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# Asian Population Studies

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## AIMS AND SCOPE

*Asian Population Studies* is the first international population journal to focus exclusively on population issues in Asia. The journal publishes original research on matters related to population in this large, complex and rapidly changing region, and welcomes substantive empirical analyses, theoretical works, applied research, and contributions to methodology. Topics covered include all branches of population studies ranging from population dynamics such as the analysis of fertility, mortality and migration (from both technical and humanistic perspectives) to the consequences of population change from a variety of demographic perspectives.

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# CONTRACEPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF ABORTION SEEKERS IN SRI LANKA

**W. Indralal De Silva, R. Asoka Dayananda and  
N. W. P. D. B. Nishanthi Perera**

*Data collected from 306 abortion seekers were used to investigate their knowledge of contraception, the type of contraceptives used at the time of conception, and their intentions for future fertility and post-abortion contraception. Even though three-quarters of the clients were using a contraceptive method at the time of conception, 74 per cent of these were relying on safe period and/or withdrawal. Only half of the users of traditional methods possessed correct knowledge of a woman's fertile period. The unwanted conceptions among these respondents were primarily due to non-use or relying on less effective contraceptives, despite the fact that modern contraceptives are available throughout the country. The acceptance of post-abortion contraception was only 66 per cent, indicating lack of effective counselling. The practice of traditional contraception could lead to repeated abortions, and in that scenario women may consider induced abortion as a contraceptive method or back-up procedure for contraceptive failure.*

**KEYWORDS:** induced abortion; contraceptive dynamics; side effects; Sri Lanka; non-use of contraception

## **Introduction**

Induced abortion has been practised in one form or another from the beginning of human society. However, recently the practice of induced abortion appears to have increased significantly in many countries of the world. Estimates indicate that approximately 40–50 million induced abortions take place throughout the world annually (Henshaw *et al.* 1999). Of the total induced abortions, a large share take place in the developing countries using unsafe methods (Mundigo 1991; WHO 2003). Thus many international organizations and governments have seen induced abortion as one of the reproductive health issues that require immediate attention. The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 drew special attention to reproductive health, which led to a global discussion on the issue of abortion (Hardee *et al.* 1998).

Although de-criminalization of abortion is a feature of evolving legal systems in many parts of the world, the law still restricts induced abortion in many third world countries (Rahman *et al.* 1998; WHO 2003). In some countries it is legal with no conditions, whereas in others it is allowed only under very strict and justifiable conditions. Hence, some women have access to a legal and safe procedure while others are exposed to unsafe methods. However, women in many developing countries do not have access to safe abortion techniques (Barreto *et al.* 1992; Paxman *et al.* 1993).

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