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## **Abortion, The Contraceptive Of Choice In Cuba**

*by Erika Harding*

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According to an article published in the July 6 issue of weekly *Juventud Rebelde*, abortion is the contraceptive of choice for Cuban women. Abortion was introduced in Cuban hospitals in early 1965. *Juventud* conducted a survey of 100 pregnant women not willing to carry their pregnancies to term. Of the total, 37 said they used some type of birth control, 18% indicated sporadic use, and 45% admitted that they used no form of contraceptive. Most respondents' motives for terminating their pregnancies can be summarized as follows: obstacle to personal projects; "I have enough children already"; and, inadequate room or other facilities for a child at home. Results of a national fertility survey in 1987 indicated that most abortions are performed on childless women. Young women resorting to more than one abortion per year is relatively common, and some women have had four or more abortions before carrying a pregnancy to term. According to government statistics, women under 18 years of age obtained 84,916 abortions in 1990. Health professionals say young women often procure birth control devices in public hospitals when it is already too late. Cuban health experts are calling on citizens to use abortion as a last resort. They say abortion is too costly and dangerous to be used as a first choice option for avoiding parenthood. Health Ministry sources say an average 130,000 abortions are performed every year.

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