The total abortion rate for the five-year period prior to the survey was similar to those for the year before the survey. The estimated total abortion rate for women in Tehran appears to be low when compared with the rates in selected neighboring countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, which range from 0.3 abortions per woman in Turkey to 3.7 in Georgia (Figure 2). Though abortion underreporting is one possible reason for the low estimated rate for Tehran, the roles of contraceptive use, intended fertility and the probability of recourse to abortion should be taken into account. According to Bongaarts and Westoff, variation in abortion rates among countries is accounted for largely by these three factors.

In the present study, 85% of married women reported using a contraceptive method at the time of the survey, 54% used a modern method and 31% used a traditional one. The most commonly used method was withdrawal (30%), fewer than 1% of women used abstinence. Among modern methods, the condom was the most widely used (16%), followed by the IUD (13%), female sterilization (11%), the pill (9%), male sterilization (6%) and the implant (<1%). Withdrawal was relied on by relatively equal proportions of women across age-groups, while women with one child were twice as likely as those with at least three children to use the method (not shown). Compared with the countries in Figure 2, Tehran has a lower abortion rate and higher use of modern methods. In these countries and Tehran, total abortion rates were strongly but negatively associated with the use of modern methods: The rates decreased as the use of modern contraceptives increased (r=–0.87). However, the association between the use of traditional methods and abortion rates was positive (r=0.30, not shown).

An estimated 8.7 of every 100 known pregnancies ended in abortion in the year preceding the survey. The proportion for the preceding five-year period was slightly lower (7.5 of every 100 pregnancies).

### Correlates of Abortion Incidence

In one previous worldwide study, a woman’s decision to obtain an abortion was associated with a number of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, which influence the decision mainly via three factors: the probability of having an abortion in the event of contraceptive failure, fertility preferences and effective method use. Furthermore, these characteristics are assumed to influence a woman’s decision either by themselves or as indicators of a woman’s social or economic situation. For instance, the likelihood of having an abortion was elevated among women who had high levels of education, as well as among those who had a large number of children. Table 2 (page 138) presents the percentage distribution of abortions and the estimated abortion rates and proportions of pregnancies ending in abortion across subgroups of women who had at least one abortion in the five-year period preceding the survey.

- **Age at abortion.** The highest proportions of abortions occurred among women aged 30–34 and 35 or older (37% and 32%, respectively). The proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion according to age-group followed a near-