

Family planning

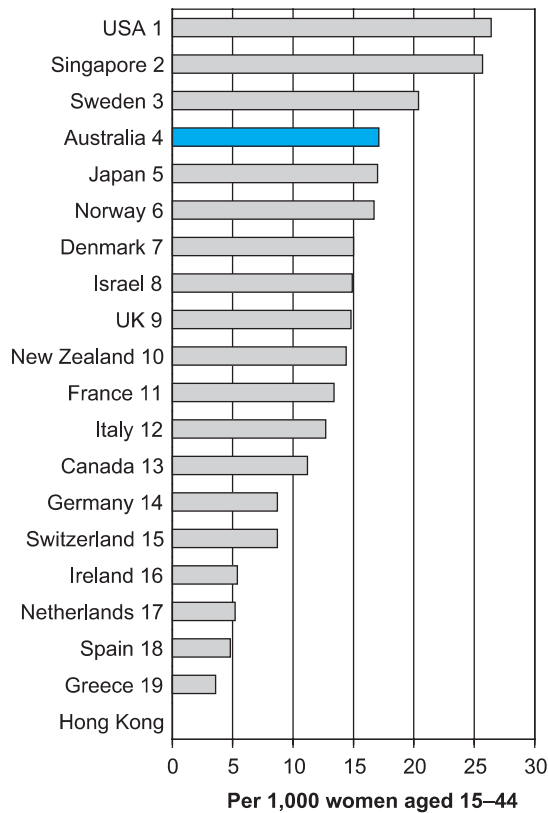


Figure 1: Elective abortion rates, 1990-1991



Figure 2: Contraceptive use, 1985-94

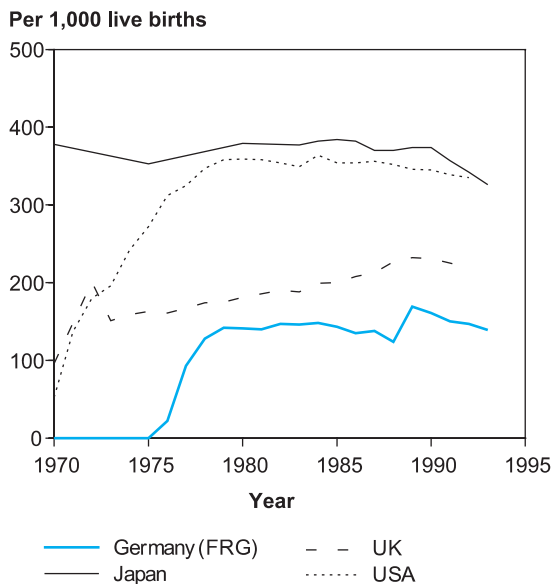
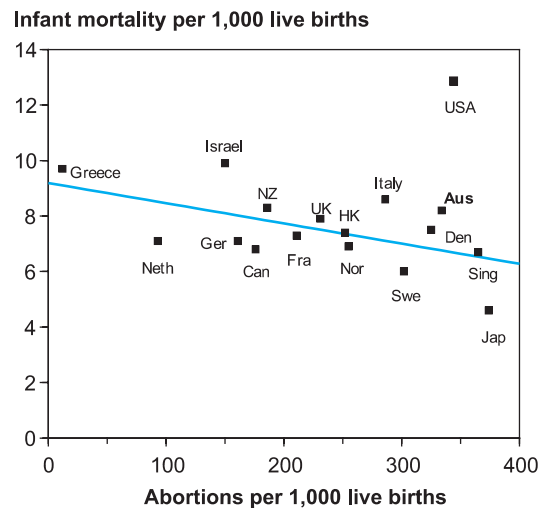


Figure 3: Trends in legally induced abortions, 1970 to 1995



Note: Fitted curve excludes USA.

Figure 4: Infant mortality rate and legally induced abortions, 1990

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Legally induced abortions and prevalence of contraceptive use

Country	Year	Legally induced abortions	Live births	Proportion ^(a)	Contraceptive use rate, 1985–94 (%)
Australia	1993	^(b) 87,000	260,229	0.25	76
Canada	1992	59,694	398,642	0.13	73
Denmark	1994	17,598	69,668	0.20	78
France	1991	162,902	759,056	0.18	75
Germany	1994	103,586	769,603	0.12	75
Greece	1992	11,977	104,081	0.10	—
Hong Kong	1987	17,600	69,958	0.20	81
Ireland	1993	—	49,456	—	—
Israel	1993	17,164	112,330	0.13	—
Italy	1994	124,334	527,406	0.19	78
Japan	1994	364,350	1,238,328	0.23	59
Netherlands	1994	20,811	195,611	0.10	80
New Zealand	1992	11,460	59,266	0.16	70
Norway	1993	14,909	59,678	0.20	76
Singapore	1994	15,690	49,554	0.24	74
Spain	1993	—	388,708	—	59
Sweden	1994	32,293	112,257	0.22	78
Switzerland	1993	—	83,762	—	71
UK	1994	169,964	750,671	0.18	81
USA	1991	1,388,937	4,110,907	0.25	71

(a) (Abortions)/(Abortions+live births).

(b) Estimated. Based on unpublished Medicare data, data from the AIHW National Hospital Morbidity Database, ABS 1998b, and Adelson, Frommer & Weisberg 1995, 1996.

Sources: United Nations 1997; UNICEF 1996.

- In Australia, national information on induced abortions is lacking, with only South Australia and the Northern Territory collecting population-based data. In 1994, one in five (20.8%) pregnancies in South Australia resulted in abortion, with half of all teenage pregnancies being terminated (AIHW 1996). An estimate of the total number of pregnancies terminated annually in Australia can be made, based on available State and Territory data, Medicare data and hospital separations data. In 1993, about 87,000 abortions were performed – equating to one in four pregnancies being terminated.
- The proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion are similar in Australia and Japan, exceeded in 1990–1991 by the United States, Singapore and Sweden (Figure 1). Greece, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland exhibit low rates – although many Irish women travel to England to have their pregnancy terminated (Brahams 1992, Francome 1992). Rates of abortion have been relatively stable in Japan, the United States and Germany since the late 1970s (Figure 3).
- Higher rates of elective abortion are correlated with lower infant mortality, possibly due to the selective termination of high-risk pregnancies (US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1993). However, this relationship does not hold in the United States, where there are both high rates of elective abortion and infant mortality (Figure 4).
- Data on the prevalence of contraceptive use in developed nations is often out-of-date, or lacking altogether, due largely to the lack of population-based studies. Available data are reported in the above table, and in Figure 2, from studies or surveys conducted between 1985 and 1994.
- It is estimated that over the past three decades, regular contraceptive use has increased by approximately 27%. Were family planning services universally available, the 25 million or more abortions performed annually in the industrialised world would decline radically (UNICEF 1994). The United Nations estimates that 57% of married women of child-bearing age worldwide currently use family planning.

For more information, see:

WHO 1994. Family planning and health. World Health Stat Q 47: 2–39.