CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The World's Abortion Laws

Currently, 61% 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% of all people reside in countries where abortion is generally prohibited.

The table on page two illustrates the varying degrees to which countries worldwide permit access to abortion. Countries in Category I have the most restrictive laws. Those in each subsequent category recognize the grounds specified in the preceding category as well as additional grounds. Depending on such factors as public opinion, the views of government officials and providers, and individual circumstances, laws in each category may be interpreted more broadly or restrictively than indicated by their classifications below.

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 (appearing in bold on p. 2) 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 recognized in national norms of medical ethics.

PHYSICAL HEALTH GROUNDS

Laws that authorize 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.

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.

SOCIOECONOMIC GROUNDS

Laws in Category IV, which allow abortion on socioeconomic 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.

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.

A number of countries explicitly recognize **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 recognize 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 authorization. These additional grounds and restrictions are identified according to the notes set forth on page two.

Countries, by restrictiveness of abortion law, 2008 *Categories from the Most to Least Restrictive*

I. To Save the Woman's Life or Prohibited Altogether (countries printed in bold make an explicit exception to save a woman's life)	II. To Preserve Physical Health (also to save the woman's life)	III. To Preserve Mental Health (also to save the woman's life and physical health)	IV. Socioeconomic Grounds (also to save the woman's life, physical health and mental health)	V. Without Restriction as to Reason
Afghanistan	Argentina–R$_1$	Algeria	Australia–♦	Albania
Andorra	Bahamas	Botswana–R/I/F	Barbados–PA/R/I/F	Armenia
Angola	Benin–R/I/F	Colombia–R/I/F	Belize–F	Austria*
Antigua & Barbuda	Bolivia–R/I	Gambia	Cyprus–R/F	Azerbaijan
Bangladesh	Burkina Faso–R/I/F	Ghana–R/I/F	Fiji	Bahrain
Bhutan–R/I/+	Burundi	Hong Kong–R/I/F	Finland–R/F/+	Belarus
Brazil–R	Cameroon–R	Israel–R/I/F/+	Great Britain–F	Belgium*
Brunei Darussalam	Chad–F	Jamaica–PA	Iceland–R/I/F/+	Bosnia-Herzegovina–PA
Central African Rep.	Comoros	Liberia–R/I/F	India–PA/R/F	Bulgaria
Chile–x	Costa Rica	Malaysia	Japan–SA	Cambodia*
Congo (Brazzaville)	Djibouti	Namibia–R/I/F	Luxembourg–PA/R/F	Canada°
Côte d'Ivoire	Ecuador– R$_1$	Nauru	Saint Vincent & Grenadines–R/I/F	Cape Verde
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Equatorial Guinea–SA/PA	New Zealand–I/F	Taiwan–SA/PA/I/F	China°–S
Dominica	Eritrea - R/I	Northern Ireland	Zambia–F	Croatia–PA
Dominican Republic	Ethiopia–R/I/F/+	Saint Kitts & Nevis		Cuba–PA
Egypt	Grenada	Saint Lucia–R/I	**14 Countries, 21.3% of World's Population**	Czech Rep.–PA
El Salvador–x	Guinea–R/I/F	Samoa		Dem. People's Rep. of Korea°
Gabon	Jordan	Seychelles–R/I/F		Denmark–PA
Guatemala	Kuwait–SA/PA/F	Sierra Leone		Estonia
Guinea-Bissau	Liechtenstein–+	Spain–R/F		France*
Haiti	Maldives–SA	Swaziland–R/I/F		Fmr. Yugoslav Rep. Macedonia–PA
Honduras	Morocco–SA	Thailand–R/F		Georgia–PA
Indonesia	Mozambique	Trinidad & Tobago		Germany*
Iran–F	Niger–F			Greece–PA
Iraq	Pakistan	**23 Countries, 4.2% of World's Population**		Guyana†
Ireland	Peru			Hungary
Kenya	Poland–PA/R/I/F			ItalyΔ–PA
Kiribati	Qatar–F			Kazakhstan
Laos	Rep. of Korea –SA/R/I/F			Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon	Rwanda			Latvia–PA
Lesotho	Saudi Arabia–SA/PA			Lithuania
Libya–PA	Togo–R/I/F			Moldova
Madagascar	Uruguay–R			Mongolia
Malawi–SA	Vanuatu			Montenegro–PA
Mali-R/I	Zimbabwe–R/I/F			Nepal–S
Malta				Netherlands^V
Marshall Islands–U	**35 Countries, 9.6% of World's Population**			Norway–PA
Mauritania				Portugal‡–PA
Mauritius				Puerto Rico^V
Mexico–♦R/F				Romania*
Micronesia–U				Russian Fed.
Monaco				Serbia–PA
Myanmar				Singapore***
Nicaragua–x				Slovak Rep.–PA
Nigeria				Slovenia–PA
Oman				South Africa
Palau–U				Sweden**
Panama–PA/R/F				Switzerland
Papua New Guinea				Tajikistan
Paraguay				Tunisia
Philippines				Turkey‡–SA/PA
San Marino				Turkmenistan
Sao Tome & Principe				Ukraine
Senegal				United States^V–♦PA
Soloman Islands				Uzbekistan
Somalia				Vietnam°
Sri Lanka				
Sudan–R				**56 Countries, 39.3% of World's Population**
Suriname				
Syria–SA/PA				
Tanzania				
Tonga				
Tuvalu				
Uganda				
United Arab Emirates–SA/PA				
Venezuela				
West Bank & Gaza Strip				
Yemen				
68 Countries, 25.7% of World's Population				

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 gestitional age limits are calculated from the date of conception, these limits have been extended by two weeks.

Δ Gestational limit of 90 days	* Gestational limit of 14 weeks	^{V} Law does not limit pre-viability abortion
† Gestational limit of 8 weeks	** Gestational limit of 18 weeks	° Law does not indicate gestational limit; regulatory
‡ Gestational limit of 10 weeks	*** Gestational limit of 24 weeks	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 authorization required	
U Law unclear	PA Parental authorization/notification required	

R$_1$ 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 (see p. 1) highly unlikely