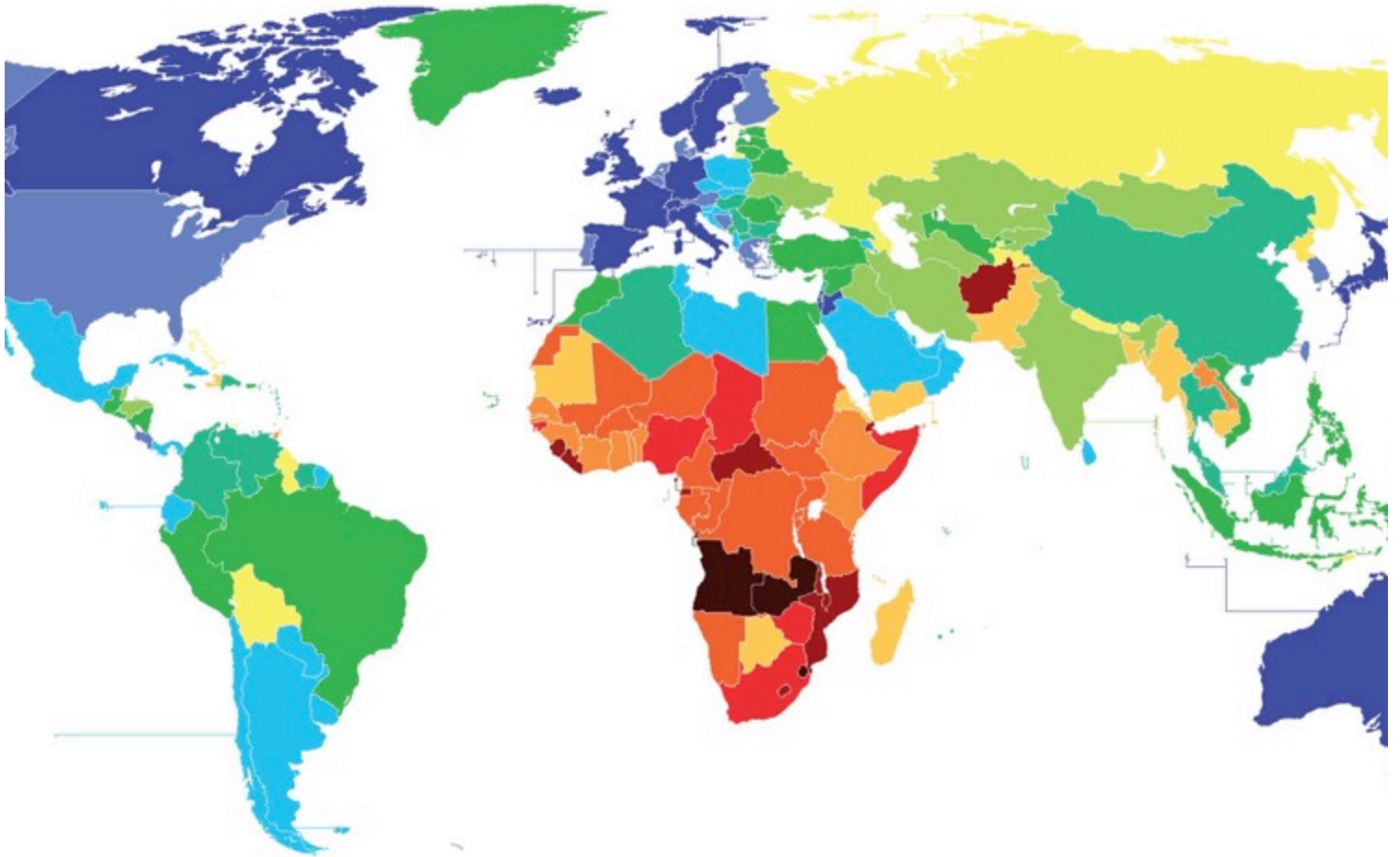


# UNDER THE MACROSCOPE



**T1  
W4**

**SURGE OF ZIKA VIRUS HAS  
BRAZILIANS RE-EXAMINING STRICT  
ABORTION LAWS**

**VALENTINE'S DAY TRADITIONS FROM  
AROUND THE WORLD**

FOR QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT US AT [UNDERTHEMACROSCOPE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:UNDERTHEMACROSCOPE@GMAIL.COM)

**RECÁS**  
We do news

# Headlines

## SURGE OF ZIKA VIRUS HAS BRAZILIANS RE-EXAMINING STRICT ABORTION LAWS



*Dr. Angela Rocha with the results of a scan of a baby with microcephaly at the Oswaldo Cruz hospital in Recife, northeastern Brazil, last week.*

RECIFE, Brazil — The surging medical reports of babies being born with unusually small heads during the Zika epidemic in Brazil are igniting a fierce debate over the country's abortion laws, which make the procedure illegal under most circumstances.

Legal scholars in Brasília, the capital, are preparing a case to go before Brazil's highest court, saying

pregnant women should be permitted to have abortions when their fetuses are found to have abnormally small heads, a condition known as microcephaly that Brazilian researchers say is linked to the virus.

A judge in central Brazil has taken the rare step of publicly proclaiming that he will allow women to have legal abortions in cases of microcephaly, preparing the way for a fight over the issue in parts of the country's labyrinthine legal system.

And here in Recife, the Brazilian city hit hardest by the increase in microcephaly and the brain damage that often comes with it, abortion rights activists are seizing on the crisis to counter conservative lawmakers who have long wanted to make Brazil's abortion laws — already among the most stringent in Latin America — more restrictive.

The scientific link between Zika and infant brain damage has not yet been proved. But the rising reports of microcephaly in parts of Brazil stricken by Zika have caused enough alarm that the World Health Organization declared an international public health emergency on Monday, noting that its "experts agreed that a causal

relationship between Zika infection during pregnancy and microcephaly is strongly suspected.”

Some Brazilian doctors are already encountering pregnant women seeking abortions because of the spike in microcephaly cases. Dr. Artur Timerman, an infectious-disease specialist in São Paulo, said that two patients had spoken with him in recent weeks about ending their pregnancies because they had tested positive for the Zika virus.

“They come to my office and ask, ‘Is there a chance for my baby to have microcephaly?’ ” he said. “We need to inform them there is. They ask if the chance is big or small. I respond, ‘I don’t know.’ They ask what I would do in their position. I tell them it’s a personal decision, only that the chance is a real one.”

“Later,” he said, “both patients told me they had abortions.”

The debate over whether women should be allowed to have abortions in microcephaly cases could reverberate across the region. The outbreak in the Western Hemisphere is believed to have begun in Brazil, the country with the most Zika infections by far. But it has spread to more than 25 countries and territories in the Americas, some with abortion laws as restrictive as Brazil’s, if not more so.

The push to relax abortion restrictions in Brazil raises difficult issues on many sides of the argument. The most severe cases of microcephaly can usually be detected with ultrasound scans around the end of the second trimester, or roughly 24 weeks. Supporters of Brazil’s existing abortion laws contend that such late-term abortions intensify an already wrenching decision.

“With microcephaly, the child is already very much formed, and the parents are conscious of this,” said Dr. Lenise Garcia, a biology professor at the University of Brasília and the president of Brazil Without Abortion, a group against easing the abortion laws. “Getting an abortion creates guilt that will stay with the woman for the rest of her life.”

Judge Jesseir Coelho de Alcântara, who has publicly stated that abortion should be allowed in microcephaly cases, acknowledged that the issue is complex.

“I know this is very difficult because the subject is new, requires thorough discussion and a great deal of religious influences persists,” said Judge Coelho de

Alcântara, of Goiás State. “But my position is that abortion for microcephaly should be allowed.”

Proponents of changing the abortion law cite a 2012 ruling by the Supreme Federal Tribunal of Brazil allowing abortions when the fetus has anencephaly, a serious birth defect in which parts of the brain or skull are missing. Almost all babies with anencephaly die shortly after birth, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. But microcephaly is far less predictable. Even when it is detected before birth, doctors often cannot say what the effects will be, potentially complicating decisions about abortion.

“Some children with severe-appearing brain malformations seem to be relatively unaffected,” said Dr. Hannah M. Tully, a neurologist at Seattle Children’s Hospital specializing in brain malformations. “Yet others with relatively minor structural problems may have profound disabilities.”

At least 10 percent of babies with microcephaly have no mental deficits. These children end up “intellectually and developmentally normal,” said Dr. Constantine A. Stratakis, a pediatric geneticist and a scientific director at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, Md. But any child whose head measures “three or four standard deviations below the mean, then it’s very unlikely that you will be dealing with normal intelligence.”

In Brazil, abortions are allowed only in cases of rape or anencephaly or when the mother’s life is in danger. Until recently, conservative lawmakers had been seeking to make legal abortions harder to get, reflecting the influence of Roman Catholic leaders and the increasingly powerful preachers at the helm of a growing evangelical Christian movement.

Led by Eduardo Cunha, the conservative speaker of Brazil’s lower house, an influential bloc of evangelical Christian lawmakers introduced legislation in 2015 to make it harder for rape victims to get abortions by requiring them to undergo a police report and forensic medical exam. Another part of the bill seeks to make it a crime for people to assist in an abortion or to encourage a pregnant woman to have one.

But now some activists here are drawing comparisons between the Zika epidemic and the debate over abortion in the United States in the 1960s, when an outbreak

of rubella, a virus that can also cause microcephaly, resulted in thousands of babies born with birth defects. The concerns over rubella, also called German measles, paved the way for states like California to allow abortion when a fetus is substantially damaged.

“Pregnant women across Brazil are now in a panic,” said Silvia Camurça, a director of SOS Corpo, a feminist group in Recife. “The fears over the Zika virus are giving us a rare opening to challenge the religious fundamentalists who put the lives of thousands of women at risk in Brazil each year to maintain laws belonging in the dark ages.”

As in the United States before the Supreme Court’s legalization of abortion in 1973, a clandestine abortion industry thrives throughout Brazil. Some illegal providers charge thousands of dollars, risking arrest and the closing of their clinics.

Estimates on the number of illegal abortions in Brazil vary widely. Drawing on hospital records showing that 150,000 women seek medical attention each year for complications from illegal abortions, Brazilian scholars estimate that as many as 850,000 abortions are performed illegally on an annual basis.

While Brazil’s abortion laws are less stringent than those in other Latin American countries — in El Salvador, for instance, abortion is not allowed under any circumstances — illegal procedures are not treated lightly.

One Brazilian woman was handcuffed to a hospital bed and arrested after she sought medical attention for a botched abortion. A judge sentenced other women in the city of Campo Grande who had undergone illegal abortions to do community service in day care centers, arguing that it would teach them to love children. A 9-year-old girl who said she had been raped by her stepfather was allowed to have an abortion in Recife, but only after a heated national battle in which officials overcame objections from religious leaders.

Debora Diniz, an anthropologist and researcher at Anis, an abortion rights group planning to file a lawsuit seeking to legalize abortion in cases of microcephaly, likened the Zika crisis to the long struggle to allow abortion in cases of anencephaly, which lasted about a decade.

“We have an epidemic, an emergency, and the public health sector is not properly caring for women’s rights,” she said. “We have constitutional rights at risk, the right to health care and human dignity.”

Religious leaders are vowing to resist any effort to ease Brazil's abortion laws because of Zika.

"Nothing justifies an abortion," the Rev. Luciano Brito, a spokesman for the Catholic Archdiocese of Olinda and Recife, told reporters. "Just because a fetus has microcephaly won't make us favorable" to changing the law.

*By The New York Times*



# Environment

## RUBBISH EVERYWHERE AT PUNGGOL MARINA



Seeing all the rubbish floating in the Punggol marina is almost like a blast from the past. Styrofoam cups and boxes, plastic oil drums, food wrappers, plastic bags and drink containers blanket the waters' surface.

And it has been happening since 2011 - litter washes up into the marina with the tide and some remains when the tide goes out, said Marina Country Club general manager Derrick Ong.

The litter problem became so bad that the propellers of at least three boats fell off at sea after they got entangled with the trash, he added.

Marina Country Club is on Northshore Drive near Punggol Way and near the mouth of Sungei Punggol in the north-east of Singapore.

At high tide, water from the Johor Strait flows into the river and the marina.

Mr Ong, 46, said the litter problem started when Punggol Dam, located near the club, was built in 2011. The estuary of Sungei Punggol was dammed to form a reservoir that year.

When there is heavy rain and the reservoir's water level is high, the tidal gates are opened to allow the excess water from the reservoir to be discharged into the sea to prevent flooding.

Mr Ong told The New Paper: "The tide used to flow into Sungei Punggol all the way to Sengkang Community Club. "Now, with the dam there, the rubbish and silt get collected at the piece of land near the dam. No one cleans it so whenever the floodgates open, the litter is flushed into our waters."

The dam is about a stone's throw from Pier 6, where boats fuel up before leaving the marina.

Mr Ong said high tide brings the litter in and between 1 per cent and 10 per cent of it is left behind when the tide goes out. The rest is carried out by the tide and the club's employees clear what is left at the top of the ramp at Pier 5. The rubbish collected every week is enough to fill one skip tank, he said.

Mr Ong said he had several meetings with officers from Public Utilities Board and National Environment Agency and had offered to clear the litter for a fee.

"I asked if \$15,000 a month was fair. After all, I would also be charged for waste disposal. They never got back to me after that," he said.

The stench and gunk had an impact on those in the area.

A boat owner, who declined to be named, said: "The water becomes like pea soup. It isn't anything to crow about." He sent TNP photos he took of the piers and a temporary drain adjoining the marina last November and December to show how bad the situation was.

He said it would worsen during the rainy season as the tide would carry the rubbish through the jetty into the marina where they park their boats.

"When it is low tide, the rubbish collects within the marina and doesn't get washed out. The water in the marina gets caked in and the rubbish often leaves a bad smell," he said.



The boat owner recently had overseas guests and wanted to take them out on his boat.

He said: "I felt ashamed because of the litter and the stench. It wasn't befitting the clean-and-green reputation of Singapore."

Another person affected by the rubbish is skipper of SwiftLady Fishing Charters, Mr Anthony Lee.

Whenever he takes clients out in his two fishing charter boats, he will have to dive into the murky waters to clear pieces of rope and plastic bags from the propellers of his boats before heading out.

"Visibility is bad, but I have to do it," said Mr Lee. "It's quite dangerous to do this, but it's a good thing I am a strong swimmer. There's just too much rubbish."

## **WORRIED**

Mr Vincent Lim, who runs a wakeboarding business out of Marina Country Club, is looking at moving his business to Sentosa.

"That or move to the Maldives," said Mr Lim, who has been water-skiing and later wakeboarding in the area since he was 17.

He is worried about the contamination in the waters. "The waters here in Punggol are no longer conducive. My clients might fall sick," said Mr Lim, who is now in his 30s.

TNP approached the relevant government agencies and sent queries on the litter problem on Jan 15.

Boat owners later told TNP that cleaning teams turned up that weekend to drain the water and clear the rubbish. The boat owner, who did not want to be named, was sceptical.

He said: "The water was drained and the place cleaned, but for how long? I hope this will be for the long term. We will see."

## **SLA, PUB closely monitoring site**

The Punggol Dam acts as a barrier to separate the reservoir from the sea. This is to prevent flooding in the Punggol area, said the Public Utilities Board (PUB).

"When there is heavy rain and the reservoir water level is high, the tidal gates are opened to allow the excess water from the reservoir to be discharged to the sea. This is to alleviate flood risks in the upstream catchment," said its spokesman, adding that it is not used to flush litter out to the marina.

In a joint reply, Singapore Land Authority and PUB explained that a temporary drain leading to the sea bordering the Marina Country Club was constructed on State land as part of the North Eastern Coast reclamation project.

The project was first announced in Parliament in 1984, to reclaim 875ha of shallow foreshore and swampland at the north-eastern coast of Singapore from Pasir Ris to Jalan Kayu, including Punggol.

"As the location is subject to tidal influence, litter may be brought in during high tides. We will continue to closely monitor the condition of the site and ensure it is regularly cleaned and maintained," the statement said.

The two agencies will also look into measures to reduce the litter brought in by the tides. "We are reviewing the need for the drain," they said.

## **DRAIN**

The New Paper understands that the temporary drain was part of a drainage system to capture rainfall and channel it towards the sea.

As for the maintenance of common channels, fairways and anchorages, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said it deploys garbage collection and flotsam retrieval craft on a daily basis.

It collects garbage from ships at the anchorages and retrieves flotsam and debris along the common channels, fairways and anchorages.

An MPA spokesman said: "This is to ensure that all vessels will be able to navigate safely within the port and to ensure that the port waters are kept clean. However,

due to currents, wind and tides, flotsam and debris may be washed towards the shorelines overnight."

MPA said it takes a serious view on and enforces strict regulations against the pollution of the sea within Singapore port waters.

It also said that it is an offence for anyone to litter in Singapore waters. If convicted, offenders can be fined up to \$10,000 or jailed up to two years or both.

When contacted, the Municipal Services Office, which coordinates public agencies to work more closely together especially when responsibilities are split, said it is monitoring the issue.

Its spokesman said it will work with the government agencies to ensure regular monitoring and cleaning of the area. She said: "We will also work with them to put in place systemic arrangements to prevent future recurrence."

During high tide, the water carries litter from the open sea into the marina. The rubbish covers the water surface where the boats are moored at Marina Country Club in Punggol. Between 1 and 10 per cent of it is left when the tide goes out.

The litter problem started when Punggol Dam was built in 2011 to dam the estuary of Sungei Punggol and form a reservoir. Whenever the floodgates open to regulate the water in the reservoir, the litter is flushed into the marina.

*By AsiaOne*

# Economics

## **U.S. CONSUMER SPENDING FLAT; SAVINGS AT THREE-YEAR HIGH**

U.S. consumer spending was unchanged in December, but a jump in savings to a three-year high suggested consumption could rebound in the months ahead.

The Commerce Department said on Monday the unchanged reading in consumer spending followed an upwardly revised 0.5 percent increase in November. Spending on long-lasting manufactured goods such as autos dropped 0.9 percent. Purchases of nondurable goods also declined 0.9 percent.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, edging up 0.1 percent in December after a previously reported 0.3 percent gain in November.

When adjusted for inflation, consumer spending edged up 0.1 percent after a 0.4 percent gain in November.

Consumer spending increased 3.4 percent in 2015 after advancing 4.2 percent in 2014.

That data was included in last Friday's fourth-quarter gross domestic product report, which showed consumer spending growth slowed to a 2.2 percent annual rate from the third quarter's brisk 3 percent pace.

Moderate consumer spending, weak export growth and ongoing efforts by businesses to reduce unsold merchandise piled up in warehouses helped restrict economic growth to a 0.7 percent pace in the fourth quarter.

More cutbacks in investment by energy firms struggling with lower oil prices also hurt GDP growth.

The dollar slightly pared losses against a basket of currencies after the data, while U.S. stock index futures were trading lower. Prices for shorter-dated U.S. Treasuries fell.

In December, income rose 0.3 percent after a similar gain in November.

Wages and salaries increased 0.2 percent after shooting up 0.5 percent in November. Income in 2015 was up 4.5 percent, the largest increase since 2012, after rising 4.4 percent in 2014.

Income at the disposal of households after accounting for inflation in 2015 recorded its biggest increase since 2006.

With income outpacing spending in December, savings surged to \$753.3 billion, the highest level since December 2012, from \$717.8 billion in November.

Higher savings and rising house prices should help to soften the blow to household wealth from a recent stock market sell-off and drive spending in early 2016.

With consumption soft, inflation retreated in December.

A price index for consumer spending slipped 0.1 percent after ticking up 0.1 percent in November. In the 12 months through December, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, however, rose 0.6 percent after increasing 0.4 percent in November.

That was the largest increase since December 2014. Year-over-year inflation rates are rising as the weak readings during the year drop out of the calculation.

Excluding food and energy, prices were unchanged after rising 0.2 percent in November. The so-called core PCE price index increased 1.4 percent in the 12 months through December after a similar gain in November.

Core PCE is the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure and remains well below the U.S. central bank's 2 percent target.

*By CNBC*

# Science and Technology

## FROM RUBELLA TO ZIKA: PREGNANCY, DISABILITY, ABORTION AND THE SPECTRE OF AN EPIDEMIC

**Current concerns about Zika and microcephaly recall similar anxieties about maternal infection with Rubella in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.**

It's early spring in London. Some of Britain's leading medical researchers have convened to discuss alarming new evidence linking a virus long presumed to be harmless with a spate of defects in newborn babies. It's not 2016, it's 1946, and the disease is not Zika, but German Measles, or Rubella.

For most patients Rubella produces only a minor rash and fever. But when contracted by women during early pregnancy, the virus may result in miscarriage, infant death, or a range of often life-shaping disabilities, such as deafblindness. Increased awareness of the risk of maternal rubella in the mid-twentieth century, partly through vivid reports on the 'crippling' effects of this disease in the international media, had profound consequences including the development of highly successful mass immunization programmes.

70 years later, another little understood virus, which apparently uniquely threatens pregnant women and the developing embryo, has been thrust into the media spotlight. Brazilian health officials have linked a dramatic surge in cases of a relatively rare defect in newborns to an outbreak of the mosquito-borne Zika virus, recognized in central Africa since the 1940s, but first recorded in Brazil just under a year ago.

### **Zika and Rubella in the media**

The Zika virus is transmitted by the bite of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, and is in most cases asymptomatic or, like Rubella, associated with a mild rash and fever. But there is mounting evidence of a connection between maternal infection and increased risk of having a baby with microcephaly (abnormally small head size), a defect associated with neurological impairment and developmental delays. As medical concern and media interest in Zika intensifies, the world is learning to see images of Brazilian babies born with this condition as portraits both of a terrifying disease, and pregnant women's anxieties.

Every epidemic is frightening, and all the more so when played out so manifestly and consequentially on children's bodies. As Rubella crossed the United States in the 1960s, with the thalidomide tragedy still fresh in the memory, media headlines similarly dramatized anxieties about a 'silent infection' predicted to 'damage' tens of thousands of babies.

Pregnant women in Latin America are understandably terrified by what they know about Zika, about mosquitoes, and about microcephaly, just as an earlier generation of women were alarmed by Rubella. Today, as in the mid-twentieth century, these fears are rooted not only in women's hopes for their families and themselves, but also in an awareness of the material conditions and social barriers shaping the lives of people with disabilities, and those who care for them.

Online news and social media have allowed the Zika epidemic to explode into view. Medical consensus about, and lay knowledge of, maternal Rubella developed more slowly in a world in which pregnancy was nowhere near so medicalized and far less openly discussed. Nevertheless, by the 1950s, women in Britain and elsewhere had learned, through medical advice, newspapers and magazines, friends and family, to fear Rubella.

### **Zika, Rubella, and the abortion debate**

As historian Ilana Löwy has recently written, a crucial factor unites those Rubella experiences with the experiences of women in contemporary Brazil faced with Zika – access to abortion. Through the 1950s and most of the '60s, abortion was illegal in Britain, as it is in much of Latin America today. An expectant mother who had contracted Rubella was confronted with the emotional toil of imagining a future for, and the potential suffering of, a seriously disabled child, and what this might mean for her family. As one woman wrote in the *Guardian* in 1962,

*"both morally and intellectually it seemed to me that for the sake of the child, of myself, and of the family that it would be taking an unjustifiable risk to allow the child to be born."*

In spite of the legal restrictions, she, like many women in the same situation, sought to terminate the pregnancy.

Such women, historian Leslie Reagan has eloquently argued, were 'moral pioneers'. The accidental combination of pregnancy and disease put women in the complicated position of having to assess scientific information about the probability of foetal



malformation, and confront the anxieties and uncertainties associated with either terminating a pregnancy or carrying it to term. Not all medical practitioners agreed that infection with Rubella in early pregnancy justified abortion. But many did, to the extent that termination had become the 'recognised treatment' for maternal Rubella in British hospitals at least a decade before abortion was made legal.

By negotiating these private dilemmas in public view, women such as the *Guardian* author, along with sympathetic doctors, helped transform the politics of abortion in Britain, Australia and the United States. Awareness of the dangers of Rubella put abortion, previously associated with criminality, deviance, and poverty, firmly on the agenda as something that any woman, of any class, might require under certain circumstances. Most Latin American women do not have this option.

Unlike Rubella, Zika is regarded as a 'tropical disease'. Like other mosquito-transmitted infections such as Malaria, Zika carries the associated historical burdens of colonialism, poverty, and underinvestment that have shaped the distribution, management, and experience of these diseases. Yet many today pin hopes of tackling Zika on the rapid development of a vaccine, or on the success of mosquito control procedures. These, and other such technical solutions, may prove effective.

Likewise, as early as 1949 doctors anticipated a vaccine that would prevent Rubella, and put an end to the complicated legal, social and moral issues associated with birth defects and abortion. But it was more than twenty years before researchers were able to roll out an effective vaccine. Given the history of Rubella, it is reasonable to ask whether pressure for a social innovation—reproductive rights—may bear fruit quicker. As women's health advocates critique the advice from some governments to delay pregnancy for up to two years, Zika, like Rubella in a different time and a different place, has reignited debate in Latin America about access to safe, legal abortion.

*By The Guardian*

# Arts

## **IN JAPAN, IT'S THE MEN WHO GET TREATED AND IN FRANCE WOMEN BURN PICTURES OF THOSE WHO SPURN THEM: INFOGRAPHIC REVEALS VALENTINE'S DAY TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

Valentine's Day started several centuries ago to honour one or more of the Christian saints called Valentinus and it has become a popular event for celebrating romance around the world.

But the various countries have very different ways of celebrating the day, so if you find yourself travelling away from home this February 14, be prepared for a few surprises.

Some nationalities gift each other spoons on the big day and others use the time to walk through a field barefoot.

In some places, the typical tradition of a man spoiling a woman is reversed, with the ladies bombarding their lovers with boxes of chocolates and other gifts.

In other areas, a key part of the tradition happens if a woman is spurned by the man she admires - in France, the ladies burn pictures of the object of their affections and in South Korea, they eat a dish of black noodles a month after February 14, in mourning over their single life.



# VALENTINE'S DAY TRADITIONS

FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Roses are red, violets are blue, here's  
how the world celebrates Valentine's,  
now how do you?

1

## Japan

Valentine's Day is about pampering the guys! Women give chocolates to men, and hope they return the gesture later in the year.



!



2

## South Korea

February 14th is one of 12 'love' days that fall on the 14th of each month. Women give gifts to men, then men return the favor on "White Day" 1 month later. But if the gift isn't returned, singles celebrate White Day by eating 'Black Noodles' – a dish that mourns and celebrates single life.

3

## Scandinavia

DENMARK &amp; NORWAY

Men send anonymous poems to women. The notes are signed with 1 dot for each letter in the man's name. If the woman guesses who her admirer is, he rewards her with an egg on Easter. If she guesses wrong, she owes him the egg on Easter.



4

## Slovenia

Slovenians walk through a field barefoot, even if it's frozen. They celebrate a holiday for love later in the year.



5

## Estonia

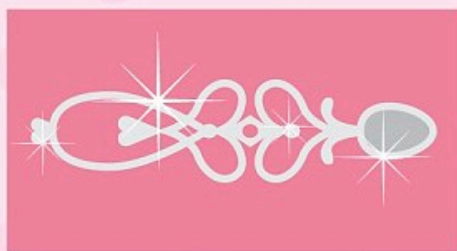
Valentine's is all about your friends. Instead of giving your partner a gift, you celebrate friendship.



6

## Wales

The Welsh give love spoons on January 25th. It gives a new meaning to "spooning" with the one you love.



7

## France

The French used to call out to each other to pair up for romance. The women who didn't find matches would gather together at the end of the day and burn photos of the men who rejected them. This practice was later banned by the French government, as it usually got quite rowdy.







## China

Love seekers visit the matchmaker statue in a temple to find love. (We wonder if Hogwarts has a hat for this?)



## Germany

The Germans celebrate by "pigging out." Statues of pigs are combined with flowers and traditional gifts as a sign of luck.



JUNE 12  
Dia dos  
Namorados



## Brazil

If you believe in fate or luck, celebrate like a Brazilian. Place the names of the people you like into a hat and randomly select one, it could be the person you end up marrying.



## Italy

When in Rome, visit St. Valentine's...skull. You can see it on display and thank him for the wonderful traditions we celebrate today.





# UNDER THE MACROSCOPE

Under the Macroscopic is a weekly summary of what's happening around the world and what's worth pondering. Stay on top of international and local news with this bulletin produced by the Raffles Economics and Current Affairs Society