

# World Abortion Policies

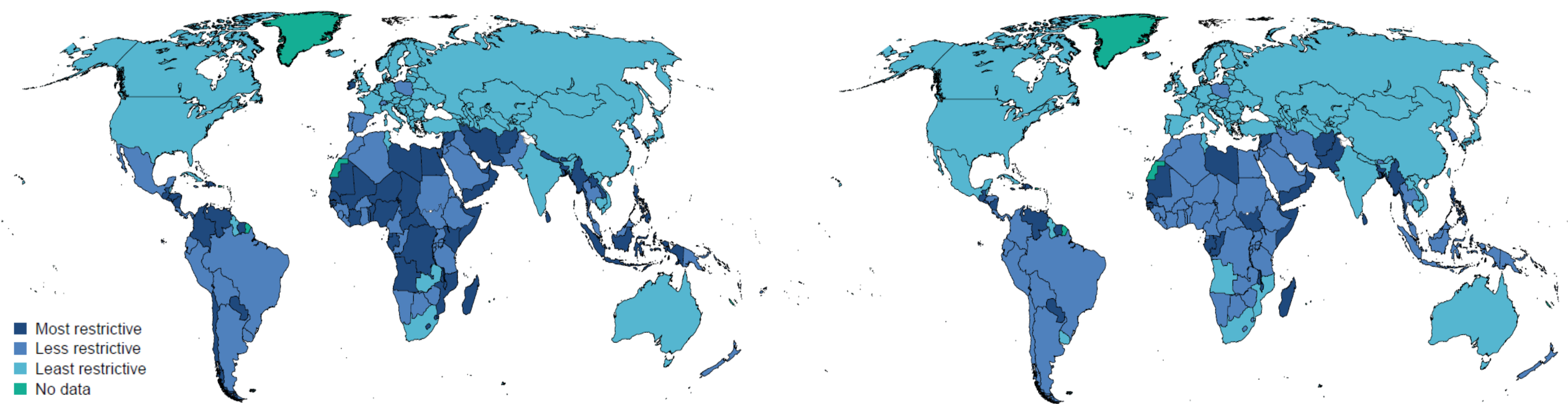
www.unpopulation.org

Since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, legal grounds for abortion have become less restrictive

Restrictiveness of legal grounds on which abortion is permitted

1996

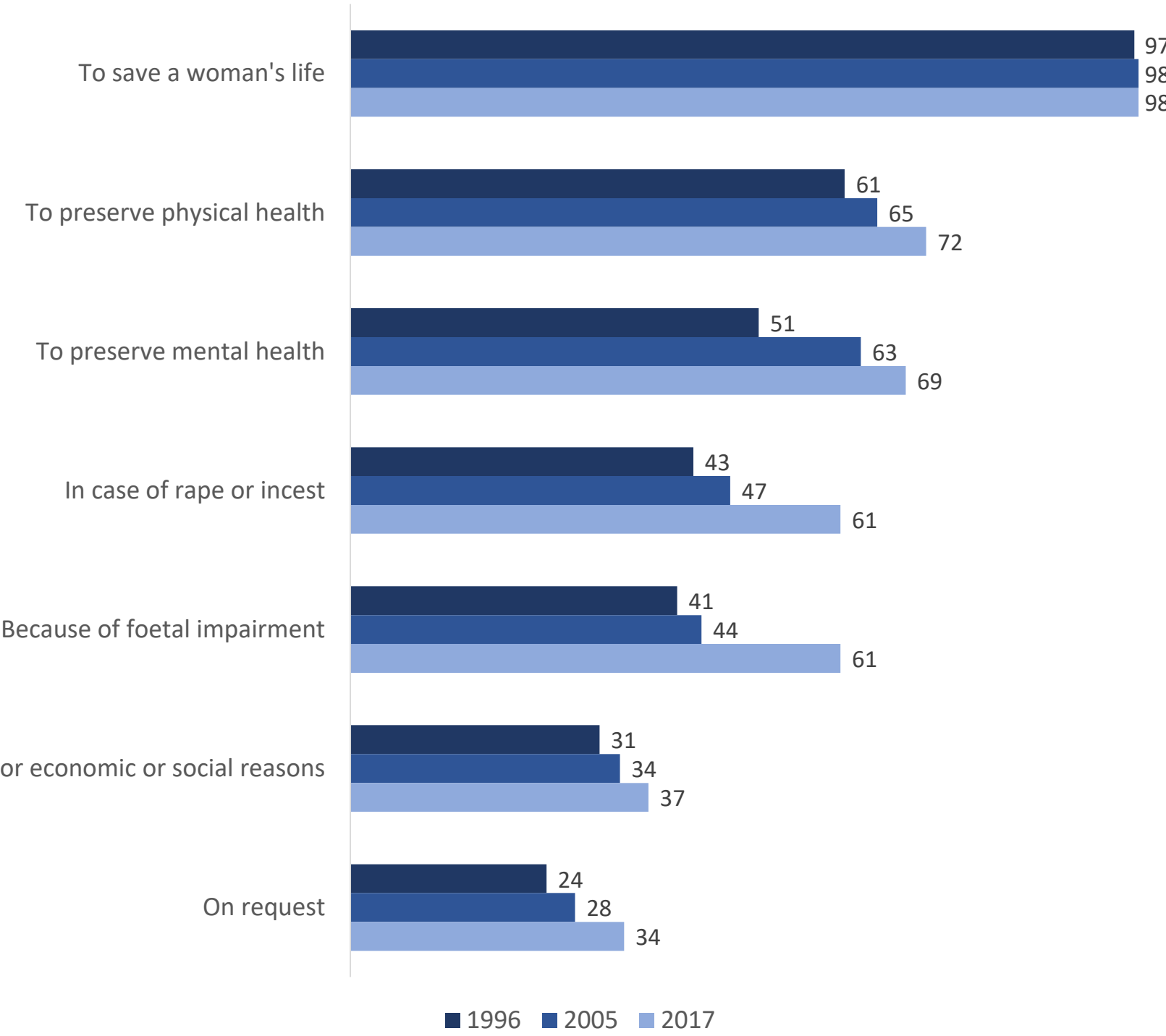
2017



**Note:** The designations employed and the presentation of material on these maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

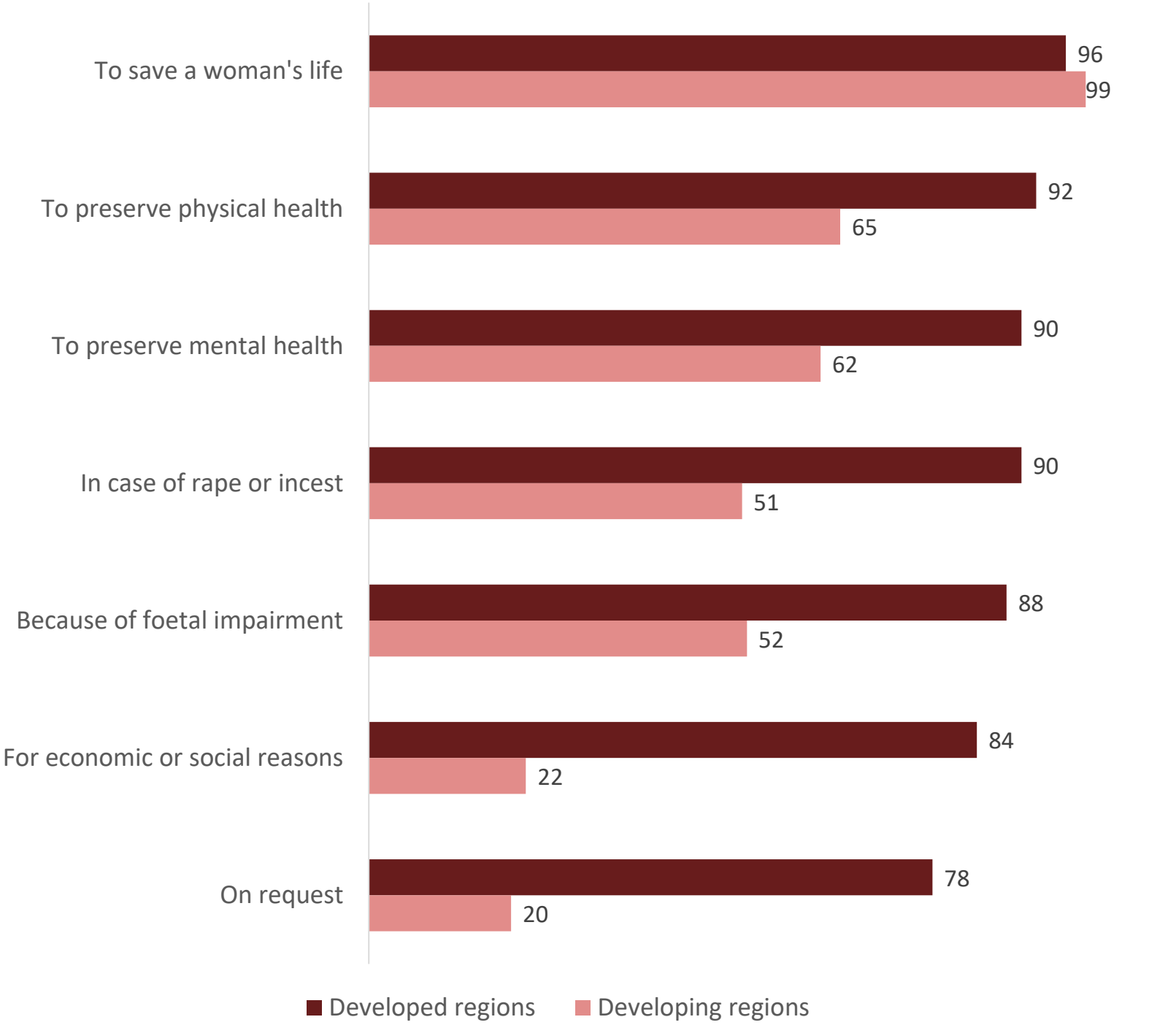
## A growing number of countries have expanded legal grounds for abortion

Legal grounds on which abortion is permitted, 1996, 2005 and 2017 (percentage of countries)



## But differences between developed and developing regions remain

Legal grounds on which abortion is permitted, by level of development, 2017 (percentage of countries)

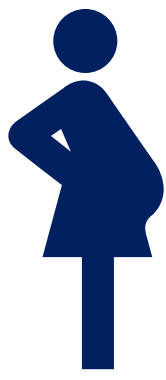


## Unsafe abortion continues to be a problem, especially in countries in developing regions



25.1 million

**unsafe abortions** take place worldwide each year, of which **97%** are in developing countries



3.9 million

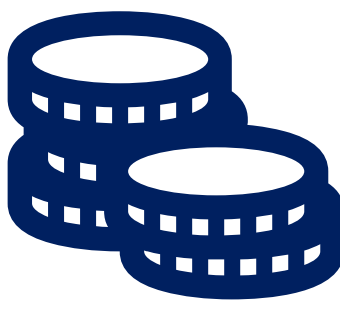
**adolescent women** aged 15-19 in developing countries undergo unsafe abortions every year

## And the losses relating to unsafe abortion are high



At least 22,800 women

**die** annually worldwide from complications related to abortion



US\$ 232 million

was the estimated **annual cost** of providing post-abortion care in developing countries

**Notes:** The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development: The ICPD Programme of Action called upon all Governments and relevant organizations "to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern" and stated that "[i]n all cases, women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion". For further information, refer to: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014). Abortion Policies and Reproductive Health around the World, see: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/policy/abortionPoliciesAndReproductiveHealth.asp>. **Most restrictive:** Countries that do not permit abortion on any ground or permit abortion only to save a woman's life. **Less restrictive:** Countries that permit abortion to preserve a woman's physical or mental health, or in case of rape or incest, or because of foetal impairment. **Least restrictive:** Countries that permit abortion for economic or social reasons or on request. **Developing regions** comprise Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia; **Developed regions** comprise Europe, Northern America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The designations "developing" and "developed" are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. Data on **legal grounds on which abortion is permitted** are available for 197 countries in 2017. Data on **unsafe abortions** are estimates based on 150 data points from 61 countries in the period 2010-2014. Data on **unsafe abortions among adolescent women** are estimates based on more than 130 nationally representative surveys from developing countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2016. Data on **maternal deaths** are estimates based on 417 data sets from 115 countries for the period 2003-2009. Data on **annual cost of providing post-abortion care** are estimates in 2014, expressed in 2014 US\$.

**Data sources:** For data on **legal grounds on which abortion is permitted**: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Policies Database (for 2017 data, see: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/policy/wpp2017.asp>; for 1996 and 2005 data, see: [https://esa.un.org/PopPolicy/wpp\\_datasets.aspx](https://esa.un.org/PopPolicy/wpp_datasets.aspx)). For data on **unsafe abortions**: Ganatra B et al. (2017). Global, regional, and subregional classification of abortions by safety, 2010-14: estimates from a Bayesian hierarchical model. *Lancet*. 390, 2372-81, see: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31794-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31794-4/fulltext). For data on **unsafe abortions among adolescent women**: Darroch JE et al. (2016). *Adding it up: Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents*. New York: Guttmacher Institute, see: <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-meeting-contraceptive-needs-of-adolescents>. For data on **maternal deaths** and **annual cost of providing post-abortion care**: Singh S et al. (2018). *Abortion worldwide 2017: Uneven progress and unequal access*. New York: Guttmacher Institute, see: <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-worldwide-2017>.

**Suggested citation:** United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). *World Abortion Policies: Infochart* (ST/ESA/SER.A/445). Copyright © 2020 by United Nations, made available under a Creative Commons license (CC BY 3.0 IGO), see: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/igo/>



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