

Facts & Figures

Background information on unintended adolescent pregnancies and contraception

The global Your Life campaign takes a revolutionary approach to sexual education.

It is directed at young people and pursues the vision of a world where every pregnancy is wanted. Unintended adolescent pregnancies are critical public health issues, as the statistics below demonstrate.

The scale of the problem

- Of all pregnancies that occur worldwide each year, more than 48% are unplanned. This corresponds to 121 million unplanned pregnancies annually. Of these, more than 60% end in abortion.¹
- Around 45% of all abortions are unsafe, almost all of which are taking place in developing countries.² 4.7% to 13.2% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortions. Unsafe abortions result in an estimated 7 million complications.²
- Many countries have a high rate of adolescent pregnancy. An estimated 21 million girls aged 15-19 in developing countries become pregnant every year, and 12 million of them give birth.³
- For women in this age bracket, pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death globally. The majority of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.⁴

Further reading: Important facts and figures

Unintended pregnancy

- An estimated 218 million women living in low- and middle-income countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using an effective contraceptive method.⁵ 111 million women in developing regions experience an unintended pregnancy each year.⁴
- While the use of contraceptives has increased in absolute numbers, it has not kept pace with population growth. This means the number of women with an unmet need for family planning is projected to change little between 2017 and 2030.⁶
- A high percentage of abortion-related deaths and injuries could be prevented through sexual education, the use of effective

contraception⁷, and the provision of safe, legal abortions with adequate healthcare.⁸

- The COVID-19 pandemic underlines this issue even further: Due to job losses, individuals possess less money to purchase contraception and are also confronted with the reduction of essential equipment in doctors' offices and hospitals. The result, in India for example, is around 2 million unintended pregnancies.⁹

Adolescent pregnancy

- Adolescent women face many barriers to obtaining contraceptive care, including fear of exposing that they are sexually active (if they are unmarried) and social pressure to have a child (if they are married).¹⁰
- The absolute number of adolescent girls who give a live birth before age 18 are highest in these five countries: India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia and Pakistan. The five countries with the highest prevalence of adolescent pregnancies are: Niger, Chad, Mali, Guinea and Mozambique.¹¹
- Unintended pregnancy can drastically alter a young girl's life. It can ruin her education and diminish her future job prospects. She becomes more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion, and often her health is threatened as her body is still in development.¹²
- The many health problems associated with early marriage and pregnancy during adolescence include maternal and child mortality an malnutrition, anemia, HIV and other STIs, postpartum hemorrhage and mental disorders such as depression.¹²

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

- Each STI is a threat to the patient's health, making them more susceptible to HIV, infertility and other reproductive health problems.¹³
- Young people are more vulnerable to STIs than adults. Those who become sexually active at a young age are, on average, more likely to change partners and increase their exposure. Young people are also more reluctant than adults to seek treatment for STIs.¹⁴
- Sexual violence puts girls and young women at greater risk of HIV and other STIs,¹⁵ e.g., in situations in which they cannot negotiate for safe sex.¹⁶

- HIV is a substantial risk factor for COVID-19 and is linked to a higher risk of death from the infection.¹⁷ So far, the majority of people living with HIV did not have access to the vaccines.
- Lockdown restrictions disrupted HIV testing which led to drops in diagnosis and treatment. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria states that in 502 health facilities in 32 African and Asian countries, HIV testing declined by 41%.¹⁸
- Adolescents living with HIV have worse access to antiretroviral treatment, adherence to treatment, retention in care and viral suppression.¹⁹
- A study of four African countries found that fear, shame, and prohibitive costs are the most common reasons adolescents cannot access sexual and reproductive health services.²⁰

Inequality

- McKinsey's calculation states that women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's jobs and that even though women make up only 39% of global employment, they still account for 54% of job losses due to COVID-19.²¹
- The closure of schools to control COVID-19 transmission in many countries put an additional burden on women, who provide most of the informal care within families, with the consequence of limiting their work and economic opportunities.²²
- The pandemic made structural racism more prominent. People of color, especially women, are treated with less care and are more likely not to be taken seriously when they express their health concerns. This does not only result in them having a worse course of a COVID-19 infection than white people, but also leads to them having less and hindered access to contraceptive methods.²³

Contraception

- A study from Guttmacher states that a 10% decline in the provision of pregnancy-related and newborn healthcare only would mean 1.7 million more women giving birth, and an additional 2.6 million newborns experiencing complications without receiving the care they desperately need.²⁴

- Disturbance in contraception access likewise brings about an expansion in unsafe abortions, transmission of HIV, pregnancy complications, as well as increased occurrences of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other mental health issues.²⁵

Supply chain and family planning

- International Planned Parenthood states that 5,633 static and mobile clinics, as well as community-based care services, in 64 countries had already been closed by April of 2020 due to the outbreak.²⁶
- Women are unable to visit healthcare facilities to get the supplies and information they need. Consequently, many families were unable to care for themselves and were forced to either take the risk of unplanned pregnancy or even put their family planning on hold. A survey of 105 countries by the WHO reported a 68% disruption to family planning and contraceptive services.²⁷

Gender-based violence

- Due to the restrictions such as curfews and the governmental plea to stay at home, as well as economic pressure, household tension and gender-based violence have increased even further.
- The crisis created additional hindrances for women to access fundamental life-saving services such as counselling, justice resources, sexual health, and other medical assistance. The UNFPA stated that only 6 months of lockdown(s) could lead to 31 million more cases of gender-based violence.²⁸
- According to UNICEF, 12 million girls are forced into marriage each year.²⁹ Alarming, it is estimated that this number has increased by 500,000 due to the pandemic.³⁰ As a consequence of these forced marriages, which are sometimes linked to sexual violence and abuse, an appalling number of one million more girls were at risk of becoming pregnant in 2020, states an article by Save the Children.

Disclaimer

Your Life/World Contraception Day content does not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the partners of the WCD Coalition.



About Your Life

The global campaign Your Life is directed at young people and pursues the vision of a world where every pregnancy is wanted. The annual highlight of the ongoing activities is World Contraception Day on September 26. To support the campaign and its goals, a broad range of international partners form the World Contraception Day Coalition, which is sponsored by Bayer.

The partners of the World Contraception Day Coalition are:

- Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)
- EngenderHealth (EH)
- European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health (ESC)
- Family Planning 2030 (FP2030)
- Federación Latinoamericana de Sociedades Obstetricia y Ginecología (FLASOG)
- International Federation of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology (FIGIJ)
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
- Marie Stopes International (MSI)
- Pathfinder International
- Population Services International (PSI)
- The Population Council
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Women Deliver (WD)
- Whispa Health

Your Life supports:

- 120 Under 40, an initiative by the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), a movement committed to the United Nations' Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health

The campaign has a dedicated website, www.your-life.com, where young people can get accurate and unbiased information on contraception. The

content is presented in a straightforward, interactive and relatable way, without judgment or lectures. It seeks to address the needs and questions of a young audience, counter common myths and provide guidance and preparation for a well-informed discussion on contraceptive methods with a healthcare professional.

The online presence is complemented by the YourLife social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter as well as the YOURLA Chatbot.

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