

3. Underreporting of abortion numbers in Romanian statistics

The authors of the study „Sănătatea Reproduserii România 1999” (“Reproductive Health in Romania 1999”)⁷ say that their abortion estimated numbers, based on data gathered through their own investigations in 1998, were 27% higher than official statistics.

The most obvious reason for abortion underreporting in Romania is the fact that the **private clinics don't report their abortion numbers.**

Dr. Mihai Horga, former Head of the Family and Social Assistance Department of Romania's Health and Family Ministry between 2000–2003, has written the following in his paper “Contraception and Abortion in Romania. Background paper for the strategic assessment of policy, programme and research issues related to pregnancy in Romania”:

„The high rate of abortion points to a considerable number of unwanted pregnancies. The total abortion rate, which is the number of abortions that a typical woman would have in her lifetime given the current age-specific abortion rate, is 70% higher than the total fertility rate (2.2 compared to 1.3). According to current estimates, for the period 1996 to 1999, the elective abortion to live birth ratio was 1.6.

(...)

This estimate is roughly twice that registered in official statistics, indicating serious underreporting in the health-care system, probably due to the private sector. According to a limited survey conducted in 2001 through Public Health Directorates, approximately 80,000 elective abortions performed in private clinics in 2000 were not reported in official government medical statistics (ed. note - approx. 30% of the total number of abortions reported by public hospitals in 2000). The real number of abortions performed in the private sector may be even higher because not all *judets* (ed. note - counties) have reported the number of abortions in the private sector and among *judets* that have reported there may be considerable underreporting from private facilities. The lack of clear regulations concerning reporting requirements for private health-care units and the scarce interest of local health authorities in supervising the reporting system may explain this situation.”⁸

Also, data from the National Institute of Statistics don't take into account chemically / hormonally-induced abortions. Prof. Virgil Ancar, Head of the Obstetrics-Gynaecology Clinic of “St. Panteleimon” Hospital in Bucharest, has estimated that such procedures could amount to 30% of the total abortion number. In conclusion, **statistics could be 30% higher if we take into account this abortion method.**

⁷ Șerbănescu, Florina, Leo Morris, Jay Friedman, „Studiul Sănătății Reproduserii România, 1999. Raport Final”, CDC, ARSPMS, 2001.

⁸ Mihai Horga, MD, PhD a.o, *Abortion and contraception in Romania. A strategic assessment of policy, programme and research issues*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2004, pp. 6, 15-16. See also Johnson, BR, Horga, M, Andronache, L, *Contraception and abortion in Romania*, *Lancet*, 1993; 341:875–878.