

The World's Abortion Laws

Currently, 61 per cent of the world's people live in countries where induced abortion is permitted either for a wide range of reasons or without restriction as to reason. In contrast, 26 per cent of all people reside in countries where abortion is generally prohibited.

A note on terminology:

"Countries" listed on the table include independent states and, where populations exceed one million, semi-autonomous regions, territories and jurisdictions of special status. The table therefore includes Hong Kong, Northern Ireland, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Gestational Limits Key: All Countries in Category V have gestational limits of 12 weeks unless otherwise indicated. Gestational limits are calculated from the first day of the last menstrual period, which is considered to occur two weeks prior to conception. Where laws specify that gestational age limits are calculated from the date of conception, these limits have been extended by two weeks.

- " Gestational limit of 90 days
- † Gestational limit of 8 weeks
- ‡ Gestational limit of 10 weeks
- * Gestational limit of 14 weeks
- ** Gestational limit of 18 weeks
- *** Gestational limit of 24 weeks
- v Law does not limit pre-viability abortion
- o Law does not indicate gestational limit; regulatory mechanisms vary

Indications:

- R Abortion permitted in cases of rape
- I Abortion permitted in cases of incest
- F Abortion permitted in cases of fetal impairment
- S Sex selective abortion prohibited
- SA Spousal authorisation required
- U Law unclear
- PA Parental authorisation/ notification required
- R1 Abortion permitted in the case of rape of a woman with a mental disability
- ◆ Federal system in which abortion law is determined at state level; classification reflects legal status of abortion for largest number of people
- + Abortion permitted on additional enumerated grounds relating to such factors as the woman's age or capacity to care for a child
- x Recent legislation eliminated all exceptions to prohibition on abortion; availability of defense of necessity highly unlikely

Permitted to Save the Woman's Life or prohibited altogether

The most restrictive laws are those that either permit abortion only to save a woman's life or ban the procedure entirely. Many countries in this category explicitly permit abortion when a pregnancy threatens a woman's life. In other countries, laws that make no explicit exception are generally interpreted to permit abortion under life-threatening circumstances on the grounds of "necessity." Such an exception may also be recognised in national norms of medical ethics.

Countries which severely restrict abortion services. Those in bold allow abortion but in very limited circumstances which involve the mother's health.

Afghanistan	Guatemala	Marshall Islands-U	Senegal
Andorra	Guinea-Bissau	Mauritania	Solomon Islands
Angola	Haiti	Mauritius	Somalia
Antigua & Barbuda	Honduras	Mexico -◆ R/F	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Indonesia	Micronesia-U	Sudan -R
Bhutan -R/I/+	Iran	Monaco	Suriname
Brazil -R	Iraq	Myanmar	Syria -SA/PA
Brunei Darussalam	Ireland	Nicaragua-x	Tanzania
Central African Rep.	Kenya	Niger	Tonga
Chile-x	Kiribati	Nigeria	Tuvalu
Congo (Brazzaville)	Laos	Oman	Uganda
Côte d'Ivoire	Lebanon	Palau-U	United Arab Emirates -SA/PA
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Lesotho	Panama -PA/R/F	Venezuela
Dominica	Libya -PA	Papua New Guinea	West Bank & Gaza Strip
Dominican Republic	Madagascar	Paraguay	Yemen
Egypt	Malawi -SA	Philippines	
El Salvador-x	Mali -R/I	San Marino	69 Countries, 26% of
Gabon	Malta	Sao Tome & Principe	World's Population

Physical Health Grounds

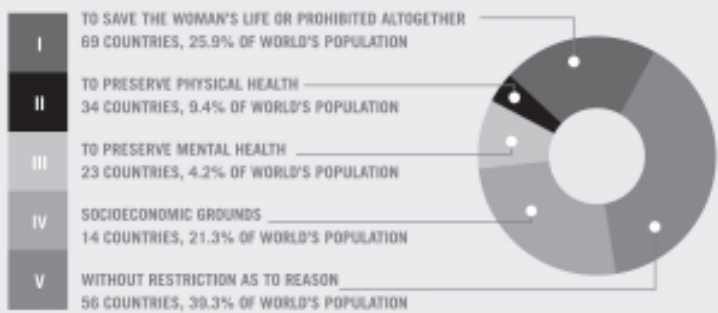
Laws that authorise abortion to protect the pregnant woman's life and physical health form Category II. These laws sometimes require that the threatened injury to health be either serious or permanent. While laws in this category do not explicitly permit abortion to protect mental health, many are phrased broadly enough—referring simply to "health" or "therapeutic" indications—to be interpreted to allow abortion on mental health grounds.

Countries which explicitly allow abortion for health reasons

Argentina-R1	Djibouti	Liechtenstein-+	Rwanda
Bahamas	Ecuador-R1	Maldives-SA	Saudi Arabia-SA/PA
Benin-R/I/F	Equatorial	Morocco-SA	Togo-R/I/F
Bolivia-R/I	Guinea-SA/PA	Mozambique	Uruguay-R
Burkina Faso-R/I/F	Eritrea - R/I	Pakistan	Vanuatu
Burundi	Ethiopia-R/I/F/+	Peru	Zimbabwe-R/I/F
Cameroon-R	Grenada	Poland-PA/R/I/F	
Chad-F	Guinea-R/I/F	Qatar-F	34 Countries,
Comoros	Jordan	Rep. of Korea	9.4% of World's
Costa Rica	Kuwait-SA/PA/F	-SA/R/I/F	Population



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WORLD'S ABORTION LAWS

A number of countries explicitly recognise **three other grounds** for abortion: when pregnancy results from rape; when pregnancy results from incest; and when there is a high probability of fetal impairment. Countries that recognise these grounds may fall within any of the categories described above. In addition, countries in any category may restrict access to abortion by requiring a woman to obtain parental or spousal authorisation.

Mental Health Grounds

Laws in Category III expressly permit abortion to protect the woman's mental health, as well as her life and physical health. The interpretation of "mental health" varies around the world. It can encompass, for example, psychological distress suffered by a woman who is raped or severe strain caused by social or economic circumstances.

Countries which allow abortion services for other health reasons, particularly those emanating from psychological distress due to rape and incest

Algeria	Jamaica-PA	Saint Kitts & Nevis	Thailand-R/F
Botswana-R/I/F	Liberia-R/I/F	Saint Lucia-R/I	Trinidad & Tobago
Colombia-R/I/F	Malaysia	Samoa	
Gambia	Namibia-R/I/F	Seychelles-R/I/F	
Ghana-R/I/F	Nauru	Sierra Leone	23 Countries,
Hong Kong-R/I/F	New Zealand-I/F	Spain-R/F	4.2% of World's
Israel-R/I/F/+	Northern Ireland	Swaziland-R/I/F	Population

Socioeconomic Grounds

Laws in Category IV, which allow abortion on socio-economic grounds, explicitly permit consideration of such factors as a woman's economic resources, her age, her marital status, and the number of her children. Such laws are generally interpreted liberally.

Countries which allow abortion based on a woman's socio-economic capacity in having children and maintaining a family

Australia-♦	Fiji	India-PA/R/F	Grenadines-R/I/F
Barbados-PA/R/I/F	Finland-R/F/+	Japan-SA	Taiwan-SA/PA/I/F
Belize-F	Great Britain-F	Luxembourg-PA/R/F	Zambia-F
Cyprus-R/F	Iceland-R/I/F/+	Saint Vincent &	

14 Countries, 21.3% of World's Population

Without Restriction as to Reason

Finally, the least restrictive abortion laws are those that allow abortion without restriction as to reason. Most countries with such laws, however, impose a limit on the period during which women can readily access the procedure.

Countries where abortion services are available on demand

Albania	Fmr. Yugoslav Rep.	Romania*
Armenia	Macedonia-PA	Russian Fed.
Austria*	Georgia	Serbia-PA
Azerbaijan	Germany*	Singapore***
Bahrain	Greece-PA	Slovak Rep.-PA
Belarus	Guyana†	Slovenia-PA
Belgium*	Hungary	South Africa
Bosnia-Herzegovina-PA	Italy*-PA	Sweden**
Bulgaria	Kazakhstan	Switzerland
Cambodia*	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Canada°	Latvia	Tunisia
Cape Verde	Lithuania	Turkey‡-SA/PA
China°-S	Moldova	Turkmenistan
Croatia-PA	Mongolia	Ukraine
Cuba-PA	Montenegro-PA	United Statesv-♦PA
Czech Rep.-PA	Nepal-S	Uzbekistan
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea°	Netherlandsv	Vietnam°
Denmark-PA	Norway-PA	
Estonia	Portugal‡-PA	56 Countries, 39.3% of
France*	Puerto Ricov	World's Population