



Technical Brief: Impacts averted by contraceptive use

What do 'impacts averted' mean?

FP2020 reports on three impact indicators: unintended pregnancies, maternal deaths, and unsafe abortions averted. These estimate how many of each outcome does not happen, because women are protected by modern contraceptives. For example, the 77 million unintended pregnancies averted reported in the 2013 Progress Report is the total number of unintended pregnancies averted among the 274 million women using contraception that year; and means that *"if these 274 million women were not using any contraception, there would have been 77 million more unintended pregnancies in 2013."* These numbers cannot be compared to actual unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal deaths that take place. In some cases, the numbers will look very large; this is because they include the impacts that were *already not happening* since many women in the 69 countries were already using contraception- thus already lowering the national burdens.

How are 'impacts averted' calculated?

The impacts averted are estimated using models, and not by measuring real-life changes in the countries. The estimates are made using the best available data; in some cases they use country-specific data, while for other inputs only regional or global estimates are available. For assistance in calculating these indicators, download the Calculator for Indicators 5-8 at www.track20.org.

Unintended pregnancies averted: This estimate is derived by comparing the number of unintended pregnancies expected to happen among women using modern contraception (due to method failure) to the number that would happen if these same women were not using any contraception (estimated to be 31%¹). It is assumed that all of these pregnancies would have been unintended.

Unsafe abortions averted: It is estimated that worldwide around 50% of unintended pregnancies are terminated by abortion; this ranges from 20% in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa to as high as 80% in East Asia.² The number of abortions averted is calculated by applying these sub-regional estimates to the number of unintended pregnancies averted. Then, unsafe abortions averted are calculated by estimating the % of abortions that are unsafe.³

Maternal deaths averted: The risk of a women dying from an unintended pregnancy is calculated by applying mortality rates to each outcome of an unintended pregnancy- live birth, miscarriage or stillbirth, safe abortion, or unsafe abortion. This is done using the national MMR⁴, a safe abortion mortality rate of 2 per 100,000 safe abortions, and sub-regional unsafe abortion mortality rates.⁵ Using this data, a maternal deaths per unintended pregnancy is calculated for each country and applied to the number of unintended pregnancies averted to estimate maternal deaths averted.

¹ The Population Council, Measuring the Impact of Contraceptive Use on Unintended Pregnancy and Other Health Outcomes, STEP-UP Brief, April 2014.

² Sedgh et al, Intended and Unintended Pregnancies Worldwide in 2012 and Recent Trends, Studies in Family Planning 2014; 45 [3]: 301-314.

³ Sedgh et al, Induced abortion: incidence and trends worldwide from 1995 to 2008, Lancet, 2012; 379: 625-632.

⁴ WHO, Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013. Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank, and UNPD. Geneva: WHO, 2014.

⁵ WHO. Unsafe abortion: Global and regional estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2008. 6th Edition. WHO 2008.