

Did recession lead to increase in vasectomies?

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Wisconsin researchers found link between economy and procedure rates, but another expert says it's not proof.

(HealthDay)—The financial crisis of 2008 and lingering economic woes are having an impact on men's reproductive decisions, new research suggests.

"With the current recession, it's pushing more guys to get a vasectomy done," said study author Dr. Anand Shridharani, a men's reproductive and sexual health specialist at Erlanger Health System, in Knoxville, Tenn.

In 2009, many urologists reported anecdotally that they were fielding more requests for vasectomies, suspecting the downturn in the [economy](#) as a reason. So Shridharani's team attempted to find some numbers to back up the reported trend.

Shridharani conducted the study while at the Medical College of Wisconsin and was scheduled to present the findings Tuesday at the joint meeting of the International Federation of Fertility Societies and American Society for Reproductive Medicine, held in Boston.

The researchers looked at the numbers of men having vasectomies at their facility in Wisconsin from June 2005 through October 2012. They also tracked the median income in Wisconsin during those years and the median U.S. income.

"We found as the median income for Wisconsin declined, the rate of vasectomies annually went up," Shridharani said. In 2005, 91 men had a vasectomy and the median state income was \$54,269. In 2010, 239 men had a vasectomy and the income had dropped to \$50,547.

"Comparing the number of vasectomies performed per year from 2005 to 2008 versus 2009 to 2012, the difference [an increase] is statistically significant," Shridharani said.

"The suspected reason is that having an unexpected child would increase the cost of living," he noted. "People are having children older, and older people are more in tune with what children cost," Shridharani suggested.

In a vasectomy, the sperm-transport system is interrupted by blocking the structure known as the vas deferens, which carries sperm from the testicle to the urethra. If a man changes his mind about wanting children, a reversal often can be done.

One expert not involved with the new study said that while the state of the economy definitely has an effect on family planning, the study does not prove definitely that it was the driver for vasectomy request.

"I'm not convinced that the increase can be tied to the recession," said

Laura Lindberg, a senior research associate at the Guttmacher Institute.

"There may be an increase in vasectomies due to the recession, but this study doesn't prove that," Lindberg said. "He can't show that the guys who came in [for a [vasectomy](#)] had lower incomes," she pointed out.

"Vasectomy remains a method chosen by higher-income, more highly educated men, so you have a real divide. White, educated men have vasectomies and men of color, and those not highly educated, do not," she added.

The reasons, Lindberg speculated, center around cultural and masculinity issues, with some [men](#) feeling the procedure makes them less manly.

The economy does affect [family planning](#) decisions, Lindberg noted. In the summer of 2009, Guttmacher interviewed 947 women, aged 18 to 34, with household incomes of less than \$75,000. Sixty-four percent said that with the state of the economy at that time, they could not afford to have a baby right then. The more financially strapped they were, the more likely they were to say this, Lindberg said.

Because the new Wisconsin study was presented at a medical meeting, the data and conclusions should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: To learn more about vasectomy, visit the [Association of Reproductive Health Professionals](#).

[Abstract](#)

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