



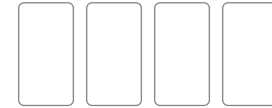
- Home
- What we do
- Topics
- News
- Publications
- Videos
- Data

Home News UNFPA Launches the State Of World Population Report, 2021: My Body Is My Own

PRESS RELEASE

# UNFPA Launches the State Of World Population Report, 2021: My Body Is My Own

14 April 2021



# MY BODY IS MY OWN

Nearly half of all women are denied their bodily autonomy, says the new UNFPA State of World Population Report - 'My Body is My Own' -- released on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

For the first time, a United Nations report focuses on bodily autonomy - the power and agency to make choices about your body without fear of violence or having someone else decide for you. A serious lack of bodily autonomy has had far-reaching implications much beyond the profound harm to individual women and girls that include potentially depressing economic productivity, undercutting skills, and extra costs to health care and judicial systems.

Nearly half the women from 57 developing countries do not have the right to decide regarding their bodies including using contraception, seeking health care, or even on their sexuality.

## Key Findings: My Body, but Not My Choice

Through this ground-breaking report, UNFPA measures women's power to make their own decisions about their bodies and the extent to which the laws of the countries support or interfere with a woman's right to make these decisions. The data shows a strong link between decision-making power and higher levels of

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education.

The report shows that in countries where data is available:

- Only 55% of women are fully empowered to make choices over health care, contraception and the ability to say yes or no to sex.
- Only 71% of countries guarantee access to overall maternity care.
- Only 75% of countries legally ensure full, equal access to contraception.
- Only about 80% of countries have laws supporting sexual health and well-being.
- Only about 56% of countries have laws and policies supporting comprehensive sexuality education.



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“Women around the world are denied the fundamental right of bodily autonomy with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbating this situation due to a sharp increase in sexual violence, barriers to health care, unplanned pregnancies as a result of lockdown and loss of jobs and breakdown of education system. Realizing bodily autonomy is essential to achieving UNFPA’s goals of ending the global unmet need for contraception, preventable maternal deaths, gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030... we are committed to the cause,” – Ms. Argentina Matavel Piccin, UNFPA Representative India and Country Director Bhutan.

**In India, according to NFHS-4 (2015-2016), only about 12% of currently married women (15-49 years of age) independently make decisions about their own healthcare, while 63% decide in consultation with their spouse.**

**For a quarter of women (23%), it is the spouse that mainly takes decisions about healthcare.**

**Regarding the power to decide about use of contraception, only 8% of currently married women (15-49 years) do it independently, while 83% decide jointly with their spouse. For nearly 1 in 10 women, it is the husband who largely takes decisions about the use of contraception.**

**Information provided to women about contraception is limited. Only 47% women using a contraceptive were informed about the side effects of the method, and 54% women were provided information about other contraceptives.**

**Solutions:** Real solutions, the report finds, must take into account the needs and experiences of those affected.

“Bodily autonomy is a foundation upon which all other human rights are built and now is the time to recognize and realize autonomy for all. Through the new international Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, UNFPA is championing access to contraception and comprehensive sexuality education and promoting measures that will empower women and adolescents to make autonomous decisions about their own bodies. Only when the world’s most vulnerable are able to make informed choices about their bodies, health and future will we be able to realize the full potential of all individuals, families, communities and nations”, Ms Matavel Piccin further elaborates.

“For many women and girls”, Ms. Matavel Piccin adds, “deprivation of bodily autonomy is embedded in the social norms and law making it difficult or impossible for them to make their own informed decisions about sex, health and reproduction. Each one of us can help by uprooting gender inequality and all forms of discrimination, and transforming the social and economic structures that maintain them”.

The State of World Population report is UNFPA’s annual flagship publication. Published yearly since 1978, it shines a light on emerging issues in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, bringing them into the mainstream and exploring the challenges and opportunities they present for international development.

### Notes to editors

As the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, UNFPA helps people obtain contraception and life-saving reproductive health services and information and empowers women and girls to make informed decisions about their bodies and lives.

- You can access the UNFPA State of World Population report, My body is my own: Claiming the right to autonomy and self-determination, by clicking [here](#)
- For more information about UNFPA and UNFPA India, please visit: [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org) and <https://india.unfpa.org/en>
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