

Table 14 - Demographic Yearbook 2000

Table 14 presents legally induced abortions by age and number of previous live births of women for the latest available year.

Description of variables: The technical notes for table 13 provide more detailed information on the classification of legally induced abortion.

Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the date of the occurrence of the event, expressed in complete solar years. The age classification used in this table is the following: under 15 years, 5-year age groups through 45-49 years 50 years and over, and age unknown.

Except where otherwise indicated, eight categories are used in classifying the number of previous live births: 0 through 5, 6 or more live births, and, if required, number of live births unknown.

The focus of the present table is an abortion as a social, rather than physiological, event. Differences among countries or areas in definition and in record-keeping would seem to preclude the collection of abortion data on any internationally comparable basis if abortion were defined solely in physiological terms. By restricting coverage to events that have been induced, the table avoids any distortion arising either from differences in definition or from differences in accuracy and comprehensiveness of the records kept concerning spontaneous foetal loss. By further restricting coverage to events performed under legal auspices, the table at least reduces (if it does not eliminate altogether) the likelihood of distortion arising from any reluctance to report the occurrence of such a procedure.

Reliability of data: Unlike data on live births and foetal deaths, which are generally collected through systems of vital registration, data on abortion are collected from a variety of sources. Because of this, the quality specification, showing the completeness of civil registers, which is presented for other tables, does not appear here.

Limitations: With regard to the collection of information on abortions, a variety of sources are used, but hospital records are the most common source of information.³³ This obviously implies that most cases that have no contact with hospitals are missed. Data from other sources are probably also incomplete. The data in the present table are limited to legally induced abortions that, by their nature, might be assumed to be more complete than data on all induced abortions.

In addition, deficiencies in reporting of age and number of previous live births of the woman, differences in the method used for obtaining the age of the woman, and the proportion of abortions for which age or previous live births of the woman are unknown must all be taken into account in using these data.

Coverage: Legally induced abortions by age and number of previous live births of woman are shown for 40 countries or areas.

Earlier data: Legally induced abortions by age and previous live births of women have been shown previously in most issues of the Demographic Yearbook since the 1971 issue. For information on specific years covered, readers should consult the Index.