

Scientific Panel on Abortion Research: Activities 2021-2025

Report for the IUSSP General Assembly

The aim of this IUSSP panel is to promote high-quality research on abortion, a topic that is complicated to study because of the social and political sensitivity of the issue. The work of the panel in this period has focused on improving measurement of the incidence of abortion and unintended pregnancy, abortion-related morbidity and understanding of the effect of laws, policies, health service provision, medical technology and women's fertility preferences on these outcomes. The activities organized by the panel have addressed these issues globally, in countries at all income levels and in all abortion law contexts. Our activities include participants representing different career stages – those who have worked on abortion research for many years, junior scholars and doctoral candidates, and we privilege geographical regional representation.

During 2021-2015, the panel was responsible for three activities, a report and two seminars, described below.

The first is a report available on the IUSSP's website [see [here](#)]. The report is based on a virtual workshop held in May 2021 on measurement of pregnancy intention and unintended pregnancy and birth. Based on presentations, discussant remarks and open discussion at the May 2021 workshop, as well as additional information from publications on these methodologies, the report provides an overview of existing methodologies and innovations around them.

In 2022, we participated in a joint convening of activities organized by three IUSSP panels - a “mini-conference”, coordinated by IUSSP and held in Funchal, Madeira, Portugal 12-15 July 2022. Our panel organized a Seminar on “Unintended pregnancy and key outcomes—abortion and unplanned births: Improvements in Measurement and New Evidence”. The objectives of the seminar were to provide a forum to discuss: new ways of conceptualizing pregnancy intention status that integrate different dimensions of the concept to improve measurement of pregnancy intention and unintended pregnancy; evidence on factors associated with, and the health consequences of, unintended pregnancy and births; decision making when an unintended pregnancy occurs; implications for policy and practice with respect to provision of SRH services (especially contraceptive and abortion care). In addition, research and policy gaps were discussed.

In 2024, the Panel held a seminar on “Improving measurement of abortion incidence and safety: Innovations in methodology and recent empirical studies” in Mombasa, Kenya, 19-21 November 2024. The last convening on this topic, also a seminar organized by this panel, was held in 2018. Since then, new methods and study designs have been tested and are being applied at national scale. As a result, it was an opportune time to hold another such convening. The 2024 seminar added new areas such as measurement of abortion incidence and safety in the context of changes in abortion law towards increased access to safe and legal abortion in several countries, and towards decreased access for example in the United States; adaptation of existing methodologies to better measure use of medication abortion from informal sources; and estimation of abortion incidence in humanitarian

contexts. A commentary that summarizes key points from the papers that were presented, and from the discussion during the seminar, has been submitted to a journal for publication.

The panel is currently identifying next steps for future activities. We are considering activities with different formats (for example webinars and workshops) as well as one or two seminars.

The panel members, the report on the virtual workshop, and reports on the two seminars are listed on the IUSSP webpage <https://iussp.org/en/abortion-research>