

Can abortion research change the law?

Rebecca Gomperts, MD, MPP, PhD

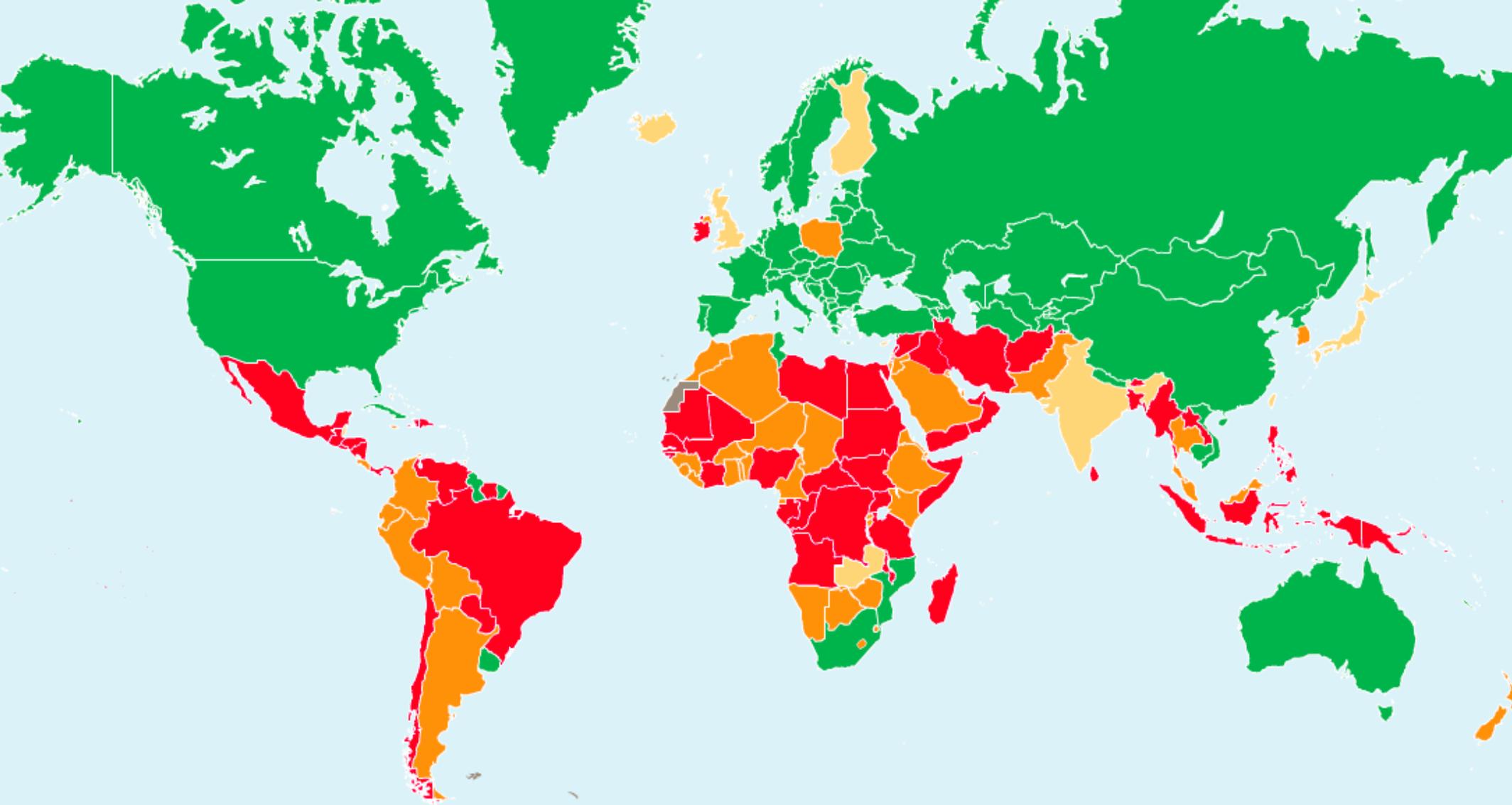
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THE WORLD'S ABORTION LAWS 2017



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Access to abortion medication is a human right

The World Health Organization's definition of health is: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".^[3] The WHO listed mifepristone and misoprostol as essential medicines since 2005 ^[4]

Access to essential medicines as part of the right to the highest attainable standard of health ("the right to health") according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 25.1

General comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health (article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) states "Essential medicines should also be available, including a wide range ofmedicines for abortioncare...."^[6]



General comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health (article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) states:

39. States parties have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right of everyone to sexual and reproductive health

40. The obligation to respect requires States to refrain from directly or indirectly interfering with the exercise by individuals of the right to sexual and reproductive health.

41. The obligation to respect also requires States to repeal, and refrain from enacting, laws and policies that create barriers in access to sexual and reproductive health services. [\[8\]](#)



Medical abortion (with pills)

till 12 weeks of pregnancy at home

Mifepristone + Misoprostol (98% effective)

swallow 1 tablet Mifepristone 200 mg,
after 24 hours put 4 tablets Misoprostol
(prostaglandin) under the tongue



Misoprostol alone (90% effective)

put 4 tablets 200 mcg under the tongue,
repeat this after 4 hours,
and again after 4 hours
(total 12 tablets)



Mifepristone and Misoprostol are on the WHO list of essential medicines



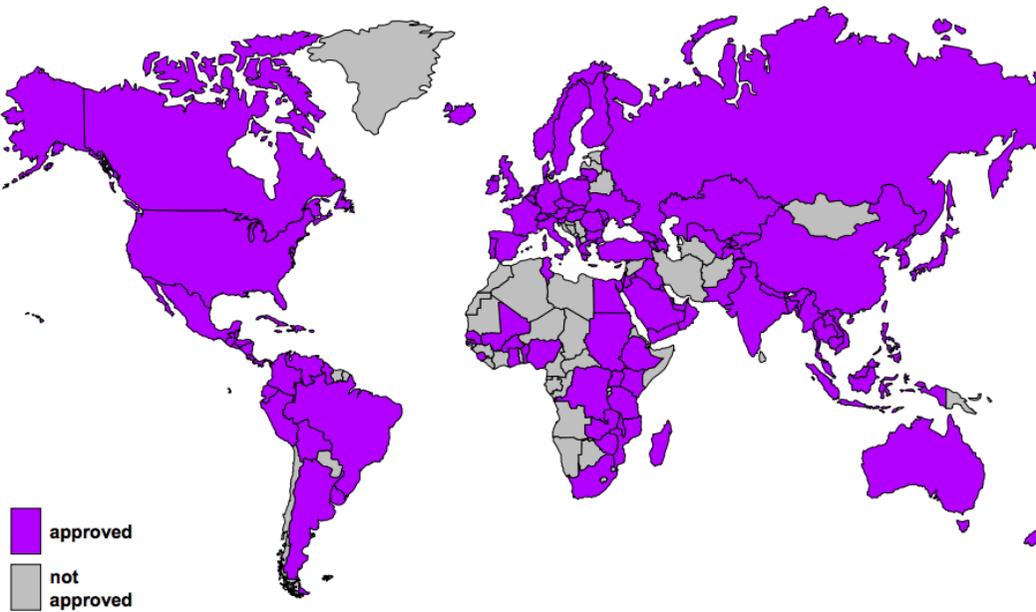
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Misoprostol Approved

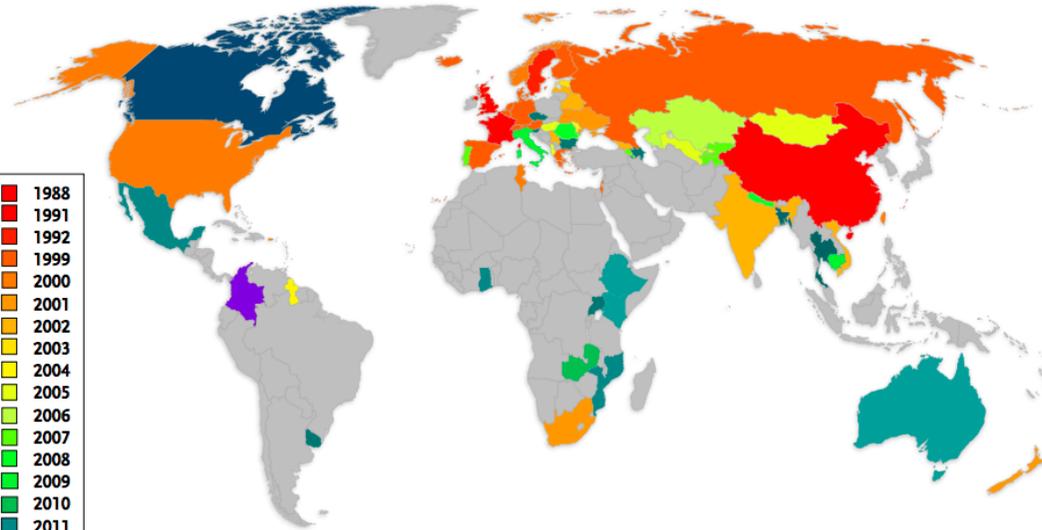
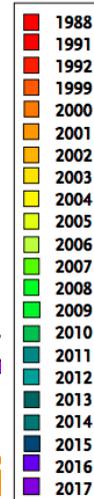
Mifepristone Approved



Gynuity Health Projects tracks formal drug registration and government approval of misoprostol throughout the world. This map reflects our latest information. If you become aware of registration or approval in new countries, please write to pubinfo@gynuity.org.

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Updated March 2017

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Access:

- Regular pharmacy with prescription (India, Nepal and other)
- Black market (where abortion is illegal)
- Special clinics/hospitals (almost all of Europe and US)
- Online (worldwide)



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How does a medical abortion work?

Mifepristone block progesterone, an hormone needed to maintain the pregnancy and this way stops the pregnancy but also makes the womb more sensitive for the second medicine, mifepristone

Misoprostol, a prostaglandin, causes contractions of the womb. Through these contractions the products of pregnancy are expelled. This is why misoprostol alone can also cause an abortion



A medical abortion has the same impact as a spontaneous miscarriage

Miscarriages are very common (15-20% of all pregnancies),

Complications are rare and women can handle the miscarriage themselves.

In many countries women take abortion pills at home. In case of complaints they can contact a doctor.

If a woman did a medical abortion in a country where abortion is illegal and she has complaints, she can go to any doctor or hospital and say she had a miscarriage. Hospital staff or the doctor cannot see the woman used medicines. The treatment for complication of medical abortion and spontaneous miscarriage is the same.



Risks of medical abortion in perspective:

Mortality unsafe abortion is 1 : 450

Mortality of an early medical abortion is < 1 : 500.000

Mortality of giving birth in Europe 1 : 20.000

Estimated road traffic death rate in Europe 1 : 25.000



Women on Web, a telemedical abortion service was launched, 2005



I need an abortion

Do you have an unwanted pregnancy? This online medical abortion service helps women gain access to a safe abortion with pills in order to reduce the number of deaths due to unsafe abortions. [Read more »](#)



I had an abortion

Every year 42 million women have an abortion. Show your face, share your story, donate your money and help women around the world get access to safe abortions. [Read more »](#)



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Impact of 11 years Women on Web:

The website has now more than 1 million visitors each month.

The helpdesk has answered approximately half a million help emails from women all over the world in 17 languages

Approximately 75.000 women have received a safe medical abortion at home

Many more women have received information about local available services and help options

The scientific publications about the service are frequently quoted in other scientific publications and influenced guidelines

It inspired other online abortion services as this is now an accepted abortion service alternative



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The Guardian September 27 th. 2017

Lead author Dr Bela Gunatra, from the WHO, told the Guardian their work showed “the persistence of inequalities by geography, by income, by levels of development ... that’s the real tragedy that these findings point to.

“Safe abortion is a very safe procedure. It can be provided at primary healthcare level. It isn’t even necessary that it has to be a procedure. Now you can use tablets. There is nothing that requires this to be highly resourced.

“It is not science that is holding back the progress but barriers in terms of stigma and law.”

In Latin America, where many countries have a ban on abortion in nearly all circumstances, women have resorted to [misoprostol](#), a tablet which they can access online, ideally taken with mifepristone as well. “It is a very safe method that women are taking into their own hands,” said Gunatra.

If they access the pills through a [telemedicine service such as Women on Web](#) which gives them information and support, the study classifies this as safe abortion, she said. But there are large numbers of women obtaining the pills online who do not have help, and those would be less safe.



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Abstract
Objective
 To explore reasons for seeking abortion services outside the formal healthcare system in Great Britain, where abortion is legally available.

Study Design
 We conducted a cross-sectional study among women resident in England, Scotland, and Wales who requested or have medication abortion through online telemedicine (Women on Web) between December 2010 and December 2012. We assessed the demographics and circumstances of all women requesting early medication abortion and conducted a content analysis of responses to their questionnaire related to the service to explore their reasons for seeking care.

Results
 Over a 24-month period, 118 women completed their seeking medication abortion. These women were diverse with respect to age, parity, and circumstances. All women reported 228 reasons for seeking abortion outside the formal healthcare setting, among all reasons, 40% were access barriers, including long waiting times, distance to clinic, work or childcare commitments, lack of eligibility for free NHS services, and/or negative experience of abortion care. 30% were privacy concerns, including lack of confidentiality of services, unwanted or unexpected stigma, and/or partner/family and/or other social contacts. 30% were controlling circumstances, including partner violence and partner/family control.

Data from Women on Web show barriers to access abortion in Great Britain

New research into the data from the online medical abortion service Women on Web found that many women in Great Britain experience barriers to access including long waiting times, distance to a clinic, work or childcare commitments, privacy concerns and controlling circumstances. Abortion was... [Read more »](#)

Self-reported outcomes and adverse events after medical abortion through online telemedicine: population based study in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
 Request for details: [www.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/bmj.g12345](#)

Abstract
 Objective: To assess self-reported outcomes and adverse events after medical abortion through online telemedicine in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Design: Population based study. Setting: Online telemedicine service. Participants: 1,000 women who used the service between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012. Results: 1,000 women used the service between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012. 95% (950) women reported successful medical abortion. 5% (50) women reported adverse events. 10% (100) women reported incomplete medical abortion. 15% (150) women reported no response to the abortion pills. 20% (200) women reported negative experience of the service. 25% (250) women reported privacy concerns. 30% (300) women reported access barriers. 35% (350) women reported controlling circumstances. 40% (400) women reported work or childcare commitments. 45% (450) women reported distance to clinic. 50% (500) women reported long waiting times. 55% (550) women reported lack of eligibility for free NHS services. 60% (600) women reported negative experience of abortion care. 65% (650) women reported unwanted or unexpected stigma. 70% (700) women reported partner/family and/or other social contacts. 75% (750) women reported partner violence. 80% (800) women reported partner/family control. 85% (850) women reported partner/family violence. 90% (900) women reported partner/family control. 95% (950) women reported partner/family violence. 100% (1000) women reported partner/family control.

Online Abortion Service Women on Web: a vital alternative.

The study was conducted by researchers from the University of Texas in Austin, Princeton University and the University of Edinburgh. They looked at the data of 1,000 women in Ireland and Northern Ireland who used the service of Women on Web between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012. [Read more »](#)

BJOG
 International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Experiences and characteristics of women seeking and completing at-home medical termination of pregnancy through online telemedicine in Ireland and Northern Ireland: a population-based analysis
 doi:10.1136/bmj.g12345
 Published: 17 October 2016

BJOG
 International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Positive experiences by Irish women using online abortion service Women on Web reported in new scientific publication

The study examined both the demographics and circumstances of 5,650 women requesting early medical abortion between 2010 and 2015, and the experiences of 1,023 women who completed abortion from January 2010 to December 2012. Women were diverse with respect to age, pregnancy circumstances, and... [Read more »](#)

Requests for Abortion in Latin America Related to Concern about Zika Virus Exposure, NEJM 6-2016

Abstract
 Objective: To assess the impact of Zika virus exposure on requests for abortion in Latin America. Design: Cross-sectional study. Setting: Online telemedicine service. Participants: 1,000 women who used the service between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012. Results: 1,000 women used the service between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012. 95% (950) women reported successful medical abortion. 5% (50) women reported adverse events. 10% (100) women reported incomplete medical abortion. 15% (150) women reported no response to the abortion pills. 20% (200) women reported negative experience of the service. 25% (250) women reported privacy concerns. 30% (300) women reported access barriers. 35% (350) women reported controlling circumstances. 40% (400) women reported work or childcare commitments. 45% (450) women reported distance to clinic. 50% (500) women reported long waiting times. 55% (550) women reported lack of eligibility for free NHS services. 60% (600) women reported negative experience of abortion care. 65% (650) women reported unwanted or unexpected stigma. 70% (700) women reported partner/family and/or other social contacts. 75% (750) women reported partner violence. 80% (800) women reported partner/family control. 85% (850) women reported partner/family violence. 90% (900) women reported partner/family control. 95% (950) women reported partner/family violence. 100% (1000) women reported partner/family control.

Requests for Abortion in Latin America Related to Concern about Zika Virus Exposure, NEJM 6-2016

A new study published yesterday in The New England Journal of Medicine by a group of researchers from the University of Texas, Princeton, Cambridge and the NGO Women on Web shows a dramatic increase in demand for safe abortions in Latin-American countries that issued public health advisories in... [Read more »](#)

Using telemedicine for termination of pregnancy with mifepristone and misoprostol in settings where there is no access to services



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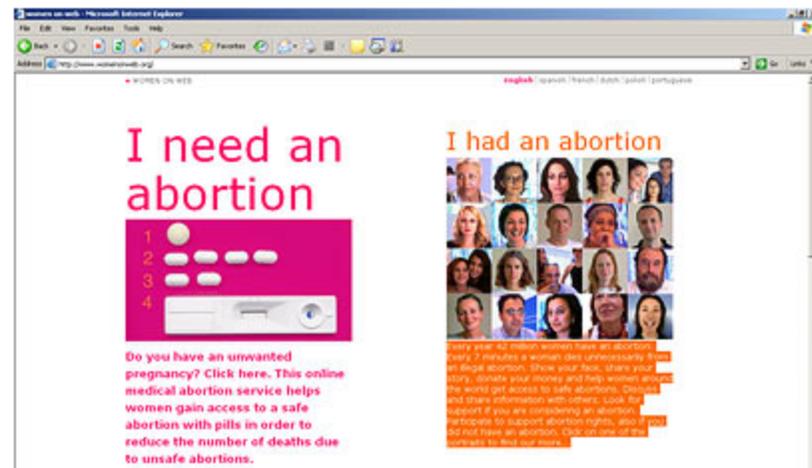
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Women risk health by using abortion websites

Women across the world are risking their health by accessing abortion medicines online and using them unsupervised, a study has revealed.

Last Updated: 10:30PM BST 18 Jul 2008



Home > Lifestyle > Women > Health

Abortion pills: Everything you need to know

Where can you get the abortion pill?

In England, Scotland and Wales, women can access abortions through NHS services and clinics.

In Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, women have limited access to abortions, which must be carried out in a hospital or a specialist licensed clinic. It means many women travel to parts of the UK where it is more easily accessible, or use sites such as Women on Web - a Netherlands-based website that sells mifepristone and misoprostol - to buy pills.

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Death rates hospitals 'too high'

Body's work

The research supported the initiation of other telemedical abortion services since 2016.

Abortion without the clinic on offer with revolutionary new US program

A pilot study in New York, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington will allow women to receive abortion-inducing drugs through the mail and be counseled by video



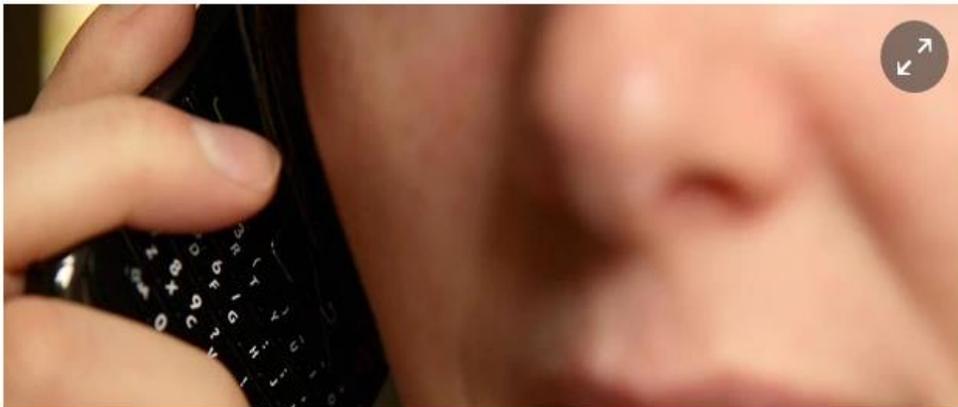
Dr Esther Priegue demonstrates the technology that will allow Choices Women's Medical Center to counsel patients who receive abortion drugs through the mail. Photograph: Molly Redden for the Guardian

A groundbreaking new experiment is launching in four states that could make abortion dramatically more accessible by allowing women to obtain abortion-inducing drugs through the mail.



Abortion pill RU486 to be available to Australian women over the phone

For \$250, women in some states will be able to arrange an abortion over the phone, booking ultrasounds and blood tests and ordering the pill to be delivered



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Ireland, case study



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Campaigns in Ireland: Abortion ship (2001), Abortion train (2014) Abortion bus (2015) Abortion drone (2016)

NEWS

Abortion Drone From Women on Web Delivers Pills to Northern Ireland

by Cassandra Vinograd / Jun.21.2016 / 3:18 PM ET



Tuesday 10 April 2018

News Irish News

Pro-choice activists travel on 'abortion pill train' to Belfast

Ruth Coppinger TD among women who took pills



Sarah Stack
October 28 2014 11:21 AM



Defiant pro-choice activists re-created the landmark contraceptive train of the 1970s earlier today by travelling to Belfast to bring back illegal abortion pills.

VICE NEWS We Traveled On Board the Irish 'Abortion Bus' That's Giving Illegal Pills to Women

EUROPE

We Traveled On Board the Irish 'Abortion Bus' That's Giving Illegal Pills to Women

By Sally Hayden

October 24, 2015 | 7:25 pm

There was a moment on Friday when a pro-life activist started flinging holy water at a pro-

[Explore this journal >](#)

Original Article

Experiences and characteristics of women seeking and completing at-home medical termination of pregnancy through online telemedicine in Ireland and Northern Ireland: a population-based analysis

[ARA Aiken](#) , [R Gomperts](#), [J Trussell](#)

First published: 17 October 2016 [Full publication history](#)

DOI: 10.1111/1471-0528.14401 [View/save citation](#)

Cited by: 0 articles  [Citation tools](#)



Answer to the question: Did the illegality of your abortion affect your feelings?

It made it very difficult to source information (some organisations in Ireland won't give details of reputable UK clinics) I feel that my country has really let me down, in this case where there are so many complications, that they couldn't provide an abortion.

I was worried the package wouldn't get to me, I was also worried that if I got caught I would be in trouble.

It made me incredibly angry at the laws of my own country. I am ashamed to be from a country with such a backwards approach to issues like this.

It made it much more difficult practically. It also added immensely to my paranoia that people would somehow find out I was pregnant and I would be prevented from accessing a safe abortion.

I felt hopeless and alone and that I had to hide what I was about to do. On top of all the difficult feelings in deciding to have an abortion, feeling like a criminal is awful. I was terrified I would get caught.

It really annoys me in this day and age in a civilised modern country that abortion is still illegal. It's my body and my choice, not the churches or some outdated law.

Yes it makes things a lot more difficult to get support and advice. It made me scared that I could get caught.

It just made it more stressful

The illegality showed me that there is something wrong with the legal system.



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https://www.newscientist.com/article/2109111-home-abortion-are-safe-we-should-let-women-do-it-themselves/

Belfast High Court t...

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INSIGHT 17 October 2016

Home abortions are safe – we should let women do it themselves



Will mail-order abortion pills make the law irrelevant?
Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty Images



BJOG An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology



BJOG An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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Experiences and characteristics of women seeking and completing at-home medical termination of pregnancy through online telemedicine in Ireland and Northern Ireland: a population-based analysis

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First Meeting of the Citizens' Assembly on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution

The Citizens' Assembly met on Saturday and Sunday, 26-27 November 2016.

The first topic the Assembly is considering is *the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution*, as outlined in the Resolution approving its establishment.

An agenda for the meeting is available [here](#). The Chair's [opening speech](#) to the Assembly is available [here](#).

Research on Abortion Pills

- Between January 2010 and December 2015, 5,650 women from the Island of Ireland consulted with 'Women on Web'
- The numbers consulting 'Women on Web' increased from 548 in 2010 to 1,438 in 2015

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Martyn Turner

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The abortion stories the Citizen's Assembly was not allowed to hear

Abortion pills are safe – an estimated 1,000 women in Ireland use them every year

© Fri, Mar 10, 2017, 04:00

Abigail Aiken

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Mifepristone (top) and misoprostol: "the only negative experience commonly reported by women is that they have to break the law for the sake of their own physical and mental health".

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Irish abortion law: Citizens' Assembly recommends unrestricted access to terminations

🕒 23 April 2017

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OPEN ACCESS

Self reported outcomes and adverse events after medical abortion through online telemedicine: population based study in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Abigail R A Aiken,^{1,2} Irena Digol,^{3,4} James Trussell,^{5,6} Rebecca Gomperts⁷

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES

To assess self reported outcomes and adverse events after self sourced medical abortion through online telemedicine.

DESIGN

Population based study.

SETTING

Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, where abortion is unavailable through the formal healthcare system except in a few restricted circumstances.

POPULATION

1000 women who underwent self sourced medical abortion through Women on Web (WoW), an online telemedicine service, between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012.

RESULTS

In 2010-12, abortion medications (mifepristone and misoprostol) were sent to 1636 women and follow-up information was obtained for 1158 (71%). Among these 1023 women confirmed use of the medications, and follow-up information was available for 1000. At the time women requested help from WoW, 781 (78%) were <7 weeks pregnant and 219 (22%) were 7-9 weeks pregnant. Overall, 94.7% (95% confidence interval 93.1% to 96.0%) reported successfully ending their pregnancy without surgical intervention. Seven women (0.7%, 0.3% to 1.5%) reported receiving a blood transfusion, and 26 (2.6%, 1.7% to 3.8%) reported receiving antibiotics (route of administration (IV or oral) could not be determined). No deaths resulting from the intervention were reported by family, friends, the authorities, or the media. Ninety three women

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²Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, TX 78712, USA

³Women on Web International Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands

⁴Centre for Reproductive Health and Medical Genetics, Chisinau, Moldova

⁵Office of Population Research, Princeton University, NJ 08544, USA

⁶Chalmers Centre, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH3 9ES, UK

⁷Women on Web International Foundation, Amsterdam,



THE IRISH TIMES

Fri, Mar 16, 20

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Politics > Abortion referendum | Oireachtas | Poll | Election 2016 | Assembly Election

FG Ministers believe only restrictive abortion law will pass

Citizens' Assembly proposals on the issue would not pass 'party, Dáil or country'

© Thu, Sep 28, 2017, 01:00



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Where Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and Labour stand on abortion

None favour implementing Assembly proposal to greatly increased access to abortion

© Fri, Sep 29, 2017, 01:02

Pat Leahy



Fine Gael said it echoes the sentiments expressed by the chair of the Citizens' Assembly, Ms Justice Laffoy.





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Women buying illegal pills swayed abortion decision

Ellen Coyne

December 14 2017, 12:01am,
The Times

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Health



As campaigners on both sides made their views known, politicians on the Oireachtas committee spent three months considering expert evidence

LEAH FARRELL/ROLLINGNEWS

Civil disobedience won the politicians over. Twenty-one Irish TDs and senators spent three months poring over reams of expert evidence and testimony on the state's anti-abortion laws. By the time the Oireachtas committee held its last meeting yesterday, more than half supported a fully pro-choice law allowing access to abortion up to 12 weeks' gestation for all women.

For the politicians who changed their mind, one of the most compelling pieces of evidence was the number of Irish women who are taking illegal abortion pills bought online. The committee heard that the use of pills bought online had tripled since 2010, when 548 women in Ireland contacted one website. Last year the figure was 1,748.

Fine Gael minister backs abortion up to 12 weeks

I've changed my mind, Regina Doherty says

Ellen Coyne, Senior Ireland Reporter |
Niamh Lyons, Ireland Political Editor

December 15 2017, 12:01am,
The Times

Politics



Regina Doherty, the social protection minister, said that the trade in illegal abortion pills had influenced her decision
ROLA MURRAY/MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

Regina Doherty has become the first Fine Gael government minister to publicly back free access to abortion up to 12 weeks for all women.

The social protection minister, who was staunchly anti-abortion in all circumstances seven years ago, said she had learnt that women did not decide to end a pregnancy “lightly”, and they should not be ignored by the state.

“It’s not up to me to judge anybody. I think the state has finally really recognised that we have a problem with women buying illegal abortion pills online, and we realise that we need to mind those women. But up until now, those women had been travelling and for some reason we felt we could ignore it,” she told *The Times* last night.



Six Cabinet Ministers say they are in favour of abortion proposals

Oireachtas committee on Eighth Amendment backs terminations up to 12th week of pregnancy

© Sat, Dec 16, 2017, 01:05

Sarah Bardon, Fiach Kelly



Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan: politicians made a "real and enduring mistake" by allowing the Eighth Amendment to be inserted into the Constitution. Photograph: Colin Keegan, Collins



Six Cabinet Ministers have indicated their support for the Oireachtas committee on the Eighth Amendment's recommendation to remove article 40.3.3 from the Constitution and allow for abortions up to 12 weeks.



Minister for Culture Josepha Madigan, Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan,



Leo Varadkar to campaign to liberalise Irish abortion laws

Taoiseach says he hopes to set date next week for referendum on repeal of 8th amendment

Henry McDonald
Ireland
correspondent

Sat 27 Jan 2018
10.50 GMT



This article is over 2 months old

193



▲ Demonstrators march in Dublin to demand change to Ireland's abortion laws. Photograph: Tom Honan/PA

Ireland's taoiseach, **Leo Varadkar**, has confirmed he will campaign for the liberalisation of Ireland's anti-abortion laws in an upcoming referendum.

The prime minister had faced criticism for appearing ambiguous about the referendum on abortion, particularly the suggestion that terminations in Irish hospitals should be allowed up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy.



Ireland's opposition leader wants to liberalise abortion law

Micheál Martin stuns sections of Fianna Fáil party by changing his mind over the contentious issue

Henry McDonald
Ireland
correspondent

Sun 11 Feb 2018
11.00 GMT



This article is over 2 months old

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285



▲ Micheál Martin will back the repeal of the Irish constitution's eighth amendment, which prohibits abortion, in a nationwide referendum in May. Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA

Ireland's opposition leader has revealed he changed his mind in favour of liberalising the Republic's strict anti-abortion laws after meeting women forced to travel to Britain to end their pregnancies after learning they had no hope their babies would be born alive.

Micheál Martin has stunned conservative sections of his Fianna Fáil party by backing the repeal of the eighth amendment to the Irish Republic's constitution,



But even women in
countries where
abortion should be
available cannot
access abortion
services



I've just found out I'm pregnant and I can't keep the baby, can you tell me if I can get the tablets from you please . I am in the u.k but it's impossible for me to get to a clinic due to having a disabled daughter who I can't leave And I have no one else at a I can trust I'm in a complete mess , clinics said I have to leave my daughter at home but I have no one else at all to have her due to her disabilities a nursery can't have her . I'm 1 week late . I'm in good health and have no allergies or medical conditions . Please I'm really desperate for help

I have visited my GP last week and he referred me to my local NHS service.They can only offer me a medical abortion with three visits to the hospital on separate days. On the second visit I am expected to stay there all day. I work full time and have two young sons so getting all that time off and childcare is going to be very difficult probably impossible.

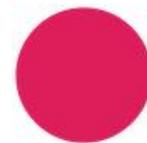
I live in South yorkshire and have no friends and the relatives I have I am not close to. I was hoping to have a termination in the comfort of my own home without judgmental eyes and without worrying about my husband knowing. I fear what would happen if he did. I have 3 children and my 3rd is 11 month old I considered an abortion when he was conceived and had a terrible pregnancy and still suffering from post natal depression. I will try to seek help, anonymously if possible. I'm in great need of help.

I'm a young studen and i want to have an abortion becouse i do not have the finacial resources to bring up a child and i'm alrely drowning in studen loans also i don't feel ready for resposibility of raising it and I want to finish my studies. I live in United Kingdom, I know abortion is legal there, but beeing a foreign student i can not aford this country priesces of procedure and the place in line for supported abortions is just to long and not guaranteed. I feel absolutely horrible and desperate and womenonweb.org seems to be the only place that could help me now. I can try and gether up the money for donation of your site. I just need to know if you could help me, please.



www.womenonwaves.org

www.womenonweb.org



Abortion requests from undocumented women:

Please I need you to help me with abortion pill..My situation is difficult..I live in Uk but I cannot go to the hospital to request abortion for fear of arrest as I am currently an illegal immigrant..I have no money and just managing and living with a friend..I am Nigerian..I came to Uk several years ago to study after that my visa expired and couldnt go back to nigeria...Its a long story but am broke and hopeless and its a shame I dont have any money to donate for your great service..Am crying day and night..I dont want this baby..Women on web is my last hope..please help me.please”



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Barriers to accessing abortion services and perspectives on using mifepristone and misoprostol at home in Great Britain

Abigail R.A. Aiken  , Katherine A. Guthrie, Marlies Schellekens, James Trussell, Rebecca Gomperts

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2017.09.003>

 Article Info

Abstract

Abstract

Objective

To examine reasons for seeking abortion services outside the formal healthcare system in Great Britain, where abortion is legally available.

Study Design

We conducted a mixed-methods study among women resident in England, Scotland, and Wales who requested at-home medication abortion through online telemedicine initiative Women on Web (WoW) between November 22nd 2016 and March 22nd 2017. We examined the demographics and circumstances of all women requesting early medication abortion and conducted a content analysis of a sample of their anonymized emails to the service to explore their reasons for seeking help.

Results

Over a 4-month period, 519 women contacted WoW seeking medication abortion. These women were diverse with respect to age, parity, and circumstance. 180 women reported 209 reasons for seeking abortion outside the formal healthcare setting. Among all reasons, 49% were access barriers, including long waiting times, distance to clinic, work or childcare commitments, lack of eligibility for free NHS services, and prior negative experiences of abortion care; 30% were privacy concerns, including lack of confidentiality of services, perceived or experienced stigma, and preferring the privacy and comfort of using pills at home; and 18% were controlling circumstances, including partner violence and partner/family control.

Conclusion

Despite the presence of abortion services in Great Britain, a diverse group of women still experiences logistical and personal barriers to accessing care through the formal healthcare system, or prefer the privacy of conducting their abortions in their own homes. Health services commissioning bodies could address existing barriers if supported by policy frameworks.



Challenges



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Women on Web website is censored by autocratic governments



Saudi Arabia

01-Jan-2016 - 01-Jan-2017

2,814 (0.02%)

01-Jan-2015 - 01-Jan-2016

64,749 (0.68%)



Turkey

01-Jan-2017 - 10-Oct-2017

19,675 (0.22%)

01-Jan-2016 - 10-Oct-2016

210,569 (2.34%)



The Safe Abortion App: information about safe abortion options in every country around the world and to bypass censorship

Safe Abortion
By Women on Waves

Open iTunes to buy and download

Safe Abortion with pills
women on waves Education
Unrated
You do not have any devices

[Add to wishlist](#) [Install](#)

Screenshots

- Carrier 3:05 PM Choose your language
- Carrier 3:05 PM WoW Home
- Carrier 3:05 PM Arge Did you take a pregnancy test?

[View in iTunes](#)

This app is designed for both iPhone and iPad

Free

Category: [Health & Fitness](#)

Released: Jan 12, 2016

Version: 1.0.4



Dear AdWords Advertiser,

We're writing to let you know about a change to Google's advertising policies that may affect your AdWords account. Beginning in the coming weeks, we'll no longer accept ads that promote abortion services and that target any of the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Spain, or Taiwan. 'Abortion services' include, but are not limited to, abortion clinics and abortion counselors. When we make this change, Google will suspend all campaigns identified as being in violation of our revised policy. You've received this email because our system identified your account as potentially affected by this policy change. We ask that you make any necessary changes to your site to comply. We have given much consideration to our stance on the advertising of this content and the potential effect our policy decision could have on AdWords advertisers. However, as a business, Google must make decisions regarding the advertising that we accept. As noted in our advertising Terms and Conditions*, Google may refuse any ads or terminate ad campaigns at any time, for any reason. Please note that the decisions we make concerning advertising in no way affect the search results we deliver. Google offers broad access to content across the web without censoring search results. We apologize for the inconvenience this policy change may cause you.

Sincerely, The Google AdWords Team

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Abortion pill group's Facebook page deleted over promoting 'drug use'

Page for Women on Web, which connects doctors with women in places that restrict abortion access, deleted over 'promotion or encouragement of drug use'



Advertisement

Ad closed by Google

[Report this ad](#)

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Women on Web

Other

Hi dear, Please refer your qu

Actions

28 July 15:51

months pregnancy

29 July 15:13

in an email to

- PAGES
- Pages feed
 - Like Pages
 - Create Page

 Zippy... 3 August 15:06

I dont have an email but where can i find you please

 **Women on Web** 7 August 08:52

Sent by Hazal Atay [?]

dear zippy, facebook is not a secure platform for communication. you can easily open an email account from hotmail, gmail or several other platforms. please do so and do not hesitate to contact us at info@womenonweb.org

Press Enter to send



Why does it matter ?

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook inbox. The background is slightly blurred, showing the Facebook interface with a search bar at the top and a navigation menu on the left. The main focus is a message thread from 'Women on Web'. The messages are as follows:

- Message 1:** From a user with a profile picture of a black dog. Text: "can it be possible to terminate a five months pregnancy". Date: 28 July 15:51.
- Message 2:** From 'Women on Web'. Text: "Sent by Maaike Waves [?] Dear Zippy, please write your question in an email to info@womenonweb.org. Thank you." Date: 29 July 15:13.
- Message 3:** From the same user with the black dog profile picture. Text: "I dont have an email but where can i find you please". Date: 3 August 15:06.
- Message 4:** From 'Women on Web'. Text: "Sent by Hazal Atay [?] dear zippy, facebook is not a secure platform for communication. you can easily open an email account from hotmail, gmail or several other platforms. please do so and do not hesitate to contact us at info@womenonweb.org". Date: 7 August 08:52.

Northern Ireland: women are prosecuted and sentenced, 2 more cases against women are to be heard by the Court

Northern Irish woman given suspended sentence over self-induced abortion

Woman's housemates contacted police eight days after she induced miscarriage using drugs bought online



A pro-life rally in Belfast in 2014. Photograph: Paul Faith/AFP/Getty Images

A Northern Irish woman who bought pills over the internet to induce an abortion has been given a suspended prison sentence.

The 21-year-old pleaded guilty to procuring her own abortion by using a poison, and of supplying a poison with intent to procure a miscarriage, and was given a three-month sentence suspended for one year.

Her barrister told Belfast crown court on Monday that if his client had lived anywhere else in the UK, she would "not have found herself before the courts".

Northern Ireland is the only region of the UK where abortion is still illegal

Belfast woman will go on trial for helping her daughter to have a medical abortion

By Alan Erwin

PUBLISHED
19/06/2015



The abortion drug Mifepristone

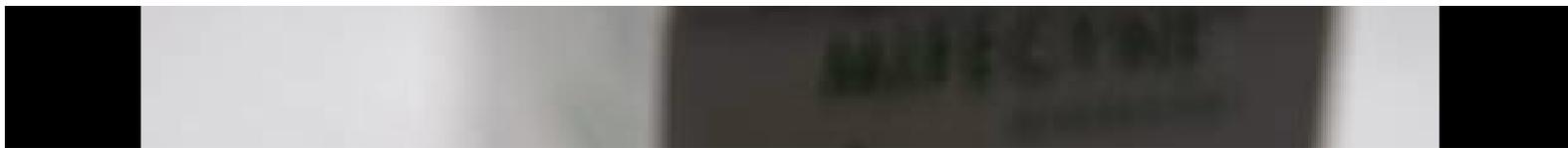
A Belfast woman is to stand trial accused of supplying poison for her daughter to have a miscarriage.

Home > News > Northern Ireland

Suicide risk to woman accused of using poison to have abortion, court hears

By Alan Erwin

January 11 2017



Popular

Man's body found on No Ireland beach [Northern I](#)

Gary Barlow walks off liv The One Show interview

Martin McGuinness' gran publishes tribute video t [Northern Ireland](#)



News > UK > Home News

Northern Irish court allows judicial review into decision to prosecute woman under abortion ban

Women in Northern Ireland face up to life in prison for having an abortion

Siobhan Fenton Social Affairs Correspondent | [@siobhanfenton](#) | Thursday 26 January 2017 12:46 GMT |

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Belfast council passes abortion pills motion against prosecutions

Councillors denounce court cases of women in Northern Ireland who procure pills online

Henry McDonald *Ireland correspondent*

Tue 10 Apr 2018 00.09 BST



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251



▲ Protesters take part in the Rally for Choice march in Belfast last October, calling for equal abortion rights with the rest of the UK. Photograph: Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

Belfast city council has passed a motion condemning the arrest and attempted prosecution of women in [Northern Ireland](#) who procure abortion pills online.

The motion denounced cases such as the one involving a mother who obtained abortion pills for her 15-year-old daughter after her child was raped. The mother faces prosecution in a court case in [Belfast](#) next month.

Councillors at Belfast city hall voted by 34 to 16 votes with five abstentions to oppose the prosecution of women in the region who buy abortion pills on the internet. The case against the mother has the backing of Northern Ireland's attorney general.



Istanbul hospitals refuse abortions as government's attitude hardens

Activists say few state hospitals agreed to perform non-emergency terminations, while president Erdoğan repeatedly compares abortion to murder



Hungary's Government to Launch Anti-Abortion Campaign

Wall Street Journal, 05 May 2011

Posted on 20 May 2



By Veronika Gulyas

The advertisement says: "(I understand if you aren't ready for me) ...but rather put me up for adoption, LET ME LIVE!"

The Hungarian government will start an ad campaign against abortion, hoping to reduce the numbers of legal abortions through persuasion rather than a ban.

FP NEWS & IDEAS REGIONS CHANNELS GALLERIES VOICES ABOUT FP SUBSCRIBE TO

DISPATCH

Putin's Next Target Is Russia's Abortion Culture

The Russian president is worried about his country's shrinking population. His social-conservative allies say they have the solution.

Proposed U.S. law would force women seeking abortions to get partner permission



Sebastien Malo

Polish lawmakers push on with near-total ban on abortion

Ruling PiS party committed to law banning most terminations and making maximum jail term for practitioners five years



4 MIN READ

Thank you!!!



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