As part of law reform in Ethiopia in 2005, the penal code was revised to broaden the indications under which abortion is legal. It is important to measure the incidence of legal and illegal induced abortion after the change in the law.

METHODS: A nationally representative survey of a sample of 347 health facilities that provide postabortion or safe abortion services and a survey of 80 professionals knowledgeable about abortion service provision were conducted in Ethiopia in 2007–2008. Indirect estimation techniques were applied to calculate the incidence of induced abortion. Abortion rates, abortion ratios and unintended pregnancy rates were calculated for the nation and for major regions.

RESULTS: In 2008, an estimated 382,000 induced abortions were performed in Ethiopia, and 52,600 women were treated for complications of such abortions. There were an estimated 103,000 legal procedures in health facilities nationwide—27% of all abortions. Nationally, the annual abortion rate was 23 per 1,000 women aged 15–44, and the abortion ratio was 13 per 100 live births. The abortion rate in Addis Ababa (49 per 1,000 women) was twice the national level. Overall, about 42% of pregnancies were unintended, and the unintended pregnancy rate was 101 per 1,000 women.

CONCLUSIONS: Unsafe abortion is still common and exacts a heavy toll on women in Ethiopia. To reduce rates of unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion, increased access to high-quality contraceptive care and safe abortion services is needed.