

FACTSHEET

1: Baby Dumping: what the public says

Baby dumping means rejecting and throwing a baby away after birth and exposing it to danger and death. Almost every month there are reports of baby dumping in the media.

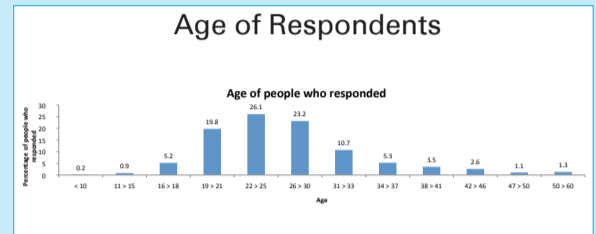
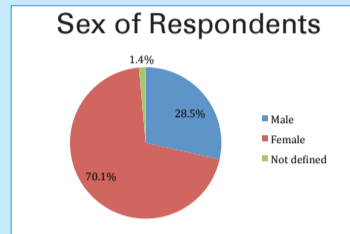
The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture with the support of UNICEF and the Legal Assistance Centre asked the public WHY baby dumping is such a problem in Namibia and HOW the government can address it. The survey asked three multiple choice questions. The questions were published in The Namibian and Die Republikein newspaper and interested persons were asked to respond by text message.

Who responded to the questions?

A total of 3742 people responded to the questions in the correct format. Some people responded to all three questions, other people only responded

to one of the questions. Some people responded to the questions in an incorrect format. Their answers could not be included in the analysis.

The majority of people who responded were women between the ages of 19-30. Previous research has shown that, on average, women give birth to their first child when they are 21 years old. We also know that most women in Namibia have 1 to 2 children. This may mean that the majority of people who responded to the questions could be experiencing the problem of being pregnant and not wanting the baby.



QUESTION 1: What do you think is the main reason that people dump babies?

A total of 2185 people responded to this question. The top three responses were:

1. The father denies paternity. (22.4%)
2. The mother is a student. (16.6%)
3. The mother does not know about options such as foster care, adoption and institutional care. (15.1%)

Other responses the public could choose were:

- The baby is born outside of marriage.
- The mother is afraid that the father will not financially support the child.
- The mother is afraid that she and her family do not have enough money to support the child.
- The mother is afraid that she will transfer HIV/AIDS to the baby.
- The pregnancy was a result of rape or an unwanted sexual act.
- The mother is afraid of the shame and stigma the pregnancy will bring.
- The mother lives in a child-headed household and cannot provide for the baby.
- Another reason.

How does this information help us to address baby dumping?

The results show that:

- men need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their children to help prevent baby dumping. More dialogue is needed between men and women about their roles and responsibilities as parents.
- students and learners in particular need to be targeted with information on options for dealing with an unwanted pregnancy and how they can continue their studies as parents. They should also be provided with more information about relationships and contraception to help them decide when is the best time to have sex and to become parents.
- people need more information about alternatives such as foster care, adoption and institutional care.

More teenage pregnancy prevention initiatives are needed, including information for youth about relationships, contraception and the responsibility of parenthood to assist them to make positive life choices.

QUESTION 2: How can baby dumping be addressed?

A total of 1489 people responded to this question in the correct format. The top three responses were:

1. Provide more information about what the law says about abortion and baby dumping. (20.0%)
2. Provide more information about foster care, adoption and institutional care. (18.2%)
3. Provide more information about contraceptives. (14.0%)

Other responses the public could choose were:

- Provide recreational activities for youth.
- Provide support (including shelters) for pregnant women.
- Provide support for mothers who have just given birth.
- Provide education for pregnant women.
- Provide encouragement for men and boys to take greater responsibility for their children.
- Another option.

How does this information help us to address baby dumping?

The results clearly show that people want to have more information about preventing pregnancies and about options for dealing with unwanted pregnancies. This information is also important for the family and friends of a pregnant woman who can provide support and advice.



QUESTION 3: What would your first reaction be if you found out that you/your girlfriend is pregnant and you do not want the baby?

Fewer people responded to this question. This may have been because it was the third question in the series and people grew less interested in the topic over time. Or it may have been because the question was challenging to answer. A total of 68 people responded to the question. The top three responses were:

1. Consider keeping the baby but plan to dump the baby when it is born. (27.9%)
2. Tell a family member. (26.5%)
3. Phone LifeLine toll free on number 116. (25.0%)

The other responses the public could choose were:

- Tell a friend.
- Find a way to abort the baby.
- Another option.

How does this information help us to address baby dumping?

The fact that one of the most common responses involved plans to dump the baby shows that baby dumping is a very serious issue in Namibia. The fact that people would consider talking to a family member or friend is a positive result as it shows that people will ask for help. Initiatives to address baby dumping should target the general public so that family members and friends can help support mothers to find an alternative to dumping their babies.

Conclusion

Overall, the results suggest that many people want more information about what to do if they are pregnant and do not want the baby. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare with the support of UNICEF and the Legal Assistance Centre have responded to this need through the production of a comic and a factsheet series. The factsheets will be placed as adverts in the newspaper. The comic and factsheets are also available from the Ministries, LAC and UNICEF.

