

HOW TO REDUCE THE ABORTION RATE



Our Bodies | Our Choices

So you want to reduce the abortion rate?

Here are three policies for you to advocate for.

LEGALISE ABORTION

International evidence demonstrates that legalising abortion is one of the best ways to reduce the number of abortions that take place.¹ Decriminalisation rapidly reduces abortion-related mortality and does not increase abortion rates.

Over the past 25 years, the worldwide abortion rate declined, and the rate among developed regions dropped sharply.² This does not mean more women are choosing to continue pregnancies and give birth - US data has established that birth rates have not increased.³

“What we see is that the law does not influence a woman’s decision to have an abortion. If there’s an unplanned pregnancy, it does not matter if the law is restrictive or liberal.”⁴

Dr Paul Van Look, Director of the W.H.O. Department of Reproductive Health and Research

The decline in abortion in the US is also not a result of more restrictions on access to abortion, though such restrictions have been enacted (to the detriment of women’s wellbeing).⁵ More than 60% of the decline in the abortion rate took place in states that had not enacted new hurdles to abortion.^{6,7}

The criminalisation of abortion only increases injury and death without decreasing the number of abortions.⁸ It does not reduce the number of abortions that take place - legalising abortion does.

MAKE COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION COMPULSORY & BAN ABSTINENCE-ONLY ‘EDUCATION’

Comprehensive sex education, including relationships and sexuality education, reduces teen pregnancy rates and thus the need for abortion. Adolescents who receive comprehensive sex education have a lower risk of pregnancy than adolescents who receive abstinence-only or no sex education.⁹

A study comparing Australia and the Netherlands (comprehensive sex ed) with the US (abstinence-only) tracked age of first intercourse, teen pregnancy, HIV and STI transmission, and rates of abortion.¹⁰ First intercourse was later, teen pregnancy was lower, rates of abortion were lower and HIV and STI rates were lower for comprehensively-educated students.

Abstinence-only education is ineffective in preventing teenage pregnancy and may actually be contributing to the high teenage pregnancy rates in the US.¹¹

Abstinence as a sole option for adolescents is scientifically and ethically problematic. A recent emphasis on abstinence-only programs and policies in the US appears to be undermining more comprehensive sexuality education and other government-sponsored programs. Abstinence-only education programs withhold information and promote inaccurate opinions.

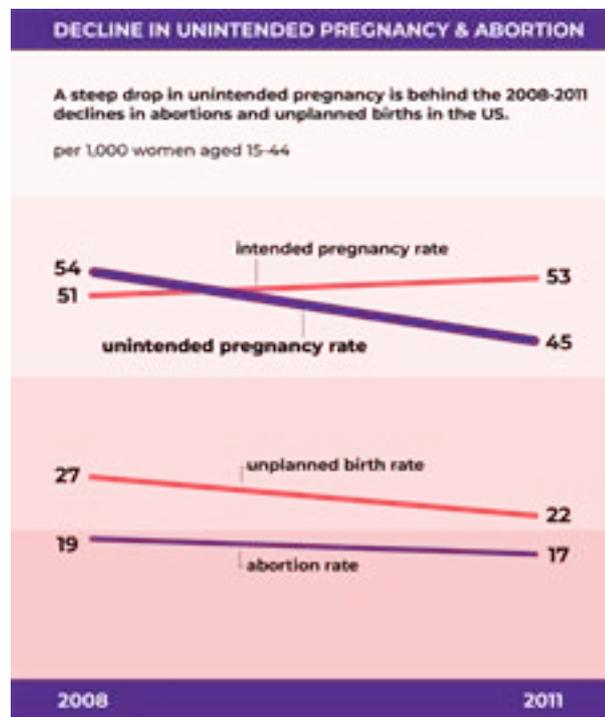
Abstinence-only programs threaten fundamental human rights to health, information, and life.¹² Comprehensive sex education has a number of positive health outcomes, one of which is reducing teen pregnancy and therefore abortion.

MAKE CONTRACEPTION FREE

By providing no-cost contraception, we noted a clinically and statistically significant reduction in abortion rates, repeat abortions, and teenage birth rates.¹³

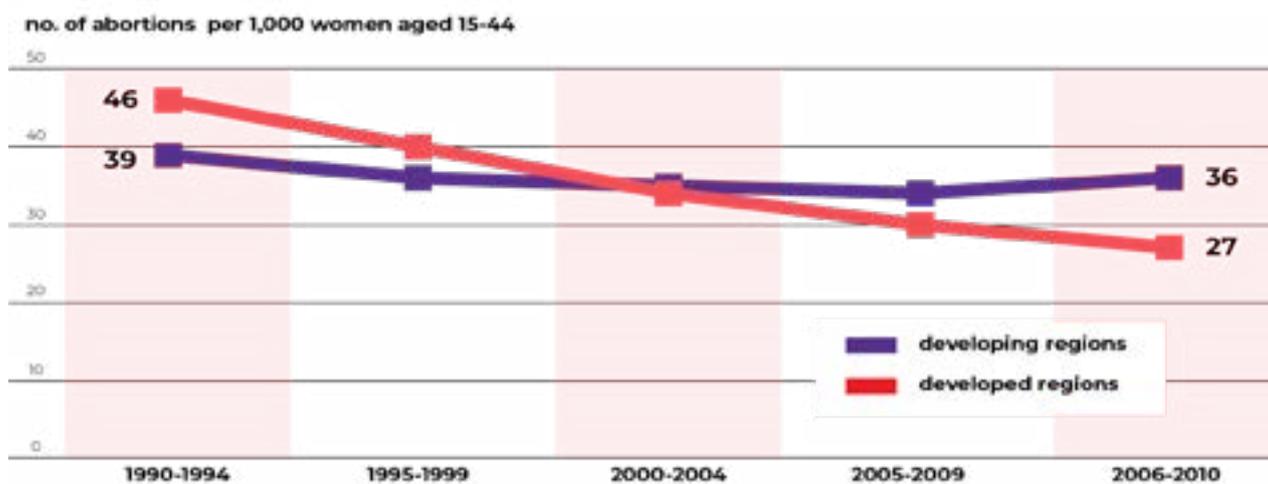
Reducing unintended pregnancies reduces abortion rates. One of the most likely contributors to reduced abortion rates in the US and around the world is better access to reliable forms of contraception.¹⁴ However, an estimated 214 million women in developing regions have an unmet need for modern contraception contributing to a higher likelihood of having an abortion than those in developed regions.¹⁵

Women will always need access to abortion as no form of contraception is 100% reliable.



Source: New England Journal of Medicine

THE ABORTION RATE HAS DECLINED IN DEVELOPED REGIONS



Source: guttmacher.org

Endnotes

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- 4 E Rosenthal, 'Legal or Not, Abortion Rates Compare' *New York Times*, 12 October 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/world/12abortion.html>.
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- 7 A Thomson-DeVeaux, 'The Abortion Rate Is Falling Because Fewer Women Are Getting Pregnant', *fivethirtyeight*, 12 June 2015, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-abortion-rate-is-falling-because-fewer-women-are-getting-pregnant/>.
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