. She said 900,000 Texas women now lived farther than 150 miles from an abortion provider, and 750,000 lived farther than 200 miles. In 2012, she said, fewer than 100,000 Texas women lived over 150 miles from a provider, and only 10,000 lived more than 200 miles away.

"So we're going from, like, 10,000 to three-quarters of a million living more than 200 miles away," she said.

That has consequences, Justice Stephen G. Breyer said, arguing that more women would now die of complications from self-induced abortions.

If the court splits 4-4 on this, then the lower court ruling (that approved the limitations on abortion access) will stand, but this will affect only a limited number of states for the time being, according to a [story on MSNBC](#). On the other hand, it will certainly encourage anti-abortion legislators in other states to push for these limitations in their own state. We'll know the SCOTUS decision in June.

Topics by Chapter

- [Age Transition](#) (187)
- [Coping with demographic change](#) (309)
- [demographic data](#) (168)
- [demographic perspectives](#) (59)
- [family and household transition](#) (255)
- [fertility transition](#) (232)
- [Global Population Trends](#) (334)
- [health and mortality transition](#) (298)
- [Introduction to Demography](#) (341)
- [migration transition](#) (379)
- [Population and Sustainability](#) (68)
- [population and the environment](#) (288)
- [Urban Transition](#) (87)
- [What Lies Ahead?](#) (74)

Blog Archive

- ▼ [2016](#) (71)
 - [April](#) (5)
 - ▼ [March](#) (20)
 - [Thank You, Population Geographers!](#)
 - [Putting a Global Price Tag on Eating Meat](#)
 - [Reality versus Perception of How Many Muslims Live...](#)
 - [Global Health and the Environment](#)
 - [The New York Times Primer on Demography](#)
 - [Urban Shrinkage in Russia](#)
 - [The Demographics of Happiness \(and Unhappiness\)](#)
 - [Jury Demographics](#)
 - [Income Inequality and Its Demographic Discontents](#)
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Posted by [John Weeks](#) at 7:47 PM

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[SCOTUS and Abortion Rights--A New Chapter?](#)

[Keeping Global Migration in Perspective](#)

► [February](#) (22)

► [January](#) (24)

► [2015](#) (240)

► [2014](#) (285)

► [2013](#) (294)

► [2012](#) (298)

► [2011](#) (310)

► [2010](#) (166)

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