

Induced abortion in Italy by foreign women

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In 1979 the National Institute of Statistics of Italy (ISTAT), according to the law 194/78 on voluntary abortion, started the survey of induced abortion (IA) together with Regions and the Ministry of Health. Data are collected using an individual form compiled by the doctor that makes the operation to terminate the pregnancy. Information about the woman and about the operation of IA are requested. In particular about the woman we have: date of birth, province of birth and residence, province of the operation, marital status, educational level, work status, citizenship, past reproductive history (in term of number of live births, dead births, miscarriages and induced abortions), weeks of amenorrhea.

A general description of the phenomenon shows that from 1980 to nowadays (2005 data) there has been a considerable descending trend for IA ratios (from 15.3 cases for 1000 women aged 15-49 to 8.9). The trend can be divided into three phases: a) an irregular growing trend due to the progressive adjustment of the statistical survey and a share of illegal abortions becoming legal (1980-1984); b) a constant and steady decrease of the abortion levels (1985-1995); c) abortion ratios stop the decreasing trend (1995-2005), because of the different recourse to abortion by marital status, age and citizenship.

During the last decade the abortion model has changed. Before mid 90s the recourse to abortion was above all among not very young and married women, having already had children. After mid 90s we see above all young and not married women, not having children yet.

Focusing our attention on women with not Italian citizenship, it is clear that the proportion of IAs made by them has been increasing over time. In 1995 it was 6,6% while in 2006 it became 31,3%. It is widely different from the proportion of foreign women aged 15-49 who are resident in Italy at January 1st 2006 (6,6%).

We estimate rates referring to foreign and resident women, by age and marital status. Estimating IA rates by these three characteristics of women it is clear that levels are still descending for Italian women while they are very high and increasing for foreign women.

Table 1 - IA rates by age and citizenship of women. Years 1996 and 2005

Age	1996				2005			
	Italian	Foreign	Total	Foreign/ Italian	Italian	Foreign	Total	Foreign/ Italian
18-24	10.9	51.6	11.7	4.7	11.1	45.5	14.2	4.1
25-29	11.6	38.1	12.4	3.3	10.3	39.0	14.1	3.8
30-34	11.9	27.5	12.3	2.3	9.0	32.5	11.6	3.6
35-39	10.7	19.5	10.9	1.8	7.8	24.2	9.3	3.1
40-44	5.3	9.0	5.4	1.7	3.9	9.3	4.2	2.4
45-49	0.5	1.0	0.5	2.0	0.4	0.9	0.4	2.5
18-49	8.9	30.3	9.3	3.4	7.0	28.3	9.0	4.0
18-49 std	8.8	25.4	9.2	2.9	7.3	26.3	9.3	3.6

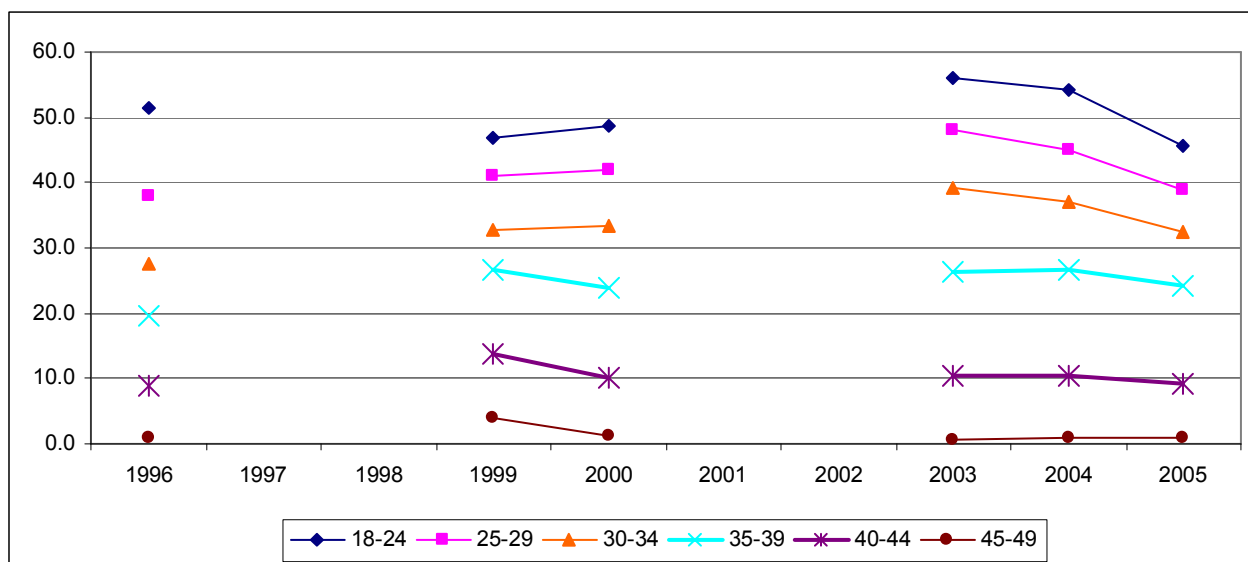
Levels of IA are 4 times higher among foreign women compared to Italian ones (and 4.1 times if we look at young women). Considering also marital status, the value is equal to 4.9 for young and not married women.

These rates are calculated considering resident women both at the numerator and the denominator. In this case we can compare Italian and foreign women, but we do not consider IAs from women born abroad who could have become Italian citizenship after marriage or for other reasons. Moreover, we do not consider IAs from not resident foreign women (for example not regular women or women having the permit to stay but not residence). So we try to calculate

another rate, considering the place of birth to define a foreign woman at the numerator. Population at the denominator has been individuated by the number of permits to stay.

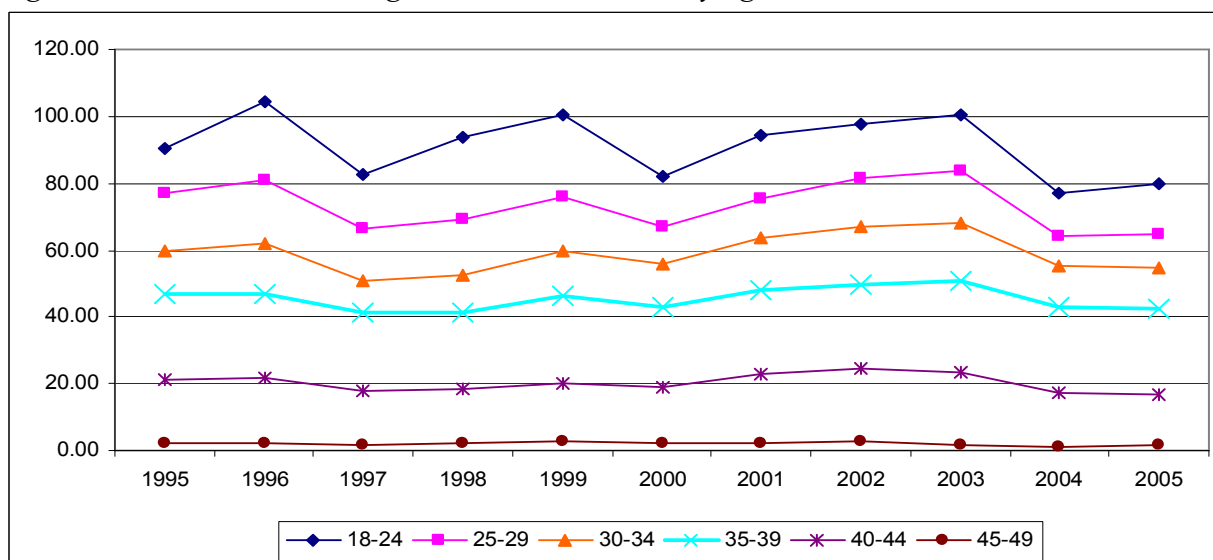
As we can see (Figures 1 and 2) rates calculated in this way are two times higher than the previous ones. This is due above all to the differences between the numerators: in the first case it contains only IAs from all resident women, in the second case IAs from single or married women born abroad (maybe also non regular women). On the contrary, denominators are very similar.

Figure 1 – IA rates considering foreign resident women by age classes. Years 1996, 1999-2000, 2003-2005



Note: rates for 1997 and 1998 were not calculated because of an higher proportion of cases having missing the information on citizenship. Rates for 2000 and 2001 were not calculated because of the lack information on resident foreign population at 1/1/2002.

Figure 2 – IA rates considering women born abroad, by age classes. Years 1995-2005.



Further considerations will be made considering the three first countries with the highest number of IAs in Italy. They are: Romania, Albania, Ukraine.