
56% of all abortions in Nigeria result in potential health complications. Many of these complications can be effectively treated with postabortion care. Complications are much more likely to result from unsafe abortion than safe abortion.

63% of all abortions in Nigeria are unsafe. Unsafe abortion, as defined by Performance Monitoring for Action, is performed with a non-recommended method and in an environment that does not meet minimal medical standards.

More than half (62%) of adolescent girls who have abortions report complications, some of them severe.

Among all women who experience complications from abortion...
- One-third report severe complications such as heavy bleeding, fever (a sign of infection), or punctured uterus, which can result in long-term health consequences and death.
- Two-thirds do not receive treatment in a medical facility or elsewhere.
- About one in four women who have an abortion report having severe pain during the procedure.

The most-reported complications from abortion include incomplete abortion—when some of the tissue remains in the woman’s womb—and fever.

Is any abortion safe? Yes. When performed using a medically approved method administered by a skilled provider, abortion is among the safest medical procedures.

Why aren’t women getting the care they need? Postabortion care services are not available in all health care facilities. When services are available, they are often limited because health facilities don’t have the medications, medical supplies, or personnel needed for postabortion care.

Percent of women reporting any complication by background characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION LEVEL</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>INCOME LEVEL (QUINTILES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Poorest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Wealth quintiles divide households into five roughly equal-sized groups based on household assets and access to water and sanitation.
MEDIA TIP SHEET: POSTABORTION CARE IN NIGERIA

Distance to facilities and availability of services are barriers to receiving postabortion care.

Postabortion care is not available at all medical facilities, and not all facilities provide the same level of care. Some facilities offer basic postabortion care, providing the necessary treatments and medications for less complex postabortion-care services. Fewer facilities offer comprehensive postabortion care, including the necessary treatments and medications for more complex postabortion-care services such as blood transfusion. Women who are poor, have little or no education, and live in rural areas are least likely to live near a facility that offers even basic care.

About 1 in 4 Nigerian women of childbearing age lives more than 10 kilometers from a health facility providing basic postabortion care. Fewer than half of all women live within 10 kilometers of a facility providing comprehensive care.

Percent of Nigerian women who live within 10 kilometers of a facility offering basic postabortion care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION LEVEL</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>INCOME LEVEL (QUINTILES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Poorest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the one-third of women who receive postabortion care, poor and rural women are less likely to receive care in a health facility than their urban and wealthy peers.

HOW CAN JOURNALISTS REPORT ON THIS TOPIC?

Investigate health policies and budgets. Postabortion care is basic primary health care. What are the obstacles to making it more accessible?

Examine the impact on children and families. Mothers disabled by complications from unsafe abortion may be unable to earn income for their families and care for their children. Children below age 5 whose mothers die are four times more likely to die than other children.

Draw attention to inequities. Women who are poor, have little education, and live in rural areas have less access to safe abortion and comprehensive postabortion care options than their wealthier, urban, and better-educated peers. Why is good health so much a matter of privilege?

Above all, don’t forget that abortion is about people. Tell the stories of the women, families, and communities affected.

NUMBERS TO KNOW

ABOUT 6,000
Nigerian women die from complications related to unsafe abortion annually, representing 10% of the nation’s pregnancy- and childbirth-related deaths.

MORE THAN 3 IN 5
abortions in Nigeria are unsafe, meaning they are carried out using methods not recommended by health professionals and not in a health facility.

NEARLY 1 IN 20
Nigerian women have an abortion every year, resulting in an annual total of around 2 million abortions.


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