

# SEPTEMBER 28, GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION FOR ACCESS TO SAFE AND LEGAL ABORTION

## #BUSTTHEMYTHS

### FIGHT #ABORTIONSTIGMA & DISCRIMINATION!

Abortion  
**MYTH**  
is dangerous

**\*Under safe and/or legal contexts  
abortion is 10 times safer than childbirth**

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## MYTH: "Abortion is dangerous"

"Abortion is dangerous" is one of the most prevalent myths surrounding abortion, and a deeply held belief that obscures this medical procedure. This distortion of medical science and good healthcare practice has a detrimental effect on women's and other pregnant individuals' health, rights and lives.

The reality is that surgical abortions done by trained providers in hygienic settings, and early medical abortions, are extremely safe procedures.

[1] In the United States, for example, where abortion is legal on broad grounds, less than 1% of all patients experience a major complication, and the risk of death associated with abortion is 10 times lower than that associated with childbirth.

[2] In France, another country where abortion is legal, there have been about 1,000,000 medical abortions performed under safe conditions since 1992, and no deaths have occurred.[3] And since the legalization of abortion in the Federal District of Mexico in 2007, more than 135,000 women have received legal abortions in the Federal District, with a zero percent mortality rate reported for these procedures.[4]

In fact, the risks associated with safe and legal abortion are substantially less than the risks related to continuing a pregnancy.[5] And as affirmed by the World Health Organization, general advances in medical practice, and in particular the advent of safe and effective technologies and skills to perform induced abortion, could eliminate unsafe abortions and related deaths entirely, if universal access to these services is made available.[6]

Yet the myth of abortion as "dangerous" has been used to shroud not only the procedure's physical safety, but also to perpetuate misinformation regarding the supposed negative emotional and mental health effects a pregnant individual experiences during and/or after accessing abortion services, and their risks for depression or suicide. Some supporters of this myth have even gone so far as to claim the existence of "post-abortion syndrome," or PAS.

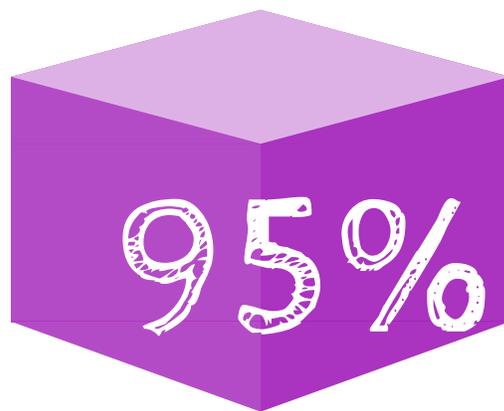


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The reality is, however, that years of research have shown no evidence that this syndrome exists.[7] Relevant expert bodies, such as the American Psychiatric Association, do not recognize "post-abortion syndrome" as a legitimate mental health diagnosis, primarily because of the lack of supporting scientific evidence.[8] While unplanned pregnancies often cause emotional stress, there is no evidence to suggest that women who choose to terminate their pregnancies will be more likely to suffer from mental health issues; for over two decades, the highest quality scientific evidence available has led to the conclusion that having an abortion does not cause mental health problems for most women.[9] Well-conducted studies consistently find that a woman's mental health before she faces an unwanted pregnancy is the best indicator of her likely mental health after an abortion.[10]

## Studies show:

Moreover, studies have shown that while many women experience mixed emotions after an abortion, 95 percent of women who have abortions ultimately feel they have made the right decision, with the vast majority also reporting feelings of relief.[11]



There is no doubt that due to the misinformation, shaming and overall negative discourse surrounding abortion reinforced at all levels of society, undergoing the procedure can be a stressful event for a pregnant individual, particularly if forced to resort to clandestine measures. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that the stigma surrounding abortion, rather than the abortion itself, can have negative mental health consequences, where a woman may experience negative emotions such as guilt or sadness because she thinks her partner, family, or community will condemn or exclude her for deciding to have an abortion.[12]

**This September 28, join us and #BusttheMyths surrounding abortion, speaking out about safe abortion experiences, and demanding the right to access safe and legal abortion services!**

September 28 has been a regional campaign for the decriminalization of abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean for over twenty years before being taken on by SRHR activists all over the world in 2011. WGNRR undertakes September 28 annual campaigning activities in collaboration with its members, partners, and allies around the world, and as a member of the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion.

[1] Ipas (2010), The evidence speaks for itself: Ten facts about abortion; Guttmacher Institute, Are You In the Know? Abortion Safety.

[2] Gold RB, et al (1990), Abortion and Women's Health: A Turning Point for America? New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute.

[3] Sedgh G. et al (2012), Induced abortion: incidence and trends worldwide from 1995 to 2008.

[4] Ipas (2015), In Mexico City, Campaign Launches to Help Women Learn More About Safe, Free, Legal Abortion Services.

[5] In many countries, there are more deaths associated with childbirth than with induced abortions. See World Health Organization, World Health Statistics 2015.

[6] World Health Organization (2012), Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems, Second Edition.

[7] Grimes, David Robert (2015), A scientist weighs up the five main anti-abortion arguments, The Guardian 12 August 2015.

[8] American Psychological Association (2015), Mental Health and Abortion.

[9] American Psychological Association (2008), APA Task Force Finds Single Abortion Not a Threat to Women's Mental Health.

[10] Guttmacher Institute (2011), Abortion and Mental Health; American Psychological Association, APA Task-Force on Mental Health and abortion.

[11] Corinne H. Rocca (et. al) (2013), Women's Emotions One Week After Receiving or Being Denied an Abortion in the United States, Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health 45(3): 122-131.

[12] American Psychological Association (2008), Report of the Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion; Grimes, David Robert (2015), A scientist weighs up the five main anti-abortion arguments, The Guardian 12 August 2015.