Induced Terminations of Pregnancy

CURRENT TRENDS

During 2001, 14,272 induced terminations of pregnancy occurred in Oregon. This total represents a 0.5 percent increase from 2000 and a decrease of 9.3 percent from the record high of 15,735 abortions reported in 1980. [Figure 3-1].

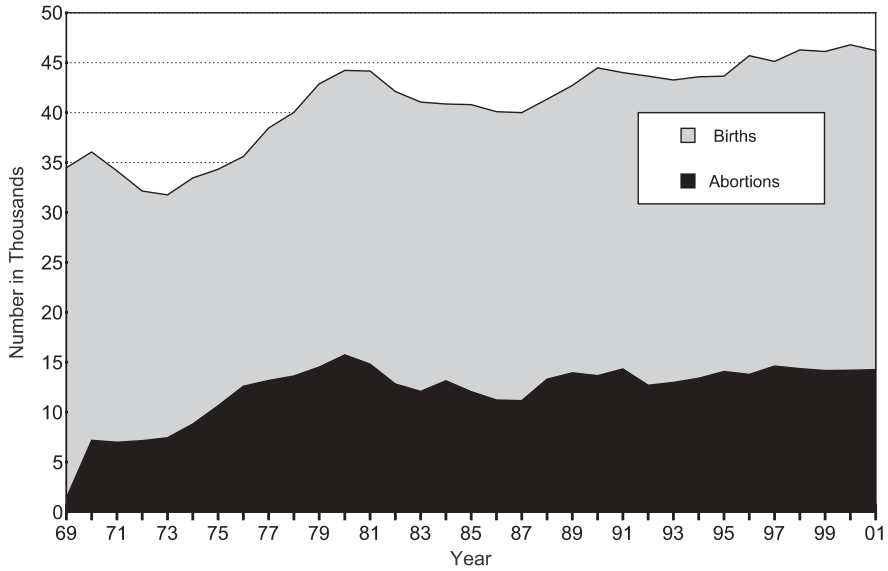
This chapter reports occurrence data; that is, all abortions occurring in Oregon whether obtained by Oregon residents or residents of another state. During the 1990s, out-of-state residents generally accounted for 11 to 12 percent of abortions in Oregon. In 2001, 1,803 (12.6%) of patients were out-of-state residents. [Table 3-6]. Oregonians who obtained abortions out of state are not included in this data. Because rate calculations use Oregon population numbers, these calculations substitute out-of-state residents for the unknown number of Oregonians who obtained an abortion in another state. (See Appendix B, Technical Notes section for a more extensive discussion of the completeness of abortion data.)

In 2001 Oregon's abortion rate remained 23 percent below the 1980 record

Changes of behavior are revealed more by shifts in rates, which account for population change, than changes in the number of events. The U.S. abortion rate has been declining since 1980 from approximately 25 per 1,000 women age 15-44 to 17 per 1,000 in 1998.[1] In 2001, the Oregon rate was slightly lower at 19.3 per 1,000, a 0.5 percent decrease from 2000 and 23.1 percent lower than the record high of 1980 (25.1 per 1,000). Oregon's rate has fluctuated around 20 per 1,000 since 1988. [Table 3-1].

1. CDC. Abortion Surveillance - United States, 1998, MMWR, June 7, 2002; V51, n 55-3. This is the most current national data available.

Figure 3-1.
Number of Abortions and Births
Occurring in Oregon, 1969-2001



Comparison of Oregon and U.S. Abortion Ratios, 1972-1998

Year	U.S. Abortion Ratio[1]	Oregon's Abortion Ratio[2] as Percent Difference from 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%
1996	314	-4%
1997	306	+6%
*1998	264[3]	+17%

1 Estimated Number of Abortions per 1,000 Live Births.

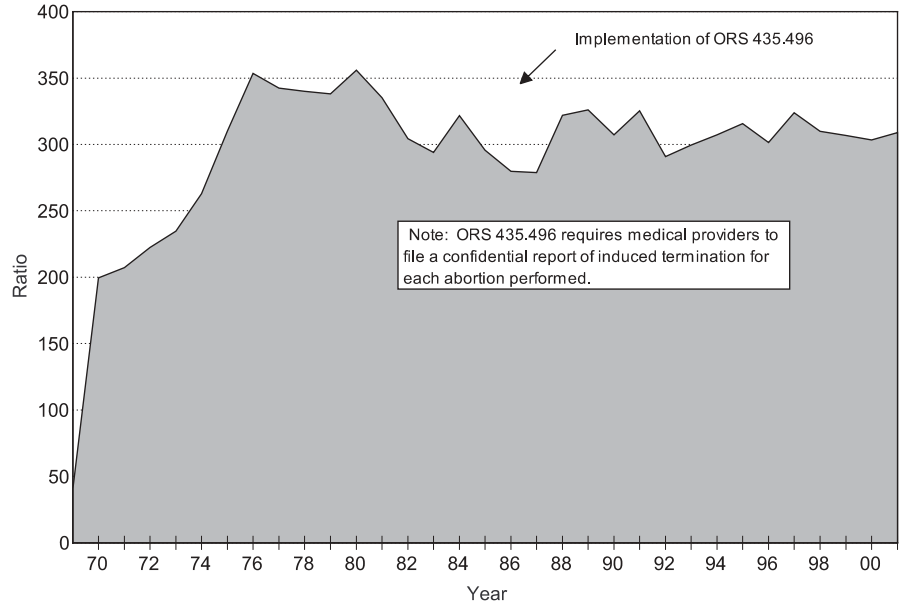
2 See Table 3-2.

3 Alaska, California, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma did not report number of legal abortions for 1998.

* Most recent data available.

** Data not available.

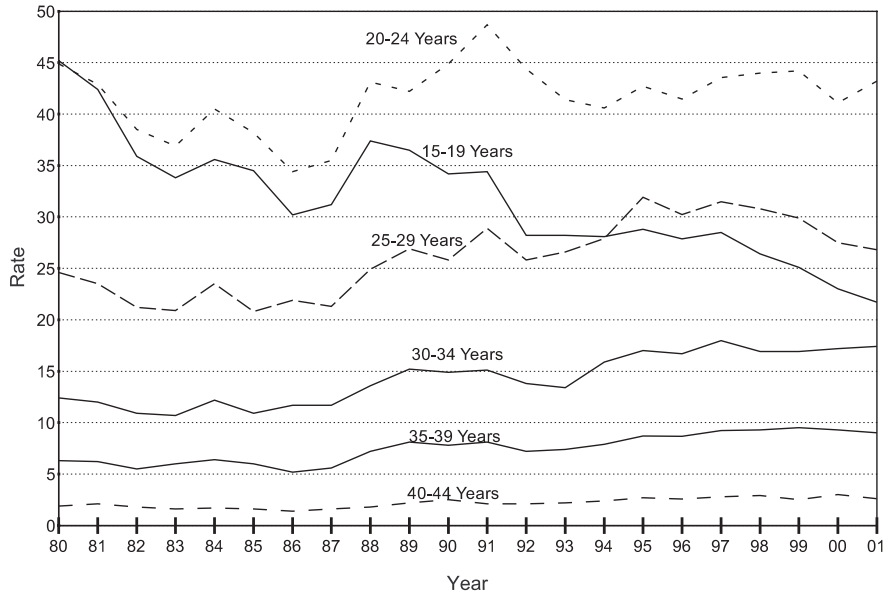
Figure 3-2.
Ratio of Abortions per 1,000 Live Births,
Oregon Occurrence, 1969-2001



PREGNANCY OUTCOMES

Figure 3-2 shows the ratio of abortions to births occurring in Oregon, indicating the prevalence of unwanted pregnancies that occurred in the state. Both the highest abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 female population) and the highest ratio of abortions (number of abortions per 1,000 births) occurred in 1980. Between 1980 and 1987, the ratio of abortions to births declined,

Figure 3-3.
Trends in Abortion Rates by Five-Year Age Groups,
Oregon Occurrence, 1980-2001



Note: Rates per 1,000 females in age group.

although an increased level of reporting beginning in 1984 (as a requirement of new legislation) obscures this fact. In 2001, there were 308.9 abortions per 1,000 occurrence births. This represents a 1.8 percent increase from 2000 and a 13.2 percent decrease from 1980, when this ratio was 355.8 per 1,000 births. [Table 3-2].

In 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion with the Roe v. Wade decision, Oregon's abortion ratio was about one-fifth higher than that of the U.S. [see sidebar, page 3-2]. In the mid-1980s and early 1990s this changed: Oregonians were less likely than residents of other states to terminate a pregnancy with an induced abortion. Since 1995, Oregon's abortion ratio has fluctuated around the U.S. ratio. The 2001 abortion ratio in Oregon was higher than the 1998 U.S. ratio (the most recent comparison available) 308.9 to 264; however this may be due in part to some states not reporting (Alaska, California, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma).

ABORTION PATIENTS

Similar to births rates, abortion rates differ by age group, race, ethnicity, marital status and prior pregnancy.

Almost two-thirds of abortion patients have never been married. [Table 3-3]. More than half have previously given birth. [Table 3-5].

Age

There is wide variation in abortion rates among age groups (see sidebar): The highest rate in 2001 occurred among women age 20-24 (43.2 per 1,000). The lowest rates were among women 45-49, (0.2 per 1,000) and women under age 15 (0.5 per 1,000). [Figure 3-3, sidebar].

Abortion Rates by Age and Percentage Distribution, Oregon Occurrence[1], 2001

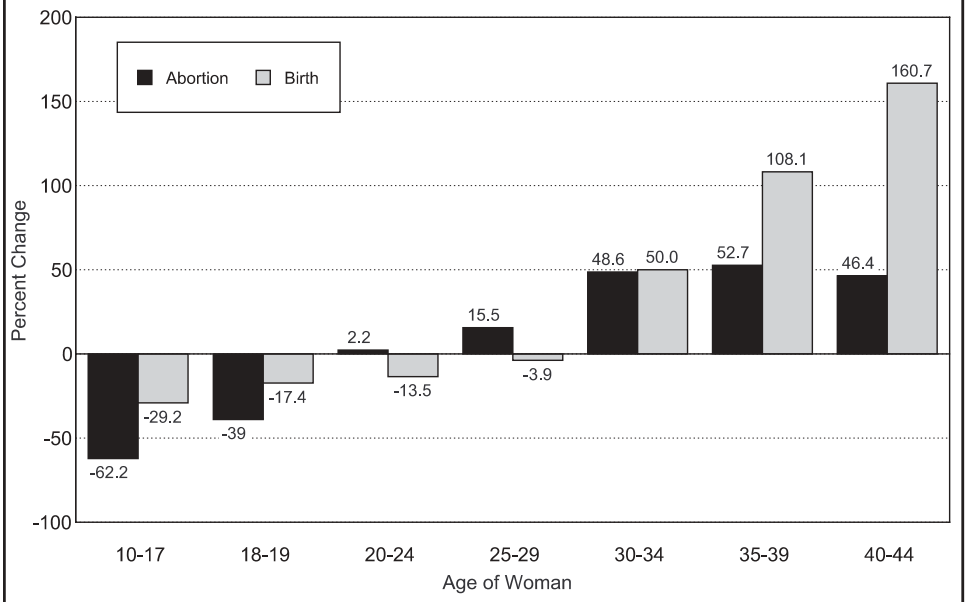
Age	Rate[2]	%
< 15[3]	0.5	0.4
15-19	21.7	18.4
20-24	43.2	34.5
25-29	26.8	21.5
30-34	17.4	14.2
35-39	9.0	8.1
40-44	2.6	2.6
45-49	0.2	0.2
15-44	19.3	99.3

[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.

[2] Per 1,000 females in age group.

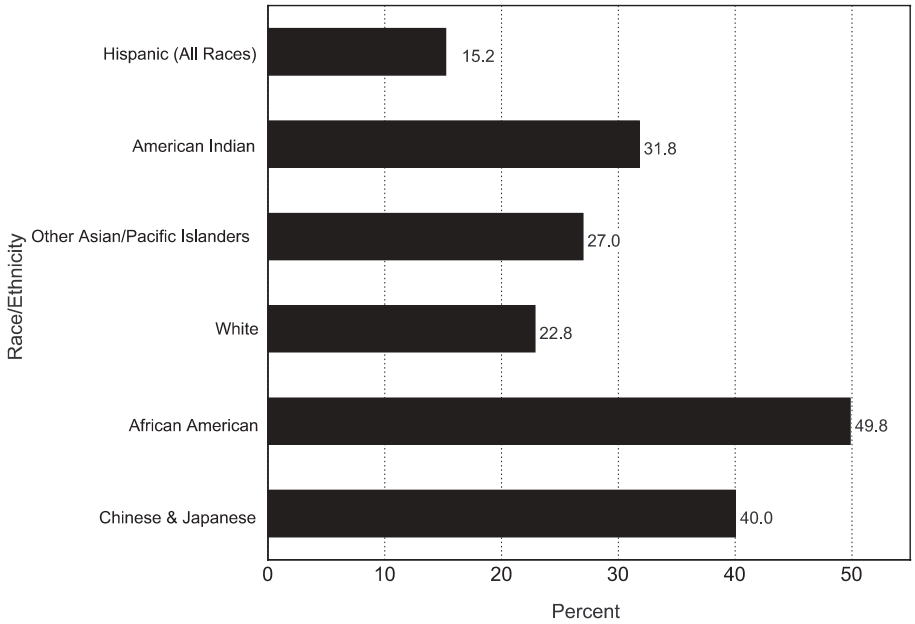
[3] Rates for <15 are based on the Oregon female population 10-14.

Figure 3-4.
Percent Change of Birth and Abortion Rates,
Oregon Occurrence Abortions and Oregon Resident Births, 1980 vs. 2001



Note: Rates per 1,000 females in age group.

Figure 3-5.
Percentage of Pregnancies Terminated by Induced Abortion,
By Race/Ethnicity, Oregon Occurrence, 2001



The 2001 abortion rate among teens age 10-17 was 62.2 percent lower than the rate in 1980 (when the statewide abortion rate was highest); the rate for 18- to 19-year-olds was 39 percent lower. [Figure 3-4]. The absence of a corresponding increase in the birth rates among teens suggests success in avoiding unwanted pregnancy, rather than an increase in decisions to carry unwanted pregnancies to term. In contrast, among women age 30 and older, both abortion rates and birth rates were markedly higher in 2001 than in 1980.

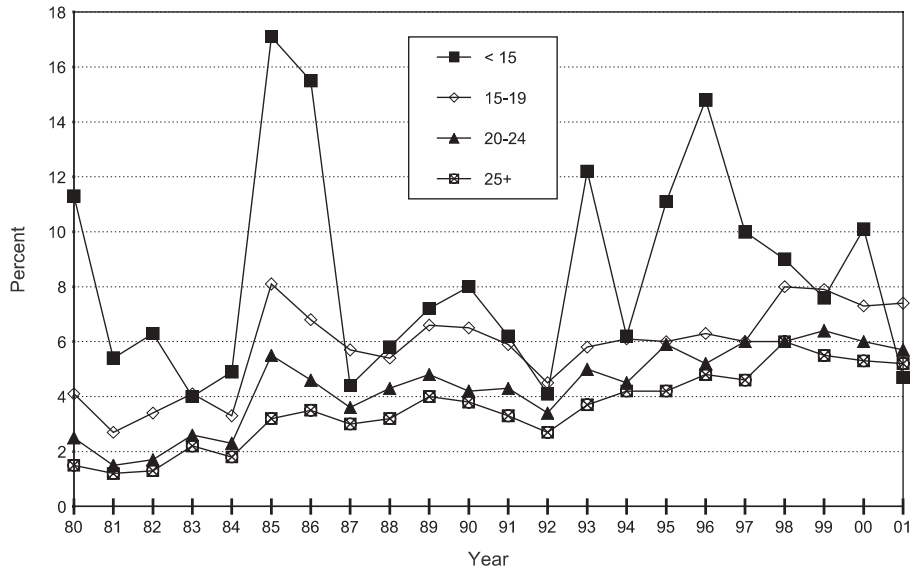
Race and Ethnicity

The frequency with which abortion procedures were used to terminate a pregnancy varied among ethnic and racial groups. Hawaiian women and African American women were most likely to have an abortion. In 2001, Hawaiian women terminated 59.5 percent of their pregnancies, African American women terminated 49.8 percent and Chinese and Japanese women terminated 40.0 percent. Because Oregon's demographic composition is predominately white, white women obtained the majority of abortions by count in 2001 (85.3%), although the group was second lowest in percentage of pregnancies terminated. As in past years, Hispanic women were least likely to terminate a pregnancy (15.2%). [Figure 3-5].

Contraceptive Use

In the majority of abortions that occur in Oregon, the pregnancy is not a result of contraceptive failure. In 2001, based upon data obtained from abortion reports, only 37 percent of women had used some method of contraception to avoid the pregnancy. [Table 3-5].

Figure 3-6.
Percentage of Abortions After 16 Weeks Gestation
by Five-Year Age Groups, Oregon Occurrence, 1980-2001



MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Eighty-eight percent of abortions with known gestation were performed prior to the thirteenth week of pregnancy. Just one in seventeen (5.8%) of induced terminations were performed after sixteen weeks gestation. Suction curettage was the procedure used in 93.5 percent of terminations prior to the thirteenth week where method was reported. Dilation and evacuation was the procedure in 77.2 percent of terminations occurring after sixteen weeks gestation. Women under the age of 20 were nearly 37 percent more likely to obtain an abortion after sixteen weeks gestation than were women age 20 and over. [Table 3-4]. The percentage of abortions occurring after sixteen weeks gestation declined for every group except for women age 15-19, which increased slightly to 7.4% from 7.3% in 2000. [Figure 3-6].

Complications at the time of the procedure were reported for 183 terminations (1.3% of abortion patients): retained products (82 patients) and infection (33 patients) were the most common complications. In Oregon, no woman has died as the result of a legally induced termination.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Abortion rates varied widely within the state, yet nearly all of Oregon's 36 counties had at least one resident who sought an abortion in 2001 (Wheeler was the sole exception). The providers of such services, however, were geographically concentrated. In 2001, abortions were reported in 11 of Oregon's 36 counties. The degree of concentration was evident in the fact that 97 percent of all abortions were obtained in the five counties of highest occurrence: Jackson, Lane, Marion, Multnomah and Washington. [Table 3-7]. Although abortions may often be sought outside a patient's community to help insure anonymity, this degree of concentration suggests that access to abortion services may be limited for some Oregon women.