

# An Overview of Abortion in the United States



**Guttmacher Institute**  
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# Objectives

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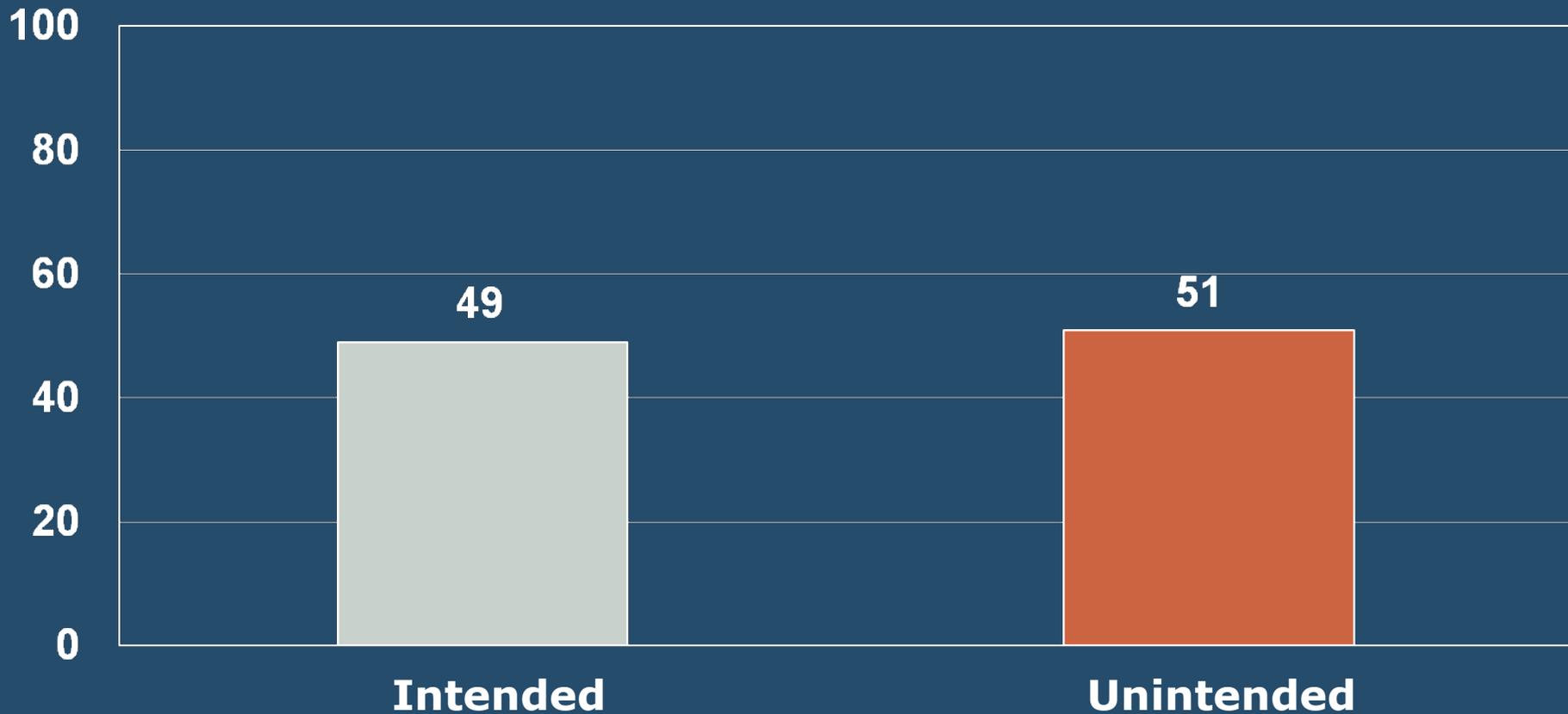
- Provide an overview of unintended pregnancy and abortion in the United States.
- Review the incidence of pregnancy and abortion.
- Discuss provision of and access to abortion services.
- Review the safety of abortion.
- Identify who has abortions, why and when in pregnancy.
- Provide a comparative international perspective on abortion.



# **Incidence of Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion**

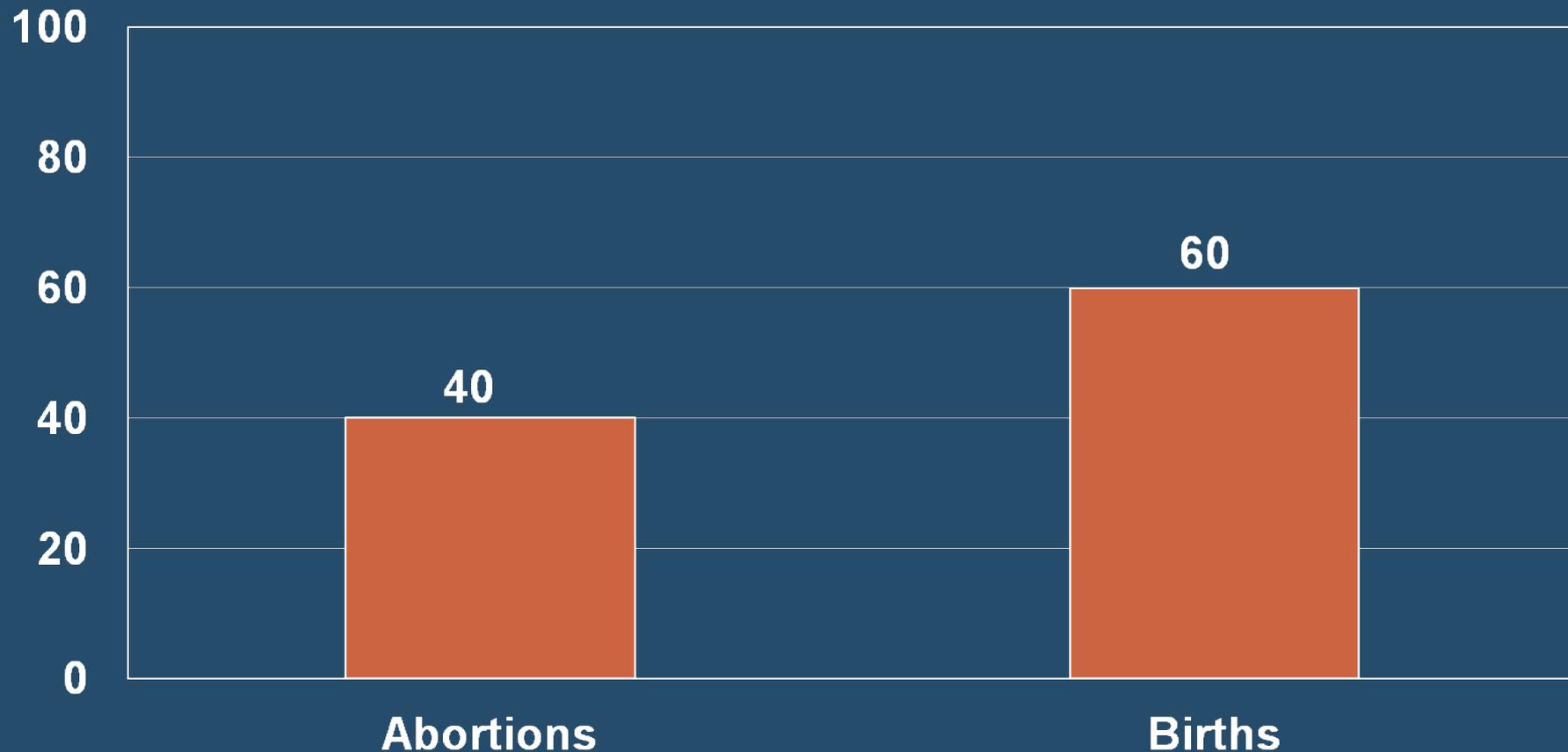
# Pregnancies in the United States (Approximately 6.6 Million in 2008)

% of pregnancies



# Outcomes of Unintended Pregnancies (Approximately 3.4 Million in 2008)

% of unintended pregnancies (excluding miscarriages)



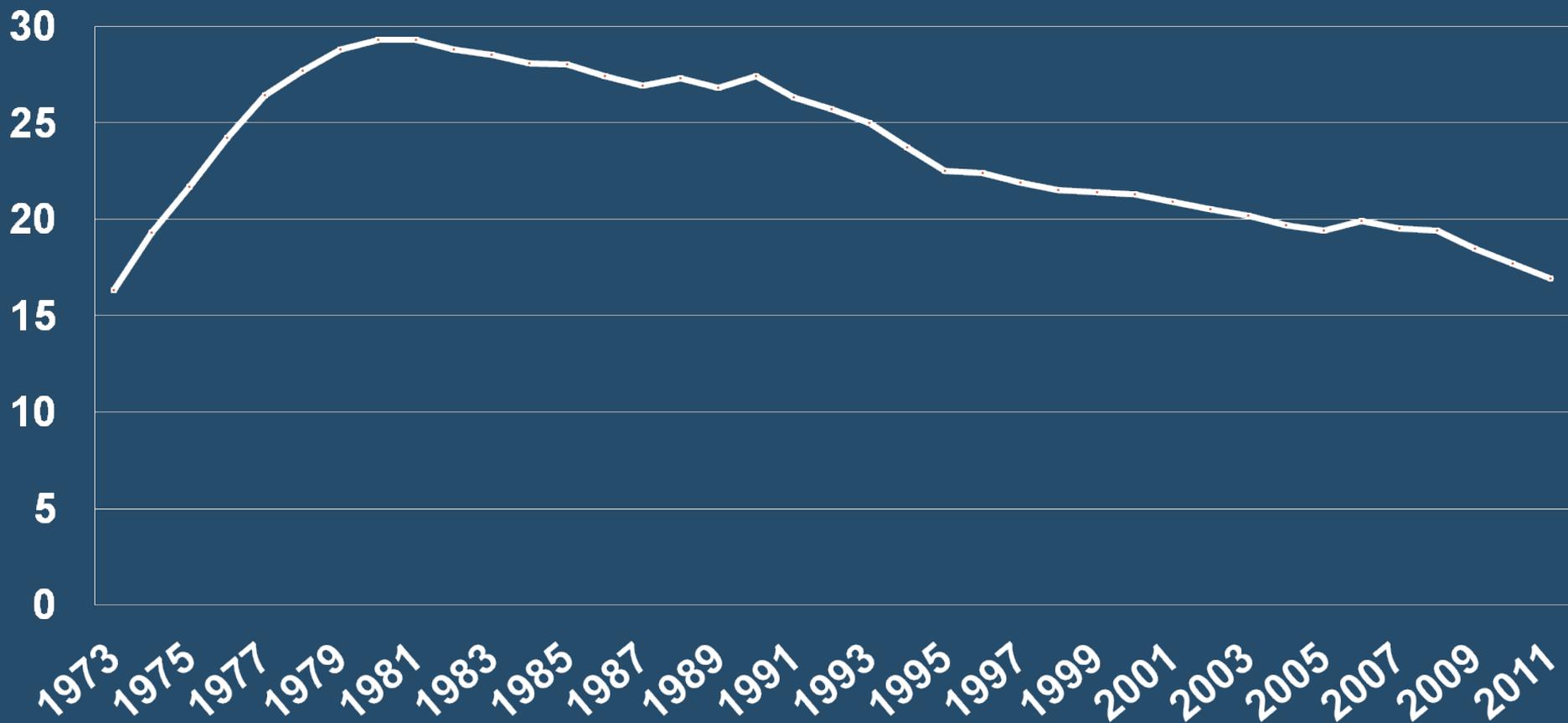
# Incidence of Abortion

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- In 2011, some 1.06 million pregnancies were terminated by abortion in the United States.
- The abortion rate in 2011 was 16.9 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44.
- Put differently, 1.7% of all women aged 15–44 had an abortion in 2011.

# In 2011, U.S. Abortion Rates Reached Their Lowest Level Since 1973

Abortions per 1,000 women

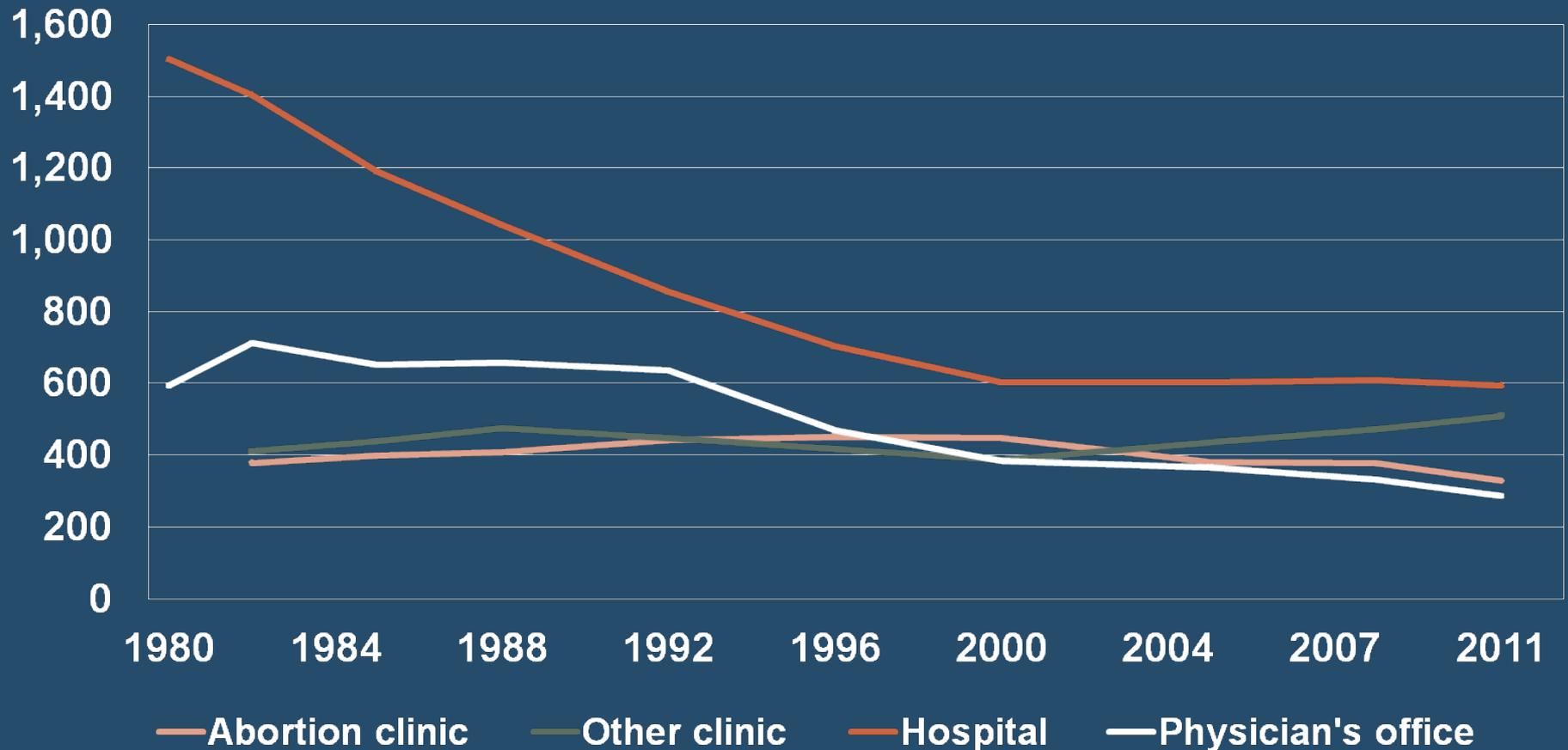




# Abortion Service Providers

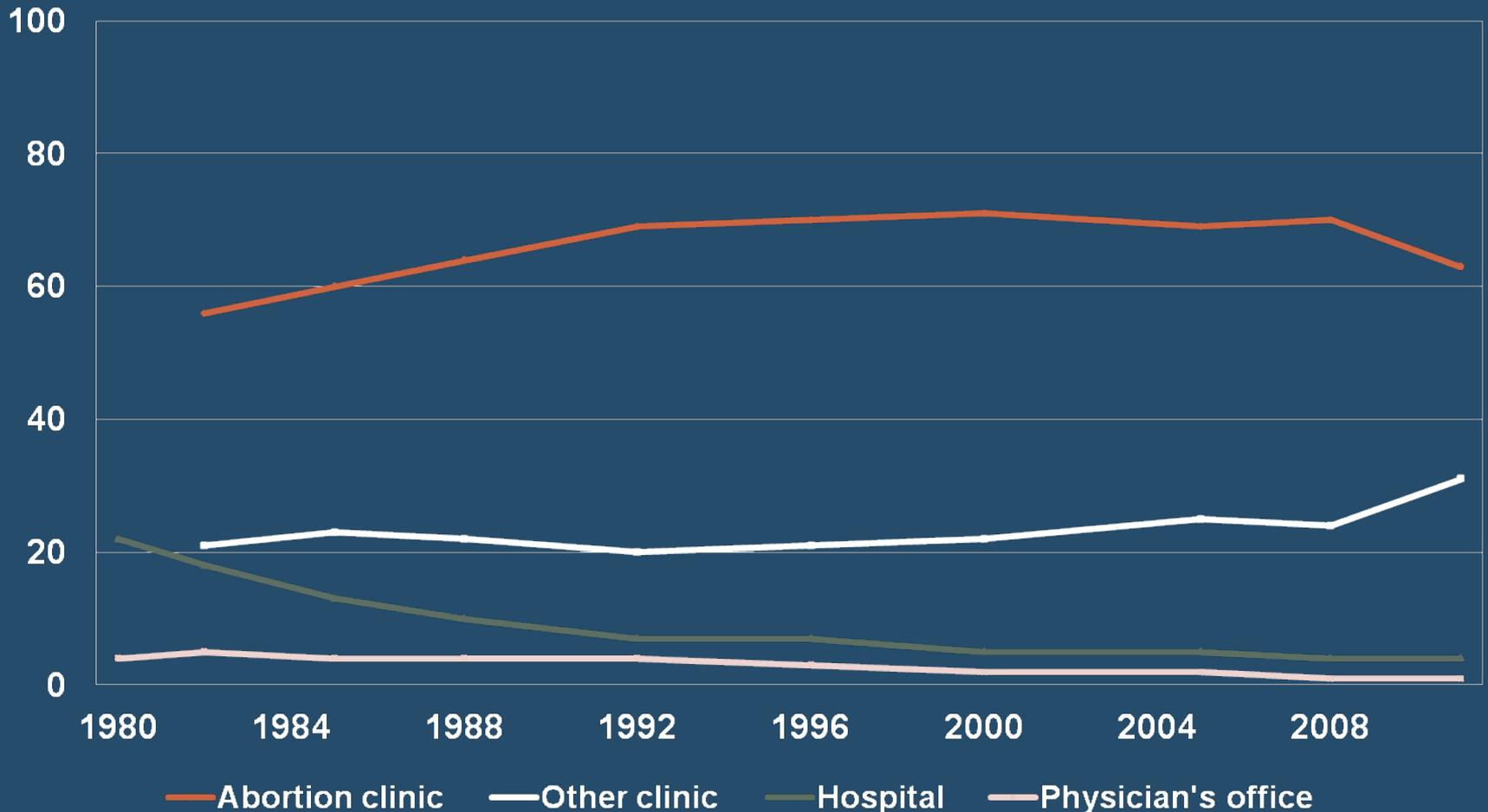
# The Number of Abortion Providers Has Declined Substantially, Mainly Due to Fewer Hospitals Providing Abortion

No. of providers



# The Overwhelming Majority of Abortions Are Performed in Clinics

% of abortions



# Facilities Providing Only Medication Abortion Had a Significant Impact

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- A minimum of 193 nonhospital providers, or 17%, offered only early medication abortion in 2011; most were nonspecialized clinics or physicians' offices with small abortion caseloads.
- The provision of medication abortion, particularly by providers who do not offer surgical abortion, is likely responsible for the stabilization in the number of abortion providers that has occurred since 2000.

# Percentage of Providers of 400 or More Abortions per Year Who Reported Harassment in 2008

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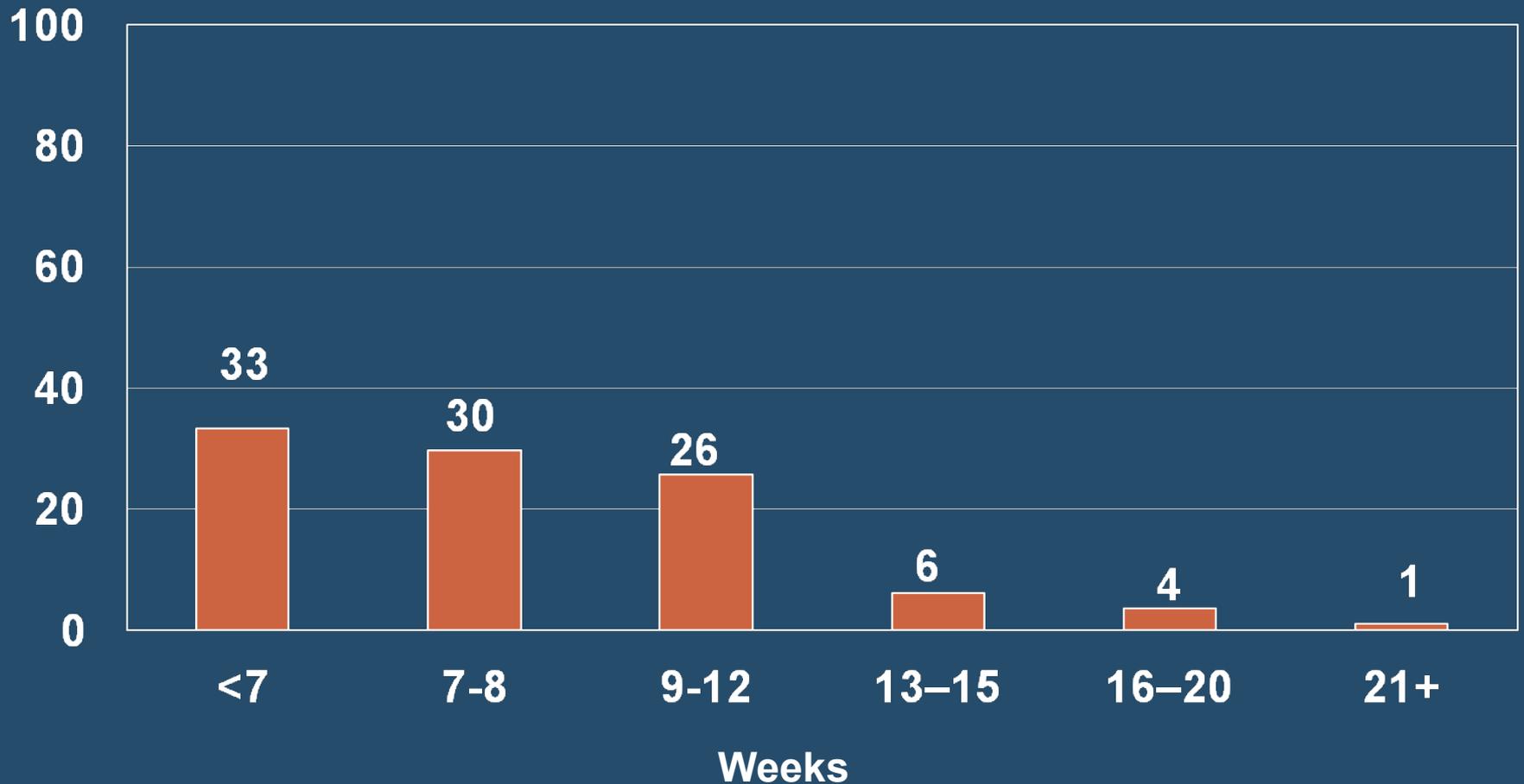
<b>Picketing</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Picketing with physical contact with patients</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Vandalism</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Picketing homes of staff members</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Bomb threats</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Patient pictures posted on the Internet</b>	<b>5%</b>



# Gestational Age

# Abortions Overwhelmingly Occur Early in Pregnancy

% of abortions



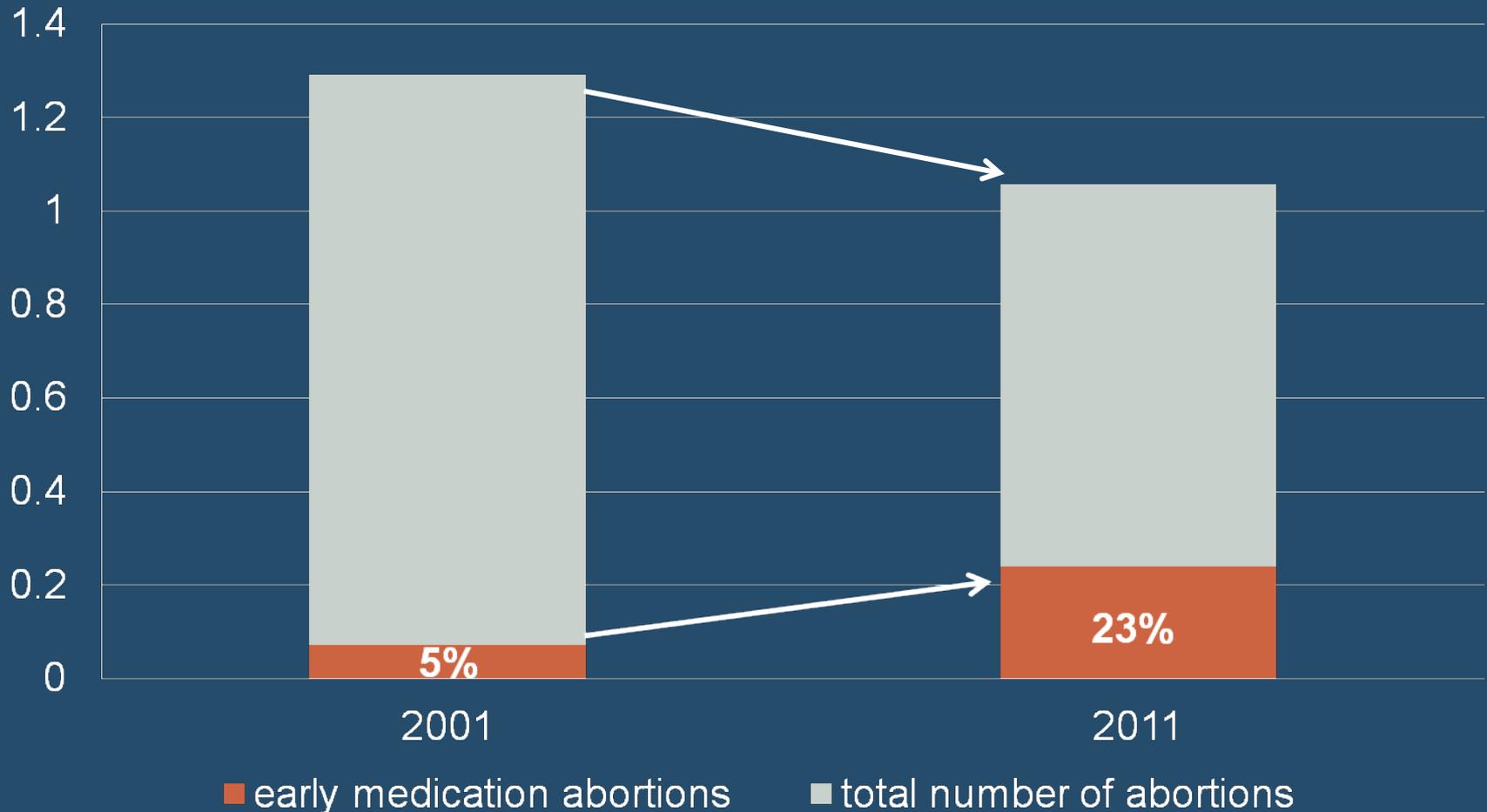
# Incidence of Early Medication Abortion, 2011

- Early medication abortion accounted for 23% (239,400) of all nonhospital abortions, an increase from 17% in 2008.
- An estimated 36% of eligible abortions (those performed up to nine weeks) were early medication abortions.
- Fifty-nine percent of all known providers offer this service, compared with 33% in early 2001.\*

\* Mifepristone was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in early medication abortion in September 2000.

# Early medication abortion as a percentage of all abortions

Number of abortions, in millions





# Safety of Abortion

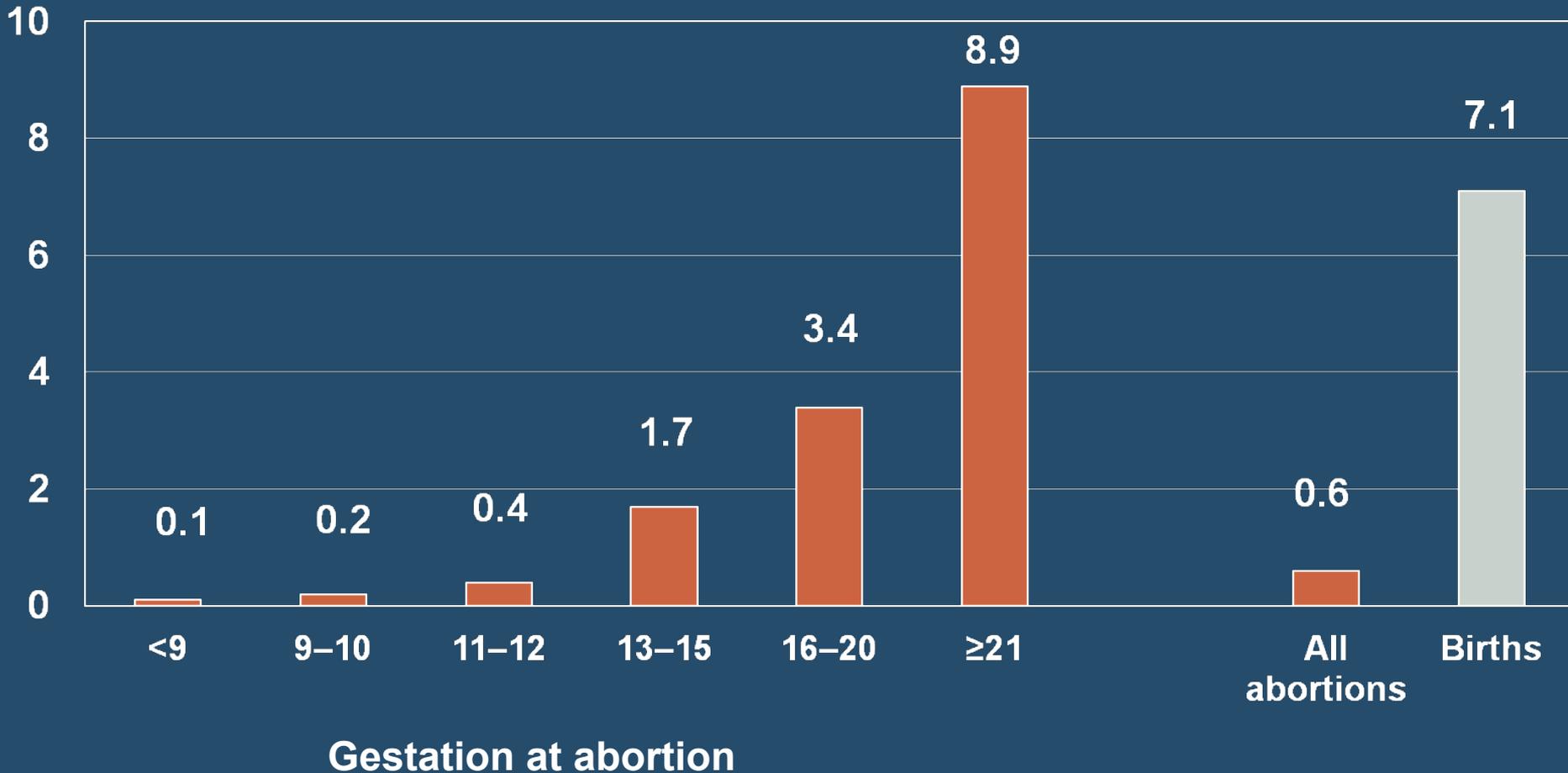
# Long-Term Safety of Abortion

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- First-trimester abortions pose virtually no risk of
  - Infertility
  - Ectopic pregnancy
  - Miscarriage
  - Birth defect
  - Preterm delivery or low birth weight
- Abortion is not associated with breast cancer.
- Abortion does not pose a hazard to women's mental health.

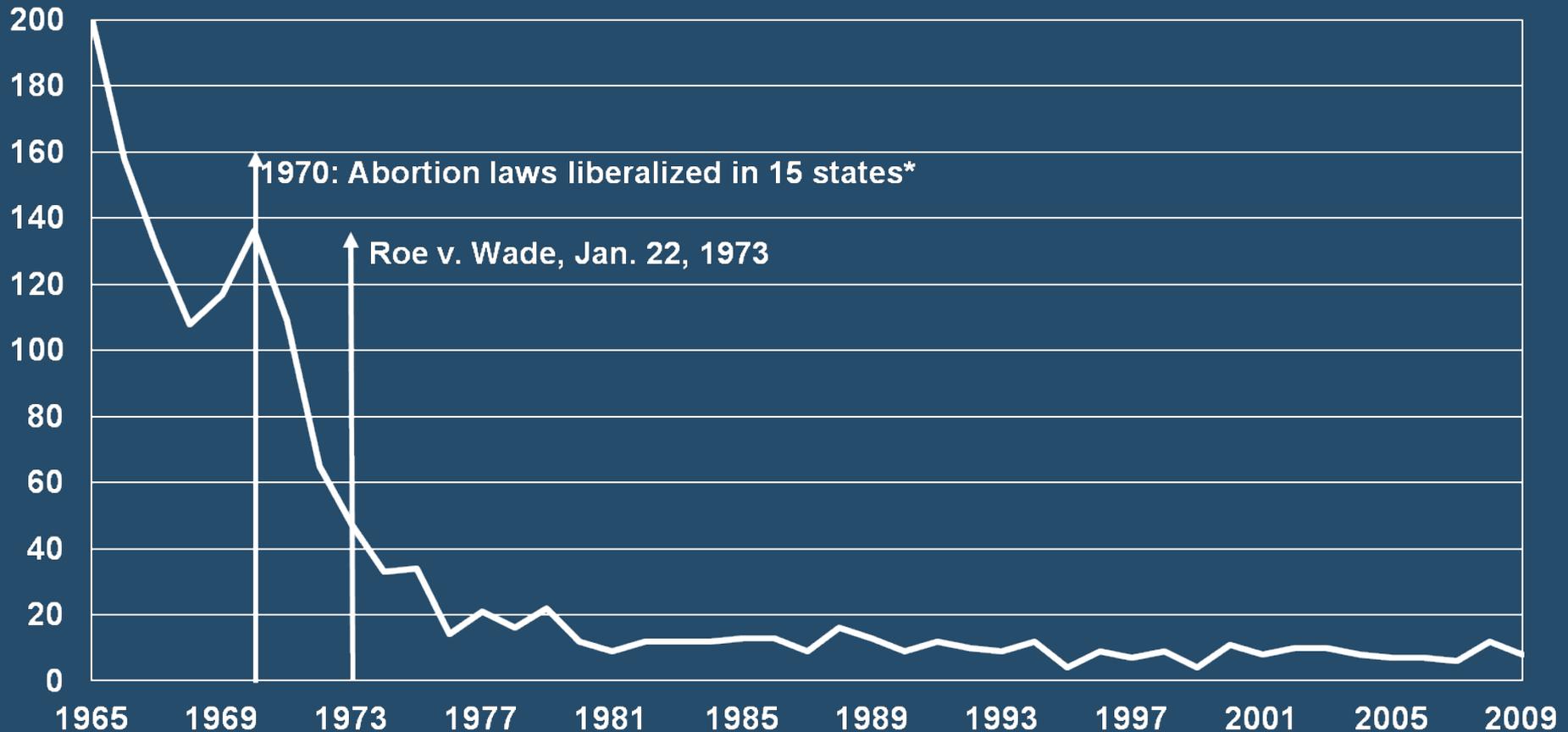
# Abortion Is Safer the Earlier in Pregnancy It Is Performed

Deaths per 100,000 abortions



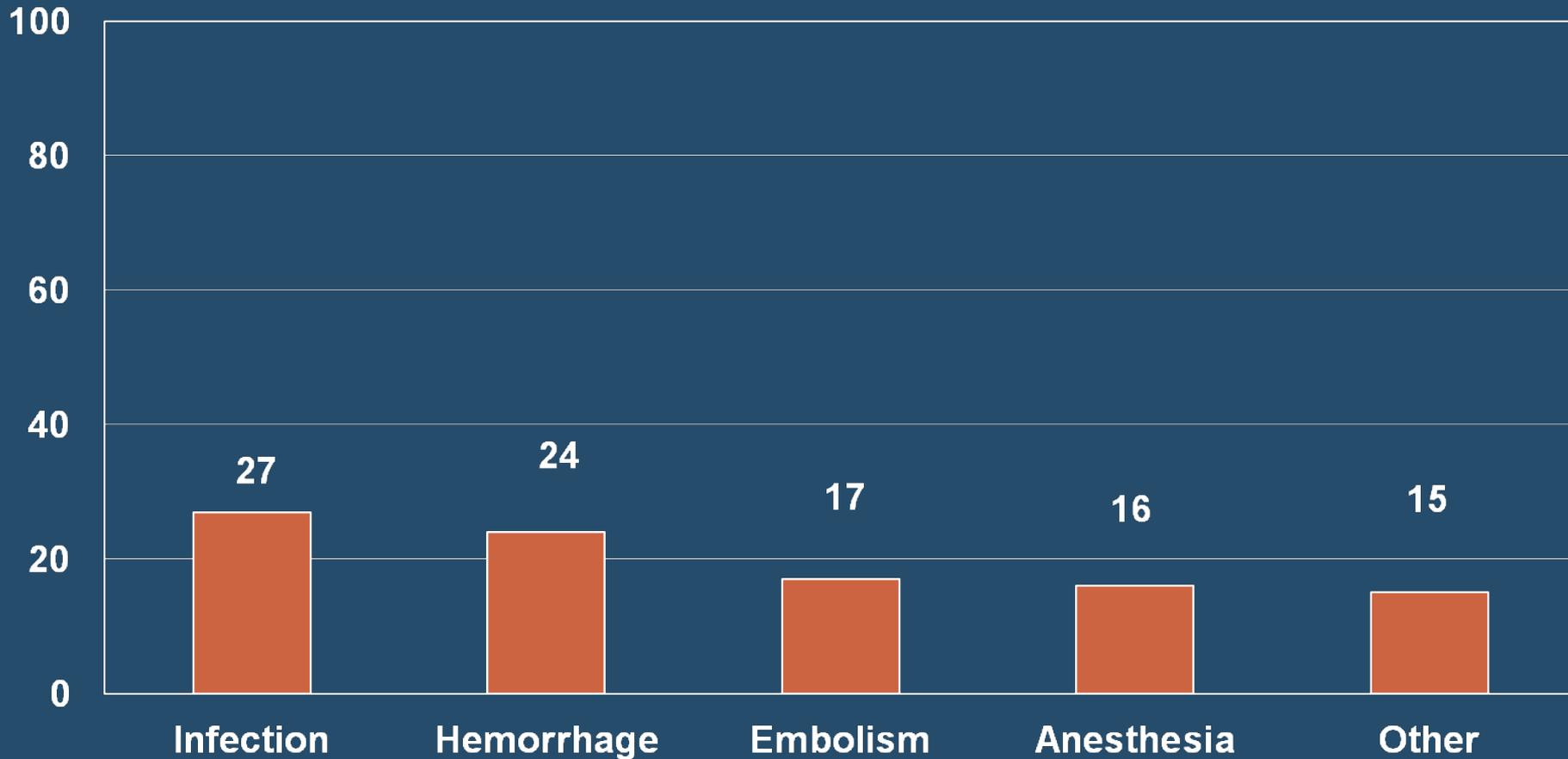
# Deaths Associated with Abortion Declined Dramatically After Legalization

Number of abortion-related deaths



# Causes of Abortion-Related Deaths

% of deaths

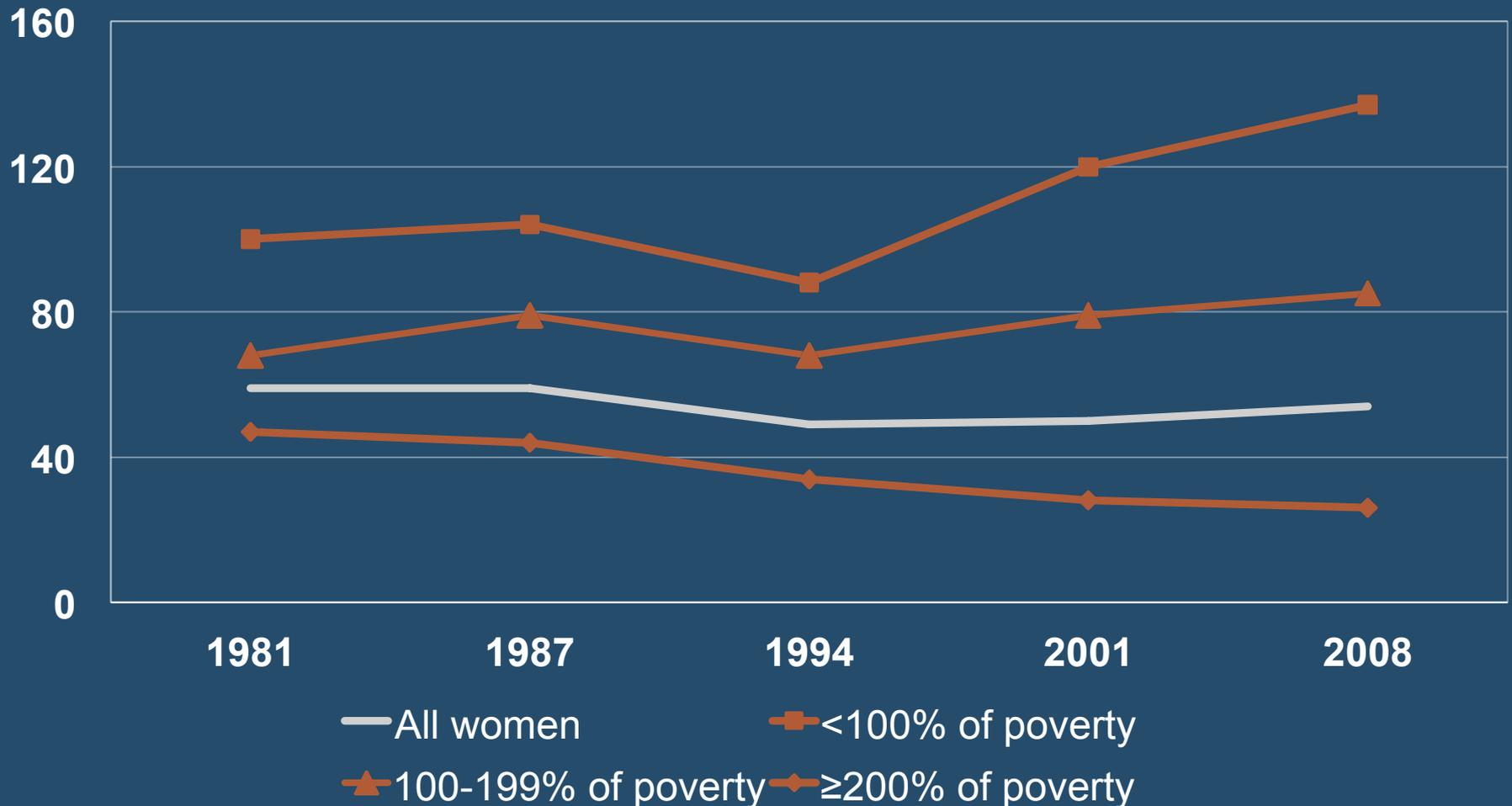




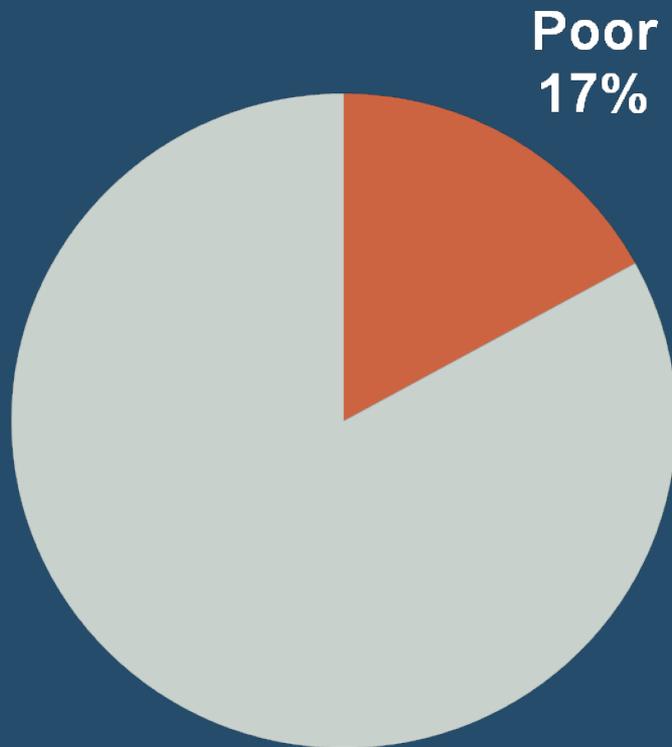
# Who Has Abortions

# Unintended Pregnancy Rates Have Risen Among Poor Women Even As They Have Fallen Among Higher Income Women

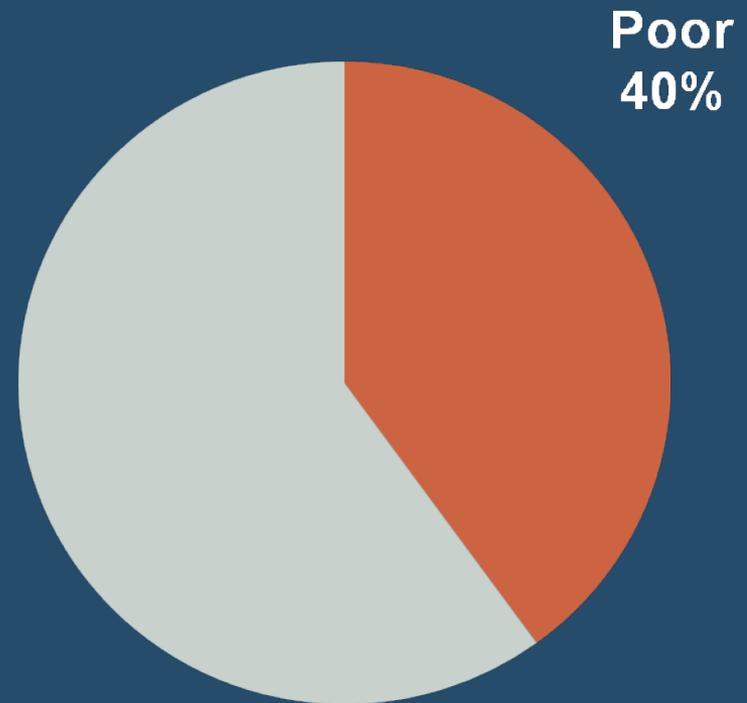
Unintended pregnancy rate (per 1,000 women 15–44)



# Poor Women Account for a Disproportionate Share of Unintended Pregnancies

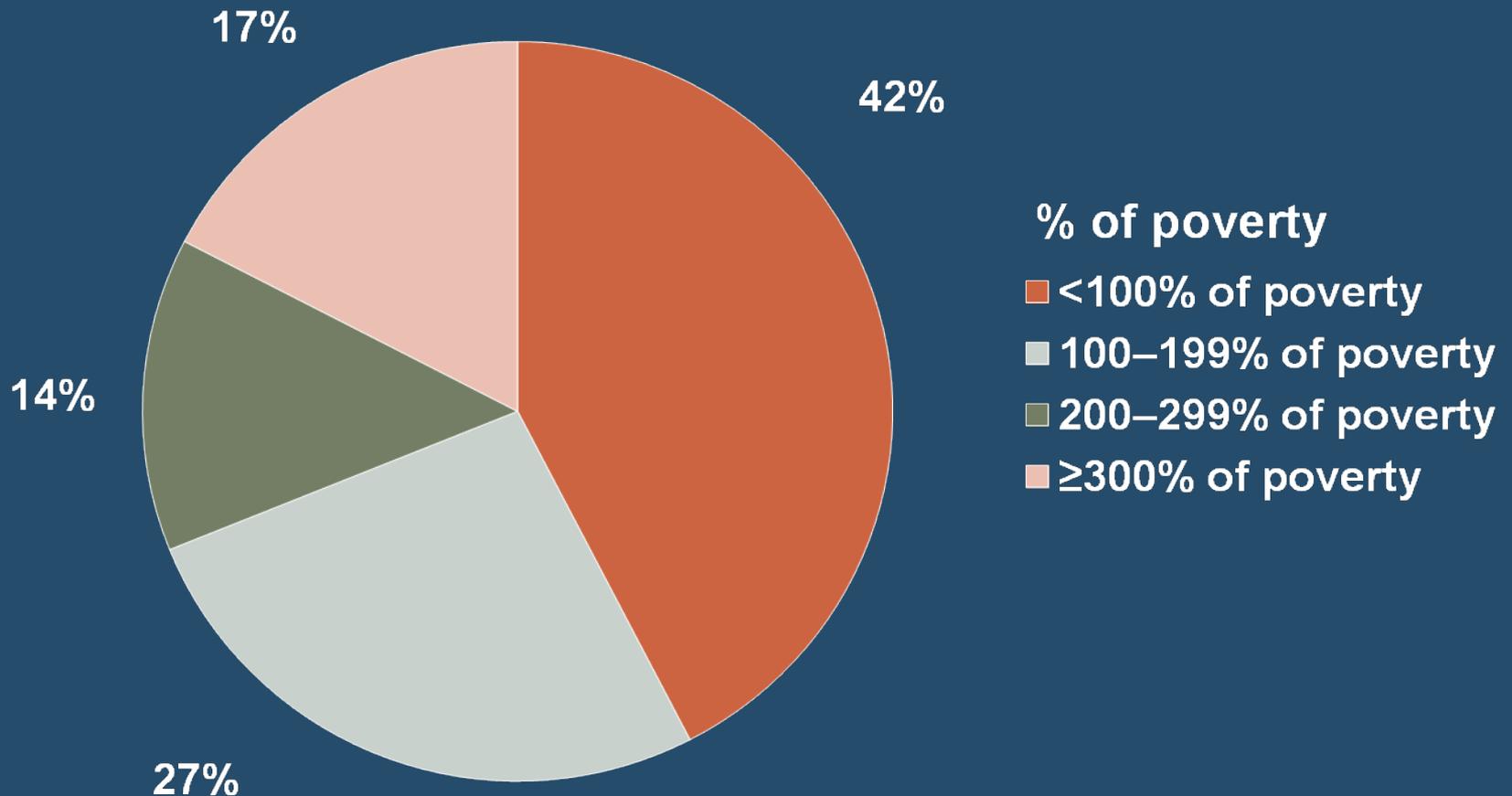


Women at risk of unintended pregnancy

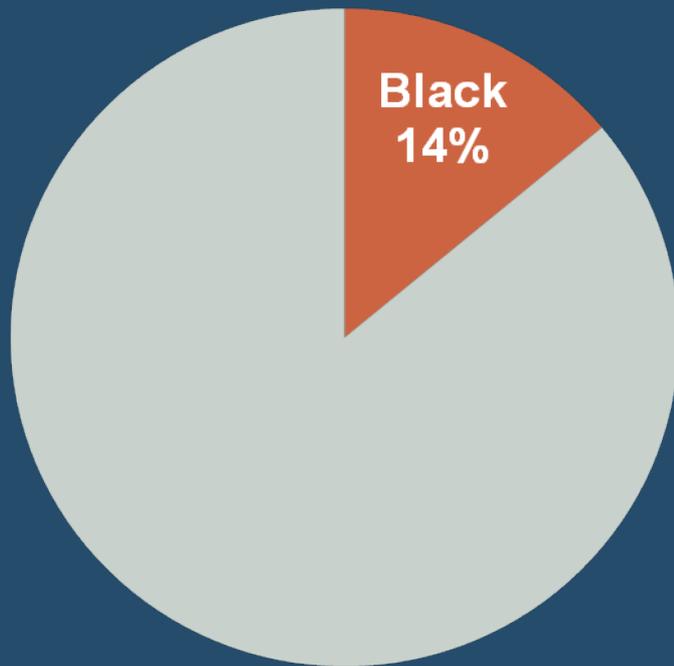


Unintended pregnancies by women's poverty status

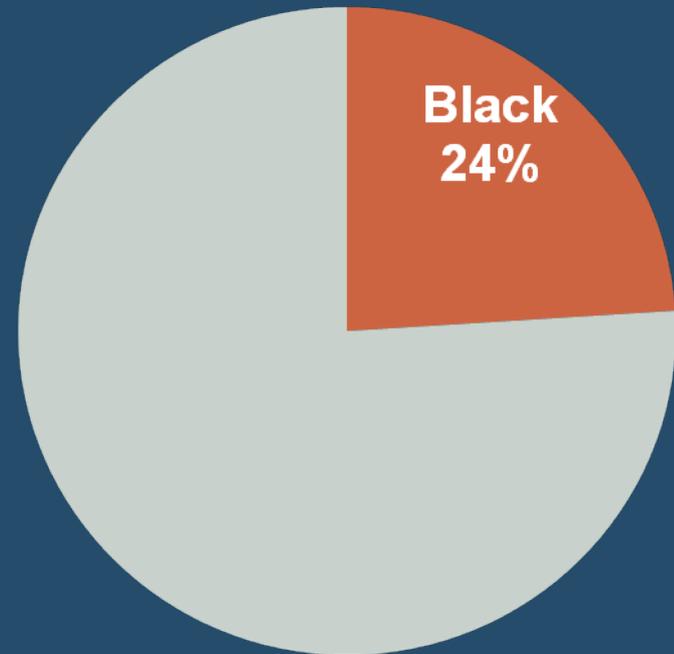
# Poor Women Are Also Overrepresented Among Abortion Patients



# Black Women Account for a Disproportionate Share of Unintended Pregnancies

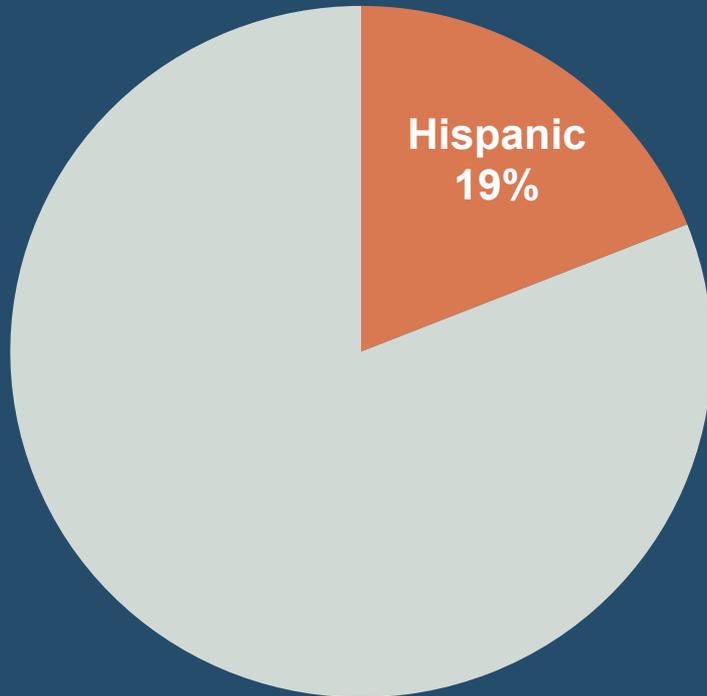


Women at risk of unintended pregnancy

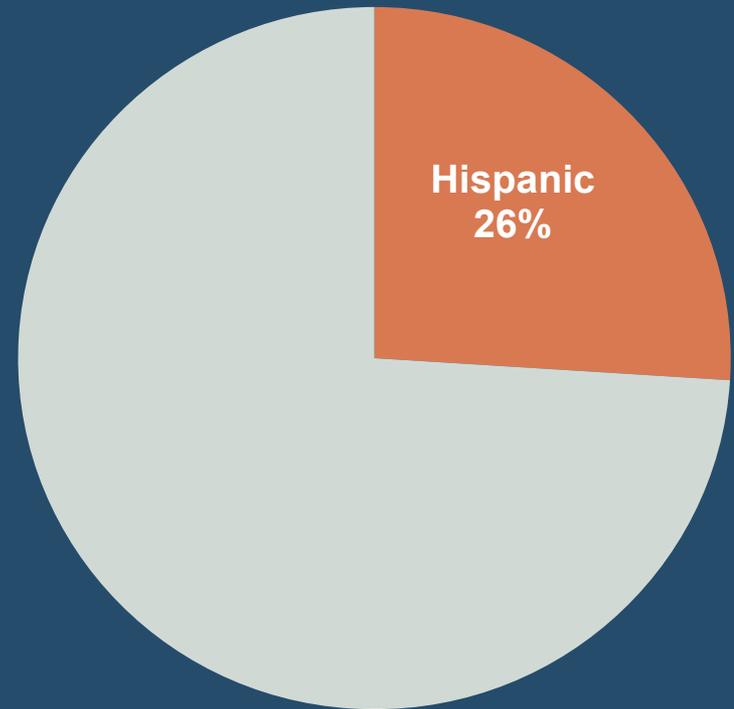


Unintended pregnancies by women's racial status

# Hispanic Women Also Account for a Disproportionate Share of Unintended Pregnancies

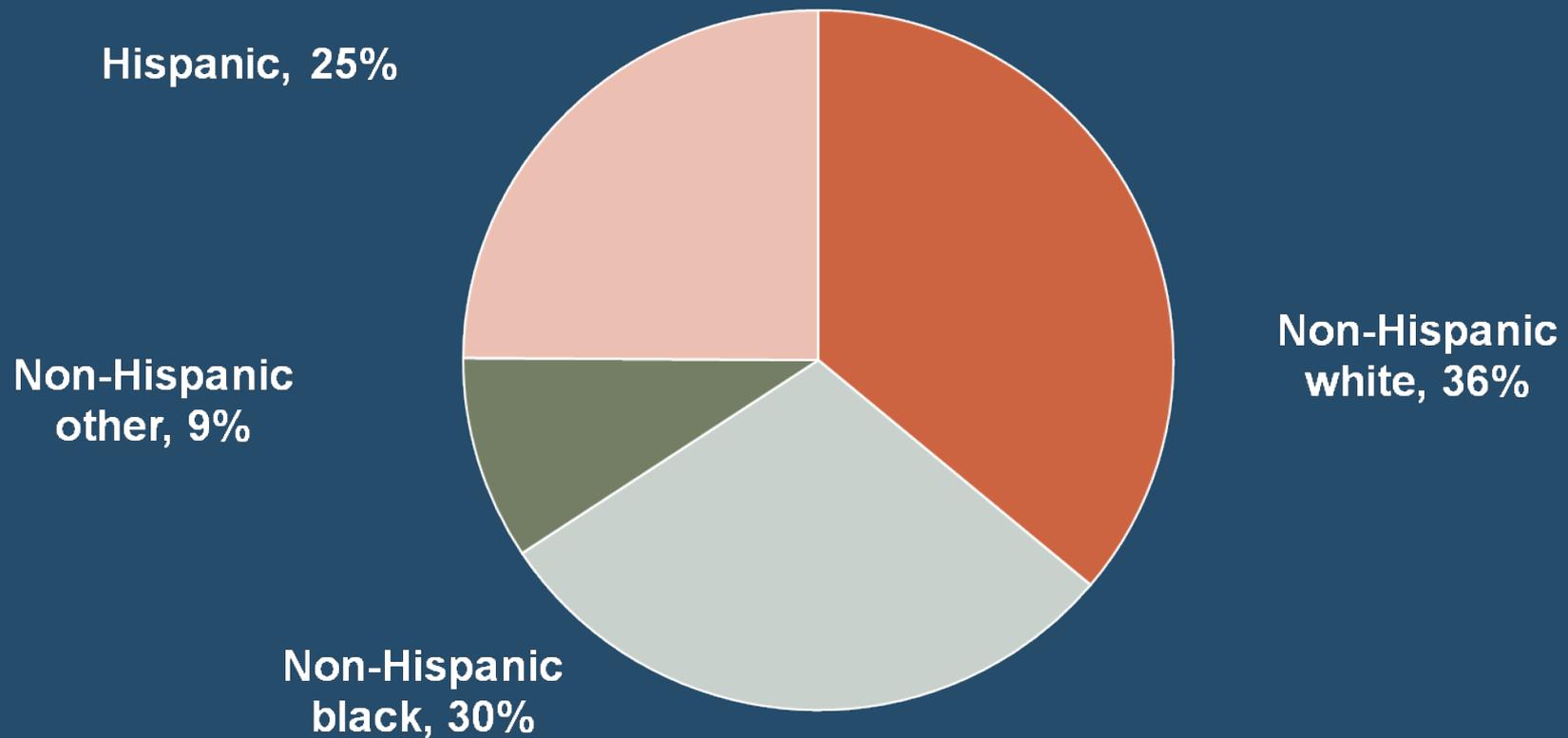


Women at risk of unintended pregnancy

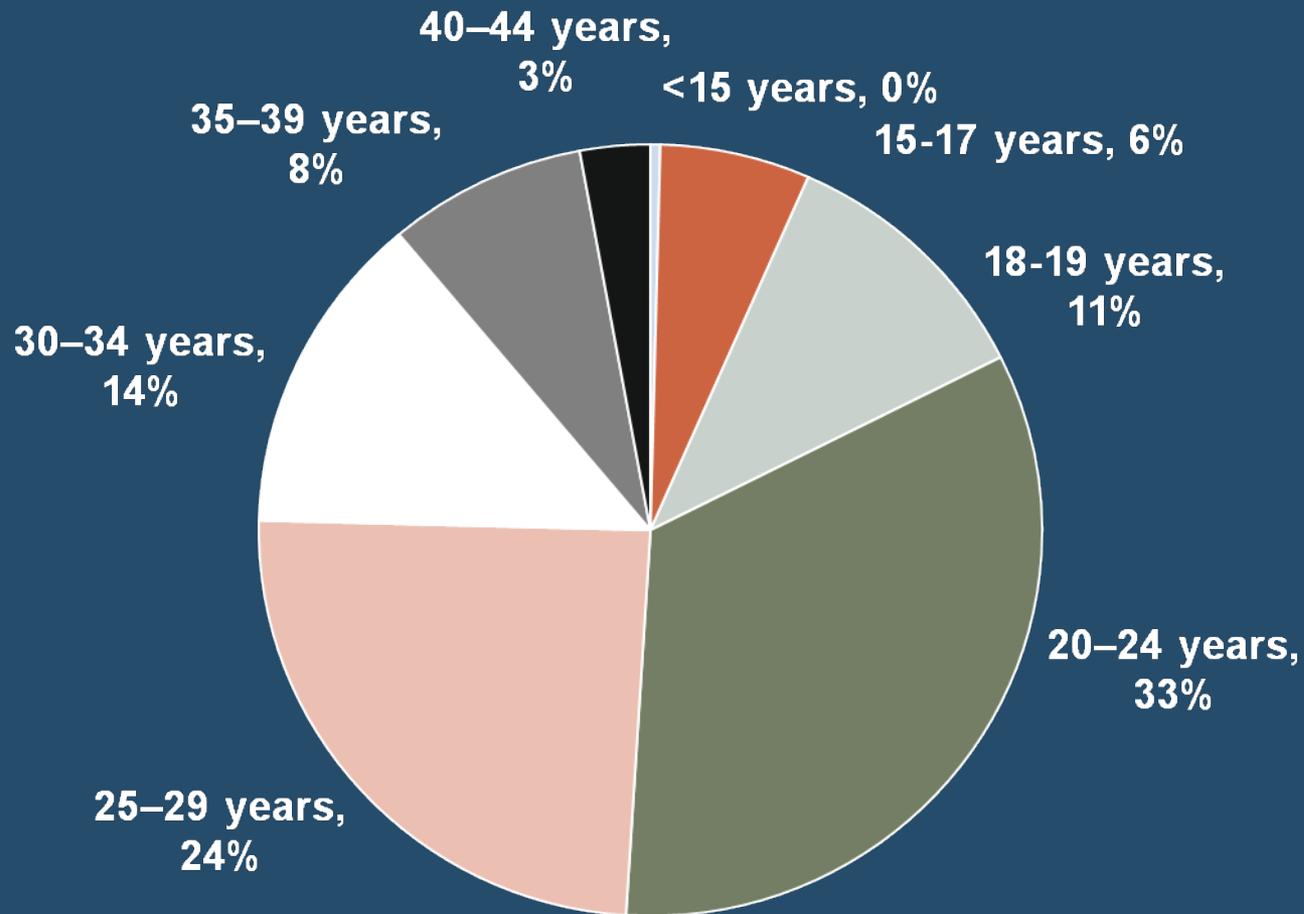


Unintended pregnancies by women's ethnic status

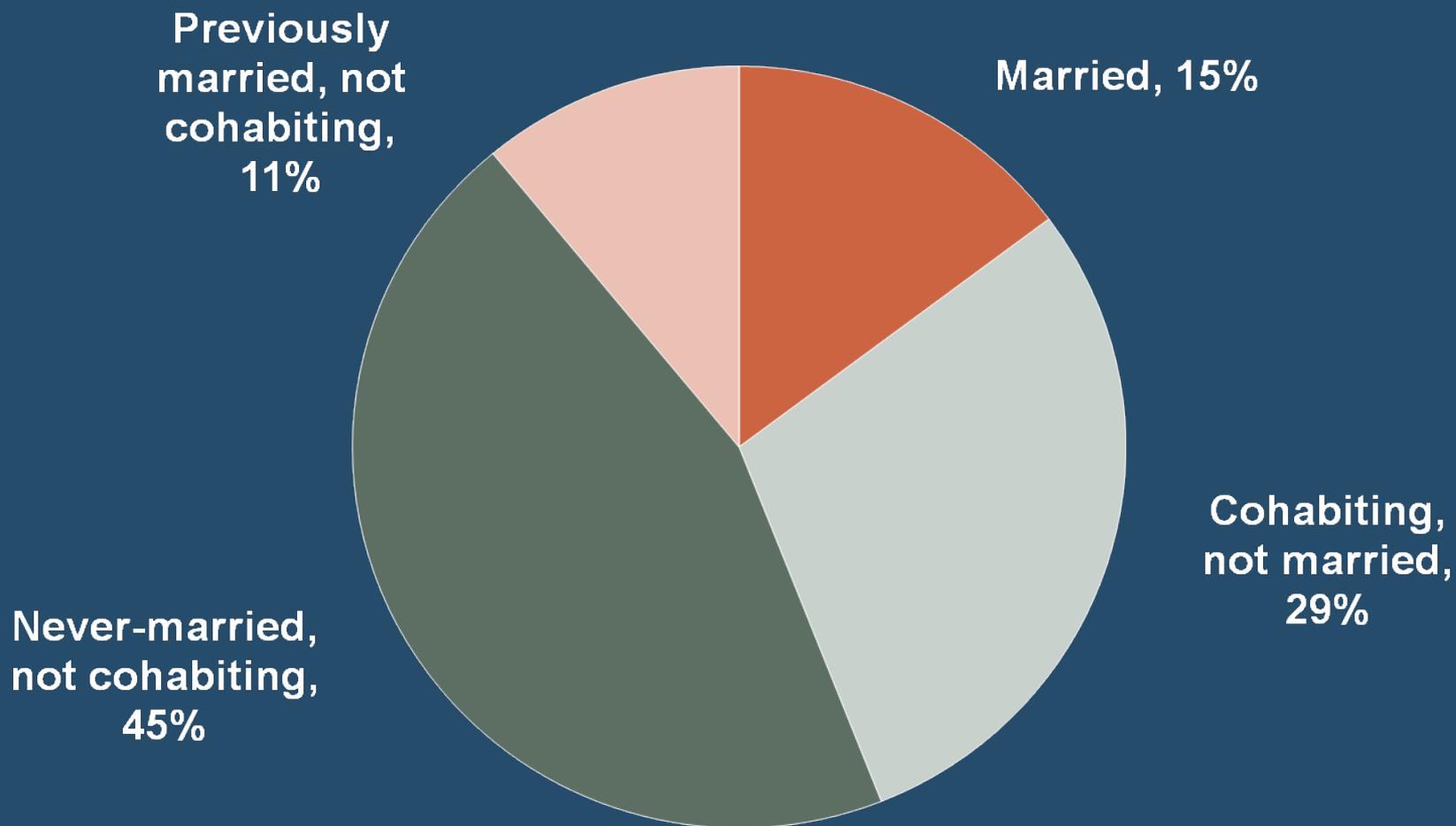
# And Both Groups Are Overrepresented Among Abortion Patients



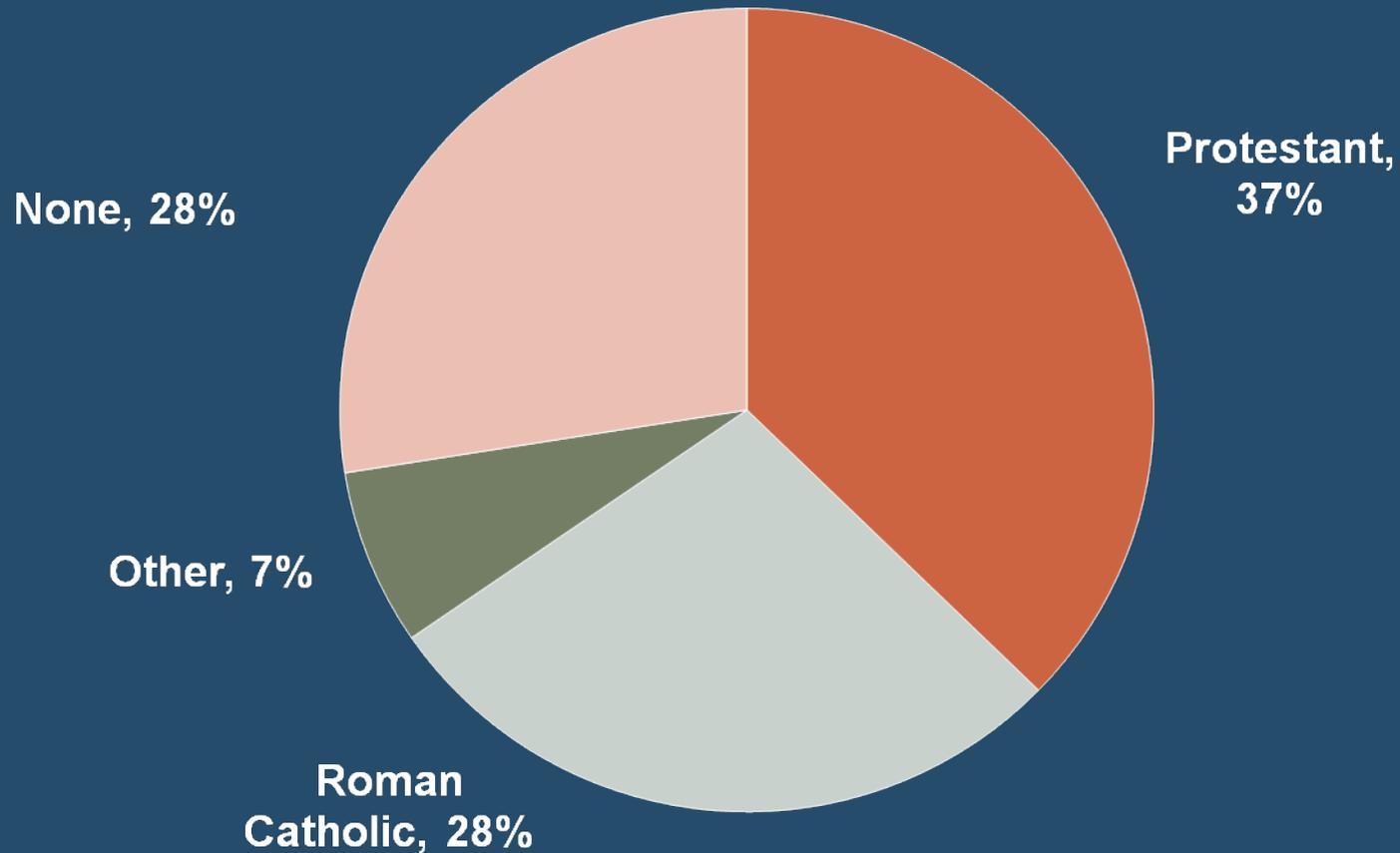
# Women in Their 20s Make Up the Majority of Abortion Patients



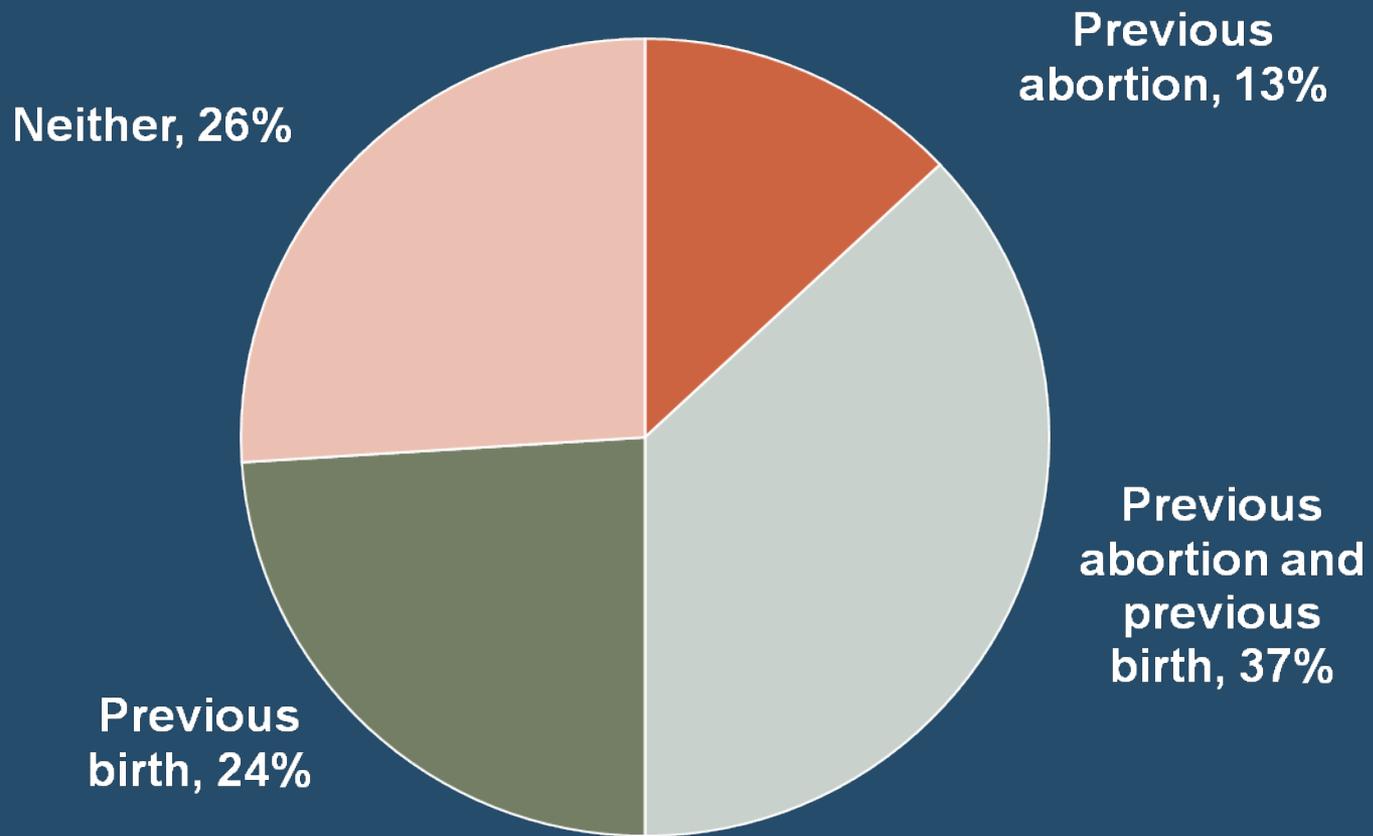
# Nearly Half of Abortions Are Obtained by Never-Married Women



# Most Women Obtaining Abortions Report a Religious Affiliation



# Six in 10 Women Having Abortions Are Already Mothers





# Reasons for Abortions

# Most Important Reasons Given for Terminating an Unwanted Pregnancy

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<b>Concern for/responsibility to other individuals</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Cannot afford a baby now</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>A baby would interfere with school/ employment/ability to care for dependents</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Would be a single parent/ having relationship problems</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Has completed childbearing</b>	<b>38%</b>

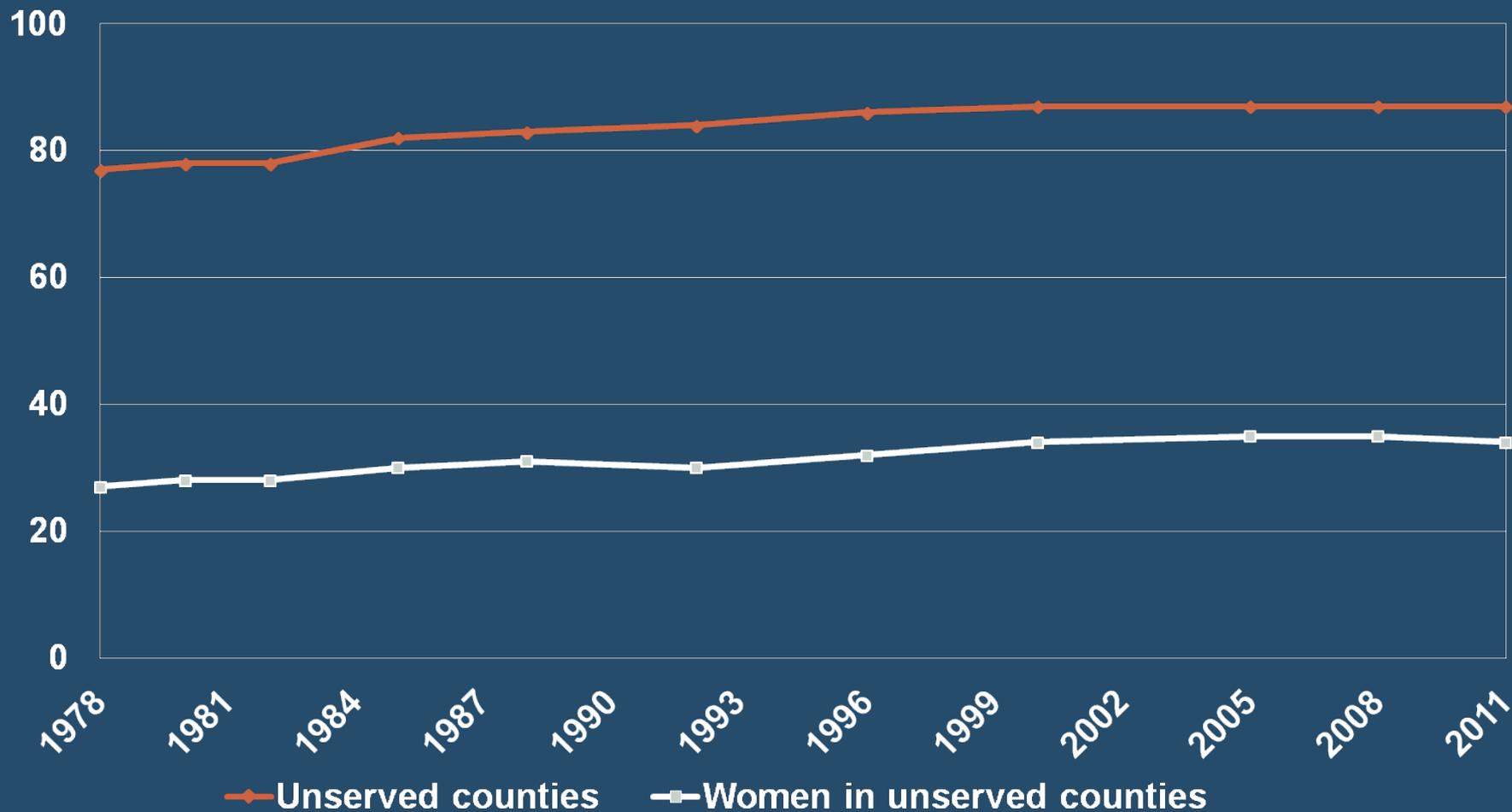
# Reasons for Abortions After 16 Weeks Since Last Menstrual Period

<b>Did not recognize the pregnancy</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Had difficulty making arrangements for abortion</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Was afraid to tell parents or partner</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Needed time to make decision</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Hoped relationship would change</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Was pressured not to have abortion</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Something changed during pregnancy</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Did not know timing was important</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Did not know abortion was an option</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Fetal abnormality was diagnosed late</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>11%</b>

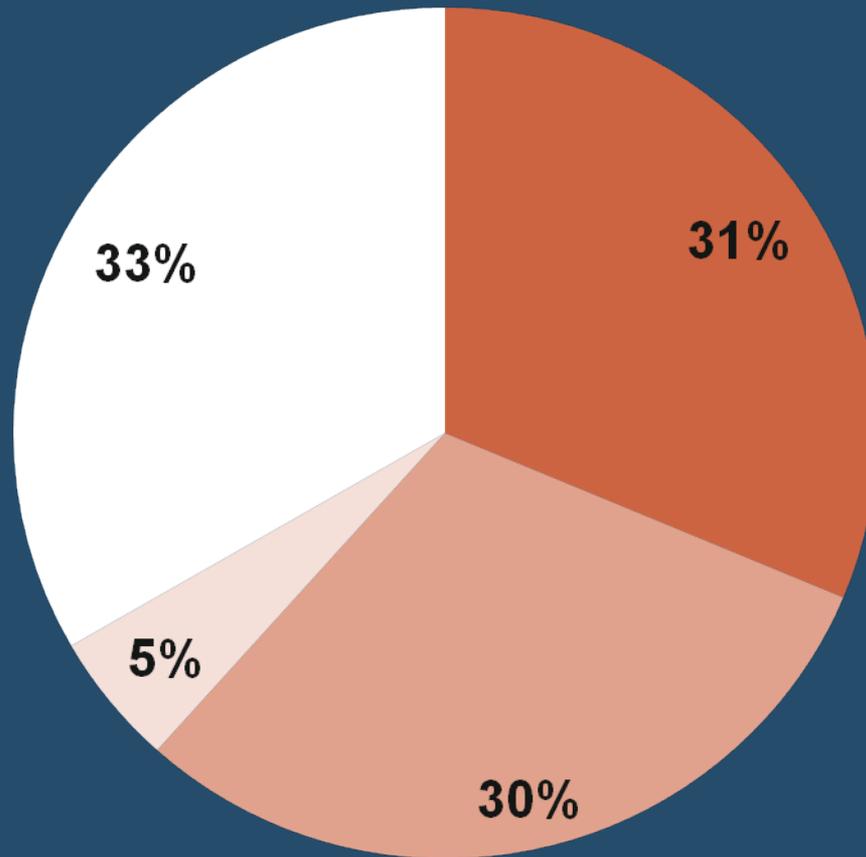


# **Barriers to Abortion Access**

# Many U.S. Counties Lack an Abortion Provider; About 1/3 of Women Live in Those Counties

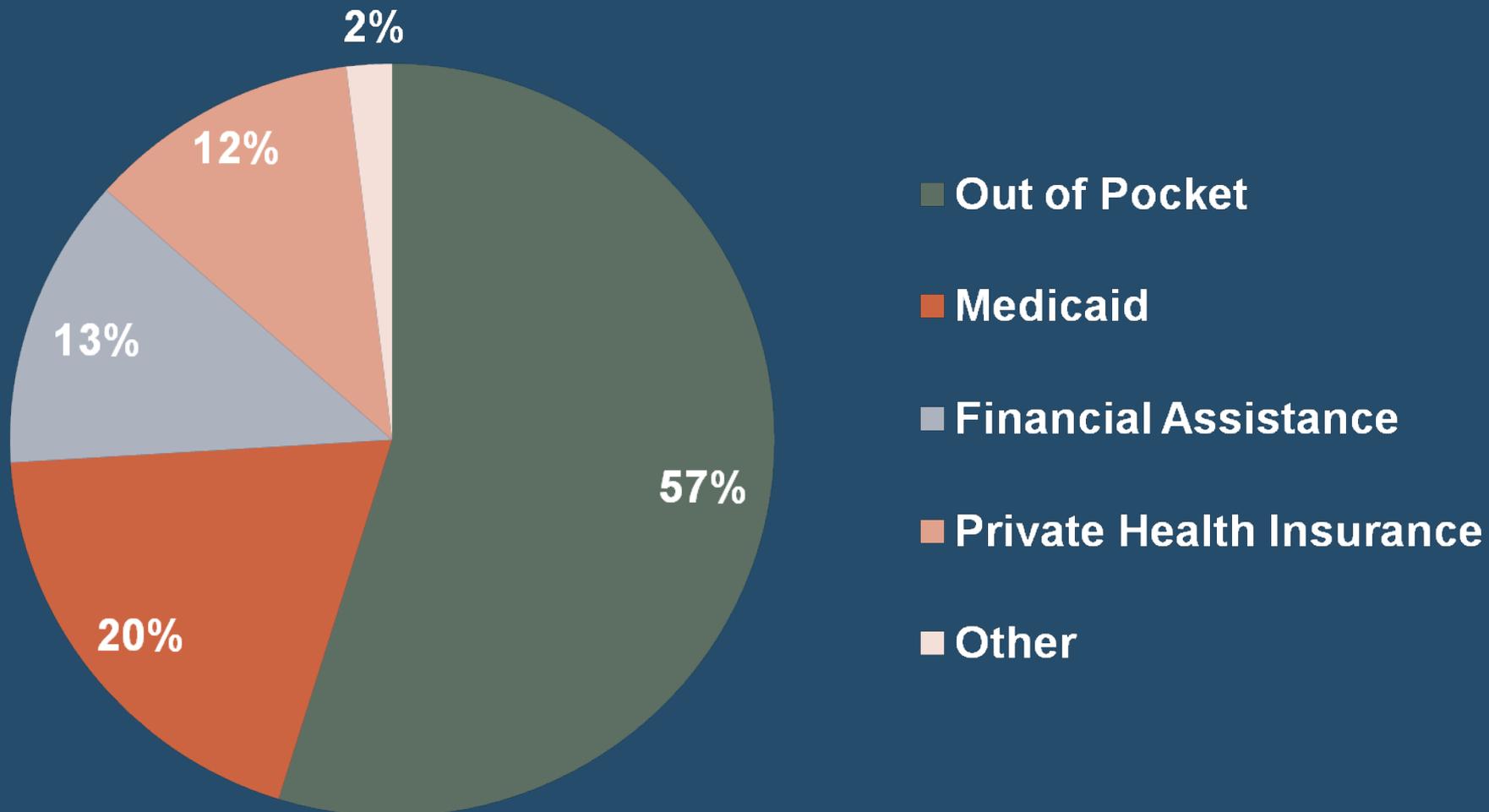


# Most Abortion Patients Have Health Coverage...

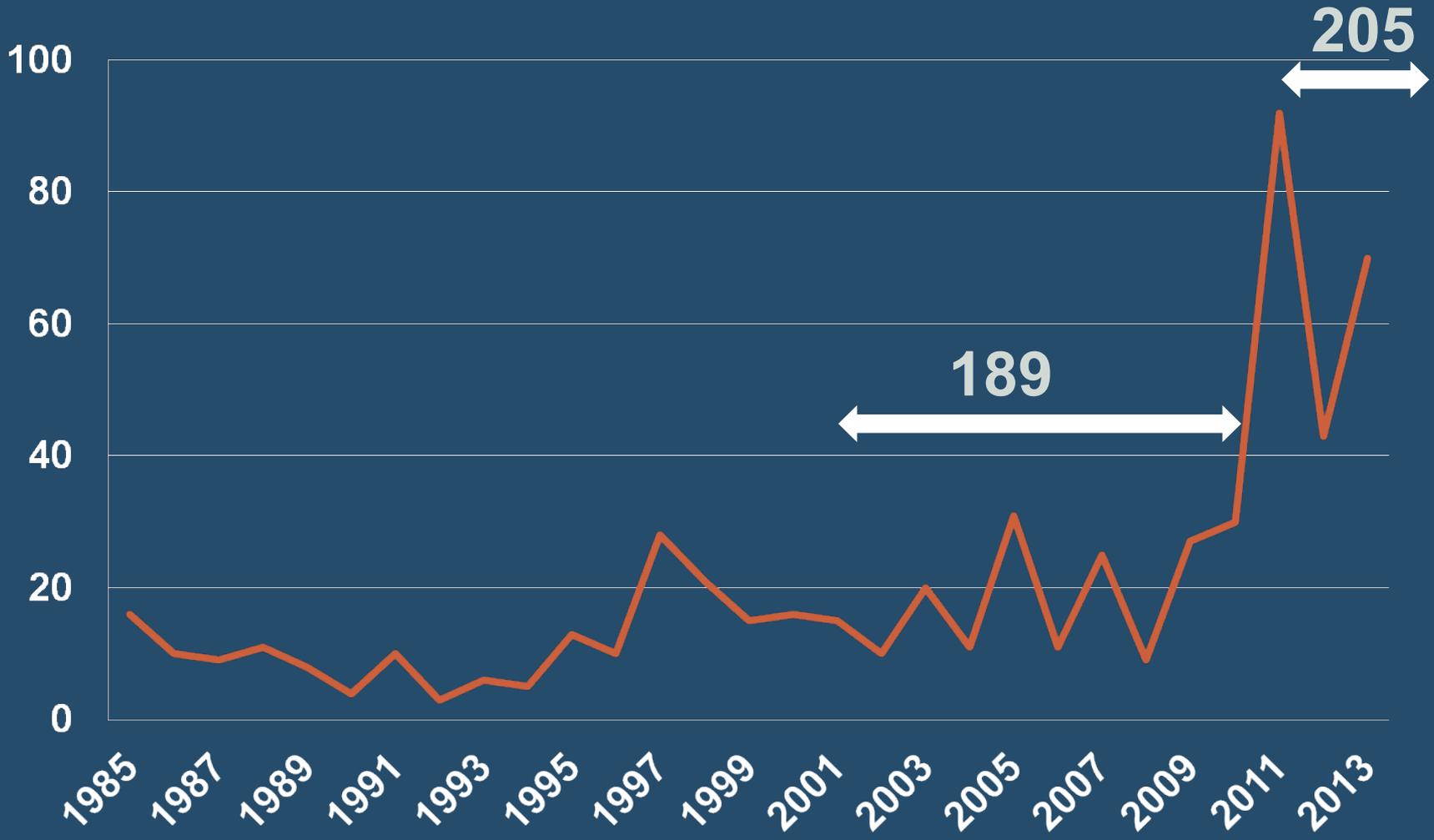


■ Medicaid ■ Private Health Insurance ■ Other ■ No Health Insurance

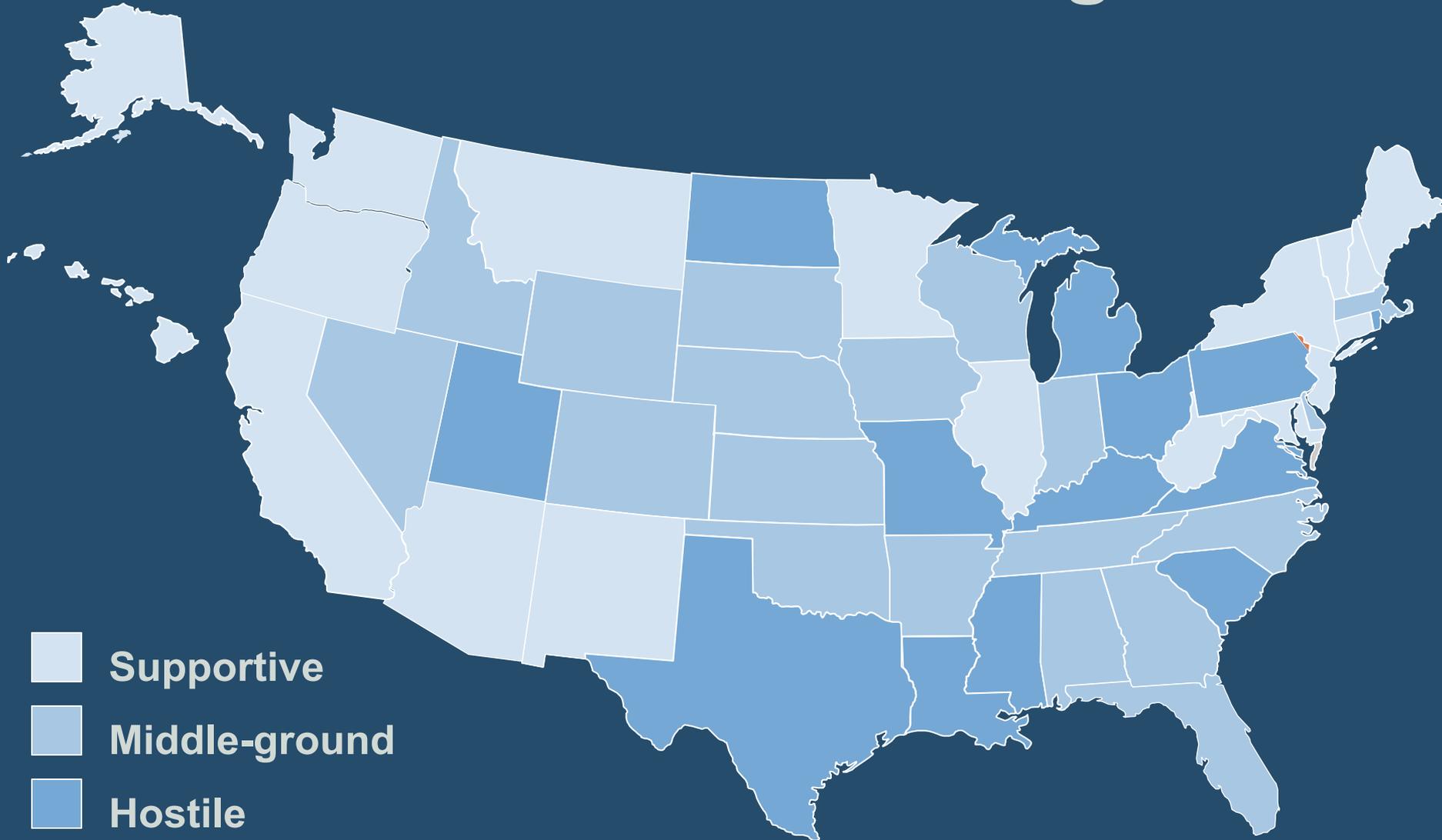
# ...But Most Pay Out of Pocket for Abortion



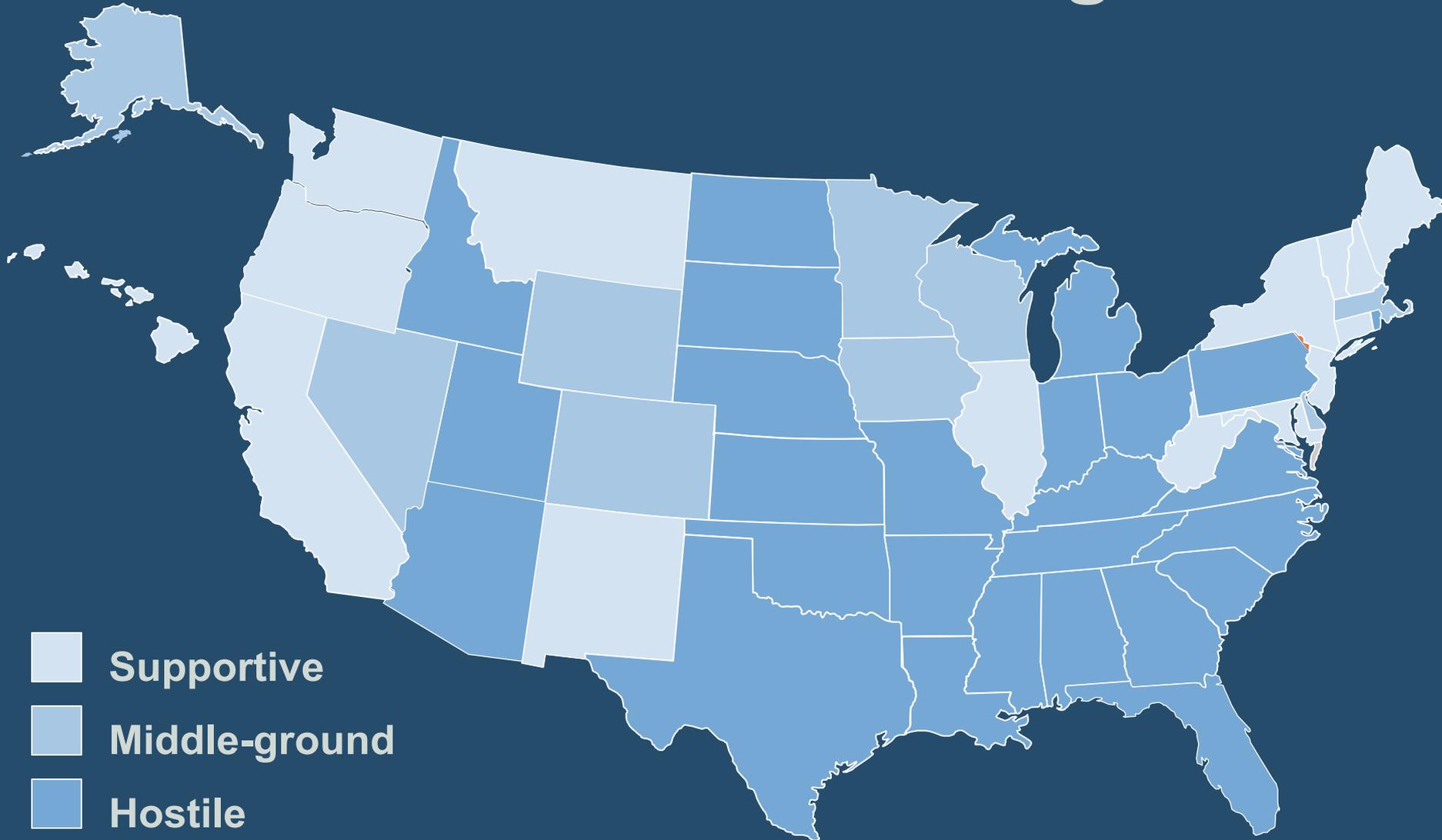
# More Abortion Restrictions Were Enacted in 2011–2013 Than in the Entire Previous Decade



# In 2000, 13 States Were Considered Hostile to Abortion Rights



# In 2013, 27 States Were Considered Hostile to Abortion Rights





# **International Perspective on Abortion**

# The Global Decline in the Abortion Rate Has Stalled

Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15—44



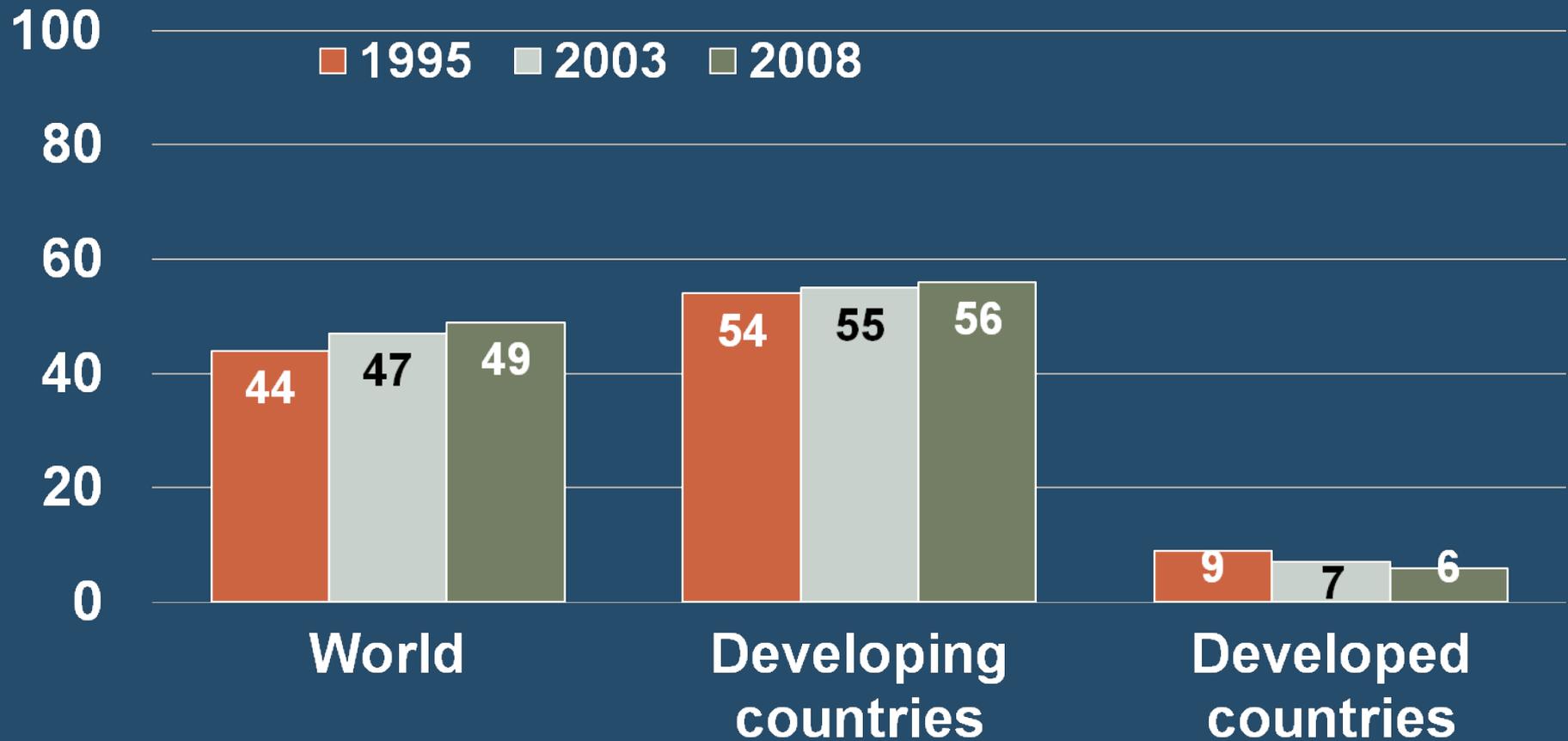
# Highly Restrictive Abortion Laws Are Not Associated with Lower Abortion Rates

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- The abortion rate is 29 per 1,000 women of childbearing age in Africa and 32 in Latin America, regions where abortion is illegal under most circumstances.
- The rate is 12 per 1,000 in Western Europe, where abortion is generally permitted on broad grounds.

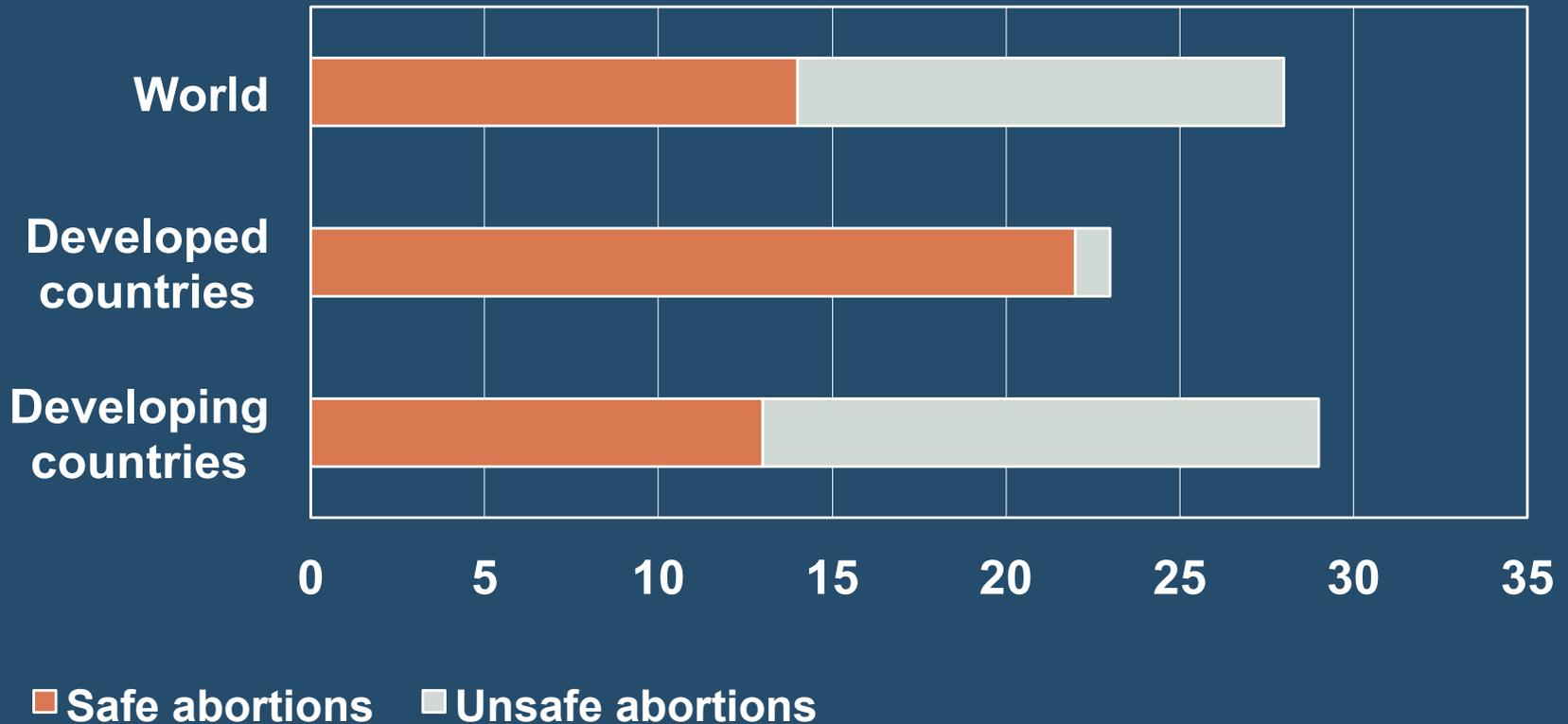
# An Increasing Proportion of Abortions Are Unsafe

% of abortions that are unsafe



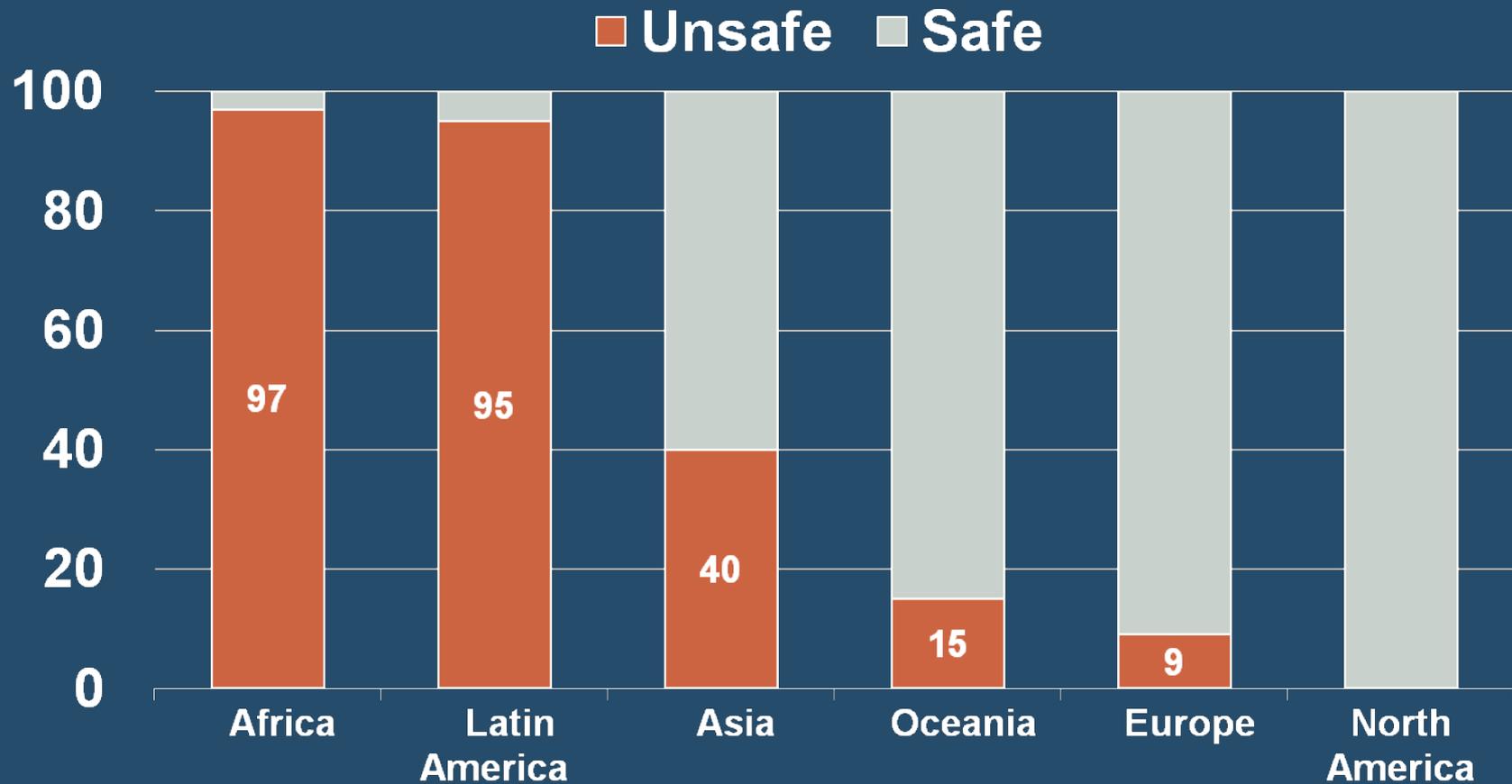
# 21.6 Million Unsafe Abortions Occur Each Year

Annual abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44



# Virtually All Abortions in Africa and Latin America Are Unsafe

% of abortions



# Consequences of Unsafe Abortion

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- Complications from unsafe abortion procedures account for 13% of all maternal deaths, or 47,000 per year.
- 8.5 million women experience complications that require medical attention each year; 3 million do not receive care.
- Virtually all of these deaths and injuries occur in the developing world.

# Law Reforms in Developing Countries Have Been Followed by Declines in Morbidity and Mortality

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- **South Africa (1997)**: annual number of abortion-related deaths decreased by 91% after the law was liberalized.
- **Nepal (2002)**: abortion-related complications as a proportion of all of maternal illnesses (in facilities in eight districts) decreased by 48%.
- **Ethiopia (2005)**: abortion complications per 100,000 live births (one large hospital) decreased by about 70%.



# Summary Points

# Incidence of Pregnancy and Abortion in the United States

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- Unintended pregnancy and abortion are common among all groups of women.
- Certain groups of women are at greater risk of unintended pregnancy than are others.
- Half of all pregnancies are unintended.
- Four in 10 unintended pregnancies end in abortion.

# Provision of and Access to Abortion Services

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- Most abortions occur in abortion clinics.
- Many women have to travel significant distances to find a provider, which can pose problems for those with limited resources, or work or family responsibilities.

# Safety of Abortion

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- Abortion is one of the safest common surgical procedures for women in the United States.
- Abortion is safe over the long term and carries little or no risk of fertility-related problems, cancer or psychological illnesses.
- Laws criminalizing abortion make abortions unsafe, but do not eliminate them.

# Who Has Abortions, Why and When in Pregnancy

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- Disadvantaged women bear a disproportionate burden of unintended pregnancies and abortions.
- The most frequent reasons women give are that having a child or another child would limit their ability to meet current responsibilities and that they cannot afford a child at this point in their lives.
- Almost 90% of abortions occur in the first trimester.

# Obstacles to Obtaining Abortion Services

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- Although most women obtain abortions early in pregnancy, some women face substantial obstacles to access.
- Nearly four in 10 women of reproductive age receive coverage under Medicaid, yet 32 states allow Medicaid funding for abortion only in cases of rape, incest or life endangerment.
- Lacking insurance coverage, poor women often require time to find the money to pay for an abortion, if they are able to at all.
- More than 200 state abortion restrictions were enacted between 2011 and 2013, making it more difficult for women to obtain timely services.

# International Perspective on Abortion

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- A very small proportion of abortions worldwide take place in the United States.
- Most unsafe abortions occur in countries where abortion is illegal.

# About Guttmacher



The Guttmacher Institute is a nonprofit organization that advances sexual and reproductive health worldwide through research, policy analysis and public education.

For more information about Guttmacher, please click [here](#).

Read our report “*Abortion in Women’s Lives*” [here](#).