

The Individual Level Abortion Stigma Scale (ILAS Scale) is a theory-based, multidimensional, validated scale to measure stigma among women who have had abortions.

Item development

Items were developed based on Cockrill and Nack's conceptual framework for individual level abortion stigma¹ and existing measures of other individual level stigmas (eg. HIV/AIDS², sexual stigma³). The wording of items was informed by qualitative interviews with women who have had abortions and content analysis of abortion stories online. The final 61 items were tested and improved through 14 one-on-one cognitive interviews with women who had previously had abortions.

Scale validation

The 61 items were piloted using a self-administered iPad-based survey at 13 family planning clinics across the US. A total of 627 women who have had an abortion completed the survey in English or Spanish. Factor analysis revealed a 20-item, 4-factor model for individual-level abortion stigma (overall $\alpha=0.88$): Worries about Judgment ($\alpha=0.94$), Isolation ($\alpha = 0.83$), Self-Judgment ($\alpha =0.84$) and Community Condemnation ($\alpha =0.78$). Chronbach's alpha scores show that the final scale and factors (subscales) have high internal consistency and reliability. Previous research has shown that perceiving stigma is associated with keeping an abortion secret.⁴ We tested construct validity using logistic regression to explore the relationship between our scale and an independent measure of secrecy. Strong associations between our secrecy measure, scale and subscales established construct validity. Finally, each subscale is correlated with the full scale, but not highly correlated with the other subscales. Thus, the subscales can be used as independent instruments, each measuring a facet of stigma.

Scoring

High scores on the ILAS scale and subscales indicate increased stigma. Seven of the items are reverse-coded (indicated with an *) because they measure positive behaviors or feelings and are therefore inversely correlated with the other 13 items on the scale. Scores for the full scale and subscales were calculated by summing the item scores and dividing by the number of items.

Within the scales and subscales there are no clear thresholds or cut-off points related to stigmatization. We recommend that the scales should be used as continuous variables whenever possible.

Applications

The ILAS Scale has many applications. It can be used to evaluate the efficacy of programs aimed at reducing stigma; including programs within clinics, after-abortion talklines, online or in-person support groups, and others. The ILAS Scale can also be used in research examining the social or mental/physical health outcomes after abortions. A Spanish translation of the scale is available and still needs validation. We encourage researchers to adopt and retest the scale for their specific study population.

¹Cockrill K, Nack A. (2013). "I'm not that type of person..." Managing the Stigma of Having an Abortion. *Deviant Behavior*, 34(12), 973-990.

²Turan JM, Bukusi EA, Onono M, Holzemer WL, Miller S, Cohen CR. (2011). HIV/AIDS stigma and refusal of HIV testing among pregnant women in rural Kenya: results from the MAMAS Study. *AIDS and Behavior*, 15(6), 1111-1120.

³Herek, GM (2009). Sexual stigma and sexual prejudice in the United States: A conceptual framework. In *Contemporary perspectives on lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities* (pp. 65-111). Springer New York.

⁴Major B, Gramzow RH. (1999). Abortion as stigma: cognitive and emotional implications of concealment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 77(4), 735.

*Citation for paper: Cockrill K, Upadhyay U, Turan J, Foster D. The Stigma of Having an Abortion: Development of a Scale and Characteristics of Women Experiencing Abortion Stigma. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 45: 79-88.

For more information and to access original versions contact: Kate Cockrill, MPH – kate@seachangeprogram.org

ILAS English Scale

Full Scale (use all 20 items)

The following survey is for women who have had an abortion. The purpose of this survey is to gain information about women's feelings and experiences around their abortions. Some women have had more than one abortion. To answer the questions, please think about your most recent abortion.

Worries about judgment: The following questions are about the things you worried about around the time of your abortion. Make the selection that best describes what you worried about.

Items	Answer Options			
	Not worried	A little worried	Quite worried	Extremely worried
1. Other people might find out about my abortion.	0	1	2	3
2. My abortion would negatively affect my relationship with someone I love.	0	1	2	3
3. I would disappoint someone I love.	0	1	2	3
4. I would be humiliated.	0	1	2	3
5. People would gossip about me.	0	1	2	3
6. I would be rejected by someone I love.	0	1	2	3
7. People would judge me negatively.	0	1	2	3

Isolation: The following questions are about talking to your close friends and relatives about your abortion. Think about your most recent abortion. Make the selection that best describes your experience.

Items	Answer Options			
	Never	Once	More than once	Many times
* Item is reverse-coded				
8. I have had a conversation with someone I am close with about my abortion.*	0	1	2	3
9. I was open with someone that I am close with about my feelings about my abortion.*	0	1	2	3
10. I felt the support of someone that I am close with at the time of my abortion.*	0	1	2	3
11. I can talk to the people I am close with about my abortion.*	<i>Note: Questions #11-13 use the five "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" answer options used in next section.</i>			
12. I can trust the people I am close to with information about my abortion.*				
13. When I had my abortion, I felt supported by the people I was close with.*				

Self-judgment: The following questions are about how you felt around the time of your abortion. Please make the selection that best describes your feelings.

Items	Answer Options				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
* Item is reverse-coded					
14. I felt like a bad person.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I felt confident I had made the right decision.*	0	1	2	3	4
16. I felt ashamed about my abortion.	0	1	2	3	4
17. I felt selfish.	0	1	2	3	4
18. I felt guilty.	0	1	2	3	4

Community condemnation: The following questions are about the community you lived in around the time of your abortion. How many people in your community held the following beliefs?

Items	Answer Options				
	No one	A few people	About half the people	Many people	Most people
19. Abortion is always wrong.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Abortion is the same as murder.	0	1	2	3	4

ILAS Spanish Scale

Full Scale (use all 20 items)

The following survey is for women who have had an abortion. The purpose of this survey is to gain information about women's feelings and experiences around their abortions. Some women have had more than one abortion. To answer the questions, please think about your most recent abortion.

Worries about judgment: Las siguientes preguntas se refieren a las cosas que más le preocupaban durante el tiempo de su aborto más reciente, ¿qué tanto le preocupaban las siguientes circunstancias? Por favor, marque la casilla que mejor describa su preocupaciones.

Items	Opciones de respuesta			
	No estaba preocupada	Un poco preocupada	Bastante preocupada	Extremadamente preocupada
1. Que la gente se enteraría de mi aborto.	0	1	2	3
2. Que mi aborto afectaría mi relación con una persona querida (aparte de su pareja).	0	1	2	3
3. Que yo decepcionaría alguna persona querida.	0	1	2	3
4. Que me sintiera humillada.	0	1	2	3
5. Que la gente contaría chismes de mí.	0	1	2	3
6. Que una persona querida me rechazaría.	0	1	2	3
7. Que la gente me juzgaría.	0	1	2	3

Isolation: Las siguientes preguntas son sobre cómo hablar con sus amigos cercanos y relaciones sobre su aborto. Piense en su aborto más reciente. Por favor, marque la casilla que mejor describa su experiencia.

Items	Opciones de respuesta			
	Nunca	Una vez	Unas pocas veces	Varias veces
8. Yo he hablado de mi aborto con quienes tengo una relación cercana.*	0	1	2	3
9. Fui sincera con quienes tengo una relación cercana sobre mis sentimientos relacionados con mi aborto.*	0	1	2	3
10. Cuando aborté sentí el apoyo de quienes tengo una relación cercana.*	0	1	2	3
11. Puedo hablar sobre mi aborto con quienes tengo una relación cercana.*	<i>Note: Questions #11-13 use the five "Estoy en MUY DESACUERDO" to "Estoy en MUY ACUERDO" answer options used in next section.</i>			
12. Estoy segura de que puedo compartir información sobre mi aborto con quienes tengo una relación cercana.*				
13. Cuando aborté, me sentí apoyada por quienes tengo una relación cercana.*				

Self-judgment: Las siguientes preguntas son acerca de cómo se sentía en el momento de su aborto más reciente. Por favor, marque la casilla que mejor describa su sentimientos.

Items	Opciones de respuesta				
	Estoy en MUY DESACUERDO	Estoy en DESACUERDO	NO estoy de ACUERDO NI EN DESACUERDO	Estoy de ACUERDO	Estoy en MUY ACUERDO
14. Sentí que era una mala persona.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Me sentí segura de haber tomado la decisión correcta.*	0	1	2	3	4
16. Sentí vergüenza por mi aborto.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Me sentí egoísta.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Me sentí culpable.	0	1	2	3	4

Community condemnation: Las siguientes preguntas son acerca de la comunidad donde vive, durante el tiempo de su aborto. ¿Cuántos de su comunidad (pueblo o ciudad) celebran las siguientes creencias? Por favor, marque la casilla que mejor describa sus sentimientos.

Items	Opciones de respuesta				
	Nadie	Algunas personas	La mitad de la gente	Muchas personas	La mayoría
19. El aborto siempre es malo.	0	1	2	3	4
20. El aborto es igual al homicidio. Me sentí segura de haber tomado la decisión correcta.	0	1	2	3	4