Induced abortion 1990 to 2014: Global, regional, and subregional trends


FIAPAC
October 2016
WHY ESTIMATE ABORTION INCIDENCE?

- To help monitor trends in abortion and unintended pregnancy
- To motivate investments in prevention of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion
- To estimate the number of unsafe abortions
- To help ensure an informed discourse on abortion
Objectives

PRIMARY:

- To calculate subregional, regional and global levels and trends in abortion incidence in 1990 to 2014

SECONDARY:

- To calculate the proportion of pregnancies that end in abortion
- To examine whether abortion rates vary with the legal status of abortion
Key findings

ABORTION INCIDENCE IN 2010-2014:

- 56 million induced abortions occurred each year, on average
- There were 35 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44
- One in four pregnancies ended in abortion
- 73% of abortions were obtained by married women
- The average abortion rate was similar in countries with restrictive and liberal abortion laws
Key findings

ABORTION TRENDS SINCE 1990-1994:

- The abortion rate
  - fell in the developed world
  - did not change in the developing world

- The percent of pregnancies ending in abortion
  - decreased in the developed world
  - increased in the developing world
Methodology
Abortion estimation: past and present

BASIS OF PRIOR ABORTION ESTIMATES:

- Available abortion data
- Informal inference to countries without data

BASIS OF NEW ESTIMATES:

- Available abortion data
- Data on factors associated with abortion incidence
- Hierarchical time series model
Conceptual Framework

Predictors of overall rates

Abortions among women:

Total number of abortions =

with unmet need for contraception +

using contraception (with failure) +

with no need for contraception
Conceptual Framework

Predictors of subgroup rates

Abortions to women with unmet need

- Frequency of sex
- Fecundity
- Strength of motivation to avoid an unplanned birth
- Ability to act on fertility intentions
Percent of women 15-44 represented by at least one observation on abortion incidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N America</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
About 56 million abortions took place each year in 2010-2014
The annual number of abortions increased in developing regions

**Developed countries**

- 11.8 in 1990
- 10.2 in 1994
- 8.7 in 2000
- 7.7 in 2005
- 6.7* in 2010

**Developing countries**

- 38.6 in 1990
- 39.5 in 1994
- 41.2 in 2000
- 44.7 in 2005
- 49.6* in 2010

* Estimate

The global abortion rate fell slightly
The abortion rate fell significantly in the developed world, but not in the developing world

This is reflected in the regional trends

Africa

Abortion rate per 1,000 women 15-44

Period


33 33 33 33 34

Asia

Abortion rate per 1,000 women 15-44

Period


41 37 34 34 36

Latin America

Abortion rate per 1,000 women 15-44

Period


40 40 41 44 44

© Guttmacher Institute 2016
The percent of pregnancies ending in abortion is increasing in the developing world

The abortion rate is similar in countries grouped by legal status

- Prohibited altogether or to save woman's life: 37
- Physical health: 43
- Woman's mental health: 33
- Socio-economic grounds: 31
- On request: 34

Sedgh et al., Induced abortion 1990 to 2014: Global, regional, and subregional trends, Lancet 2016
The abortion rate is higher among married women than unmarried women

Abortions per 1,000 women 15-44

World
Developed countries
Developing countries

Married
Unmarried

36
25
18*
33
37
27

© Guttmacher Institute 2016
Married women account for the majority of abortions

[Graph showing the percentage of abortions among married and unmarried women worldwide and by developed and developing countries. The graph indicates that married women account for the majority of abortions, typically around 73%. Unmarried women account for approximately 27% of abortions globally. In developed countries, unmarried women account for about 31% of abortions, while in developing countries, the percentage is around 27%.]

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- The decline in abortion in the developed world occurred mostly among married women
- The abortion rate has increased in Western Europe
- Prior global abortion estimates were conservatively low
Discussion and Recommendations
DISCUSSION: UNSAFE ABORTION

- Many women in developing countries with restrictive abortion laws have medically unsafe abortions

- 6.9 million women in developing countries are treated for complications from unsafe abortion each year
  - 1 out of every 5 abortions in the developing world leads to a treated complication

- At least 22,000 women died of complications from unsafe abortion in 2014
DISCUSSION: UNSAFE ABORTION

Factors to consider when assessing the safety of an abortion

– Is it performed in accordance with medical guidelines
– Does the woman risk facing criminal sanctions
– Is the woman at risk of stigma or social isolation
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

- We have better estimates than ever!

- Abortion rates have continued to decline in all subregions of the developed world

- Even where abortion laws are restrictive, many women who need an abortion are able to obtain it (but not necessarily safely).
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address barriers to contraceptive use in developing countries
  - Improve the *quality* of family planning services

- Ensure women have access to safe abortion care
  - Abortion is prevalent throughout the world

- Ensure access to post-abortion care
  - Millions of women experience complications from unsafe abortions
UK Government
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

DISCUSSION: UNMET NEED FOR CONTRACEPTION

- 225 million women in the developing world want to avoid getting pregnant but are not using a modern method of contraception

- Women’s reasons for not using a method include:
  - Concerns about side effects and health risks of methods
  - Thinking they can avoid pregnancy without a method
  - Stigma related to not being married