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Zika virus: Abortion demand spikes in countries hit by outbreak

Requests for terminations in Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador have doubled

Peter Yeung | [@ptr_yeung](#) | 12 hours ago | 0 comments



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Orlando Sierra/Getty

Demand for abortion has spiked among women living in countries affected by the spread of the **Zika virus**, which is known to cause severe birth defects.

The number of requests for abortion in Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador have doubled, while there has been an increase of a third in other countries, according to research **published in the *New England Journal of Medicine***.

Researchers analysed thousands of requests received by Women on Web, a website that advises women online and then delivers pills to end a pregnancy, in the five years before the Pan American Health Organization issued its warning on Zika on 17

November 2015.

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Analysis from other countries, which did not advise against pregnancy, suggested smaller increases in abortion demand.

One woman from Peru told Women on Web: "I'm very concerned, I'm two months pregnant and in my country Zika has been detected.

"We are all very alarmed and I do not want have a sick baby, please, I do not want to continue my pregnancy because it is very dangerous."

Another from Venezuela said: "I contracted Zika four days ago.



"I love children, but I don't believe it is a wise decision to keep a baby who will suffer. I need an abortion. I don't know who to turn to. Please help me ASAP."

In the countries where Zika warnings were issued, there are typically about 3.5 million abortions per year, according to the **Guttmacher Institute**, a reproductive health research organisation which was not involved in the study.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is advising travellers to the Olympics to practise safe sex using condoms or abstain for eight weeks after their return to avoid the risk of sexual transmission of the virus to a woman who is pregnant or planning to become so.

The Zika virus - in pictures



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Earlier this month, golfer [Rory McIlroy](#) announced he would not compete at the [Rio Olympics](#) because of the threat posed by the [Zika virus](#), with the four-time major winner claiming it is “a risk I am unwilling to take”.

WHO previously rejected calls from 150 leading scientists to relocate or postpone the Olympic Games because of the Zika virus outbreak in Brazil.

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