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Reasons Women Have Induced Abortions: A Synthesis of Findings from 14 CountriesSophia Chae^a, Sheila Desai^{a*}, Marjorie Crowell^a, and Gilda Sedgh^a^a Guttmacher Institute, 125 Maiden Lane, New York, NY USA

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Abstract

Objective: Many reasons inform women's reproductive decision-making. This paper aims to present the reasons women give for obtaining induced abortions in 14 countries.

Study Design: We examined nationally representative data from 14 countries collected in official statistics, population-based surveys, and facility-based surveys of abortion patients. In each country, we calculated the percentage distribution of women who have abortions by main reason given for the abortion. We examined these reasons across countries and within countries by women's sociodemographic characteristics (age, marital status, educational attainment, and residence). Where data are available, we also studied the multiple reasons women give for having an abortion.

Results: In most countries, the most frequently cited reasons for having an abortion were socioeconomic concerns or limiting childbearing. With some exceptions, little variation existed in the reasons given by women's sociodemographic characteristics. Data from three countries where multiple reasons could be reported in the survey showed that women often have more than one reason for having an abortion.

Conclusion: This study shows that women have abortions for a variety of reasons, and provides a broad picture of the circumstances that inform women's decisions to have abortions.

Implications: Future research should examine in greater depth the personal, social, economic, and health factors that inform a woman's decision to have an abortion as these reasons may shed light on the potential consequences that unintended births can have on women's lives.

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