

## Effects of Abortion and the role that contraception plays towards reducing abortion rates among women in Kenya

The Who and Why of abortion....How does contraception come in?? Join the conversation by sharing, commenting, and liking this story. Tag @AmpathKenya on Facebook and @ampathkenya on Twitter so that we can see your comments

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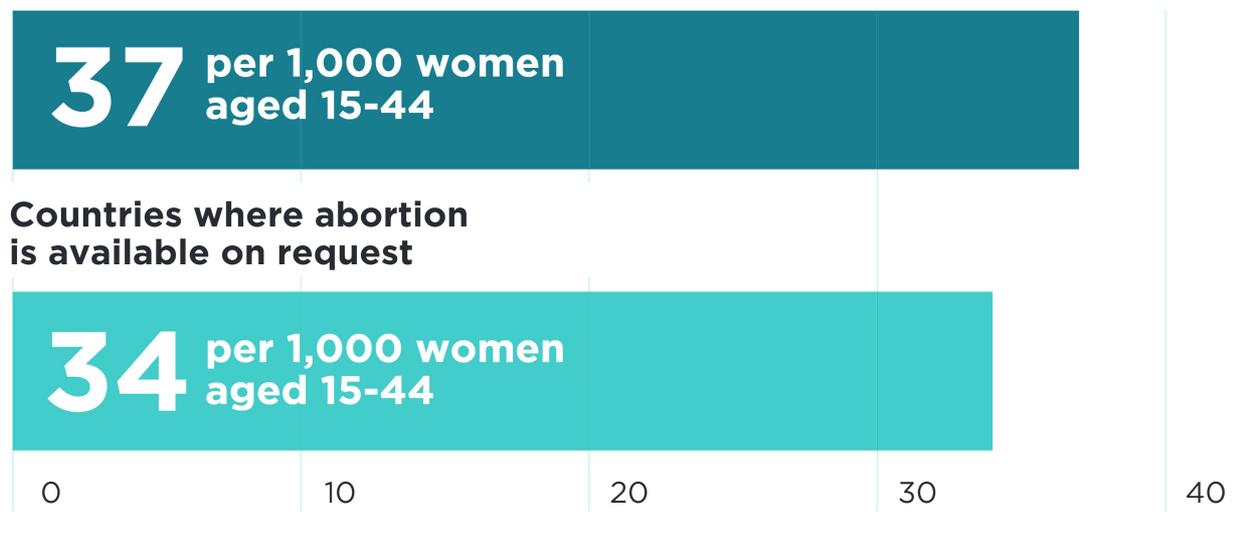
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**Restrictive laws do not stop women from having abortions. They mainly make the procedure clandestine and often unsafe.**



### Abortion rates

**Countries where abortion is prohibited altogether or permitted only to save a woman's life**



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An estimated 40% of all pregnancies in Kenya are unplanned. One reason is that only 58% of women use family planning, be it modern or traditional methods (KDHS, 2014). Over 300,000 unplanned pregnancies end in abortion annually (KDHS, 2014). Because abortion is highly restricted and only permitted legally under special circumstances, most of these women are forced to seek unsafe abortion, which can lead to complications requiring hospital admission.

Of those admitted with complications from having unsafe abortion, 12% are above 40 years old, 40% are between 25-34 years, while 16% are teenagers, showing that abortion cuts across all age groups. Inability to financially support a child is the most common reason reported for women of all ages seeking an abortion. Additionally, adolescents often cite the need to complete school so that later on they can financially support a

child. This is highlighted by John in his interview with AMPATH health reporter Timothy. John narrated of a friend who got pregnant while in school. Not wanting to drop out, in addition to not being in a position to take up parental responsibilities, she ended up terminating the pregnancy. When queried, most Kenyans know at least one woman who has had an abortion, and many have stories of friends who had complications of unsafe abortion, even death.

**REPORT FROM 2ND OCTOBER, 2017 TAKEN AT 0.52252998798352, 35.243625640869**

### **The burden and consequences of unsafe abortion**

In most Kenyan communities, abortion is considered a taboo to carry out. John, just like most members of his community, strongly believe abortion is a crime. He narrates of his friend who got pregnant while in school. Not wanting to drop out of school in addition to not being ready to take up parental responsibilities, she ended up terminating the pregnancy. She however went for a back alley service which was not safe as she ended up bleeding excessively. This almost resulted to death. He is of the opinion that abortion should remain illegal. He believes any changes to this will lead to irresponsible sexual behaviors, especially among teenagers. He urges women having unintended pregnancy not to procure an abortion. Instead, they can put these babies up for adoption or seek help from the government or the community to bring up the baby.

Download full report [here](https://her.timby.org/download/?id=856) (https://her.timby.org/download/?id=856)

To hear young women's views on abortion, Sadaam conducted an interview with 3 teenagers. While one is in support of abortion in instances where someone is financially unstable, the other two are against. They believe every child has a right to live regardless of prevailing situation and that it should not be up to anyone to make the decision to keep or terminate a pregnancy. They urge each person to take responsibility to avoid unplanned pregnancy that may lead to abortion by using family planning methods, and if they fail to do so, they should take the responsibility of keeping the pregnancy.

According to a high school guidance counselor in Kerugoya, most young people seek abortions because of fear of rejection by society. In her interview with our AMPATH health reporter Eunice, a high school guidance counselor who desires to remain nameless reported *"They are not ready to take care of these babies because they are still in school."* As to where this is done, she said *"Most of them go to health facilities, especially the private health facilities because they don't want to be known in public."* She stated that young women who undergo abortions may end up being traumatized, face being stigmatized and feel rejected, leading to low self-esteem in the young women.

The high rate of abortion has been linked to ignorance about or lack of access to contraceptives. Despite being sexually active, most teenagers do not use any protection from infections and pregnancy. A survey that was conducted in schools indicated a gap in the knowledge available to the youths on contraceptives. In her interview with a 20-year old college student, AMPATH health reporter Anita established that the student is not currently and has never used any family planning method. However, she has friends who have used contraception. Interestingly, some of them believe that family planning has the potential to cause infertility in women! This myth is brought out again in another interview conducted by AMPATH health reporter Timothy with Brenda. She reported that some community members believe use of contraception could potentially cause infertility and abnormalities to babies.

**REPORT FROM 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2017 TAKEN AT 0.47858635360158, 35.265598297119**

### **Benefits of Family planning**

Brendah from West Indies in Eldoret is appreciative of family planning programs. She believes that it has helped many plan for their pregnancies and to have number of children they can take care of and support. In her opinion, this is one area that has benefited many youths by helping them avoid unplanned pregnancies. This way, their focus is concentrated on finishing their education and achieving their dreams.

Despite the well known benefits of using family planning to help plan for and space pregnancies, she is

aware of opposition of the same from some groups. She mentions some church leaders being against provision and use of family planning. Some of the myths she has heard about family planning from the society are that it causes infertility, abnormalities to babies. It is also common to have people associate weight gain to use of family planning. Although in some cases this is true in use of hormonal contraceptives, it is not synonymous with use of family planning. She would however prefer if more family planning methods had dual use of preventing pregnancies and infection of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases like the condom.

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Peris, a 24 year old college graduate from Langas in Eldoret reported that many college students are having abortions. She encouraged use of family planning methods such as condoms to avoid unplanned pregnancy that lead to abortion. In her words, *"the future depends on what is done now."* Benefits of the use of contraception are reiterated by Brenda, a youth from Eldoret. While talking to our reporter Timothy, she stated that she believes use of family planning has helped many other youths to avoid unplanned pregnancy and to focus on their education.

Regardless of which side of the debate we each fall, we all have a responsibility to bring awareness and education that can prevent unsafe abortion. One successful program is that the Ministry of Health has included contraceptive services in the post-abortion care given in district hospitals after studies showed the effectiveness of family planning counseling and contraceptive use in preventing unsafe abortions. Other steps that can be taken include giving proper education and awareness on contraceptives coupled with adequate health care support for pregnant and non-pregnant women of all ages.

Please join in the discussion to help solve these problems in your community!

What other measures can we as a society take to help address this issue?

How can we combat myths about contraception to encourage its use?

How can we prevent stigmatization of women who undergo abortion, so they can lead successful lives?