Key topics

• Global trends in the incidence of abortion and unintended pregnancy
• Abortion laws around the world
• The safety of abortions obtained
• Consequences of unsafe abortion
• Characteristics of women who have abortions
About 99 million unintended pregnancies and 56 million abortions take place each year.
Unintended pregnancy and abortion rates declined globally

- Unintended pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15–44
- Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44
- Abortions per 100 unintended pregnancies
Unintended pregnancy rates remain higher in the developing world than in the developed world

**Developed world**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Unintended pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15–44</th>
<th>Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44</th>
<th>Abortions per 100 unintended pregnancies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Unintended pregnancy and abortion rates are highest in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa.
The abortion rate is similar in countries with restrictive and liberal abortion laws

Abortion rates per 1,000 women 15-44

- Prohibited altogether or to save woman's life: 37
- Physical health: 43
- Woman's mental health: 32
- Socio-economic grounds: 31
- On request: 34

What is an unsafe abortion?

- WHO and Guttmacher recently developed three categories of safety:
  - Safe abortions are those done (a) by a trained person and (b) using a WHO-approved method.
  - Less safe abortions are those that meet only one of the above criteria.
  - Least safe abortions meet neither criterion.
25 million unsafe abortions are done under unsafe conditions each year

25.1 million unsafe abortions, 2010–2014
Abortions in countries with restrictive abortion laws are more likely to be unsafe
About 3% of women in developed countries live under restrictive abortion laws

- None, to save woman's life, physical health
- To preserve mental health, socioeconomic grounds
- Without restriction

Total (1.64 billion women):
- 38%: None, to save woman's life, physical health
- 25%: To preserve mental health, socioeconomic grounds
- 37%: Without restriction

Developed regions (244 million women):
- 3%: None, to save woman's life, physical health
- 15%: To preserve mental health, socioeconomic grounds
- 81%: Without restriction

Developing regions (1.39 billion women):
- 44%: None, to save woman's life, physical health
- 27%: To preserve mental health, socioeconomic grounds
- 29%: Without restriction

Developing regions without China and India (784 million women):
- 78%: None, to save woman's life, physical health
- 9%: To preserve mental health, socioeconomic grounds
- 13%: Without restriction
Changes in legal status of abortion

- Of the 28 countries that substantially changed their abortion laws since 2000, 27 expanded the grounds for legal abortion.

- Another six countries made narrow expansions to the grounds under which abortion is legal, to include cases of rape, incest or fetal anomaly.

- In all, 33 countries expanded legal criteria for abortion between 2000 and 2017.
Almost all countries that changed their abortion laws since 2000 broadened grounds for legal abortion

Developed regions

- Monaco
- Portugal, Spain, Switzerland

Developing regions

- Bhutan, Chile, Iran, Mali, Somalia
- Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Lesotho, Niger, Togo
- Colombia, Mauritius, Swaziland
- Nepal
- Kenya
- Eritrea, Mozambique, Saint Lucia, Thailand
- Uruguay
- Nicaragua

To save woman’s life
To save woman’s life and preserve physical health
To save woman’s life and preserve physical/mental health
To save woman’s life, preserve physical/mental health, and socioeconomic reasons
Without restriction as to reason, with gestational and other requirements
In 10 legally restrictive countries, poor and rural women were particularly likely to use an untrained provider.
In 14 countries where unsafe abortion is prevalent, rural poor women are most likely to experience complications.
Women are still at risk of dying from an unsafe abortion

Global trend

Current levels

Number of deaths for every 100,000 abortions
Almost seven women per 1,000 in developing regions are treated annually for complications of induced abortion

- Developing regions*: 6.9
- Africa: 6.7
- Asia*: 8.2
- Latin America & Caribbean: 5.3

No. of treated cases per 1,000 women aged 15–44
Surgical and drug-induced abortion are both used in Europe

Belgium

Finland

France

Germany

Netherlands

Sweden

% surgical

% medication
Most women obtaining abortions are 20-39 years old

![Chart showing the percentage of women obtaining abortions by age group in different countries. The chart includes data for Scotland, Iceland, Eng. & Wales, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Switzerland, and Italy. The age groups are <19, 20-29, 30-39, and 40+. The percentages vary across countries, with most women falling within the 20-39 age group.](chart)
Most women who have had an abortion have at least one child

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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Women report a variety of reasons for obtaining an abortion

- Risk to fetal health
- Risk to maternal health
- Too young; parents/others object to pregnancy
- Wants no (more) children
- To postpone/space childbearing
- Partner-related
- Socioeconomic concerns

[Chart showing percentages of reasons for abortion across different countries]
Summary

- Unintended pregnancy rates have declined across the world, while abortion rates have held steady in the developing world.

- Though many countries have broadened the grounds for legal abortion, almost half of women still live under restrictive laws.

- Half of abortions are performed under unsafe conditions each year.

- It appears that unsafe abortions are being done under less dangerous circumstances now in some countries.

- Substantial inequities exist in the incidence of unintended pregnancy and access to safe abortion and postabortion care.

Unpublished data. Please do not share.
Recommendations

- Ensure that women have access to high quality contraceptive services
- Expand the grounds for legal abortion
- Implement policies that expand access to abortion services and post-abortion care
- Reduce the harm done by unsafe abortions in low-resource settings
Thank you

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