
Republic of China (Taiwan): Reported abortions, 1951-2015

25 October 2016

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Abstract: This document reviews available abortion data and estimates for the Republic of China (Taiwan) for 1967-2015, related demographic data for 1951-2015, and other information related to abortion policy.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) began implementing population control policies in the 1960s, with fertility levels for the nation dropping consistently to the present day. Abortion was legalized in 1985. Some dates related to Taiwan's abortion policy:

- 1949: the Republic of China is a de facto separate state from the People's Republic of China from this date (consequently separating ROC and PRC population control policies)
- 1968: national family planning program implemented
- Jan 1985: Eugenic Health Law in force, legalizing abortion
- Dec 2001: sale of RU-486/mifepristone approved
- 2007: defeat of effort to place limits on grounds for abortion
- Aug 2011: disclosure of fetal sex in clinical genetic reports banned

Available abortion data for Taiwan is incomplete. Abortions have been reported by the family planning organization for 1989-1998, though these reported figures dropped from 32,000 to 2,300 per year over this time period, likely indicating decreasing completeness in reporting. The Ministry of Health has reported abortions since 2004, ranging from 32,000 to 42,000 per year. Various sources claim much higher levels of unreported abortions:

- 300,000 per year in 1996 (Hung, 20??),
- up to 400,000 per year, prior to 2000 (Jen, 2000),
- 200,000 per year, prior to 2002 (Hung, 20??),
- 210,437 in 2004 (Chen et al., 2011),
- 180,000-190,000 per year in 2006-2009 officially reported, plus 41,000-54,000 per year using RU486 (Chen et al., 2011; LifeSiteNews, 2011),
- 300,000-500,000 in 2010 (Chen et al., 2011; LifeSiteNews, 2011; Collison, 2011),
- 200,000-240,000 per year, prior to 2011 (Collison, 2011),
- 80,000 to 150,000 per year at most, including illegal, prior to 2011 (Hays, 2015; Collison, 2011),
- 50,000-80,000 per year legal, up to 150,000 per year including illegal (Chen et al., 2011),
- 200,000 per year reported, up to 300,000-500,000 (Russell, 2012),
- up to 500,000 per year (Taipei Times, 2015)

Despite the official or medical authorities cited for some of these figures, supporting evidence is not known to this author. One estimate of 130,000 abortions per year to teen mothers (Collison, 2011) is based on an assumed 90% rate of abortions for teen pregnancies, with no apparent basis for the assumption. At least some of the official figures cited appear to include miscarriages as well as induced abortions, and some sources do express skepticism of the higher estimates. The higher estimates would give Taiwan the highest abortion to live birth ratio in the world in recent years, an extraordinary claim for which no corresponding extraordinary evidence is provided. On the other hand, the estimates of 80,000-150,000 per year (including legal, illegal, and RU486 abortions) appear to be plausible, consistent with annual figures of 32,000-42,000 reported abortions, 28,000-54,000 unreported abortions, and 20,000-54,000 RU486 abortions (and excluding 62,000-82,000 spontaneous miscarriages per year).

Several sources discuss the somewhat unique social phenomena in Taiwan of abortion grief/guilt associated with belief in haunting or other contact with spirits of aborted fetuses (Jen, 2000; Lee et al., 2014; Moskowitz, 2001). Taiwanese demographics are affected by higher fertility in Dragon Years, notably in 1976 and 1988 (Goodkind, 1993).

The following table summarizes reported or estimated abortion data and related demographic data. Estimates of possible excess female abortions (sex-selective abortions) are based on an assumed birth sex ratio of 1.066 in the absence of sex-selective identified abortions (this ratio is the average in Taiwan for 1970-1985). Males and female births for 1970-1998 and 2013-2014 are derived from reported male-to-female birth ratios. Estimates by the compiler are highlighted in yellow.

Table 1. Data on live births and abortions, Republic of China, 1951-2015.

year	live births	male live births	female live births	male-to-female birth ratio	miscarriages	abortions	estimated sex-selective abortions	abortion percent	abortion source
1951	385,383								
1952									
1953									
1954									
1955									
1956									
1957	394,870								
1958	410,885								
1959	421,458								
1960	419,442								
1961	420,254								
1962	423,469								
1963	424,250								
1964	416,926								
1965	406,604								
1966	415,108								
1967	374,282					400		0.1	S76a

1968	394,260					2,211		0.6	P77a
1969	390,728								
1970	394,015	203,200	190,900	1.064					
1971	380,424	195,900	184,500	1.062					
1972	365,749	188,100	177,600	1.059					
1973	366,942	189,600	177,400	1.069					
1974	367,823	189,600	178,200	1.064					
1975	367,647	189,300	178,400	1.061					
1976	423,356	218,700	204,700	1.068					
1977	395,796	203,800	192,000	1.062					
1978	409,203	212,000	197,200	1.075					
1979	422,518	218,500	204,000	1.071					
1980	413,881	213,200	200,700	1.062					
1981	414,069	213,900	200,100	1.069					
1982	405,263	209,400	195,800	1.070					
1983	383,439	198,200	185,200	1.070					
1984	371,008	192,000	179,000	1.073		1,268		0.3	
1985	346,208	178,300	167,900	1.062					
1986	309,230	160,200	149,000	1.075		1,300	1,300	0.4	est
1987	314,024	163,300	150,700	1.084		2,500	2,500	0.8	est
1988	342,031	177,700	164,300	1.081		2,400	2,400	0.7	est
1989	315,299	164,100	151,200	1.086		32,159	2,700	9.3	
1990	335,618	176,000	159,600	1.103		18,475	5,500	5.2	
1991	321,932	168,900	153,000	1.103		16,259	5,400	4.8	
1992	321,632	168,500	153,100	1.100		10,606	5,000	3.2	
1993	325,613	169,500	156,100	1.086		6,469	2,900	1.9	
1994	322,938	168,400	154,500	1.090		5,062	3,500	1.5	
1995	329,581	171,100	158,500	1.080		4,199	2,000	1.3	
1996	325,545	169,500	156,100	1.086		3,572	2,900	1.1	
1997	326,002	170,000	156,000	1.090		2,849	3,500	0.9	
1998	271,450	141,500	130,000	1.088		2,339	2,700	0.9	
1999	283,661	148,042	135,619	1.092		42,282	3,300	13.0	T00a
2000	305,312	159,726	145,586	1.097		4,300	4,300	1.4	est
2001	260,354	135,596	124,758	1.087		2,400	2,400	0.9	est
2002	247,530	129,537	117,993	1.098		3,500	3,500	1.4	est
2003	227,070	118,984	108,086	1.101		3,500	3,500	1.5	est
2004	216,419	113,639	102,780	1.106	82,168	41,586	3,800	16.1	ROC15a
2005	205,854	107,378	98,476	1.090	77,049	38,902	2,300	15.9	ROC15a
2006	204,459	106,936	97,523	1.097	71,634	36,902	2,800	15.3	ROC15a
2007	204,414	106,898	97,516	1.096	69,960	35,178	2,800	14.7	ROC15a
2008	198,733	103,937	94,796	1.096	71,431	35,349	2,700	15.1	ROC15a
2009	191,310	99,492	91,818	1.084	66,923	33,692	1,500	15.0	ROC15a
2010	166,886	87,213	79,673	1.095	66,286	32,633	2,100	16.4	ROC15a

2011	196,627	101,943	94,684	1.077	66,626	34,688	900	15.0	ROC15a
2012	229,481	118,848	110,633	1.074	79,366	34,927	900	13.2	ROC15a
2013	199,113	103,300	95,800	1.078	63,106	32,907	1,100	14.2	ROC15a
2014	210,383	108,700	101,700	1.069	62,665	34,287	300	14.0	ROC15a
2015	216,225				61,639	33,557		13.4	

Totals for several statistics over the available data periods specified are:

- Live births, 1967-2015: 15,311,337
- Abortions, 1967-2015: 592,700 (minimum)
- Abortions, 1967-2015: 1,073,000 (with linear interpolation for underreported periods 1985-1988, 1990-1998, and 2000-2003)
- Sex-selective abortions (minimum estimate), 1986-2012: 79,100

Figure 1 shows abortion and live birth numbers for 1957-2015.

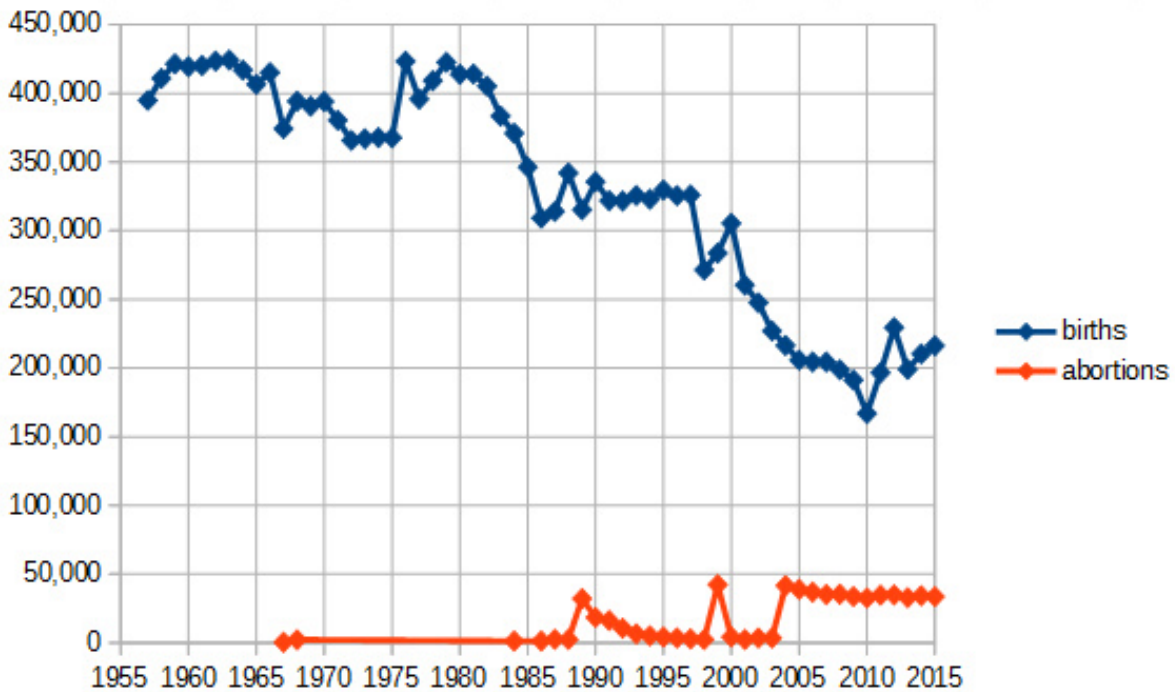


Figure 1. Republic of China (Taiwan) live births and known abortions, 1957-2015.

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