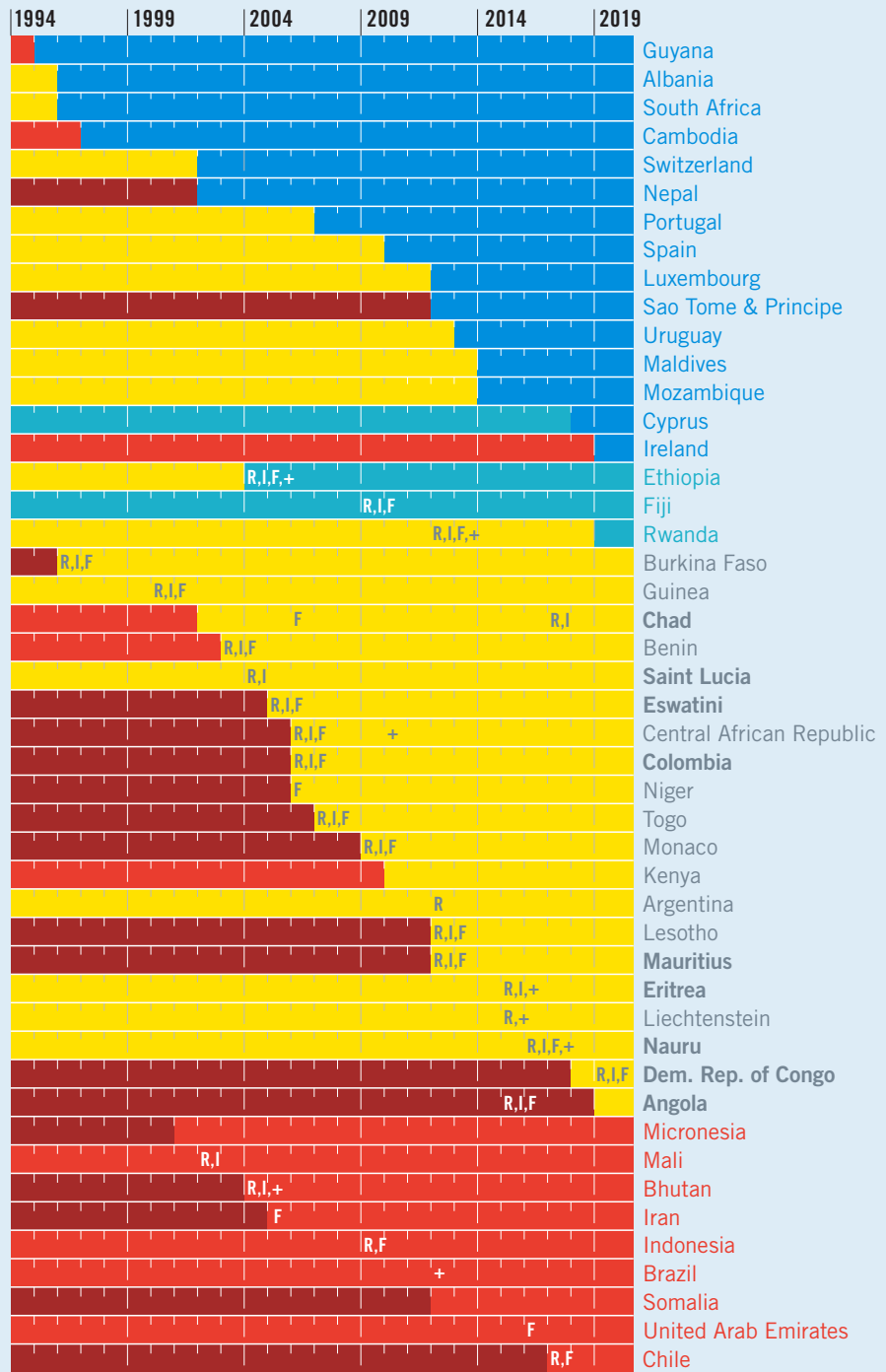


# Accelerating Progress: Liberalization of Abortion Laws Since ICPD

In 1994, 179 states signaled their commitment to prevent unsafe abortions and reduce maternal mortality by signing the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD), the first international consensus document recognizing reproductive rights as human rights. The 25 years since ICPD have seen an overwhelming global trend toward the liberalization of abortion laws, with nearly 50 countries worldwide enacting laws expanding the grounds under which abortion is legal.

The infographic to the right illustrates the change in countries' abortion laws over the past 25 years, using the categorization rubric from the Center for Reproductive Rights' World Abortion Laws Map. The change in color reflects the transition towards a more liberal abortion law. Where the change in law added enumerated grounds for abortion, these are reflected through lettered icons. The location of the color change shows the year in which the new law was enacted. For example, in 1994 Guyana changed its law from allowing abortion only where there is a risk to the woman's life to allowing abortion on request (moving from red to blue).



- I** Prohibited altogether
- II** To save the woman's life
- III** To preserve health
- IV** Broad social or economic grounds
- V** On request (gestational limits vary)

- Countries in bold** explicitly permit abortion to preserve the woman's mental health.
- R:** Rape
- I:** Incest
- F:** Fetal impairment
- +:** Additional enumerated grounds

# Facts and Figures

Over the past 25 years:



**15 countries** reformed their laws to **allow abortion on request**.

Two countries (**Nepal** and **Sao Tome & Principe**) transitioned from absolute bans on abortion to allowing abortion on request.

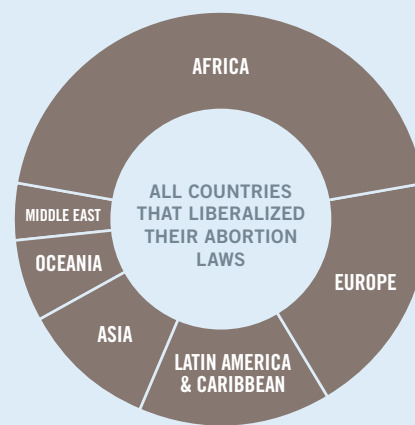
Three countries (**Guyana**, **Cambodia**, and **Ireland**) went from allowing abortion only to save the life of the woman to allowing abortion on request.

→ Nepal	
→ Sao Tome & Principe	
→ Angola	R,I,F
→ Burkina Faso	R,I,F
→ Central African Republic	R,I,F,+
→ Colombia	R,I,F
→ Dem. Rep. of Congo	R,I,F
→ Eswatini	R,I,F
→ Lesotho	R,I,F
→ Mauritius	R,I,F
→ Monaco	R,I,F
→ Niger	F
→ Togo	R,I,F
→ Bhutan	R,I,+
→ Chile	R,F
→ Iran	F
→ Micronesia	
→ Somalia	

**18 countries** overturned **complete bans on abortion**, reforming their laws to permit abortion under various circumstances.

The majority of these countries reformed their laws to permit abortion when the woman's health is at risk and on specific enumerated grounds such as when the pregnancy results from rape or incest.

Five countries reformed their laws to permit abortion only to save the life of the woman or on enumerated grounds, such as rape or incest.



There has been **significant geographic diversity in abortion law reform**.

**Nearly half** of the countries that liberalized their abortion laws are in **Africa**.

**Asia**, **Europe** and **Latin America** each accounted for about **one-fifth** of countries that liberalized their abortion laws.

Only **two countries** in the **Middle East** liberalized their laws during this time (**Iran** and **United Arab Emirates**).

Notably, **progress has accelerated over the past decade**, with over half of the liberalizations since ICPD occurring during this time. This has occurred despite orchestrated efforts to roll back women's right to decide whether to carry a pregnancy to term and reflects a **growing global consensus that access to safe and legal abortion is a human rights and public health imperative**.