

## The Issue of the Legal Status of Abortion

Abortion is a common health intervention. It is considered safe when carried out using the method and conditions outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), appropriate to the pregnancy duration, and by someone with the vital necessary skills.

The legal status of abortion refers to the legal restrictions that establish the circumstances under which women can legally terminate a pregnancy. As of October 2022, 66 countries have legalised or decriminalised abortion on request.

Each year, approximately seventy three million abortions take place worldwide, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Six out of 10 (61%) of all unintended pregnancies, and 3 out of 10 (29%) of all pregnancies, end in induced abortion. This equates to around thirty nine abortions per one thousand women globally, a rate that has remained fairly constant since 1990.

Although the legal status of abortion varies considerably by region, a large majority of countries permit abortion under limited circumstances. There are five categories/perspectives to consider when handling this issue:

Category 1: Abortion is prohibited altogether

Category 2: Abortion is permitted in order to save a pregnant person's life

Category 3: Abortion is permitted for the preservation of health

Category 4: Abortion is permitted based on broad social or economic grounds

Category 5: Abortion is available upon request (gestational limits vary)

Discussion of the ethics of abortion must rest on one or more of several foundations: whether or not a foetus is considered a human being; the rights of the pregnant person as opposed to those of the foetus, and circumstances of horror and hardship that might surround a pregnancy. Viability is relative.

It is also vital to consider the potentially life-threatening consequences of the inaccessibility of abortion care. Lack of safe access to safe, affordable, timely and respectful abortion care, and the stigma associated with abortion, poses risks to a pregnant person's physical and mental wellbeing throughout the course of their life (as well as potentially affecting the lives of close relations).

Consider the contribution to death rates of unsafe abortions

Points to consider:

- Which member states fall into the above categories?
- What are some consequences associated with unsafe abortion?
- How do unsafe abortions contribute to global death rate?
- Is there a correlation between abortion restrictions and rates of abortion among member states?
- What issues arise when access to abortion goes against the cultural/religious views of a state?

Useful links:

<https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/75173/?sequence=1>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/search/research-news/3415/>

<https://getgoldenvisa.com/which-countries-allow-abortion>