



PROTECT LIFE MICHIGAN

2024

OPERATION ZERO

IMPACT REPORT

# Introduction

Operation Zero is a strategic initiative with the ambitious goal to reduce public support for elective abortion to zero. We believe that by directing our efforts towards such an ambitious vision we can see lasting progress towards the end of violence against unborn children in our lifetime.

Since the overturning of Roe v. Wade, the pro-life movement has been caught flat-footed. As a result, we have lost ballot initiatives in states like Ohio, Kansas, Montana, Arizona, and many more. The most devastating for Protect Life Michigan was Proposal 3's passage in 2022, as well as the subsequent repeal of protections for unborn children by the Michigan Legislature.

As a result of these many losses, many people in the pro-life movement, as well as the Republican Party, have been left to think that the issue of abortion is a losing issue and that violence against unborn children is here to stay. This has resulted in organizations arguing for mild restrictions (e.g. parental consent or regulating clinics) instead of also setting their sights on the abolition of abortion. This retreat from the core purpose of the pro-life movement (to end abortion) will ultimately result in the very outcome we wish to prevent - the permanence of abortion.

At Protect Life Michigan, we recognize that public opinion is not on our side and that the number one barrier to protection for the unborn is the current state of public opinion. Further, we have developed the strategies necessary to bring about that public opinion change.

Operation Zero began in 2024 as an effort to prove that our strategies can scale and deliver broad and lasting public opinion change on abortion. With the success we have seen in 2024, we are prepared to scale and expand Operation Zero across Michigan, as well as export it to all corners of the United States through partner groups.

We invite you to learn about Operation Zero and join us in the fight to end public support for elective abortion in our lifetime.

# Executive Summary

Operation Zero, launched by Protect Life Michigan in 2024, is a strategic initiative designed to reduce public support for elective abortion to zero by leveraging persuasion tactics and grassroots engagement. This report highlights the success of the initial trial run in Novi, Michigan, demonstrating the potential for Operation Zero to scale across the state and nationally.

## Key insights from the 2024 campaign include:

- Youth Persuasion:** Individuals under 29 were significantly more likely (2-5 times) to change their views on abortion compared to older age groups. College campuses and younger communities remain the primary focus for future efforts.
- Public Opinion Shift:** The trial run in Novi resulted in a net 7.96% swing towards supporting abortion bans, with a 4.7% decrease in general support for abortion and a 3.26% increase in support for restrictions.
- Persuasion Pipeline:** Operation Zero utilizes a four-step persuasion pipeline:
  - Priming the population with messages enhancing receptivity.
  - Challenging key assumptions about abortion.
  - Engaging in direct, empathetic personal conversations.
  - Reinforcing messages with abortion victim photography and community-wide saturation through omnichannel strategies.
- Targeted Messaging:** The campaign employed customized messages tailored to specific demographics, using psychological principles like social priming and habituation to create lasting opinion changes. Victim photography proved highly effective, shifting 67% of individuals towards a more pro-life stance.
- Cost Efficiency:** The campaign found that it costs approximately \$38 to convert one person from supporting abortion to opposing it. Operation Zero aims to reduce this cost through scalable processes and increased use of technology.

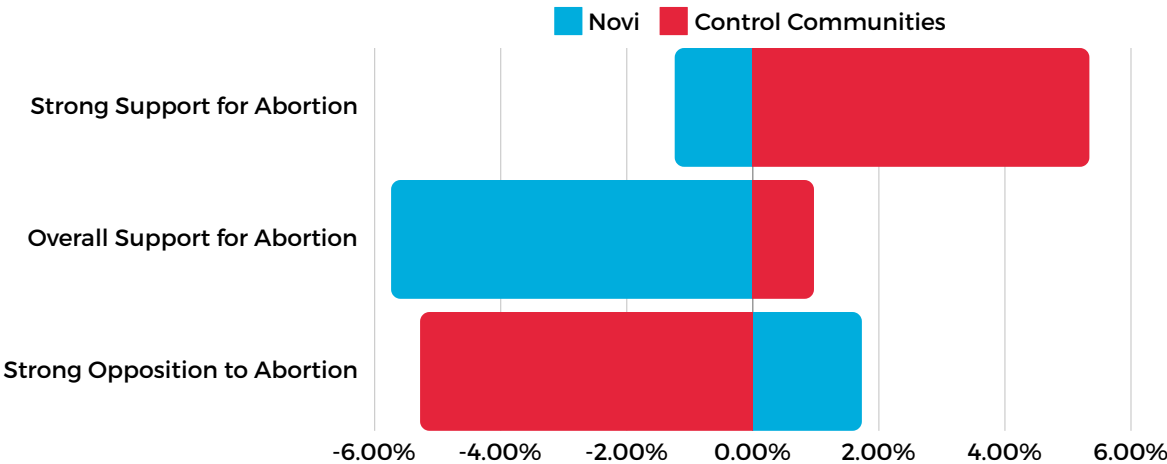
Moving forward, Protect Life Michigan plans to expand its efforts, particularly targeting college-aged individuals and moderate communities, while addressing political and identity barriers that hinder support for pro-life legislation. The success of Operation Zero in shifting public opinion signals that, with broader application, this strategy could lead to significant cultural change on abortion in the U.S.

# The 2024 Operation Zero Trial Run & Proof of Concept

In 2024, we knew we needed a strategy to focus on public persuasion that could scale to campuses and communities across the state. We developed a micro-version of that strategy to test in Novi, Michigan from March-August of 2024. We enlisted outside polling firms to measure the impact on Novi, and compared the results to polling conducted on the greater Detroit, MI metro area, as well as the state of Michigan as a whole.

## Summarizing The Impact

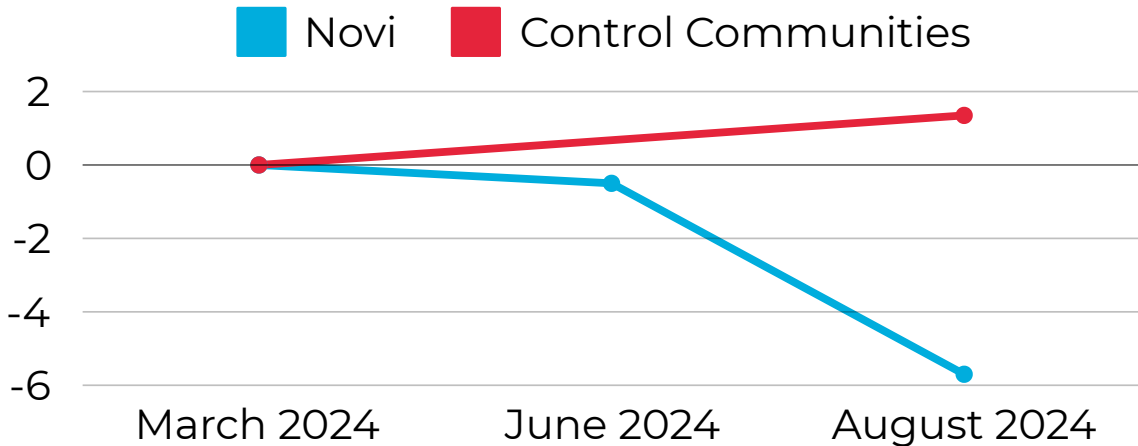
There was a statistically significant change in public opinion relative to our control groups that demonstrated the positive effect Operation Zero can quickly have on public opinion.



**5.2K** Fewer Strong Pro-Choicers in Novi as a result of Operation Zero.

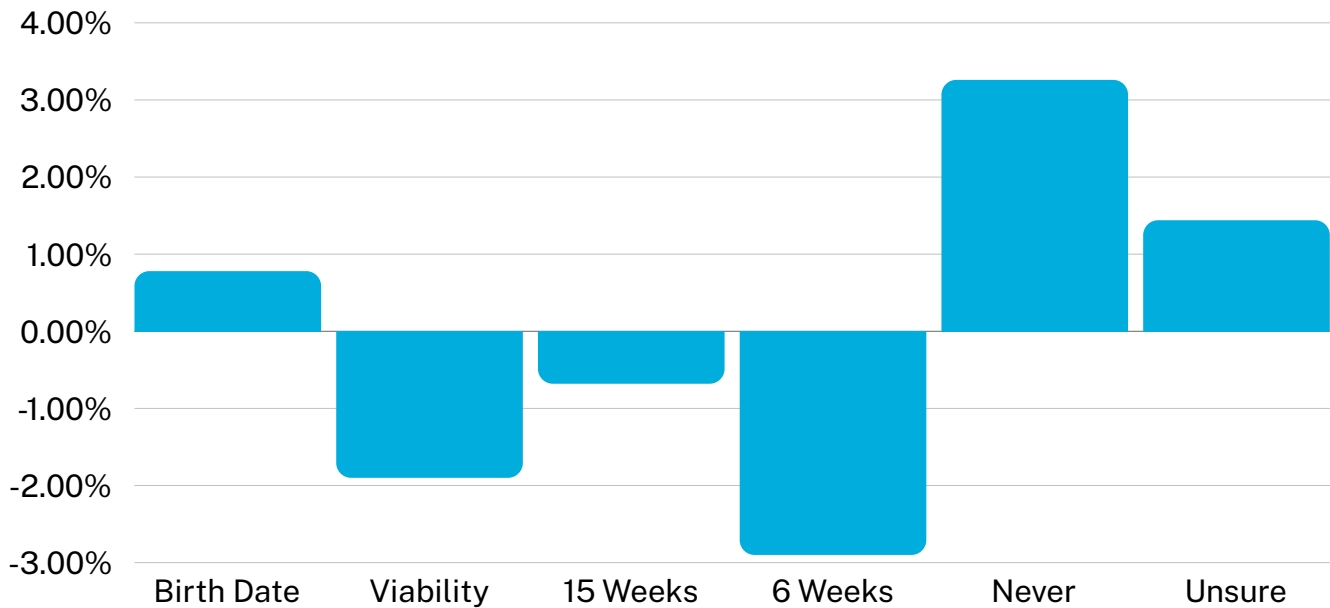
**2-5X** People under 29 were up to 5x more likely to change their mind than older people.

## Change in Support for Abortion Comparison



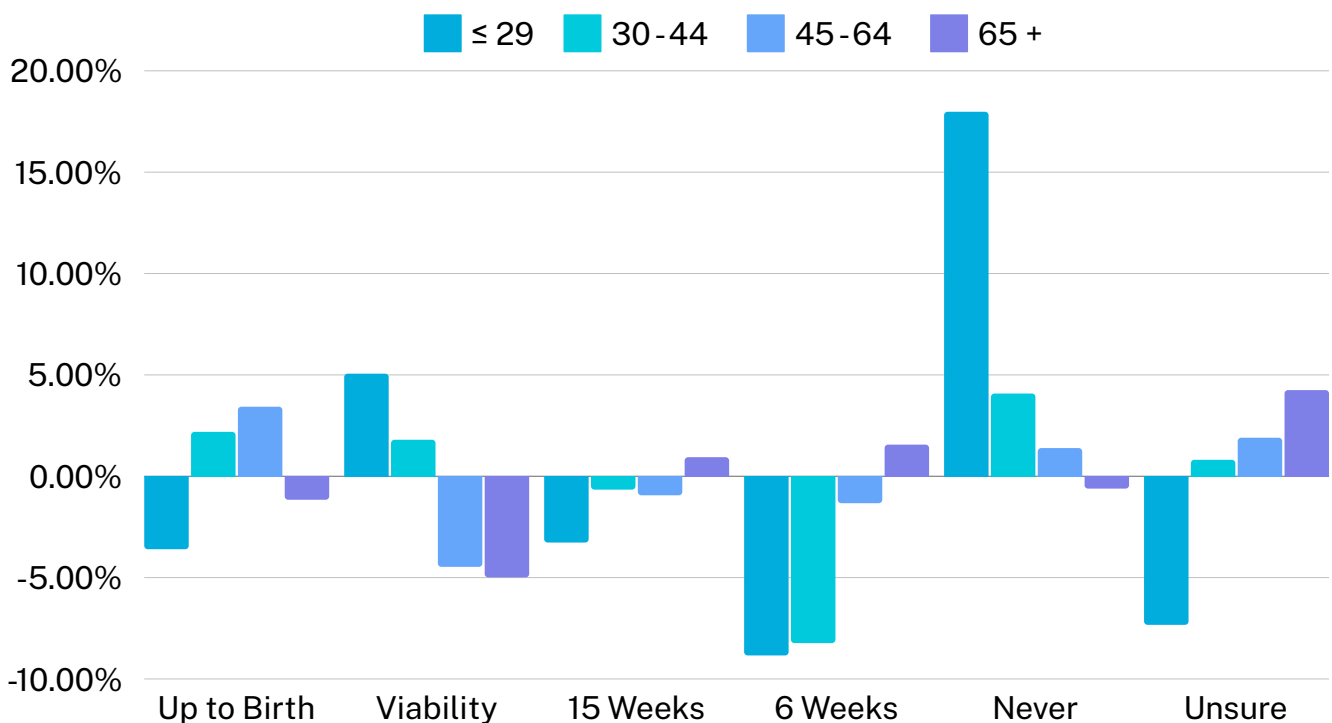
# Effect on Support for Abortion Restrictions

Summed support for abortion decreased by 4.70%, while support for a ban on abortion increased by 3.26%. That is a 7.96% net swing in support for banning abortion in our target community.



## Change in Support by Age Bracket

When we examined the increase in support for an abortion ban, the < 29-year-old bracket was 2-5x more likely to be more supportive of an abortion ban after our persuasion campaign.



# The Core of Operation Zero

## 2024 was a pilot of new strategies to scale pro-life persuasion

We took what we knew about pro-life persuasion (how to use effective dialogue, compelling stories, and powerful imagery) and piloted ways to enhance its effectiveness and expand reach to an entire community.

### YOUTH DRIVEN AND FOCUSED

Reaching and engaging the youth is built into Protect Life Michigan's DNA. Operation Zero uses the youth we work with to reach communities and campuses and make these young people lifelong advocates for the unborn.

### MANUFACTURED CONVERSATIONS

We know we don't have the manpower to speak with every pro-choice individual personally. Therefore, we use technology and advertising to have "manufactured conversations" with entire communities at once to supplement in-person persuasion efforts.

### OMNICHANNEL SATURATION

For a radical cultural shift to occur, people need to be confronted with the pro-life message and the reality of abortion daily. Our strategy saturates a community or campus for months with the pro-life message through every available communication channel (i.e. omnichannel).

### DIRECTED EFFECTS

We use data to inform our advertising and outreach, recognizing that the same message that moves one demographic may not move another. We better invest our resources by tailoring our strategy to direct particular effects (based on demographics, timing, geography, etc.).

# Using Psychology

Changing minds about moral questions is as much psychological & emotional as it is informational. We leverage that fact.

The psychology of persuasion is a growing field of study for businesses, politicians, and social reform organizations. We have invested significant resources in researching how to refine our strategies to leverage human psychology effectively to change more minds, more quickly.

## 01 Social Priming

We strategically activate certain mindsets (e.g. open mindedness) and combat problematic assumptions (e.g. women will die) before entering our persuasion phase of the campaign. We do this by priming a community with targeted advertising.

## 02 Social Habituation

Psychology and experience confirm that repeated exposure to a message increases acceptance and identity shifts. We saturate the physical and digital environment of a community with complimentary messaging to engrain it in people's consciousness.

## 03 Social Pressure

By pushing the norm we wish to see advanced in the world with strategic messaging and public awareness, we can capitalize on individuals sense of belonging and conformity to accept the pro-life message.

# Our Persuasion Pipeline

The effectiveness of Operation Zero was in large part due to the effectiveness of our newly developed “persuasion pipeline.” This pipeline is a series of steps we executed within the community to deliver a narrative and persuasion campaign that was designed to deliver the maximum persuasive effect possible. This pipeline can now be duplicated, exported, and adapted to different communities, campaigns, and purposes to scale our movement’s ability to change minds and save lives.

## The Steps of the Pipeline

**Pre-Work: Public Opinion Polling of Target & Control Communities**

### Step 1

#### Prime the Population

We prime the population with messaging that enhances the persuadability and receptiveness of our core, possibly more challenging, message that follows.

### Step 2

#### Assault Key Assumptions

Key assumptions about the pro-life movement hold back popular persuadability. These include the lie that pro-life laws will kill women, or that few people oppose abortion.

### Step 3

#### Personal Persuasion

The most likely form of persuasion is personal and conversational, yielding a 32% mind change rate. We deploy high-effort, direct conversational outreach to targeted households..

### Step 4

#### Community Conviction

The final step of the persuasion pipeline relies on delivering a challenging, intuitive rebuke of abortion through widespread distribution of abortion victim photography.

**Post-Work: Public Opinion Polling of Target & Control Communities**

# The 2024 Internship

We leveraged the dedication of dozens of young people to engage a community with a layered persuasion campaign for three months.

The success of a years-long persuasion initiative like Protect Life Michigan is developing needs dedicated manpower and effective tactics.

By leveraging our network of student organizations across the state, we are able to recruit full-time, paid interns to be the manpower behind our summer of activity.

In 2024, these brave young people talked to thousands of pro-choice people in 3 months, delivered literature to over 30,000 homes, and got verbal confirmation of over 500 mind changes in the community.



**Dozens of full-time activists living on-site in a community doing daily activism leads to significant change in public opinion.**

**Further, they are now dedicated to a lifetime of pro-life work, ensuring we can grow for years to come.**

# Tactics

Persuasion requires repetition and the engagement of multiple mental schemas to produce lasting and significant opinion change. By engaging each individual via multiple means, we can accelerate our persuasive effectiveness.

## Digital Saturation

- Streaming TV Ads
- Google Display Network
- YouTube Advertising
- Digital Banner Placements
- Social Media Engagement

## Legacy Messaging

- AI-Driven Voicemail Drops
- Direct Mailers
- Digital Billboards
- Yard Signs
- Text Messages and Phone Calls

## Deep Canvassing

- Targeted Conversations on Doorsteps
- Focus on Long, Empathetic Conversations and Story-Telling

## Public Outreach

- Roadside Banners & Displays
- Lit Drops at Doorsteps
- Conversational Street Outreach
- Video Display Trucks

**By developing a layered messaging campaign, we were able to confront the target community with the pro-life message dozens of times, leading to lasting effectiveness of our message.**

# Abortion Victim Photography

A central part of our strategy was the strategic use of abortion victim photography to change public opinion. We have shown through hundreds of thousands of conversations, numerous national studies, and historical precedent that no other single tactic is more likely to move public opinion at scale than victim photography.

Operation Zero wrapped victim photography within a larger persuasion effort to maximize its reach and persuasive effect.

## Historical Case

Whether it was the abolition of slavery, reforming child labor laws in the U.S., or fighting for civil rights, victim imagery has been a central tenet of virtually every successful social reform movement in history.

We did not invent the effective use of victim photography, we merely adapted it to the pro-life cause.

Just as William Wilberforce, Emmet Till's mother, and Martin Luther King Jr. saw the value of victim images, so must we.

## Proof in the Data

National studies in Canada and the U.S. have shown victim photography to be significantly more effective than any other mass scalable tactic in the pro-life movement.

In an age where we need to reach as many people as possible with the most effective tactics, victim photography stands alone as the single most effective strategy.

Our studies have shown that merely seeing victim photography results in 67% of people becoming more pro-life.

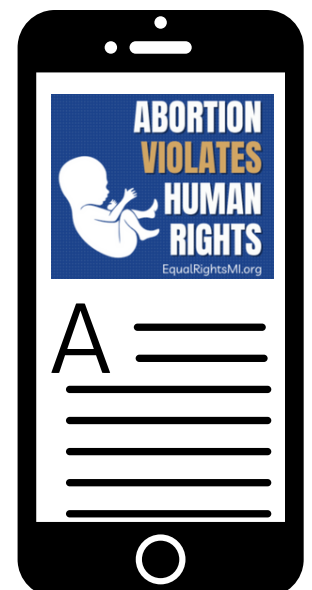
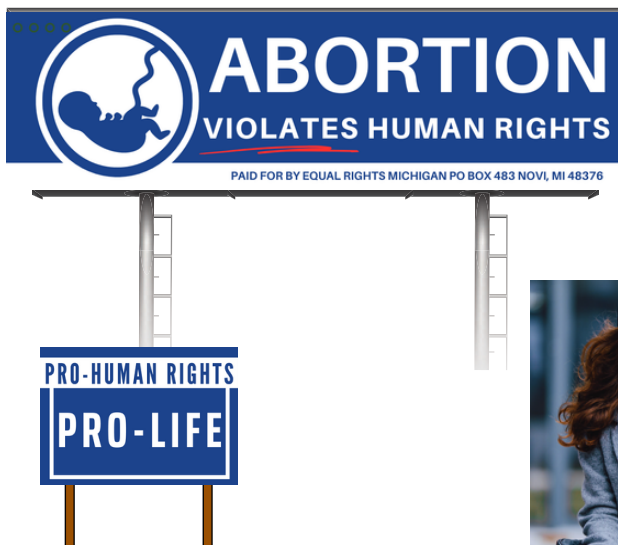


# Community Saturation

Traditional tactics like outreach and canvassing can be more effective when people are saturated and primed in their physical and digital environments.

By targeting streaming television, digital billboards, YouTube, digital display banners, digital out-of-home platforms, and more, we were able to prepare the community for our persuasion campaign and make them more receptive to our pro-life messaging.

Below are just a handful of examples of different media we used to compliment our traditional grassroots strategies, both digital and physical.



# Our Core Message

## The Human Rights Argument

It is vital that our persuasion messaging is consistent and persuasive. The core of whatever message we use must be translated to various mediums (billboards, mailers, ads, conversations, etc.) in a way that they mutually echo each other and repeatedly point people to our core argument.

At Protect Life Michigan, we have had hundreds of thousands of conversations with pro-choice people and have tested numerous messaging strategies over the past 15 years. No single argument for our position has proven to be as effective as the “Human Rights Argument,” which we have adopted from the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform.



**By positioning the case against abortion as one that is anti-violence and pro-human rights, we enter into their worldview and change their perspective from within.**

After training our staff and students in pro-life apologetics and navigating complex pro-choice arguments, we then prepare them with the human rights argument. This argument is a simple and effective way to position the pro-life case against abortion in its more powerful way possible: a position focused on human rights, equality, and non-violence.

This simple messaging permeates every message, conversation, advertisement, mailer, and tactic we deploy. This engrains on the mindset of community members across our target area that being pro-life is pro-human rights - a core tenet of their existing worldview.

# Moving Forward

## How do we apply the lessons learned and eliminate public support for abortion?

2024 proved that it is possible to change public opinion on abortion in a significant way. A shift in public opinion of nearly 7% is a significant result that should be replicated in other areas of the state and nation. We have 4 key takeaways that are informing our next steps as we grow our efforts to make abortion unthinkable through the expansion of Operation Zero.

### Takeaway

### Details

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#### **Expand Our >35 Years Old Efforts**

College-aged individuals were 2-5x more likely to change their opinions than older age brackets. We need to expand the reach and depth of efforts on campus to capitalize on the most persuadable population.

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#### **Strategically Target Moderate Communities**

During the summer, when colleges are not in session, we can strategically engage persuadable, politically moderate communities using primarily student activists.

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#### **Develop Scalable Campaign Processes**

It costs roughly \$38 to switch a single person from generally supporting abortion to opposing it. We can reduce this conversion cost by optimizing processes, enhancing our use of technology, improving opportunities for volunteers, and targeting our efforts to the most affordable populations first.

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#### **Break Through Political and Identity Barriers**

Numerous data sets from 2024 confirm that we can reduce support for abortion. However, we have also found difficulty in translating that to supporting abortion bans and legislation. We must break through identity and political barriers that are still making legal protections for the unborn difficult.