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### NEWS RELEASE



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## CONCERN FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE CHILDREN A KEY REASON WOMEN HAVE ABORTIONS

### Responsibility for Existing Children and “Ideal” Conditions for Motherhood Found to be Important Factors

Women’s sense of responsibility for their existing and future children influences their decision to seek an abortion, according to [“I Would Want to Give My Child, Like, Everything in the World:’ How Issues of Motherhood Influence Women Who Have Abortions,”](#) by Rachel Jones et al., published in the January 2008 issue of the *Journal of Family Issues*. The majority (61%) of U.S. women who have abortions are already mothers, more than half of whom have two or more children. In many cases, women choose abortion because they are motivated to be good parents. Women who have no children want the conditions to be right when they do; women who already have children want to be responsible and take care of their existing children.

“We found that consideration of motherhood issues in abortion decision-making falls into two broad areas: responsibilities for existing children and the ‘ideal’ conditions of motherhood,” says [Rachel K. Jones](#), senior researcher with the Guttmacher Institute. “Among those women with children, the most commonly cited reason for choosing to have an abortion was the concern that having another child would compromise the care given to existing children. Women felt that they were already stretched thin financially, emotionally and physically—and they wanted to put the children they already had front and center. Two-thirds of women who gave this answer were at or below the poverty line and received little help from their partners.”

In addition, many of the women surveyed made direct and indirect references to the “ideal” conditions of motherhood, expressing the view that children are entitled to stable and loving families, financial security, and a high level of care and attention. Because the women were unable to provide those conditions at the time, they did not feel they were in a position to have a child or, if they were already mothers, an additional child.

“Many of these women were already raising children in situations that were less than ideal, and when faced with the possibility of bringing another child into this environment, they preferred to wait until they were in a better situation to be good parents,” says Jones. “These women believed that it was more responsible to terminate a pregnancy than to have a child whose health and welfare could be in question.”

Without being asked directly, several of the women indicated that adoption is not a realistic option for them. They reported that the thought of one’s child being out in the world without knowing if it was being taken care of or by whom would induce more guilt than having an abortion.

This study was based on in-depth interviews with 38 women who obtained abortions in the United States in 2004. These women were a subsample of larger study focused around the reasons for and context in which women are making decisions about abortion.

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