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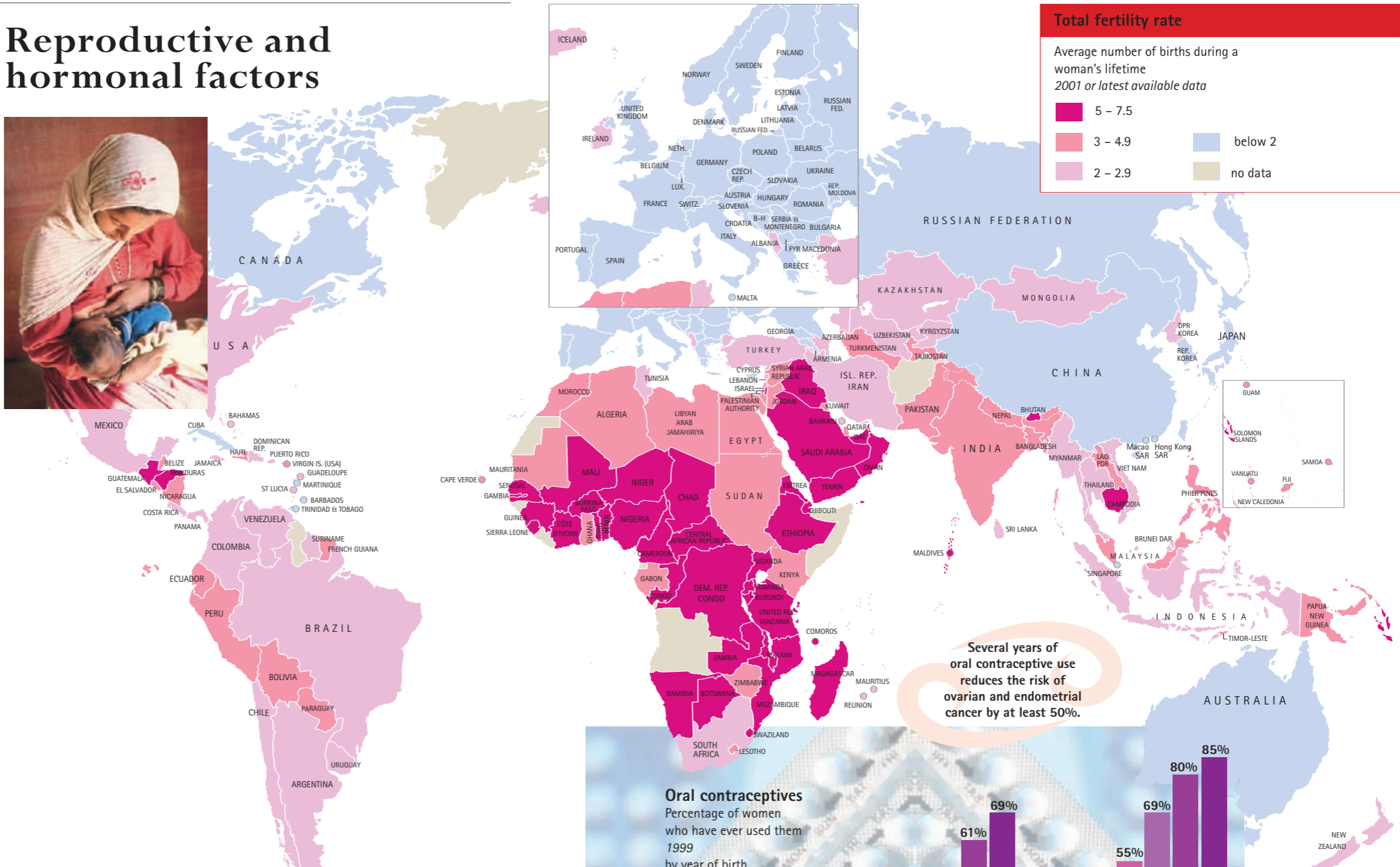
## Reproductive and hormonal factors

Reproductive and hormonal factors influence the risk of several cancers of women. Higher rates of breast cancer in developed countries are partly the consequence of women having their first baby later, having fewer pregnancies overall, starting to menstruate earlier and experiencing the menopause later. These changes in risk are related to hormones (mainly oestrogen).

Exposure to exogenous hormones as oral contraceptives and hormone replacement therapy (HRT), results in a small increase in the risk of breast cancer. There is no risk to past users of HRT, and the effect of oral contraceptive use disappears 10 years after cessation. The absolute risk in users of the pill is very small, and easily outweighed by the benefits of effective family planning.

The use of oral contraceptives also slightly increases the risk of cancer of the cervix, but decreases the risk of endometrial and ovarian cancers. The risks of both endometrial cancer and ovarian cancer are increased in women who have neither used hormonal contraception nor had children, while that of cancer of the cervix is increased by childbearing.

A report in 1926 found that breastfeeding was protective against cancer of the breast, an observation confirmed in more recent studies.



Several years of oral contraceptive use reduces the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancer by at least 50%.

Risk of breast cancer	
Increased by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>oral contraceptives: current users have a risk 24% higher than that of non-users.</li> <li>hormone replacement therapy: use for 5 years increases risk by 35%.</li> </ul>
Decreased by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>childbearing: risk decreases by 7% for each birth.</li> <li>breastfeeding: risk declines by 4.3% for each 12 months of breastfeeding.</li> </ul>
Not changed by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>miscarriages.</li> <li>abortions.</li> <li>use of HRT or oral contraceptives in the past.</li> </ul>

