

When Abortion is Not Available: *Self-management of Abortion*

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43 states make it hard to access abortion

- ◀ Restrictions include:
 - ◀ 72-hour waiting periods
 - ◀ Ban on state-funded insurance coverage
 - ◀ Ban private insurance coverage
 - ◀ Requirement to give biased counseling
 - ◀ Additional barriers specifically for undocumented people and minors



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Worldwide, 42% of women of reproductive age live in the 125 countries where abortion is highly restricted, including some countries with outright bans on all abortions.”

Guttmacher Institute Abortion Worldwide 2017



Restrictive abortion laws lead to unsafe abortion

- ▶ Abortions occur with the same frequency

**Restrictive
countries**

Unsafe abortions

- Not by recommended method
- Not by trained provider

**Less
restrictive
countries**

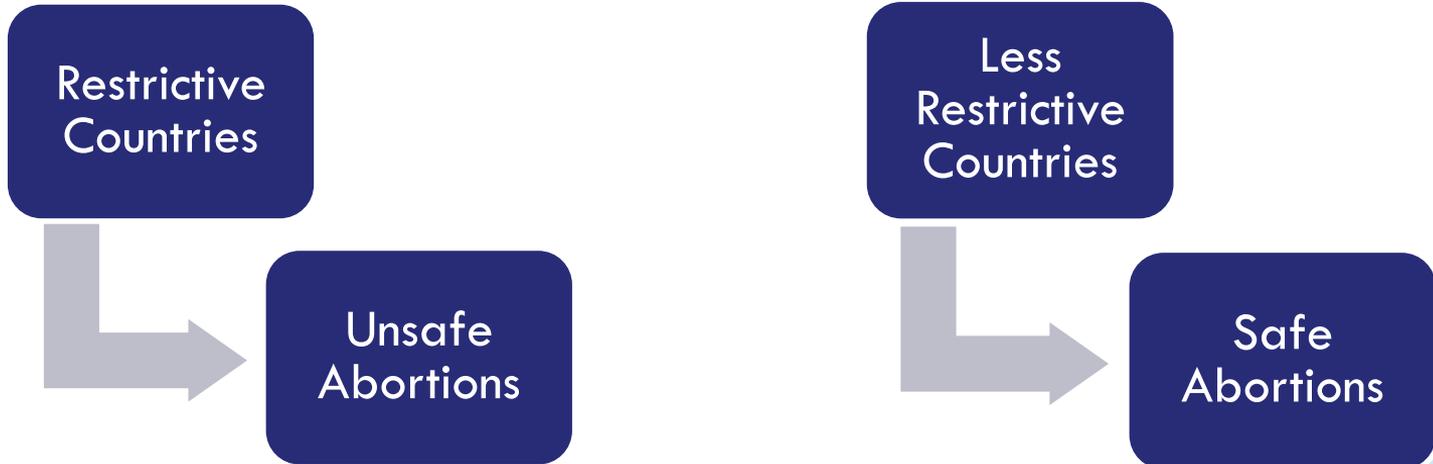
Safe abortions





Restrictive abortion laws lead to unsafe abortion

- ◀ Abortions occur with the same frequency



- Not by recommended method
 - Not by trained provider
- 



Unsafe abortion causes harm

- ◀ Where unsafe abortion is common:
 - ◀ 40% of people develop complications
 - ◀ 7 million people are treated each year
 - ◀ Many die from the unsafe abortion



Characteristics of unsafe abortions

- ◀ Unqualified provider
- ◀ Setting does not meet minimal medical standards
- ◀ Outdated methods
- ◀ Untrained provider with a safe method
- ◀ Untrained provider with dangerous or non-evidence-based methods
 - ◀ foreign objects
 - ◀ herbal blends

More people who live in restrictive countries are accessing abortion with medications.





Safe abortion outside the healthcare system

- ◀ Mifepristone and misoprostol
- ◀ Misoprostol alone
- ◀ Mimics the clinical presentation of a miscarriage
- ◀ Medications not detectable in the blood
- ◀ Can also be used safely in the second trimester according to WHO guidelines



The American College of Obstetricians
and Gynecologists opposes the
criminalization of any person who self-
induces their abortion.



Criminalization of self-managed abortion

- ◀ **6 states** have criminal prohibitions on self-managed abortion
- ◀ **21** individuals arrested for self-managed abortion since 2000
- ◀ Risk of prosecution highest for already marginalized groups
 - ◀ People of color
 - ◀ Low income



As healthcare providers, we have
no duty to report patients who
may self-manage their abortions.



Healthcare providers have a role in harm reduction

- ◀ Determine pregnancy duration
- ◀ Counsel about safe methods
- ◀ Explain what the experience should be like
- ◀ Review reasons they should seek emergent care
- ◀ Provide post-abortion care
- ◀ Educate colleagues