



Research Report

Commission on the status of women

Establishing methods to safe and accessible
birth control

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INTRODUCTION

Establishing safe and accessible birth control is a global issue which is of great significance for the international community. The question of birth control can be traced back for centuries, however sexual intimacy and premarital relationships were a social taboo. In this day and age however western societies are much more liberal towards these relationships, which unsurprisingly lead to a rise of unwanted pregnancies. Birth control is defined as the practice of preventing unwanted pregnancies¹

Birth control varies from Abortions to condom use, each one of those methods are different and tackle the issue in a different way, as well as their legal status vary in different parts of the world. As of October of 2023 14 states in the USA have implemented a full ban of abortions and 7 states have a partial ban on it. ² On the other hand, From 1977, The World health organization, has published a list of essential medicines that should be available at all times, at an affordable price, which included forms of birth control. lastly , in germany, while subsidized contraceptives are legal, they require a prescription, which if given, are free for any women under 18³

abortions for example, are a method of birth control, which if not conducted by an expert may be detrimental to one's life, in many countries, such as the USA illegal and dangerous abortions happen daily due to the strict abortions laws imposed.

Pills that *prevent* pregnancy			
Pill type	Common brands	Active ingredient	How it works
Birth control pill, Combined hormonal	Ortho Cyclen, Yaz, and many others	Estrogen + progestin (many different types)	Prevents ovulation and/or blocks sperm from uterus
Birth control pill, progestin only	Slynd, "Mini pill" – Micronor, Camilla, and others	Progestin, such as norethindrone or drospirenone	Prevents ovulation and/or blocks sperm from uterus
OTC Emergency Contraception	Plan B, E-Contra, many others	Levonorgestrel	Delays ovulation to prevent fertilization
Rx Emergency Contraception	Ella	Ulipristal acetate	Delays ovulation to prevent fertilization, may also impair implantation

Pills used for abortion and miscarriage		
Medication	What it does	What it's used for
Misoprostol	Opens the cervix and causes uterine contractions to empty the uterus Also has effects on the stomach	To help complete a miscarriage To induce a medical abortion To induce labor To treat stomach ulcers
Mifepristone	Blocks progesterone, resulting in breakdown of the endometrium and/or placenta At high doses, also blocks cortisol receptors	To help complete a miscarriage To induce a medical abortion To treat Cushing's disease

Table 1.1 Birth control pill options⁴

¹ <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/us/abortion-laws-roe-v-wade.html>

³

https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr_eu_contraception_fact_sheet_v2.pdf

⁴ <https://thosenerdygirls.org/birth-control-pills/>

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Definitions of Key Terms

birth control

pill Deliberate Prevention of Conception or Impregnation ⁵

STD

any of various diseases or infections that can be transmitted by direct sexual contact⁶

IUD

a T-shaped device containing either Prostaglandin or copper that is inserted into and left in the uterus to prevent conception by blocking ovulation, thickening cervical mucus, or interfering with sperm motility⁷

Diaphragm

a circular dome made of thin, soft silicone that's inserted into the vagina before sex.⁸

spermicide

A preparation or substance (such as nonoxynol-9) used to kill sperm ⁹

cervical cap

a usually rubber or plastic contraceptive device in the form of a thimble-shaped molded cap that fits snugly over the uterine cervix and blocks sperm from entering the uterus¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/birth%20control>

⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/std>

⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/IUD>

⁸ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/contraceptive-diaphragm-or-cap/>

⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spermicide>

¹⁰ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cervical%20cap>

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sterilization

the process of having a medical operation to make it impossible to have children¹¹

Vasectomy

the medical operation of cutting the tubes through which a man's sperm move, in order to stop his partner getting pregnant¹²

abortion

the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo¹³

General overview

Birth control is a concept that has been around for centuries, it can be traced as back as Around 3000 BCE, where Ancient societies made condoms using animal intestines or bladders. Later on, the first form of spermicide was made, around the 1850 BCE by egypt.

During slavery, there was another rise in Birth control use, which consisted of remedies made by African American women in order to resist coerced reproduction by the colonizers. This was the blueprint for an ongoing fight for equal birth control rights. through both science and activism, women, from all backgrounds got a voice of their own. An Important figure in the fight for birth control rights was Margaret Sangers, who opened the first ever birth control clinic in the whole of the USA. After a year of operating her clinic she gets a sentence of a month in jain due to her business, however that did not stop her from continuing to fight for birth control accessibility, and re opened her clinic every time she got arrested, she went as far as to make a magazine, "birth control review" which called for the education of the public regarding birth control methods.¹⁴

The People of the State of New York v. Margaret H. Sanger (1918) case was of great significance for the fight towards a safe and accessible birth control. In the court it was argued that section 1142

¹¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sterilization>

¹² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vasectomy?q=Vasectomy+>

¹³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abortion>

¹⁴ <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/health-info/a-brief-history-of-birth-control/>

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was a clear violation against the fundamental right to determination of conceiving or not. this case lead to a lot of conversation and legislation regarding the issue in hand¹⁵

Birth control, even though believed to be fully integrated in this society in this day and age, is a topic of discussion among religious individuals. premarital sex is considered a Sin in christianity and other religions have different regarding birth control, many of them being against it. is it possible to respect one's belief but ensure their healthcare at the same time?

Islam for example divides birth control onto two categories, irreversible and reversible contraception. For example vasectomy or tubectomy is strictly forbidden in Shari'ah. It is beloved that castration and vasectomy take away the power of reproduction, which is impermissible. reversible contraception however is practiced for a valid reason, such us, inability to sustain a healthy pregnancy, being away from their home, a disagreement within the couple, fear of a mutated baby, or family planning is fully acceptable by islamic laws ¹⁶

In the catholic church on the other half, it's forbidden to use any kind of birth control under any circumstances such as the usage of hormonal,sterilization or any barrier methods such as condoms. Even though societies have moved from those really religious rules, they are still integrated deep into religious societal values.¹⁷

On the other side of the spectrum, there is no law in Hinduism preventing the use of contraceptives, furthermore certain hindu texts do offer advice on how a couple can family plan, such as contraceptive use. Some hindu texts even promote the use of contraceptives at times. Abortion is even allowed if the wellbeing of the carrier is at danger. ¹⁸

Birth control in the western world, such as Europe and USA have different local laws regarding the accessibility of such methods of family planning. For example, hormonal contraception, even though it is allowed without prescription, in countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Moldova and Ukraine. The accessibility of such drugs however are challenged in terms of affordability, as these countries aren't as economically developed as other countries in europe. other countries on the other hand, such us france, portugal and Germany, a prescription to get such pills is required¹⁹.

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https://history.nycourts.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Judicial-Notice-Issue-09_People-v-Sanger.pdf

16 <https://darulfiqh.com/is-contraception-permissible-in-islam-2/>

17 <https://www.catholic.com/tract/birth-control>

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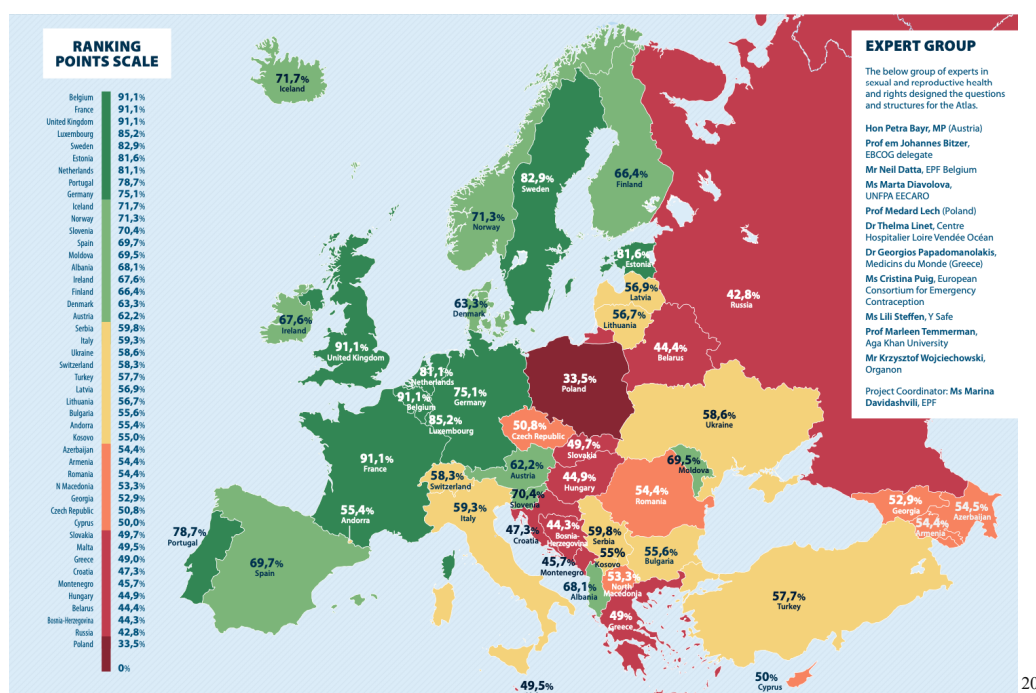
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<https://www.euronews.com/next/2023/07/20/where-in-europe-can-you-get-birth-control-pills-without-a-prescription>

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Tracking government policies on access to contraceptive supplies, family planning counseling and the provision of online information on contraception in 2022



In Asia on the other hand the situation is very complicated, for example in china, in 1979, china's 5th national congress of the people of china. campaigns were made to promote such family planning. This initiative was the biggest attempt in human history to control human activity regarding reproduction. such constitutional efforts lead to a rise of birth control and contraception technologies. The Chinese government promised free access to birth control supplies, alongside IUD and other contraceptive technologies, financial subsidies were provided alongside other benefits for families that had one child. furthermore they fiscally punished parents with more than 1 kids.²¹

Furthermore, having the possibility to access contraception is defined by the United nation as a universal Human right, which is essential for women around the world. UNPF, defines family planning as a human right as well. " Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, executive communities and more economically productive." The United Nations is trying to delegate the legal, cultural and financial

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<https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/EPF%20Contraception%20Policy%20Atlas%20Europe%202022.pdf>

²¹ <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/chinas-one-child-policy>

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problems that arise in the way. however the UN does not recognise Abortion among the measures of contraception²²

In conclusion, access to birth control is an essential human right. Its both a global, pan European, national and individual responsibility to fight for those who do not have access to basic human rights.

Major parties involved

Russia- Russia has made efforts to ensure the reduction of abortion and increasing contraception.

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Iceland- Iceland is the country with the highest equality scale in the world. in iceland family planning services are completely free and are considered health care²⁴

Human life international - Human life international is a non profit organization, which is in support of catholic beliefs. They are advocates to stop abortions

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Planned Parenthood - Planned Parenthood is an american organizations, which however operates internationally and aims to give vital reproductive healthcare alongside educate the general public about Reproduction²⁶

Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights- WGNRR Advocates for the sexual and reproductive rights through campaigns, capacity building and networking.²⁷

Egyptian Family Planning Association (EFPA)- EFPA is an association, with a focus on volunteer work in order to help citizens from The Arab and African World to have equal access to family planning methods.

²² <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/un-calls-contraception-access-a-universal-human-right/>

²³ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5055.html

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<https://youly.com.au/blog/sexual-reproductive-health/how-easy-is-it-to-access-the-pill-around-the-world/#:~:text=Accessing%20the%20birth%20control%20pill%20in%20Iceland,pregnancy%2Dfree%20pace%20of%20mind.>

²⁵ <https://www.hli.org>

²⁶ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/#>

²⁷ <https://www.globalgiving.org/pfil/30697/projdoc.pdf>

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Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP)- An organization advocating for the advancement, protection and promotion of birth control as well as any other sexual and reproductive class²⁹

United Nations Population Fund - the united nations population fund, is a UN body which advocates for better reproductive and maternal healthcare ³⁰

UN WOMEN- UN women is one of the biggest UN organization, which actively works to enhance women's rights and ensure every young girl and every woman has a fulfilling life full of opportunities ³¹

Commission on the status of women - CSW is an intergovernmental body which advocates for gender equality and the empowering of women from all corners of the world. It is a functioning commission of ECOSOC.³²

World health organization- WHO fights for all people to be healthy, happy and have good living standards, guided by science. ³³

Timeline of Key Events

1920 Soviet Union legalized abortion- in 1920 the bolsheviks party legalized abortions. It was the first country to do so. ³⁴

²⁸ <https://www.ippf.org/about-us/member-associations/egypt>

²⁹ <https://asap-asia.org>

³⁰ https://www.unfpa.org/donate/a?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=CF-na-21&utm_content=GENERAL&qad_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAiA9dGqBhAqEiwAmRpTC61FDpWRwH4swkPOmSi075M6olerB9cFhBxnIB1zYBhWJwpmVeH0wRoCt8MQAvD_BwE

³¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en>

³² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

³³ <https://www.who.int/about>

³⁴ <https://jacobin.com/2020/03/soviet-women-abortion-ussr-history-health-care>

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1936 United States v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries - Dr Hannah Stone, who worked in one of Sanger's clinics, made an order for a new type of diaphragm from Japan, which was confiscated by American authorities and brought to court. The court decided that the law does not have the mandate to intercept shipments from doctors³⁵

1965 Griswold v. Connecticut- in court, the question of " Does the Constitution protect the right of marital privacy against state restrictions on a couple's ability to be counseled in the use of contraceptives?" In a 7 to 2 Ruling, the court decided that the right to protect marital privacy against the states falls under the responsibilities of the constitution³⁶

1991 Establishment of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA)- HFEA conducts research on treatments regarding reproduction such as IVF and Abortion. This was the first research regulatory body³⁷

2009 Yemen's Family Law Amendments- those amendments had a huge influence on the livelihood of women, from arguments of modernization to the content of the sharia . such amendments gave women a voice to advocate for their interest and rights. However there are a lot more rights to be fought for.³⁸

2014 A, B and C v. Ireland.- 3 women from Ireland got pregnant and due to local laws they couldn't abort, so they traveled to the UK to terminate their pregnancies. The court tackles whether the Irish Law was a direct violation of article 8 of ECHR and evaluates the mechanisms regarding abortions in Ireland and how effective it is.³⁹

2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization

³⁵ Ph.D., Aharon W. Zorea (January 16, 2012). *Birth Control*. ABC-CLIO. pp. 51-. ISBN 9780313362552.

³⁶ www.oyez.org/cases/1964/496

³⁷

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/about-us/30th-anniversary-expert-series/the-hfea-at-30-where-do-we-go-from-here/#:~:text=The%20HE%20was%20set%20up,human%20embryos%2C%20in%20the%20world.>

³⁸ <https://journals.openedition.org/cy/2039?lang=en>

³⁹ <https://privacylibrary.ccg.nlud.org/case/case-of-a-b-c-vs-ireland#:~:text=The%20first%20two%20applicants%20underwent,safeguard%20to%20their%20private%20life.>

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Previous attempts to solve the issue

Free the pill : free the pill is an organization advocating for over the counter use of birth control pills. on July 13, history was made in the world of reproductive health, where FDA for the first time made, where a progesterone only birth control pill was approved for over the counter accessibility for the very first time, due to the advocacy of free the pill ⁴⁰

China's one child policy : the one child policy was an official policy of the Chinese government, where it was the first and only effort of a government to control the birth rates, through this policy contraception and abortion was widely promoted and was made way more accessible. ⁴¹

Prescription regulation for hormonal contraceptives legislation in Germany : in Germany, laws have been set which ensure no subsidized contraceptives are given without a prescription which in fact make it harder for the accessibility of such medicine, however there have been efforts, such as covering the costs for such medicine for minors, however there's room for improvement

Possible solutions

Educate others

Educating everyone about such pressing issues is essential. through social campaigns, modification of school curriculum and political conversation we can ensure that global citizens will be aware and fight within their local communities and international forums regarding this issue

Make essential birth control accessible to all by fiscal aid

Providing fiscal aid is an essential part to ensuring birth control will be accessible to all. Governments subsidizing ones in need of contraceptive help is something we as global citizens have to advocate for such help from both governments, NGOs and international organizations.

⁴⁰ <https://freethepill.org>

⁴¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/one-child-policy>

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Further Readings

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