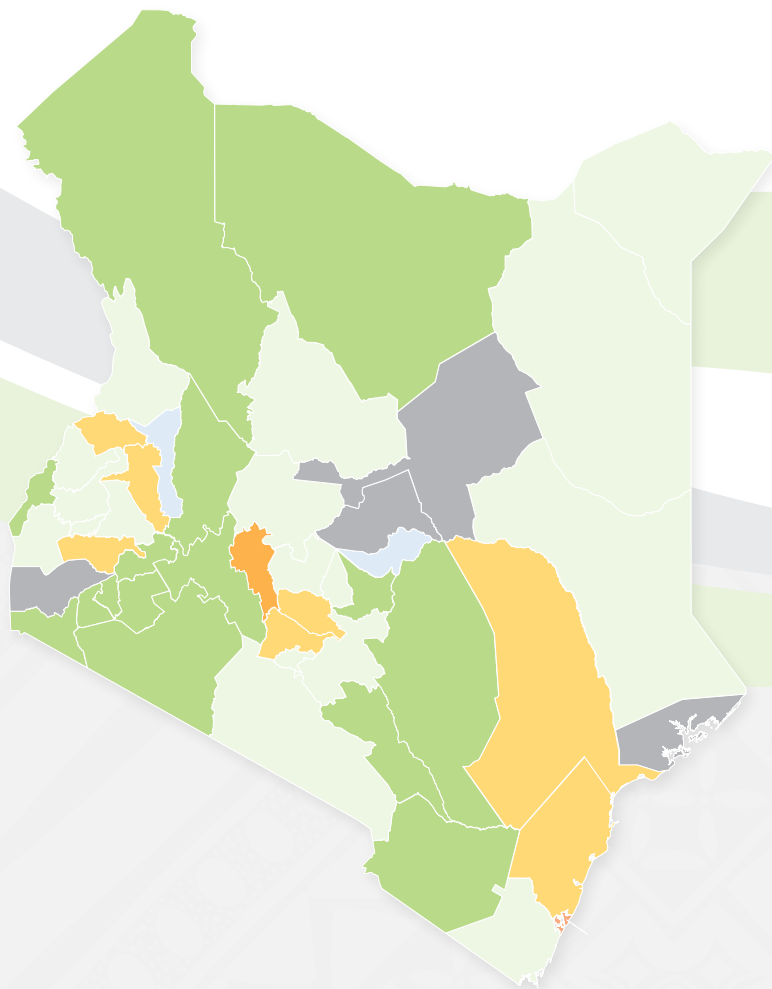




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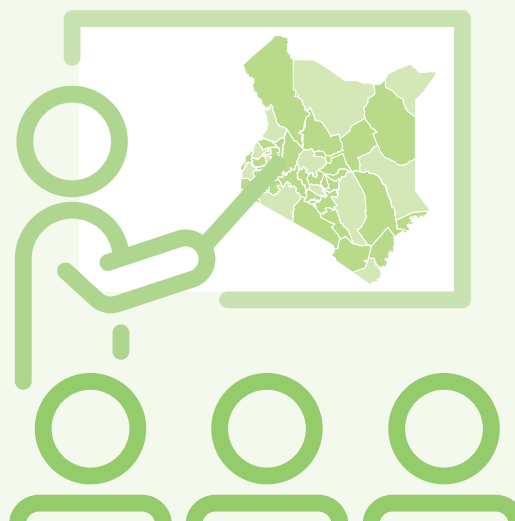
# Knowledge of and Preference for Abortion Legality in Kenya

## Introduction

Existing research suggests that women, healthcare providers, and even policymakers worldwide have limited or inaccurate knowledge of abortion laws and policies in their countries. As such, people seeking sexual and reproductive health services do not know what they are entitled to legally and healthcare providers cannot deliver services with legal protection. This brief summarizes key findings from a nationwide survey on the knowledge of abortion legality in Kenya.

## Methods

This was a nationwide cross-sectional survey that targeted adults 18 years or older. The sample was drawn from a database owned by a mobile-survey provider with over 12 million telephone numbers across all 47 counties in Kenya. A random digit dialing approach was used to select and recruit participants. Trained research assistants administered structured questionnaires through telephone interviews between October and November 2022.



## Key Findings

A total of 8,942 adults participated in the survey. The average age of participants was 33 years (standard deviation 10.1). Most participants, 46% were above 35 years, 54% were married and 93% were Christians. There was an even split between men and women.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

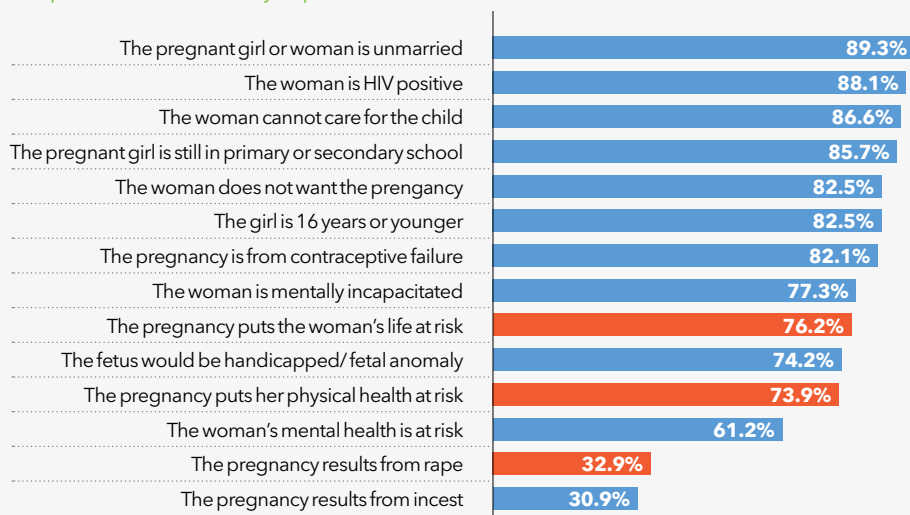
|                        | Characteristic                    | Frequency | %     |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Age group</b>       | 18-24                             | 2,219     | 24.8% |
|                        | 25-34                             | 2,640     | 29.5% |
|                        | 35+                               | 4,083     | 45.7% |
| <b>Sex</b>             | Male                              | 4,464     | 49.9% |
|                        | Female                            | 4,478     | 50.1% |
| <b>Marital status*</b> | Married or cohabiting             | 4,790     | 53.6% |
|                        | Single/Separated/Divorced/Widowed | 4,149     | 46.4% |
| <b>Religion*</b>       | Christian                         | 8,303     | 92.9% |
|                        | Muslim                            | 526       | 5.9%  |
|                        | Others                            | 110       | 1.2%  |

\*3 participants chose "None", "Don't know", or did not respond.

## Knowledge of abortion law in Kenya

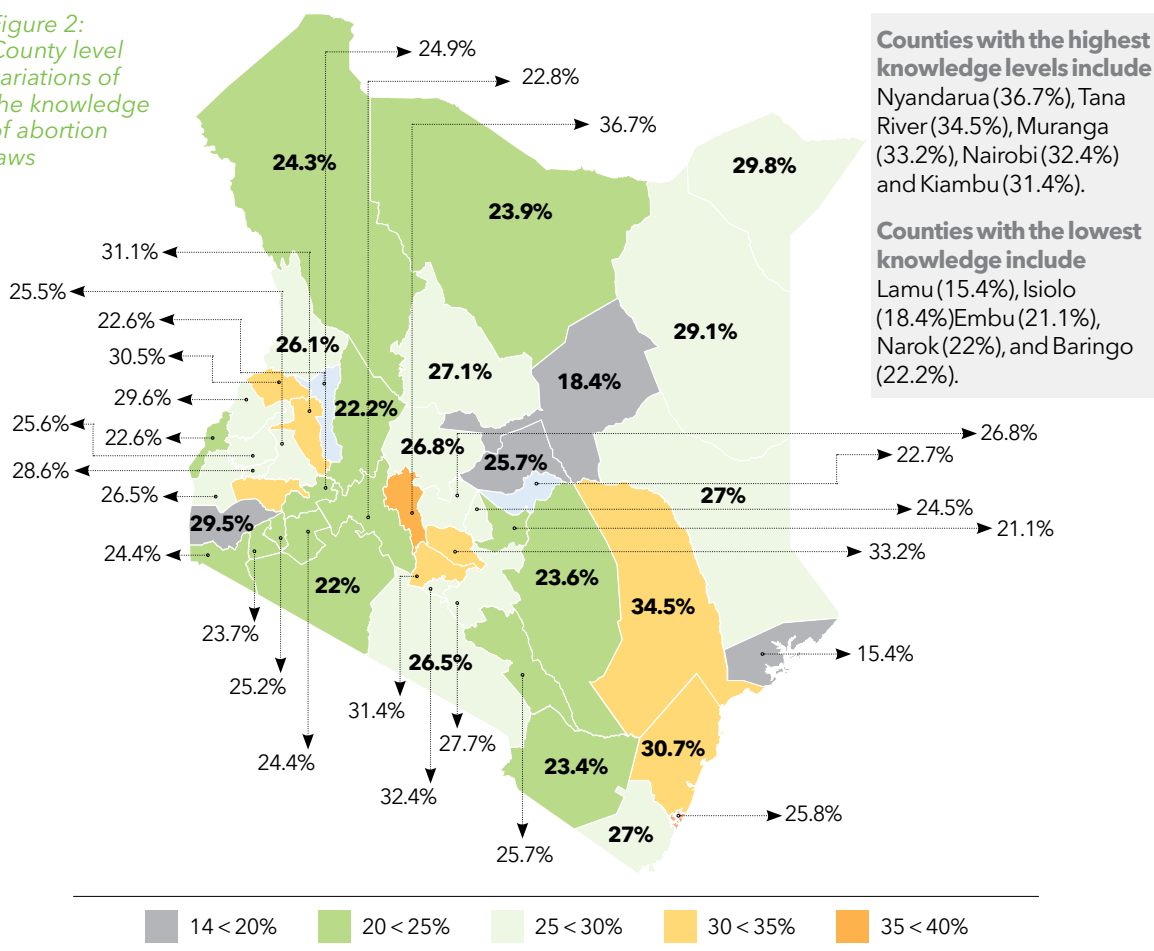
- Respondents correctly reported that the Kenyan law allows abortion when a woman's life is at risk (76%), when a woman's health is at risk (74%), and when the pregnancy results from rape (33%).
- Majority knew that abortion is not allowed because a pregnant girl or woman is unmarried (89%), the woman is HIV positive (88%), the woman is unable to care for the child (87%), or the girl is still in school (86%), or the girl is 16 years or younger (83%).

Figure 1: Proportion who correctly reported whether abortion is allowed or disallowed for various conditions



The map below shows the variations of knowledge on abortion laws by county

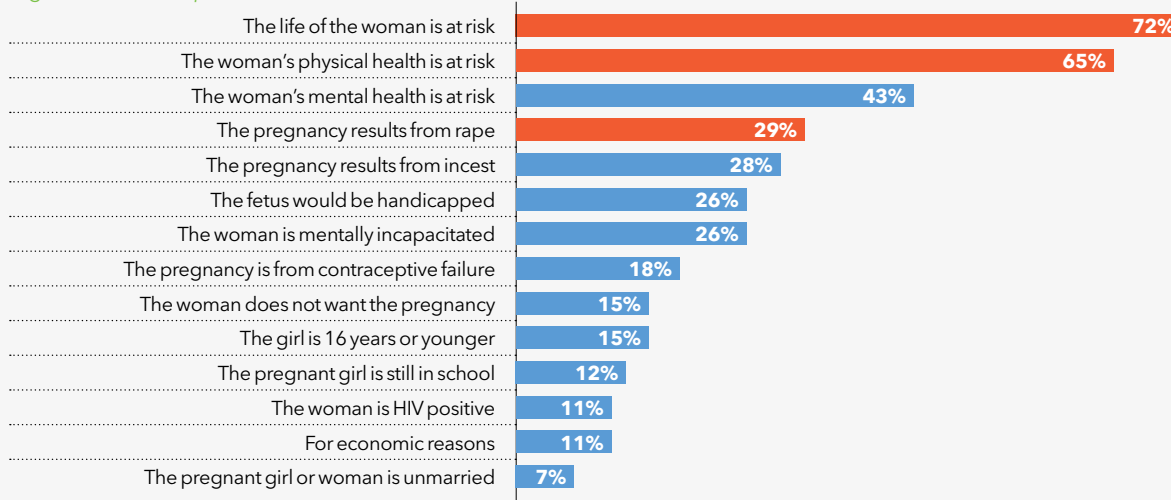
Figure 2: County level variations of the knowledge of abortion laws



## Conditions under which participants preferred abortion be legally allowed

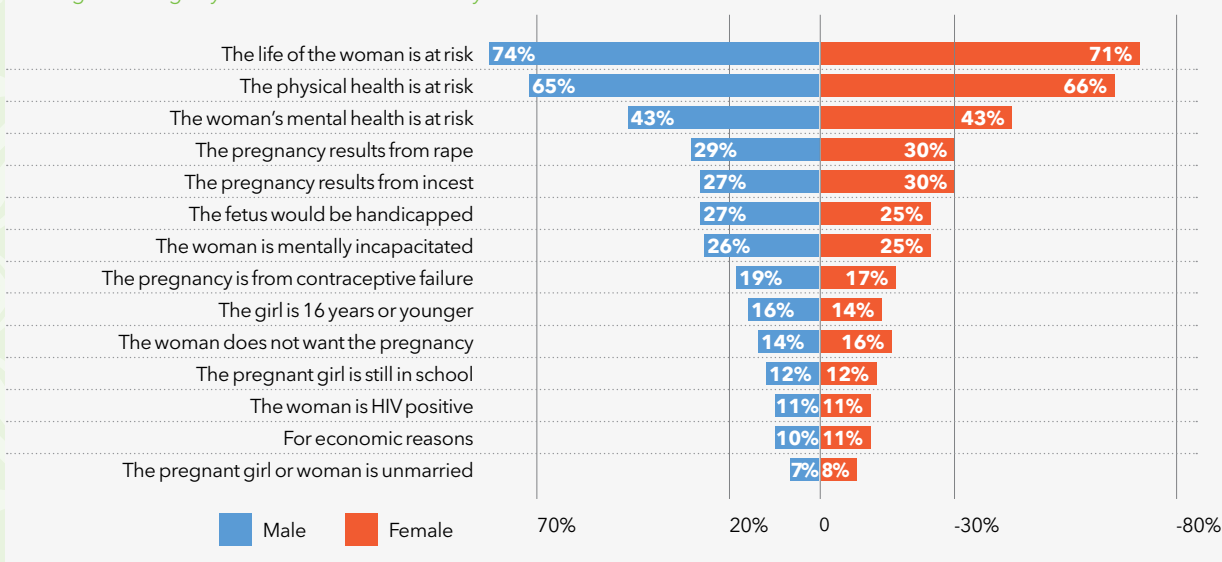
- Respondents wanted abortion allowed when the life of the woman is at risk (72%) or her physical health is at risk (65%), while 43% approved of abortion if the woman's mental health is at risk.
- Only 29% would want abortions allowed in case of rape, incest (28%), if the pregnant woman was unmarried (7%), on economic grounds (11%), the woman is HIV positive (11%) and if the girl is still in school (12%).

Figure 3: Abortion preferences



- There was no major difference across men and women regarding situations in which respondents felt they would want to see abortion legalized.

Figure 4: Legality of Abortion Preferences by Sex



## Conclusion and recommendations

The study revealed limited knowledge of the abortion law, with a majority of respondents preferring abortion when the woman's health, life or mental health is threatened. The findings show diverse attitudes towards abortion in Kenya. The findings suggest the need for comprehensive dissemination of the Kenya abortion law to communities with focus on marginalized populations to improve access to safe legal abortion care and post-abortion care service utilization.

### Acknowledgments

- The research was supported by a grant from the African Regional Office of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida (Contribution No. 12103) to the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) under the Challenging the Politics of Social Exclusion project (CPSE)

### Source: The information in this evidence brief can be found in:

- Ushie, B. A., Akuku, I. G., Mutuku, E., & Juma, K. (2023). Contextualizing abortion opinions in Kenya: A vignette-based national survey.
- Juma, K., Mutuku, E., Athero, S., Akuku, I., Ajayi, A., & Ushie, B. A. (2023). Knowledge of and preference for abortion legality in Kenya: A National Cross-Sectional Survey.