

# Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion in Africa

Model-based estimates offer an opportunity to observe and assess unintended pregnancy and abortion over time and, because they enable comparability across borders and groups, to do so for individual countries, for regions and globally. Estimates for regions and subregions, as defined by the United Nations Statistics Division groupings,\* can offer advocates, policymakers, researchers and others valuable insight into sexual and reproductive health and autonomy. Regional estimates can help reveal disparities and areas where continued investment is needed to ensure that individuals can access the full spectrum of quality sexual and reproductive health care.

The estimates below provide an overview of the incidence of unintended pregnancy and abortion in Africa from 1990 through 2019; the values are based on average annual estimates for five-year time periods. To view these estimates for countries within this region, find specific country profiles on [guttmacher.org](http://guttmacher.org).

\*Eastern Africa: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Réunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Middle Africa: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe

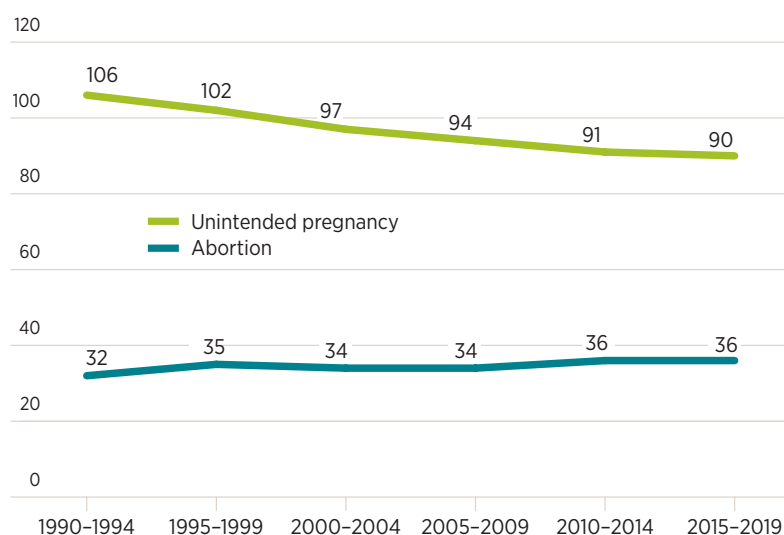
Northern Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara

Southern Africa: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa

Western Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

## In Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 15% over the past 30 years, while that of abortion increased by 13%

Average annual no. per 1,000 women aged 15–49



### Unintended pregnancy and abortion in Eastern Africa

- In Eastern Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 17% between 1990–1994 and 2015–2019.
- During the same period, the abortion rate increased by 20%.
- The share of unintended pregnancies ending in abortion rose from 24% to 35%.
- In 2015–2019, there were a total of 20,900,000 pregnancies annually.
- Of these, 9,890,000 pregnancies were unintended and 3,500,000 ended in abortion.

### Unintended pregnancy and abortion in Middle Africa

- In Middle Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 3% between 1990–1994 and 2015–2019.
- During the same period, the abortion rate increased by 20%.
- The share of unintended pregnancies ending in abortion rose from 25% to 31%.
- In 2015–2019, there were a total of 9,380,000 pregnancies annually.
- Of these, 4,010,000 pregnancies were unintended and 1,240,000 ended in abortion.

## Unintended pregnancy and abortion in Northern Africa

- In Northern Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 27% between 1990–1994 and 2015–2019.
- During the same period, the abortion rate declined by 4%.
- The share of unintended pregnancies ending in abortion rose from 42% to 56%.
- In 2015–2019, there were a total of 10,000,000 pregnancies annually.
- Of these, 4,800,000 pregnancies were unintended and 2,680,000 ended in abortion.

## Unintended pregnancy and abortion in Southern Africa

- In Southern Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 18% between 1990–1994 and 2015–2019.
- During the same period, the abortion rate increased by 41%.
- The share of unintended pregnancies ending in abortion rose from 21% to 36%.
- In 2015–2019, there were a total of 2,280,000 pregnancies annually.
- Of these, 1,480,000 pregnancies were unintended and 526,000 ended in abortion.

## Unintended pregnancy and abortion in Western Africa

- In Western Africa, the unintended pregnancy rate declined by 8% between 1990–1994 and 2015–2019.
- During the same period, the abortion rate increased by 33%.
- The share of unintended pregnancies ending in abortion rose from 30% to 42%.
- In 2015–2019, there were a total of 19,900,000 pregnancies annually.
- Of these, 6,490,000 pregnancies were unintended and 2,740,000 ended in abortion.

## Source

The information in this fact sheet is based on Bearak J et al., Unintended pregnancy and abortion by income, region, and the legal status of abortion: estimates from a comprehensive model for 1990–2019, *Lancet Global Health*, 2020, 8(9):e1152–e1161, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(20\)30315-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(20)30315-6). Regional and subregional trends in this fact sheet were re-estimated using a revised data set, available on OSF; revised estimates are available at the Guttmacher Data Center.

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**Good reproductive health policy starts with credible research**

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