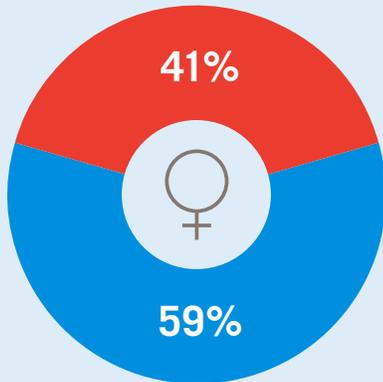


By the Numbers:

The Legal Status of Abortion Worldwide



59 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that broadly allow abortion, while 41 percent live under restrictive laws

Countries broadly allowing abortion are those with laws permitting abortion on request or on social or economic grounds, whereas restrictive laws prohibit abortion altogether or authorize abortion only under limited circumstances, such as when the woman's life or health is at risk.



Nearly 50 countries have liberalized their abortion laws over the past 25 years

In the 25 years since the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, the overwhelming global trend has been toward the liberalization of abortion laws. While nearly 50 countries have broadened the grounds under which abortion is legal, only a small handful have reformed their laws to remove legal grounds for abortion.

Almost 23,000 women die each year as a result of complications from unsafe abortions

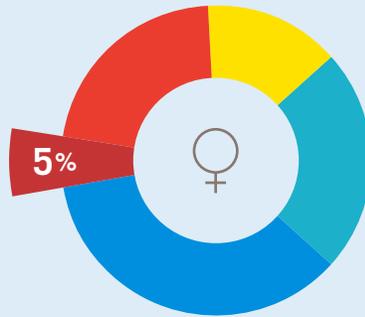
According to the World Health Organization, almost every death resulting from unsafe abortion could be prevented through access to safe and legal abortion services.¹ The vast majority of unsafe abortions occur in regions with countries that have restrictive abortion laws.² While there is a positive trend toward liberalizing abortion laws globally, states must also ensure services are accessible, acceptable, affordable, and of good quality, by taking measures such as removing barriers to abortion services and establishing clear guidelines governing access.

Understanding the World Abortion Laws Map

The World Abortion Laws Map categorizes the legal status of abortion in countries across the globe. These laws, which are broken into five categories, fall on a continuum from severe restrictiveness to relative liberality.

The first category includes countries that prohibit abortion altogether. The countries in each subsequent category recognize additional grounds under which abortion is legal: to preserve the woman's life; to preserve the woman's health; on broad social or economic grounds; and on request. Some countries also permit abortion on additional enumerated grounds, such as cases in which the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or in cases of fetal impairment.

The legal status of abortion is a key indicator for whether women and girls will have access to safe abortion services, although in practice laws may be interpreted or applied differently, impacting if and how individuals can exercise this right.

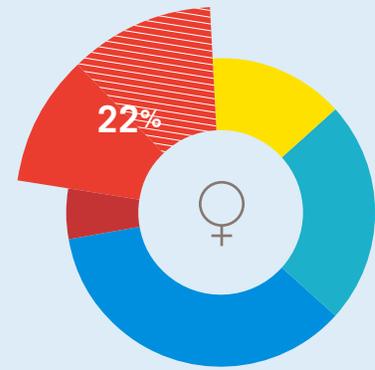


Category I

5 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that prohibit abortion altogether

These countries do not allow abortion under any circumstances, including when the woman's life or health is at risk.

● **26 countries globally fall within this category.** These countries are mostly located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with the exception of several European microstates.



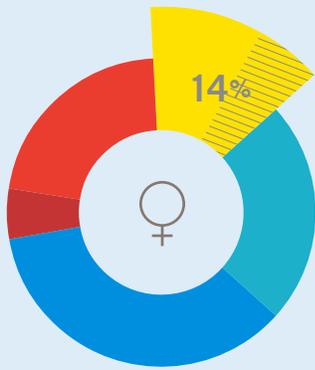
Category II

22 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that allow abortion to save the life of the woman

These countries explicitly allow abortion when the woman's life is at risk.

● **39 countries globally fall within this category.**

● **10 countries in this category also allow women to obtain abortion on additional grounds,** such as where the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or in cases of fetal impairment.



Category III

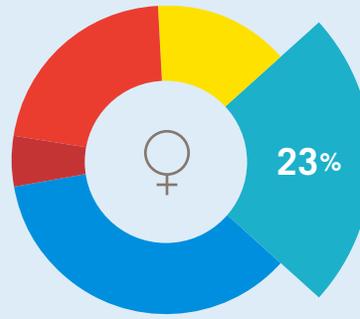
14 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that allow abortion on health grounds

These countries often allow abortion under broad health or therapeutic grounds, although some specifically include mental health or limit abortion to only threats to physical health. The World Health Organization advises that countries permitting abortion on health grounds should interpret “health” to mean “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

● **56 countries globally fall within this category.** These countries are scattered throughout the world.

● 25 countries in this category explicitly permit abortion to **preserve the woman’s mental health.**

The majority of countries in this category also permit **abortion on additional grounds**, such as where the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or in cases of fetal impairment.



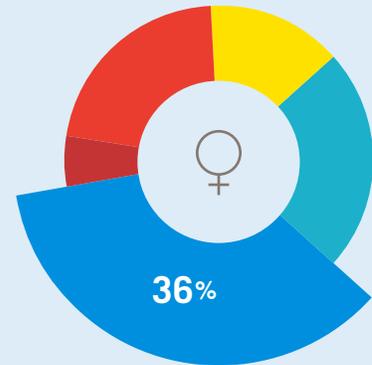
Category IV

23 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that allow abortion on broad social or economic grounds

These laws are generally interpreted liberally to permit abortion under a broad range of circumstances. These countries often take into account a woman’s actual or reasonably foreseeable environment and her social or economic circumstances in considering the potential impact of pregnancy and childbearing.

● **14 countries globally fall within this category.** These countries are spread throughout the world.

All 14 countries in this category also allow women to obtain abortion on additional grounds, such as where pregnancy results from rape or incest, or in cases of fetal impairment.



Category V

36 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries that allow abortion on request, with varying gestational limits

● **66 countries globally fall within this category.** These countries are spread throughout the world, with some concentration in Europe and North America.

The most common gestational limit is 12 weeks, but abortion is often allowed on additional grounds once that limit has expired. These additional grounds may include, for example, where the women’s health or life is at risk or where pregnancy results from rape or incest.

Since 1994, 15 countries have liberalized their abortion laws to enter this category.

The methodology behind the map

The Center maintains a rigorous methodology in analyzing and categorizing the legal status of abortion in countries across the globe. The categorizations on the World Abortion Laws Map reflect a strict reading of the black letter law in effect in each country. Abortion laws are categorized according to provisions in national statutes, legal regulations, and court decisions. Ministerial guidelines, which may include interpretations of the legal status of abortion, are not utilized in categorizing the legal status of abortion for the World Abortion Laws Map. This is to ensure uniformity in methodology and accuracy in our interpretation of the law. In addition to the Center for Reproductive Rights' lawyers, Ashurst, DLA Piper, Gómez-Pinzón Abogados, and White & Case provided pro bono support in reviewing the laws of each country, with legal interpretations provided by practicing lawyers in each country where possible. For the purpose of the map, "countries" includes independent states, and where populations exceed one million, semi-autonomous regions, territories, and jurisdictions of special status, such as Hong Kong, Northern Ireland, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Statistics for the percentage of women of reproductive age living under each category are calculated based on *United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division's World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*.

The interactive version of the World Abortion Laws Map, available at worldabortionlaws.com, is updated in real time to reflect changes to the global legal status of abortion.

The Center recognizes that non-gender binary people also need access to the full range of reproductive health care, and we strive to use gender-neutral language whenever possible. However, this resource uses female pronouns and the terms "women" and "girls" to reflect the formulation of referenced laws and policies and the methodology behind attributed data. The Center supports reproductive rights and human rights for all populations, and we are proud to fight for the reproductive rights of all people, including trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals.

Endnotes

1. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, PREVENTING UNSAFE ABORTION, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preventing-unsafe-abortion> [last updated February 18, 2018].
2. *Id.*