

## Facts & Figures

### *Background information on unintended pregnancies and contraception*

Many factors linked to reducing unintended pregnancy are embedded within the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030, including gender equality, good health and wellbeing, ending poverty, ensuring quality education for all, and promoting sustained economic growth.<sup>1,2</sup>

Working to achieve the SDGs relating to family planning will therefore help to address these issues that impact individuals, health systems and whole societies. Universal access to contraception is also cited as having financial benefits across social, economic and environmental factors.<sup>3</sup>

The global **Your Life** campaign takes a revolutionary approach to sexual and reproductive health education. It is directed at young people and pursues the vision of a world where every pregnancy is wanted. The Your Life website ([www.your-life.com](http://www.your-life.com)) provides young people with accurate and unbiased information on contraception.

#### **The scale of the problem.**

Unintended adolescent pregnancies are critical public health issues:

- Of all pregnancies that occur worldwide each year, more than 48% are unplanned.<sup>4</sup> This corresponds to 121 million unplanned pregnancies annually or 332,000 daily.<sup>1,4</sup>
- More than 60% of unplanned pregnancies end in abortion.<sup>1,4</sup> Around 45% of all abortions are unsafe, almost all of which are taking place in developing countries.<sup>5,6</sup> 5% to 13% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion.<sup>5</sup> In developing countries alone, 7 million women per year were treated in hospital facilities for complications of unsafe abortions.<sup>5</sup>
- Many countries have a high rate of adolescent pregnancy. An estimated 21 million girls aged 15-19 in low- and middle-income countries become pregnant every year.<sup>7</sup> 12.8 million girls aged 15-19, and an estimated half a million girls aged 10-14 give birth every year.<sup>8</sup>
- Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 -19 globally.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Further reading: Important facts and figures.**

##### Unintended pregnancy

- Globally, an estimated 257 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using effective, modern methods of contraception and of these women, 172 million are using no method at all.<sup>1</sup>

- In low-and middle-income countries alone, an estimated 218 million women have an unmet need for modern contraception, which means they want to avoid pregnancy but are not using an effective contraceptive method.<sup>7</sup> 111 million women in developing regions experience an unintended pregnancy each year.<sup>7</sup>
- There were 744 million women using modern contraceptives living in low- and middle-income countries in 2023. Most of them (58%) get their method from the public sector.<sup>10</sup> Women obtain different contraception methods from the public and private sectors:
  - the vast majority (68%) of public sector contraception users rely on long-acting reversible and permanent methods (sterilization, IUDs, and implants) whereas the vast majority of private sector users (69%) use short-acting methods (namely condoms, pills, and injectables).<sup>10</sup>
- If all 218 million women in low-and middle-income countries had their unmet need for modern contraception satisfied, unintended pregnancies would drop by 68%, resulting in 21 million fewer unplanned births, 46 million fewer abortions, 8 million fewer miscarriages, 0.7 million fewer stillbirths and 70,000 fewer maternal deaths, each year.<sup>7</sup>
- Satisfying unmet need for contraceptive services creates opportunities for women to attain a higher level of education and to participate in the workforce, thereby elevating economic growth, socio-economic development and promoting public health. These benefits multiply over generations as women who participate in the workforce are more likely to expect the same of their daughters.<sup>8</sup>

### 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).<sup>7</sup>
- Contraception is often not easily accessible to adolescents. Even when adolescents can obtain contraceptives, they may lack the agency or the resources to pay for them, knowledge on where to obtain them and how to correctly use them.<sup>11</sup>
- Child marriage and child sexual abuse place girls at increased risk of pregnancy, often unintended.<sup>11</sup>
- The unmet need for contraception among women wanting to avoid an unplanned pregnancy in low- and middle-income countries is much higher for adolescents than for all women aged 15–49.<sup>7</sup>
- Adolescent pregnancy, and childbirth, can derail girls' development into adulthood and have negative impacts on their education, livelihoods and health. Many girls who are pregnant are pressured or forced to drop out of school, which can impact their educational and employment prospects and opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

- Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to the health consequences of pregnancy and delivery as their bodies may not be physically ready.<sup>12</sup> Adolescent mothers (aged 10–19 years) face higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis and systemic infections than women aged 20–24 years, and babies of adolescent mothers face higher risks of low birth weight, preterm birth and severe neonatal condition.<sup>11</sup>

### Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

- STIs have a direct impact on sexual and reproductive health through stigmatization, infertility, cancers and pregnancy complications and can increase the risk of HIV.<sup>13</sup>
- A study in the United States found that adolescents and young adults are particularly susceptible to STIs, and cases of chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis have been rapidly increasing among young people in recent years. Adolescent girls and young women are particularly susceptible for some STIs, such as chlamydia for biological reasons.<sup>14</sup>
- People seeking screening and treatment for STIs face numerous barriers, including limited resources, stigmatization, poor quality of services and often out-of-pocket expenses. Some populations with the highest rates of STIs, such as adolescents in high burden countries for HIV, often do not have access to adequate and friendly health services.<sup>13</sup>
- Sexual violence puts girls and young women at greater risk of HIV and other STIs, for example in situations in which they cannot negotiate for safe sex.<sup>15</sup>

### Gender-based Violence

- In many countries, women are not able to exercise their bodily autonomy. Data from 68 countries show that an estimated 44% of partnered women are unable to make decisions over health care, sex or contraception.<sup>16</sup>
- Worldwide, more than one in four women aged 15 to 49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to gender-based violence in the form of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>8</sup>
- 13% of women have been subject to physical or sexual intimate partner violence at some point within the prior year.<sup>8</sup>
- Women who experience intimate partner violence are significantly less likely to subsequently use contraception.<sup>8</sup> And intimate partner violence has been linked with increased numbers of unintended pregnancies.<sup>8</sup>

## Forced marriage

According to UNICEF, 12 million girls are forced into marriage each year.<sup>17</sup>

- Child, early and forced marriage is a global problem, and most girls forced to marry at a young age live in developing countries:<sup>18</sup>
  - 40 percent of young women (20-24) in developing countries were married before the age of 18 (21 percent globally)<sup>18</sup>
  - 12 percent were married before the age of 15 (5 percent globally)<sup>18</sup>
- Marrying at such a young age means that these young girls are forced into sexual relations and often get pregnant when they are not ready.<sup>18</sup>
  - Child brides are also at a greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.<sup>18</sup>

## Disclaimer

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

## References

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population 2022. Seeing the Unseen. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/swp2022>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. Sustainable Development. The 17 Goals. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>3</sup> Copenhagen Consensus. Available at :

[https://copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/documents/post2015brochure\\_m.pdf](https://copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/documents/post2015brochure_m.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 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: e1152-61. Available at:

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<sup>5</sup> WHO, (17 May 2024) Abortion. Fact Sheet. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abortion>

<sup>6</sup> Ganatra, B. et al. Global, regional, and subregional classification of abortions by safety, 2010–14: estimates from a Bayesian hierarchical model. The Lancet 2017. Available at:

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<sup>7</sup> Sully EA et al., "Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019" New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2020. Available at: <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population 2024. Interwoven Lives. Threads of Hope. Available at:

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<sup>9</sup> WHO, (28 April 2023). Adolescent and young adult health, Fact Sheet. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions>

<sup>10</sup> Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. LEAP 2024. Available at: <https://leap.rhsupplies.org/#/contraception/overview>

<sup>11</sup> WHO, (10 April 2024). Adolescent pregnancy, Fact Sheet. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF Data. January 2024. Early Childbearing. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/adolescent-health/>

<sup>13</sup> WHO, (21 May 2024). Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Fact Sheet. Available at: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-\(stis\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-(stis))

<sup>14</sup> Keller, Lea H. "Reducing STI Cases: Young People Deserve Better Sexual Health Information and Services", New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2020. Available at: <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2020/04/reducing-sti-cases-young-people-deserve-better-sexual-health-information-and-services>

<sup>15</sup> UNAIDS, (2019). Women and HIV. A Spotlight on Adolescent Girls and Young Women. Available at: [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/2019\\_women-and-hiv\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2019_women-and-hiv_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of world Population 2023.8 billion lives, infinite possibilities. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/swop23/SWOP2023-ENGLISH-230329-web.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF Data. June 2023. Child marriage. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

<sup>18</sup> The effects of child, early and forced marriage. [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/human\\_rights-droits\\_homme/child\\_marriage-mariages\\_enfants.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/child_marriage-mariages_enfants.aspx?lang=eng)