New Global Evidence on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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Unintended pregnancy and abortion by income, region, and the legal status of abortion: estimates from a comprehensive model for 1990-2019


Summary

Background
Unintended pregnancy and abortion estimates document trends in sexual and reproductive health and autonomy. These estimates inform and motivate investment in global health programmes and policies. Variability in the availability and reliability of data poses challenges for measuring and monitoring trends in unintended pregnancy and abortion. We developed a new statistical model that jointly estimated unintended pregnancy and abortion that aimed to better inform efforts towards global equity in sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Unintended pregnancy and abortion worldwide

Needs, cost and impact of sexual and reproductive health care in low- and middle-income countries
Unintended pregnancy and abortion are experiences shared by millions of people around the world.

Unintended pregnancy and abortion occur where abortion is broadly legal and where abortion is restricted.

In developing countries, abortion tends to be unsafe and health systems lack capacity to provide essential abortion services.

Worldwide, 121 million unintended pregnancies and 73 million abortions occurred each year, 2015-2019

48% of pregnancies were unintended

61% of unintended pregnancies ended in abortion

Unintended pregnancy and abortion occur across all country income groups

2015–2019 rate

Unintended pregnancy and abortion occur worldwide, both where abortion is broadly legal and where it is restricted

2015–2019 rate

![Bar chart showing unintended pregnancy and abortion rates by legal status of abortion](chart.png)

Adding It Up: new evidence on essential sexual and reproductive health services

Adding It Up 2019 includes 90+ services, covering:
- Modern contraception
- Pregnancy-related care
- Newborn care
- STI treatment

Evidence for 1.6 billion women of reproductive age in 132 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)

Modern contraceptive use has increased over time, but many women still have an unmet need for modern methods.

Expanded services are needed to fulfill unmet needs in LMICs

923 million women of reproductive age want to avoid a pregnancy.

218 million of them have an unmet need for modern contraception.

Large gaps persist across countries in essential maternal health services

% among women giving birth

- Receive ≥4 antenatal care visits:
  - All LMICs: 61%
  - Low-income countries: 43%
  - Lower-middle-income countries: 57%
  - Upper-middle-income countries: 78%

- Give birth in a health facility:
  - All LMICs: 76%
  - Low-income countries: 59%
  - Lower-middle-income countries: 70%
  - Upper-middle-income countries: 97%
 Investing in sexual and reproductive health care would dramatically reduce unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and maternal deaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At current levels of care</th>
<th>If all needs are met</th>
<th>Averted if all needs are met</th>
<th>% change if all needs are met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unintended pregnancies</td>
<td>111M</td>
<td>35M</td>
<td>76M</td>
<td>-68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe abortions</td>
<td>35M</td>
<td>10M</td>
<td>26M</td>
<td>-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal deaths</td>
<td>299K</td>
<td>113K</td>
<td>186K</td>
<td>-62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every $1 spent on contraceptive services beyond the current level would save $3 in the cost of maternal, newborn and abortion care because contraception reduces unintended pregnancies.

# Potential annual impacts from COVID-19–related disruptions in sexual and reproductive health services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disruption in essential SRH care</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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</table>
| 10% decline in use of short- and long-acting, reversible contraception | • 49 million additional women with unmet need for modern contraceptives  
• 15 million additional unintended pregnancies |
| 10% decline in pregnancy-related and newborn care | • 1.7 million additional women experiencing major obstetric complications without care  
• 28,000 additional maternal deaths  
• 2.6 million additional newborns experiencing major complications without care  
• 168,000 additional newborn deaths |
| 10% shift in abortions from safe to unsafe | • 3.3 million additional unsafe abortions  
• 1,000 additional maternal deaths |

For More Information

**Adding It Up 2019:**
Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019

**Abortion and unintended pregnancy:**
Unintended pregnancy and abortion by income, region, and the legal status of abortion: estimates from a comprehensive model for 1990–2019

**Global Gag Rule:**
Investigating the Early Impact of the Trump Administration’s Global Gag Rule on Sexual and Reproductive Health Service Delivery in Uganda

**The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission:**
Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission

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