

Abortion: Facts and Figures

How Many, When, Where, By Whom, and for What Reasons

How Many Abortions Are Performed in the US?

	2003	2001	2000*	1996*	1980-1992*
Total Abortions Per Year, US	***		1,313,000	1,360,000	≥1,500,000
Total Abortions Per Day, US	***		3,597	3,726	4,109
Total Medical Abortions Per Year, US	***	74,000 (est.)**			

Sources: Lawrence Filner and Stanley K. Henshaw, "Abortion Incidence and Services in the United States in 2000," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Volume 35, No. 1, January/February 2003, (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3500603.pdf)

* *Note:* These numbers come from survey data. There are no uniform reporting requirements for abortion in the US. Although these numbers are the best available estimates, they shouldn't be taken as exact or perfectly representative of the actual number. These numbers also include only surgical abortion and chemical abortion at or after 4 weeks gestation. Killings of the unborn before 4 weeks gestation, whether for ectopic pregnancy, embryo research, cloning research, in vitro fertilization (IVF), or selective reduction (too many embryos implanted through IVF), are *not* included here. Some menstrual extraction abortions (early suction abortions) are probably not included either. The possible abortifacient effect of oral contraceptives (taken by an estimated 11,000,000 women) and emergency contraception (morning-after pill) is not accounted for either. So, if all unjust killing of the unborn from conception to birth is taken into account, the number is probably much higher, perhaps well over 1.5 million (about 4,000 per day).

** The FDA approved the use of RU-486 in the fall of 2000, enabling researchers to report the number of these abortions from the first half of 2001. Filner and Henshaw define medical abortions as those using mifepristone (RU-486)/misoprostol or methotrexate/misoprostol combinations (p. 13). Medical abortion techniques are used between four and seven weeks gestation.

*** For some data (incomplete) from 2003, see *Abortion Surveillance – 2003*, CDC (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5511a1.htm)

When Are Abortions Performed?

Age*		Percentage in 2001 (rounded to nearest percent)	Number in 2007 (estimated)	
Embryo	younger than 7 weeks	59.2%	775,520	1st Trimester Total: 88.6%
	7-8 weeks	19.3%	252, 830	
Fetus	9-10 weeks	10.1%	132,310	
	11-13 weeks	6.4%	83,840	
	14-18 weeks	3.8%	49,780	
	older than 18 weeks	1.2%	15,720	

Source: AGI Fact Sheet www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.pdf, accessed August 25, 2007

* Based on doctor estimates.

Where Are Abortions Performed?*

Provider** Type	Definition of type****	# of Providers	% of Providers	# of Abortions	% of Abortions
<i>Abortion Clinics</i>	“non-hospital facilities in which half or more of patient visits are for abortion services”	447	25%	927,200	71%
<i>Other clinics</i>	“group practices with clinic names, surgical centers, health maintenance organizations [HMO’s], family planning clinics and other facilities with clinic names”	386	21%	292,710	22%
<i>Physician’s Offices</i>	“solo and group practices where fewer than 400 abortions were performed”	383	21%	27,490	2%
<i>Hospitals</i>	“hospitals where one or more abortions were performed during the year”	603	33%	65,590	5%
Totals		1,819	***	1,312,990	***

Source: Lawrence Finer and Stanley K. Henshaw, “Abortion Incidence and Services in the United States in 2000,” *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Volume 35, No. 1, January/February 2003 (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3500603.pdf)

* *Note: These numbers reflect the provider situation in 2000 but are likely similar now.*

** A “provider” is defined as “a place where abortions are performed.” The number of providers is greater than the number of doctors (one doctor may do abortions at more than one “provider”).

*** May not add up to 100% due to rounding

**** Stanley K. Henshaw, “Abortion Incidence and Services in the United States, 1995–1996,” *Family Planning Perspectives*, Volume 30, No. 6, November/December 1998 (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3026398.html)
These definitions are used here for clarity. They are the same in all salient aspects as the study from which the numbers come.

Significance of Where Abortions Are Performed

The numbers above show that abortion clinics make up only 25% of abortion providers in the US. Even if we combine “abortion clinics” and “other clinics” (which include HMO’s), these still constitute a minority of abortion providers. This casts doubt on whether abortion can be stopped merely by causing abortion clinics to go out of business, since many private practice physicians and hospitals are *already performing abortions*. Certainly it is true that 71% of abortions are done in specialized abortion clinics, but if all clinics were closed, the abortion industry would simply shift the great majority of abortions to these other providers, especially in the early term. Most Americans believe early abortions should be permitted, so unless we change minds so that people no longer believe abortion should be an option, it will persist in doctor’s offices and hospitals.

What Types of Women Are More Likely to Seek Abortion?

Race (with percentage of total population)	% of Abortions*	# of Abortions per Year*	Abortion Rate**
African-American (14%)	32%	416,000	49 (more than twice the average abortion rate)
Caucasian (68%)	41%	537,000	13
Hispanic (13%)	20%	264,000	33
Asian/Pacific Islander (4%)	6%	84,000	31
Native American (1%)	1%	13,000	NA

Religion	% of Abortions*	# of Abortions per Year*	Abortion Rate**
Protestant	43%	592,000	18
Catholic	27%	360,000	22
Evangelical/Born-Again (3/4 of these also claimed "Protestant")	13%	171,000	NA
No Religion	22%	292,000	30

Age	% of Abortions*	# of Abortions per Year*	Abortion Rate**
Under 15***	1%	9,000	NA
High School (15-17)***	7%	85,000	15
College (18-24)	45%	591,000	>42 (twice the average abortion rate)
Post-College (25-29)	23%	301,300	32
Thirty-something (30-39)	22%	288,200	NA
Over 40 (40-44)	3%	39,300	4

Marital Status	% of Abortions*	# of Abortions per Year*	Abortion Rate**
Single (Previously Married and Never married)	83%	1,089,000	NA

Lifestyle / Health Care	% of Abortions*	# of Abortions per Year*	Abortion Rate**
Cohabiting	31%	406,100	55 (nearly three times the average abortion rate)
Participating in Medicaid	24%	314,400	57 (nearly three times the average abortion rate)

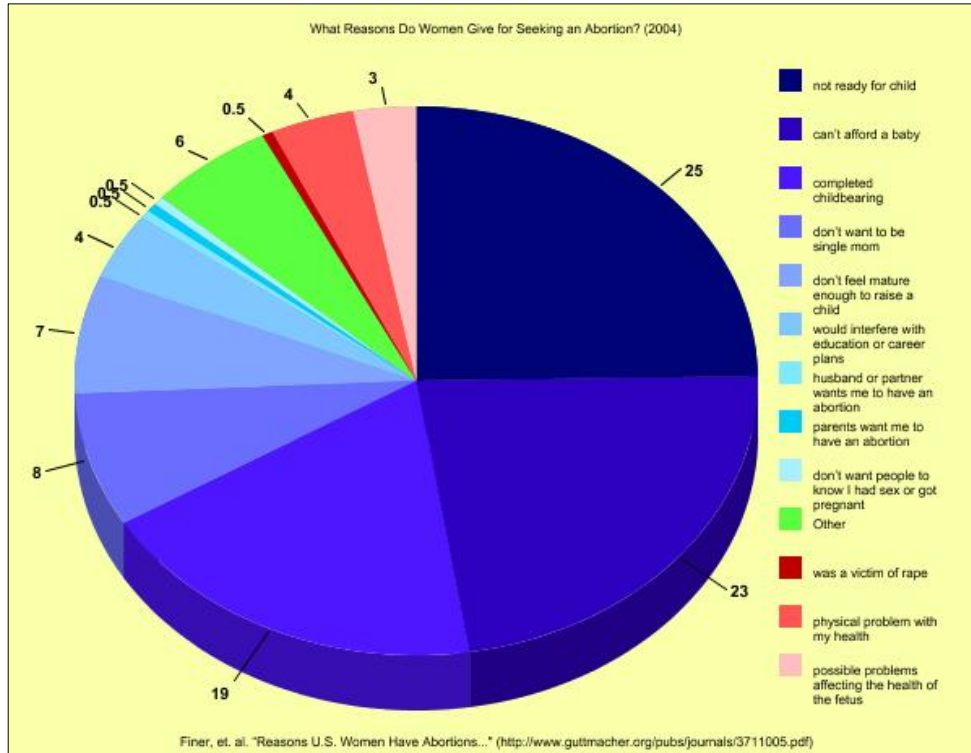
Source: Rachel K. Jones, Jacqueline E. Darroch and Stanley K. Henshaw, Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* Volume 34, Number 5, September/October 2002 (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3422602.html). See especially www.guttmacher.org/tables/3422602t.html#1

* Rounded to the nearest whole percent or nearest thousand.

** Abortion Rate: How many abortions per 1000 women in each category aged 15-44. The average abortion rate is 21.

***For more data on teen pregnancy and abortion, see *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics*, Guttmacher Institute. (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/teen_stats.pdf)

What Reasons Do Women Give for Seeking an Abortion?



This reason was most important in my abortion decision...*	1987* %	2004** %	
I'm not ready for a child. The timing is wrong.	27	25	social, emotional, economic (87%-92%)
I can't afford a baby now.	21	23	
I have completed my childbearing. I have other people depending on me. My children are grown.	8	19	
I don't want to be a single mother. I am having relationship problems.	13	8	
I don't feel mature enough to raise a child. I feel too young.	11	7	
It would interfere with education or career plans.	10	4	
My husband or partner wants me to have an abortion.	1	<.5	
My parents want me to have an abortion.	<.5	<.5	
I don't want people to know I had sex or got pregnant.	1	<.5	
There is a physical problem with my health. (Note: This does not reflect a doctor's diagnosis; some women chose this category because of morning sickness. See page 112 of the Finer article.)	3	4	"hard cases" ~7%
There are possible problems affecting the health of the fetus.	3	3	
I was a victim of rape.	1	<.5	
Other	1	6	

* **Source:** Aida Torres and Jacqueline Forrest. "Why Do Women Have Abortions," *Family Planning Perspectives*, July/August 1988, 20 (4):169-176.

** **Source:** Finer, et. al., "Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2005, 37(3):110-118 (Table 3, which includes Torres statistics from 1987) available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3711005.pdf>.

Talking Points on Reasons Women Give for Abortion

Most Women Abort for Social or Economic Reasons (in the USA and Around the World)

The 2005 *Finer* article showed that when women were asked to select the most important reason for their abortion, the reasons were social, emotional, and economic in more than 87% of cases. The study also asked women to choose from a list any reasons that contributed to their abortion decision. Women could choose multiple items. Again, women overwhelmingly chose social, emotional, and economic reasons. Some of the common responses are captured in the summary below:

- 74% of abortions: the woman believes having a baby would dramatically change her life
(Women had a choice to further define how her life would be affected. Again, women could choose more than one option. 38% said the baby would interfere with education, 38% said the baby would interfere with job or career, and 32% said other children or dependents would be affected.)
- 73% of abortions: the woman believes she can't afford a baby
(Women had a choice to further define why she couldn't afford the baby. Again, women could choose more than one option. 42% said they were unmarried, 34% said they were a student, and 28% said they couldn't afford baby and child care, and 23% said they couldn't afford the basic needs of life.)
- 48% of abortions: the woman doesn't want to be a single mother

Source: *Finer, et. al., "Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives," Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2005, 37(3):110–118*
(Table 2, which also includes statistics from 1987)
available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3711005.pdf>.

Warren Hern affirms this in his textbook, *Abortion Practice, 2nd ed.* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1990):

“A study of motivations for abortion has found that the majority are sought for socioeconomic reasons...The impression from clinical practice is that all but a few women seek abortions for reasons that can be broadly defined as socioeconomic, and many cite strictly economic reasons.” – p. 10

“As a rule, women do not make decisions about pregnancy prevention or treatment on the basis of statistical evaluations and medical advice but rather on the basis of personal attitudes and necessities. At times, medical considerations enter into the picture, but decisions are usually made on the basis of such factors as desire or lack of desire for parenthood, stability of relationships, educational status, emotional status, or economic status, or others.” – p. 39

A study of women in 27 countries also showed that most women around the world abort for social and economic reasons.

Source: *A. Bankole, et. al., "Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries," International Family Planning Perspectives, Vol. 24, No. 3, Sept. 1998,*
available at www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/2411798.html.

Even in the Late Second Trimester, Abortion is Usually Elective

“And I'll be quite frank: most of my abortions are elective in that 20-24 week [probably LMP] range... In my particular case, probably 20% are for genetic reasons. And the other 80% are purely elective...” Martin Haskell, *American Medical News* (July 11, 1995)

Other Sources for Abortion Statistics:

World: www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/index.html

Canada: www.statcan.ca