

Induced Terminations of Pregnancy

CURRENT TRENDS

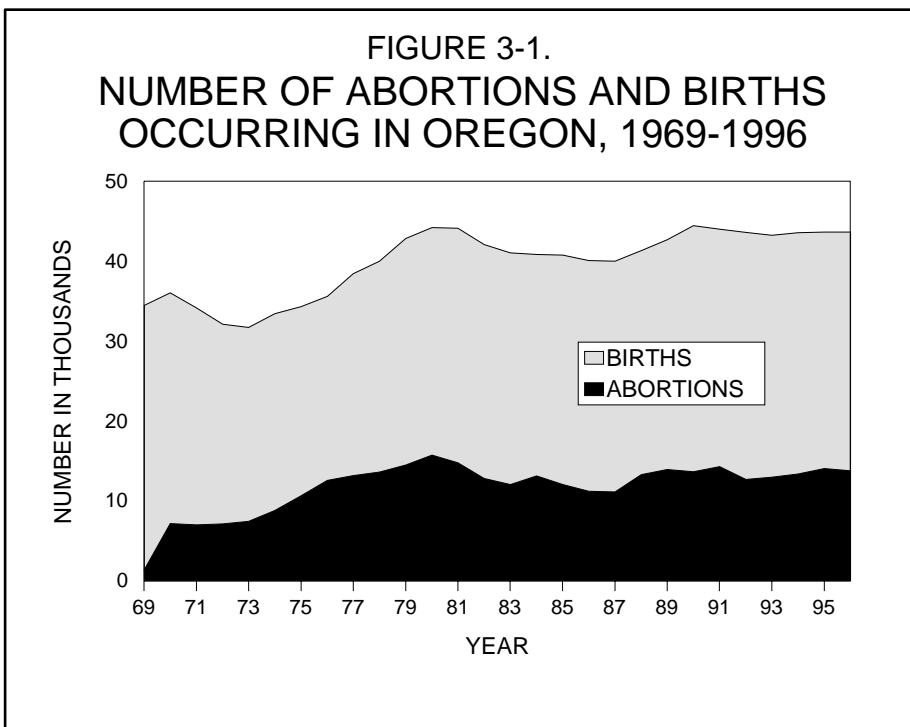
There were 13,767 induced terminations of pregnancy reported in Oregon during 1996. This figure includes out-of-state residents who obtained abortion services in Oregon, but does not include Oregonians who may have obtained abortions elsewhere. It represents a 2 percent decrease from 1995. In addition, the 1996 figure is 13 percent below the 15,735 abortions reported in the peak year of 1980. [Figure 3-1].

Changes in behavior are revealed by shifts in rate more than by changes in the number of events. The U.S. abortion rate has remained relatively stable since 1980 at approximately 24 per 1,000 women of childbearing age; Oregon's rate declined by nearly one-third between 1980 and 1987—to 17.5 per 1,000. From 1988 to 1996, Oregon's rate has fluctuated around 20 per 1,000. [Table 3-1]. In 1995, the Oregon rate was 20.4 per 1,000; in 1996 it decreased 2 percent to 20.0 per 1,000. The 1996 rate was 20 percent lower than the record high of 1980 (25.1 per 1,000).

Abortion patients in Oregon were typically non-Hispanic white women, who were single and in their early 20s. Half had previously given birth. Out-of-state residents accounted for 12.2 percent (1,679) of abortions in 1996—a 7 percent increase from the previous year.

The accuracy of abortion estimates is generally less than that for births and deaths, in part because some providers may fail to report all abortions even though it is required by state law. In addition, the total number of women who travel to another state to obtain abortions is unknown. (See Appendix B, Technical Notes section, for a more extensive discussion of the completeness of abortion data.)

Oregon's abortion rate remains 20 percent below its 1980 peak.



AGE

Abortion rates vary greatly by age group. The highest occur among younger women. [Figure 3-2]. In 1996 the rate for women age 20-24 was 41.5 per 1,000, with older teens and women in their late 20s also showing high rates (see sidebar). Among women 30-44, 8.9 per 1,000 obtained an abortion.

During 1996, abortion rates decreased for all age groups, except for women aged 35-39 and women over age 45, whose rates remained the same. The largest decrease was among women age 15 or younger, whose rate decreased by 11 percent to 0.8 per 1,000.

The 1996 abortion rate among young teens (age 10-17) was 43.3 percent lower than the rate in 1980—the year the statewide abortion rate was highest. [Figure 3-3]. The rate among 18- to 19-year-olds was 27.7 percent below that of 1980. The birth and abortion rates among teens indicate that the reduction in abortions is associated with success in avoiding unwanted pregnancy, rather than an increase in decisions to carry unwanted pregnancies to term. Among women 30 and older, by contrast, birth rates were markedly higher than they were in 1980.

ABORTION RATES BY AGE AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION, OREGON OCCURRENCE ¹ , 1996		
AGE	RATE ²	PERCENT
< 15	0.8	0.6
15-19	27.9	21.9
20-24	41.5	30.7
25-29	30.2	22.2
30-34	16.7	13.6
35-39	8.7	8.2
40-44	2.6	2.5
45+	0.2	0.1
15-44	19.9	99.2

¹ Occurrence data include all abortions reported by providers located in Oregon, regardless of the patient's residence. Because rate calculations employ Oregon population figures, these calculations, in effect, substitute out-of-state residents for Oregonians who may have obtained an abortion in another state. As a result, the rates may be inflated by as much as 10 percent. However, the percentage distribution is essentially unaffected. Does not include abortions where patients's age is unknown.

² Per 1,000 females.

PREGNANCY OUTCOMES

Figure 3-4 shows the relationship between the number of abortions and births in Oregon, giving an indication of the number of unwanted pregnancies that occurred in the state. The highest ratio of abortions to births was in 1980. Between 1980 and 1987, the ratio of abortions to births declined—although this fact is obscured by the increased level of reporting begun in 1984 as a requirement of new legislation. In 1996, there were 315.4 abortions per 1,000 resident births; the first decline since 1992.

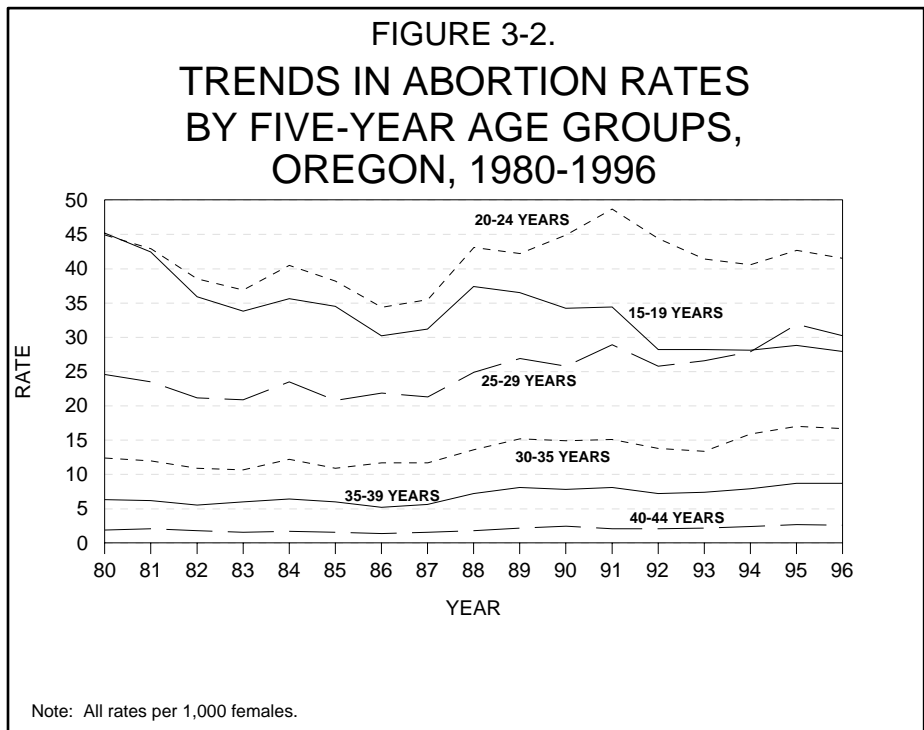
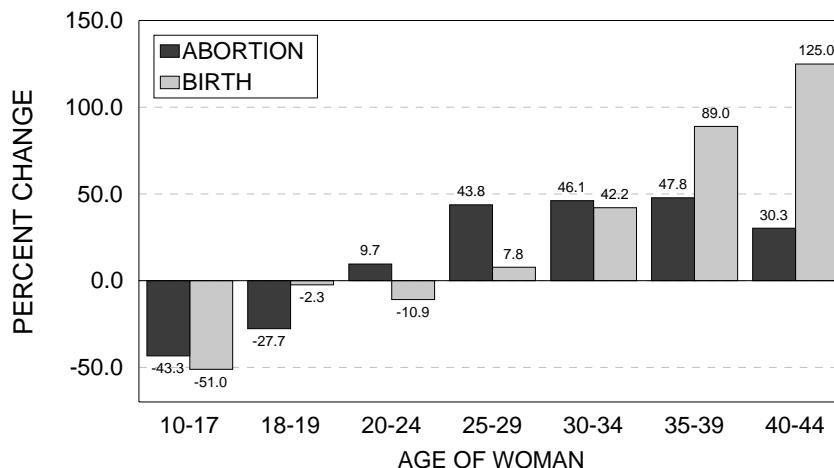


FIGURE 3-3.
COMPARISON OF BIRTH AND ABORTION RATES,
OREGON, 1980 VS. 1996



Note: All rates per 1,000 females.

In 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion with *Roe v. Wade*, Oregon’s abortion ratio was about one-fifth higher than that of the nation. By the mid-1980s, however, this had changed: Oregonians were less likely than residents of other states to terminate pregnancy by abortion (see sidebar). The most recent comparison available (1995) indicates that the abortion ratio in Oregon was 1.4 percent above that of the nation.¹

CONTRACEPTIVE USE

In the majority of abortions that occur in Oregon, an unwanted pregnancy is not a result of contraceptive failure. In 1996, based upon data obtained from abortion reports, 59.1 percent of abortion patients had engaged in sexual intercourse without using any method of contraception. Furthermore, failure to use a contraceptive was as likely among those who had previously obtained an abortion as among those having one for the first time. Sixty percent of first-time abortion patients reported using no contraceptive; the figure was 60.6 percent among those with at least three previous abortions. [Table 3-5].

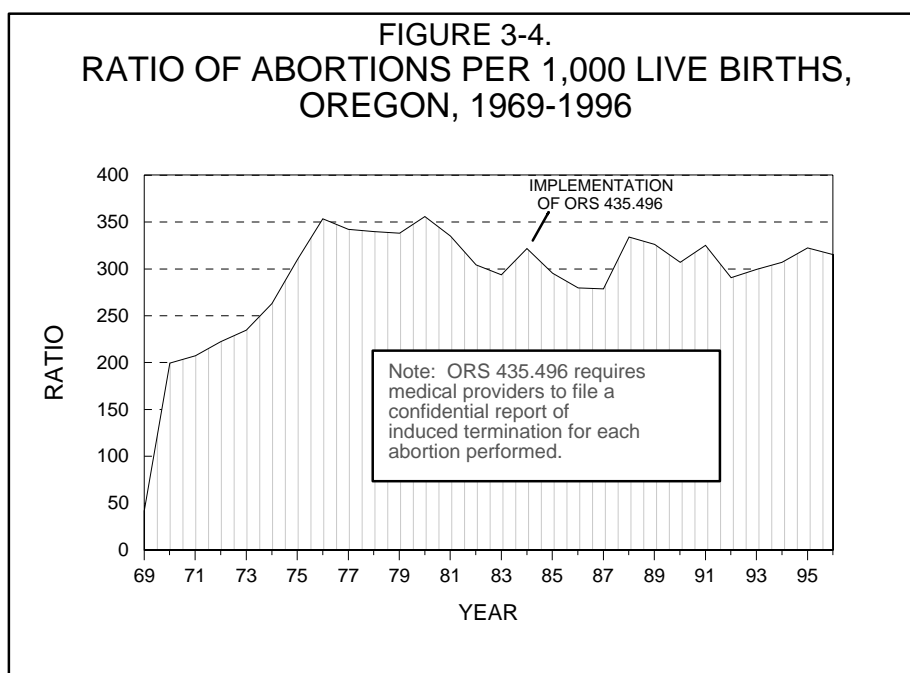
RACE/ETHNICITY

The frequency with which abortion procedures were used to terminate a pregnancy varied among ethnic and racial groups. Non-Hispanic African American, and Chinese and Japanese women were most likely to have an abortion; Hispanic women (15.3%) were least likely. [Figure 3-5].

In 1996, non-Hispanic African American, Chinese and Japanese women terminated more than 40 percent of their pregnancies – a total of 972 cases. However, these cases represented only about 7.1 percent of abortions performed in the state where race and ethnicity were known. Because of Oregon’s demographic composition the great majority of the state’s abortions are obtained by non-Hispanic whites. In 1996, this group

YEAR	U.S. ABORTION RATIO ¹	OREGON'S ABORTION RATIO ² AS PERCENT DIFFERENCE OF U.S.
1972	180	+23%
1973	196	+19%
1974	242	+9%
1975	**	**
1976	312	+13%
1977	**	**
1978	347	-2%
1979	**	**
1980	359	-1%
1981	**	**
1982	354	-14%
1983	**	**
1984	364	-12%
1985	354	-16%
1986	354	-21%
1987	356	-21%
1988	352	-9%
1989	346	-6%
1990	345	-11%
1991	339	-4%
1992	335	-13%
1993	334	-10%
1994	321	-4%
1995*	311	+2%

¹ ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ABORTIONS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS.
² SEE TABLE 3-2.
* PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE.
** DATA NOT AVAILABLE.



accounted for 11,018, or four in five of the abortions performed in Oregon. Hispanic ethnicity was unknown in 49 cases and race was unknown in 150 cases.

MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Eighty-eight percent of known gestation abortions were performed prior to the 13th week of pregnancy. Suction curettage was the procedure used in 94.3 percent of these terminations (where method was reported). Just one in twenty (5.3%) of induced terminations were performed after 16 weeks gestation: 47.4 percent of these used dilation and evacuation. [Table 3-4]. Teenage women were more likely to obtain an abortion after 16 weeks gestation than were women 20 or older [Figure 3-6]. Complications at the time of the procedure were rare—in fact, less than 1 percent (0.2%) of the 1996 abortion reports indicated any medical complication. There have been no deaths reported in which a woman died as the result of an induced termination in Oregon since 1971, before the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Abortion rates vary widely within the state, yet all 36 counties had at least one resident who sought an abortion in 1996. The providers of such services, however, are geographically concentrated. In 1996, abortions were reported in 10 of Oregon's 36 counties, compared to 9 in 1995. The degree of concentration is evident in the fact that 90.2 percent of all abortions were obtained in the three counties of highest occurrence. [Table 3-7].

Although abortions may often be sought outside a patient's community to help ensure anonymity, this degree of concentration suggests that access to abortion may be limited for some Oregon women.

FIGURE 3-5.
PERCENTAGE OF PREGNANCIES TERMINATED
BY INDUCED ABORTIONS BY RACE/ETHNICITY,
OREGON, 1996

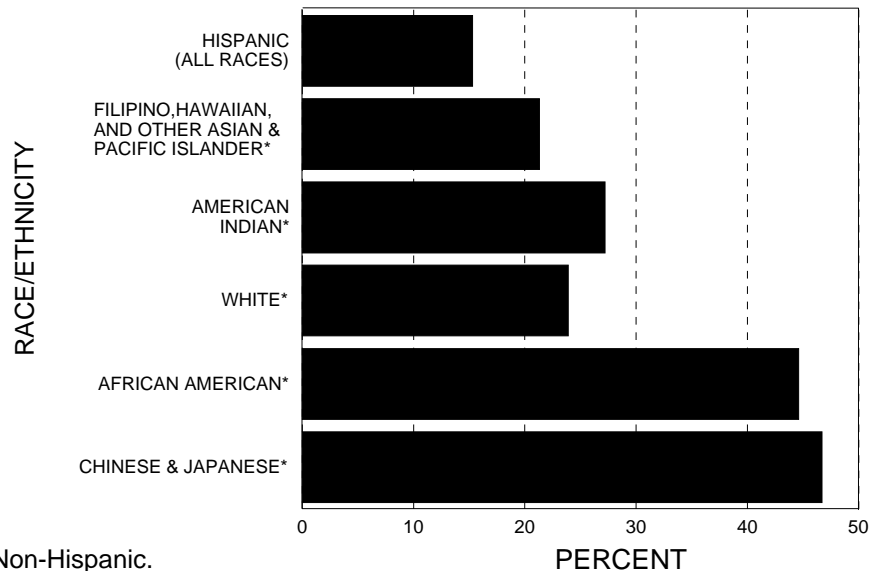
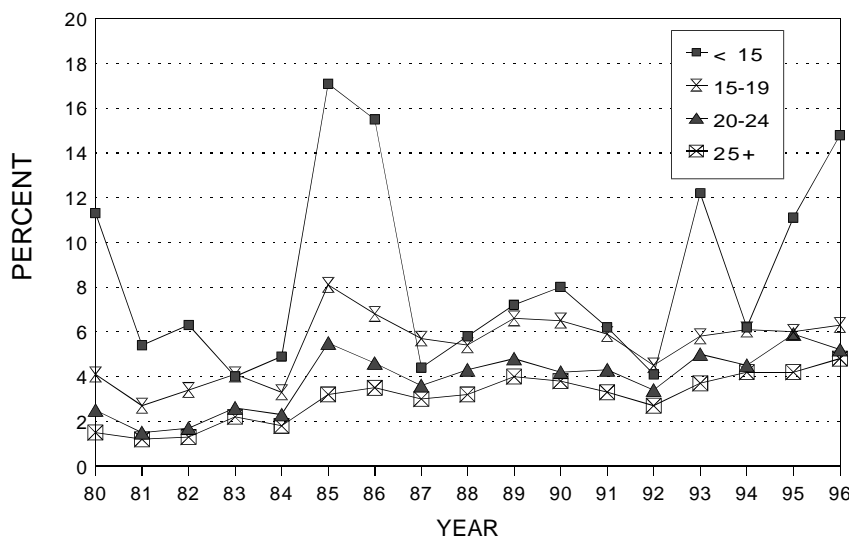


FIGURE 3-6.
PERCENTAGE OF ABORTIONS AFTER 16 WEEKS GESTATION
BY FIVE-YEAR AGE GROUPS,
OREGON, 1980-1996



References

1. CDC. Abortion Surveillance: Preliminary Analysis -- United States, 1995. *MMWR* 1997; 46:1134-1137.