



Abortions Averted Through Contraception

An estimated 26 million legal and 20 million illegal abortions were performed worldwide. The resulting overall abortion rate was 35 per 1,000 women aged 15-44. Among the sub regions of the world, Eastern Europe had the highest abortion rate (90 per 1,000) and Western Europe the lowest rate (11 per 1,000).

In response to the findings of surveys, the United Nations Population Fund, the UNFPA, and USAID launched targeted family planning programs in Eastern Europe, as well as other high risk regions like Asia and Latin America.

Why:

- Access to family planning and contraception has been proven to prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce rates of abortion.
- The number of children desired in the developing world has decreased significantly. Lack of access to modern contraception resulted in unwanted births and high abortion rates.
- A survey of women in Georgia in 2005 (the country with the highest abortion rate in the subregion: 5.5 among married women) revealed that the number of children women under 30 considered ideal was 2.7. Given that abortion is the most common form of birth control in Georgia, there are 2.2 abortions for every live birth; resulting in the abortion of approximately two-thirds of all pregnancies. This dependency on abortion as the primary method of contraception is linked to the high cost of imported contraceptives and a dearth of knowledge of modern methods of contraception and attitudes of many physicians.

Costs and Benefits of Contraceptive Use

At a cost of about \$1.7 billion a year, modern contraceptive use currently prevents annually:

- 187 million unintended pregnancies
- 60 million unplanned births
- 105 million induced abortions
- 2.7 million infant deaths
- 215,000 pregnancy related-deaths (including 79,000 from unsafe abortions)
- 685,000 children losing their mothers due to pregnancy-related deaths

There are some 201 million women with unmet need for effective contraception. Meeting their needs, for an estimated annual cost of \$3.9 billion, would avert some 52 million pregnancies each year (half of which would be delayed to a later time, in accordance with stated desires).

Preventing or delaying these unintended pregnancies would also prevent:

- 23 million unplanned births (a 72 percent reduction)
- 22 million induced abortions (a 64 percent reduction)
- 1.4 million infant deaths
- 142,000 pregnancy-related deaths (including 53,000 from unsafe abortions)
- 505,000 children losing their mothers due to pregnancy-related deaths

*UNFPA State of the World Population 2004, The Cairo Consensus at Ten

Results of Programs to Meet Unmet Need for Contraception

- Between 1988 and 2001, modern contraceptive use increased in Russia by 74 percent, with a 61 percent decline in the abortion rate.
- The abortion rate among women 15 to 44 in Georgia declined 16 percent from 3.7 to 3.1 between 2000 and 2005. This decline is linked to increased awareness and use of contraception. By 2005, 97 percent of Georgian women had heard of at least one modern contraceptive method. However, there is a large discrepancy between married women's awareness of modern contraceptive methods and their knowledge of how to use the method (95 compared to 62 percent). Approximately 47 percent of married women

used contraception and 26 percent used a modern method in 2005 (up from 41 and 20 percent in 1999 respectively).

- Abortion rates declined by almost 50 percent in the 1990s in Kazakhstan in tandem with a rise in contraceptive use of 50 percent.
- In Latin America, high illegal abortion rates raised concerns among several countries in the 1960s. However, it was not until 1985 that Brazil instituted a family planning program within its government health services, with international organizations and funding stepping in to meet the needs of uncovered individuals. By 1996, 77 percent of married women used a method of modern contraception. Also, between 1990 and 1998, hospitals in Brazil reported a decline from 340,000 to 240,000 in patients suffering from complication linked to illegal abortions.
- Overall, contraceptive use in the developing world increased from less than 10 to almost 60 percent between 1960 and 2005 among married women.

Drop in Real Funding for Population Assistance and the UNFPA

- The United States' funding for international family planning peaked at \$541 million in 1995, began to decline in 2002, and has since remained constant. The 2006 budget allotted \$440 million and was continued into 2007. President Bush, however, recommended a 15 percent cut in family planning funding for fiscal year 2007, which would decrease spending to \$357 million.
- If 1995 funding levels were had been continued until today, and adjusted for inflation and world population growth, the current US contribution would be \$865 million or \$2.88 per capita per year.
- Decreased funding for international family planning has already taken a toll. For example, the Bush administration has withheld the US annual \$34 million donation to the UNFPA since 2002, resulting in \$136 million in lost revenues for the organization. According to UNFPA projections, the denied funding could have “prevented 2 million unplanned pregnancies and 800,000 abortions.”

Implications of the Funding Deficit

- If unmet need for contraception were reduced to zero in Eastern Europe, the result would be an estimated 25 percent reduction in abortion.

Consequences of the Funding Gap

Each \$1 million shortfall in contraceptive commodity assistance will result in an estimated:

- 360,000 unintended pregnancies
- 150,000 induced abortions
- 800 maternal deaths
- 11,000 infant deaths
- 14,000 deaths of children under five

*UNFPA State of the World Population 2004, The Cairo Consensus at Ten

Charts compiled by Charles Westoff

Figure J1. Recent trends in modern contraceptive use and abortions for all women.

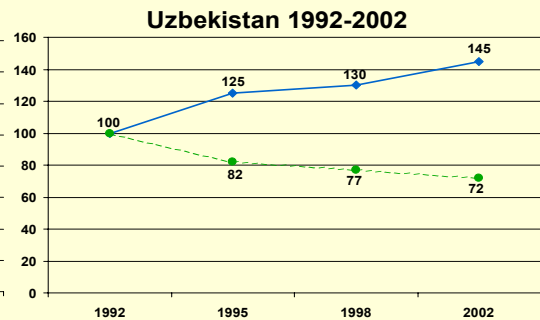
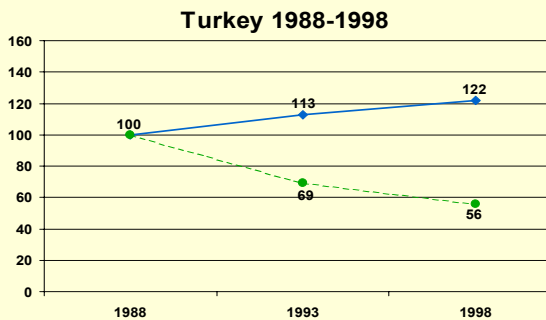
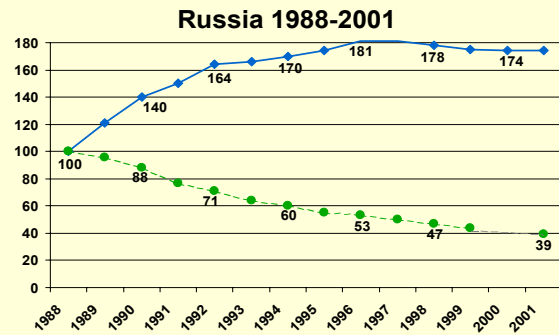
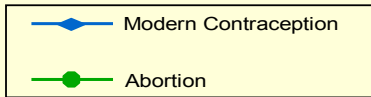
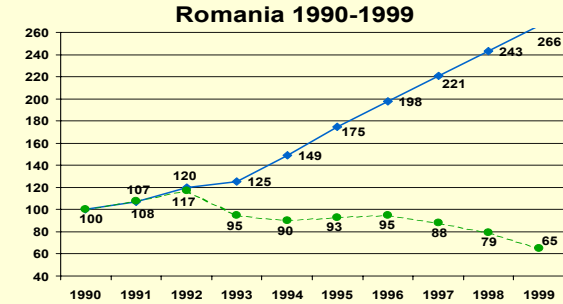
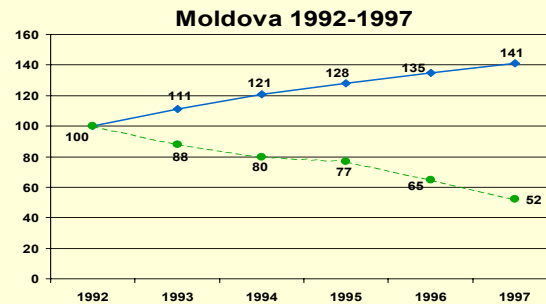
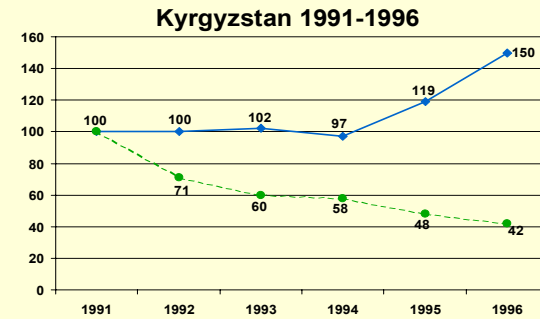
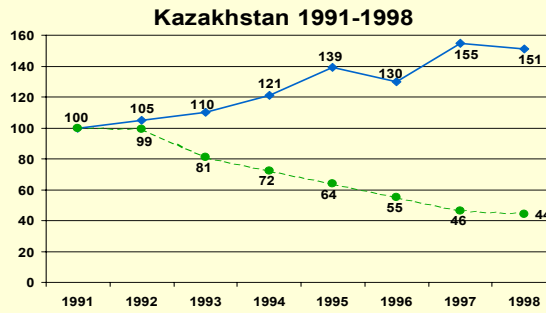
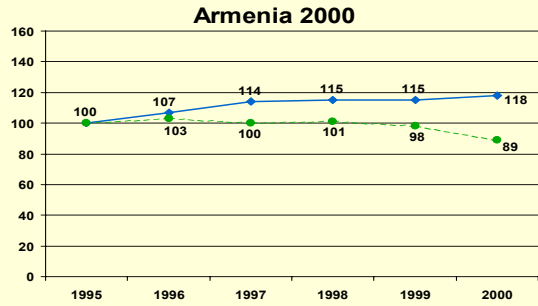


Figure L. Components of abortion (%)

