



Vital Choices: How the Community Sees Women's Healthcare After the Election

Students and faculty discuss their views and predictions on the effects of the election results concerning reproductive rights.

Celine Wang, Assistant Features Editor

On Election Day, Upper School Math Teacher Kasia Williams sat in front of her computer, watching the electoral votes come in. As the decisive swing states turned red one by one, it seemed like the Republicans were winning the race. Seeing that her preferred candidate would not win, she said she felt a mix of confusion and numbness. After finally processing Harris' defeat, she said the first thing that came to mind was abortion rights.

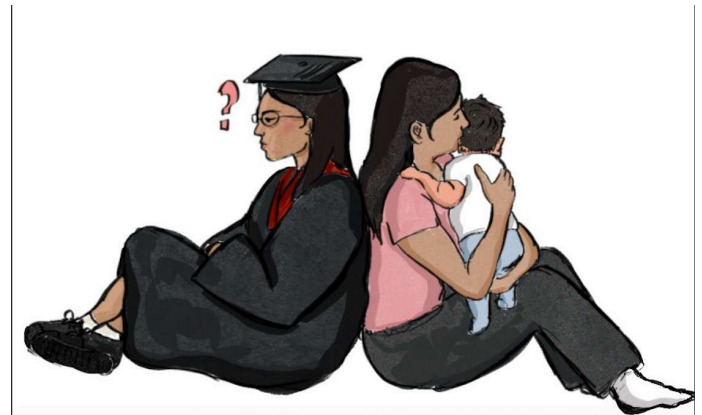
"I have a lot of fear," Williams said about the future of reproductive rights for her children. "Wherever [my kids] are at school, I am hoping, if they're in a state that does not allow abortion, I can always fly them home because we have the financial resources to do that. But some people don't have the resources."

After newly-elected President Donald Trump won the election, with his administration taking shape, there has been concerns surrounding reproductive rights, especially about Project 2025, a far-right plan to guide the federal government once Trump comes into office. As a part of the plan, Project 2025 calls for the ending of federal funding for abortion, according to the Project 2025 website. However, Trump has denied allegations about his involvement with Project 2025, leading many to question if women's healthcare will be negatively impacted under his term in office.

Williams lived in Poland, a Catholic country that has a strictly enforced ban on abortion, according to the Center for Reproduction Rights, before immigrating the U.S. Poland is one of only four countries in the world that only allows abortion when the woman's life or health is at risk or if the pregnancy resulted from a criminal act.

Williams, a mother of three, said she feels that abortion is a personal choice.

"Abortion care is family planning," Williams said. "Sometimes you need abortion care because the child you wanted is not going to be okay. It's not as they show you in some ads where you're ripping the baby limb by limb. Technically, they're not developed. It's a collection of cells that is becoming a baby more and more every day. I personally feel like it's better for both the mother and the fetus just to [have an abortion] and start over if you want to have babies, or [have an abortion] and go back to your life."



Illustrated by Alexa Liu

After seeing the results of the election, Williams said she was interested in Trump supporters' positions on women's healthcare because of her concerns about reproductive rights.

"The morning after the election, I called my father-in-law, who definitely voted for Trump three times," Williams said. "I asked him, very respectfully, and it took me 30 seconds to get the question out: 'How do you feel about abortion accidents and the fact that some women are dying in Texas right now, or [that] some women have to flee to have a selective abortion because one of their twins has died and it's going to kill the other one unless it gets removed from the uterus?' And he was very polite and very helpful. He pretty much said that it's a state's problem and that he did not personally see it as a Trump issue."

Harris and Trump supporters have very different views on the importance of women's healthcare policies. 29% of Trump supporters said that abortion was important to their votes. In comparison, 69% of those who voted for Harris said abortion was crucial to their vote and 84% said abortion should be legal in all cases, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Although there are split opinions on the morality of abortion, the statistic shows that abortion was not a key factor in considering the candidates for a lot of citizens.

Head of Upper School Beth Slattery said students were considerate of each other's political views following the election.

"2020 was weird because we weren't in school, but in 2016, I felt that the school was a lot more volatile and a lot more feelings," Slattery said. "This year, people were respectful, in my observation, to one another and understanding to one another, and not trying to be provocative. Even in the time period leading up to the election itself, I felt even people who might have disagreed with one another weren't doing things to poke the bear."

Parker Rockwell '27 and Luke Rascoff '27, two of the three co-hosts of the HW Media podcast "Crossing the Line: Borders and Beyond," talk about their respective sides in the political debate. In the podcast, Rockwell and Rascoff engage in debates on the viewpoints of the right and the left, respectively, and have conflicting opinions on the impact on women's healthcare in the future.

Taking the right stance in the podcast, Rockwell said he thinks the legality of abortion will be a state-by-state case and the Trump administration will not ban abortion federally.

"In general, abortion is not going to be impacted," Rockwell said. "In the last Trump presidency, we saw the Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade. That gave the states the option to decide. I don't think that Trump is against any federal ban or approval of abortion, but that we're going to continue to see it on a state-by-state basis. The federal government [will not] block or completely legalize it, and instead [will] let the states choose and let the people of the states choose."

On the other hand, Rascoff said he disagrees with the idea that abortion will be state-by-state issue and that Trump's administration will have an impact on abortion federally.

"There's a lot that Trump could do as president without just pushing forward a legislative national abortion ban, which might not be as likely," Rascoff said. "He could use his executive authority to go after the dispersion of the abortion pill, for example. He could attempt to gut or even eliminate entirely Medicare or Medicaid, which he's tried to do in the past. He could try to cause punishments for women who obtain abortions, which is something that he said in 2016 that women should be punished if they receive an abortion. Trump could just allow all of these, in my opinion, very repressive state laws, to continue on."

Rascoff said he is concerned about the erosion of women's rights under anti-abortion laws.

"There are already states that are either attempting to implement or have implemented laws that restrict the ability of women to travel to receive abortions," Rascoff said. "The laws may even attempt to criminalize women for receiving abortions, or even tracking women through things like period apps and all of these are things that, even if Trump doesn't implement on the federal level, I would argue, are already violating people's rights. A Democratic President, someone like Kamala Harris would have attempted to stop whereas Trump will allow it to happen."

Upper School History and Gender Studies Teacher Lilas Lane said she believes that the general public does place an emphasis on women's health.

"Americans do care about women's health care, and a significant majority of Americans believe that women should have choice over their fertility and access to safe, affordable reproductive health care, including abortions," Lane said. "The fact that Americans voted to support abortion rights in seven of the 10 states that carried the issue on the ballot in Nov. 2024, but also voted to elect Donald Trump in those same states, suggests that many Americans have separated Donald Trump from reproductive rights issues."

Although one may not agree with all of a candidate's stances on issues, there are certain values that they do agree with. In the context of the election, the economy, healthcare, the justice system, immigration and the administration over crimes are the main issues, according to the Pew Research Center. However, each candidate weighed each concern differently. For Trump supporters, polls show that the economy, immigration and violent

crime are of the most concern, while Harris supporters are more interested in health care and Supreme Court appointments, according to the Pew Research Center. With Trump winning the popular vote, election results show that the American public is more concerned about other issues in comparison to the potential decline for women's healthcare.

Lane said that Trump has focused abortion rights as a state's choice and that most voted for him based on other concerns.

"Trump was effective in distancing himself from the abortion controversy in the last two years, claiming that his success in appointing conservative justices to the Supreme Court to overturn Roe v. Wade was not about ending abortion access in the U.S. but about returning the decision to the states," Lane said. "For many people, this contradiction seems baffling. But it is clear from the last election that while a majority of Americans believe that women should have reproductive choice and safe health care, their vote for president was based on something else."

As early applications have come to an end, Lane said female students have been concerned about abortion bans in states where they have applied for college. Although reproductive rights may be on a state agenda, Lane said there are politicians in certain states who are pushing for a ban for abortion following Trump's election.

"While I don't think that Trump really cares about reproductive issues much one way or the other, and potentially recognizes the political poison they represent, I do think that there are many supporters, advisors and Republican politicians who intend to push a radical anti-choice agenda with the aim to pass a federal ban on abortion," Lane said. "It is difficult to predict what might happen, but it is concerning to think that a minority view might succeed in imposing itself on a majority of Americans who support women's health and abortion rights. Regardless, the fact that so many women have their health at risk, and their choice limited, in a country that values freedom and equality is shocking and disheartening."

Jasmine Sorgen '25 said that the possible abortion ban is not a big concern for her when considering options for college.

"I already wanted to stay in California, but when I was looking at schools, I was very much against anything in the south," Sorgen said. "Not necessarily because I was worried that I would get pregnant and have to fly somewhere else, but just because of the political ecosystem in general. I have the resources to go somewhere and get an abortion."

Sorgen said she is concerned about the potential supervision over women's reproductive health.

"We already saw an effect from the first term, where Trump put conservative justices in to eventually overturn Roe v. Wade," said Sorgen. "In this term, we will see more restrictions on birth control pills. Because he's not running for another term, he will be a lot more radical with Project 2025, which he has denied any connection to, but I do think that he is working with those people. They talked about monitoring every woman who's pregnant and monitoring their miscarriages abortions, which I don't think will be that extreme, but I definitely think that there will be a lot of surveillance that we maybe didn't have previously."