



March 14, 2018

News Release

## First Study on the Incidence of Abortion Among Ethiopian Adolescents Released

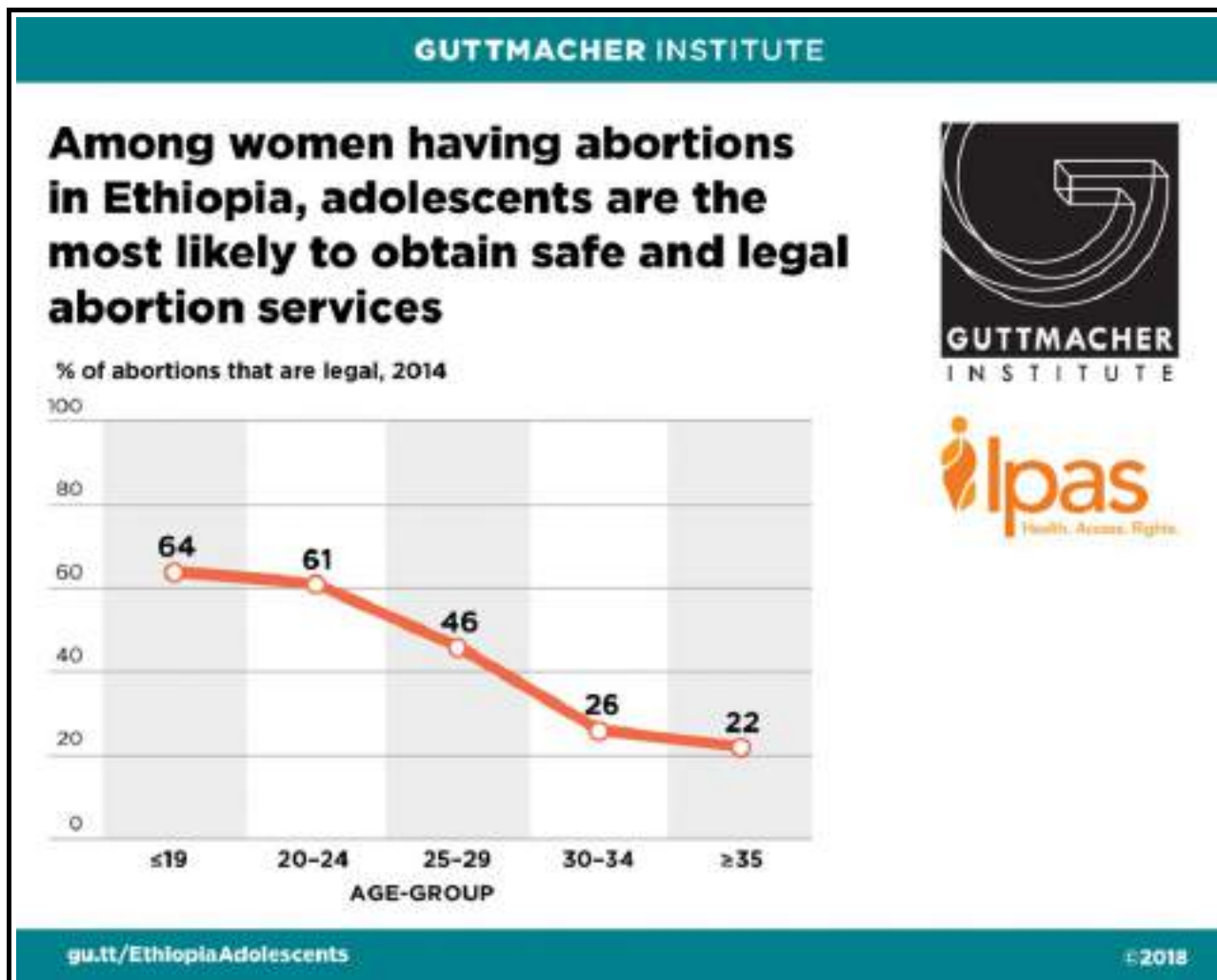
*Improved Access to Safe Abortion Has Benefited Adolescent Women*

A new study finds that adolescent women have benefited greatly from the 2005 expansion of Ethiopia's abortion law that gave them access to safe, legal abortion services. "Playing it Safe: Legal and Clandestine Abortions Among Adolescents in Ethiopia," conducted by researchers from the Guttmacher Institute and Ipas, documents for the first time legal and clandestine abortion rates among Ethiopian adolescents (aged 15–19), and the severity of abortion-related complications in this age-group. The study found that adolescents are more likely than older women to obtain legal abortion services, and that complications from unsafe abortion are just as severe among adolescents as they are among other age-groups.

Ethiopia is one of only a few countries that have explicitly reduced barriers to safe and legal



clandestine—and potentially unsafe—abortion procedures.”



The study also finds that adolescents seeking care for complications from miscarriage or unsafe clandestine abortion experience severe complications at the same rate as older women (one severe complication per every four complications). Compared with adolescents having legal abortions, those presenting with complications from unsafe clandestine abortions are more likely to be married, to have had less education and to be in the second trimester of their pregnancy. Further research is needed to understand how marital and educational status may influence access to and use of legal abortion services among young women.

“Adolescents have the lowest rate of abortion among women of all ages in Ethiopia,” said Elizabeth Sully, senior research scientist at the Guttmacher Institute and the study’s lead



Researchers estimate that adolescents have the highest unintended pregnancy rate among sexually active women in Ethiopia (176 per 1,000 women). By comparison, the unintended pregnancy rate among all sexually active women aged 15–49 is 101 per 1,000. In large part, this discrepancy exists because adolescents are less likely to be sexually active than older women, but they often face the greatest barriers to family planning.

Abortion rates are also affected by adolescents' low level of sexual activity relative to that of older women. As of 2014, adolescents have an estimated 96,243 induced abortions per year, which translates to the lowest rate of abortion among any age-group: 20 per 1,000 women. However, looking only at women who are sexually active, women aged 15–19 have the highest rate of abortion. The authors recommend that adolescents be provided with a full range of high-quality contraceptive methods.

The study suggests that further research is needed to shed light on the factors contributing to the continued use of clandestine abortion among some adolescent women, such as autonomy in reproductive decision making, distance from health facilities, abortion stigma and knowledge of the abortion law. These efforts will be critical to reducing inequities and to ensuring that all adolescent women have access to safe and legal abortion services.

This news release is also available in Amharic and Afaan Oromo.

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**Playing it Safe: Legal and Clandestine Abortions among Adolescents in Ethiopia***Journal of Adolescent Health*



INFOGRAPHIC

## Unintended pregnancy among adolescents in Ethiopia, 2014

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**Sub-Saharan Africa:** Ethiopia

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