

# Publication Summary



## Abortion Statistics

Year ending 31 December 2012

Publication date – 28 May 2013



### About this Release

The Abortion Statistics are published annually and are derived from the Notifications to the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland under the Abortion Act 1967. This release includes annual data to December 2012.

### Key Points

- For the past four years there has been a fall in the number and rate of abortions with 12,447 in 2012 compared to 13,904 in 2008 (representing rates of 12.0 per 1000 women aged 15-44 in 2012, and 13.3 in 2008). This fall is a change to the overall pattern of increase since the implementation of the 1967 Abortion Act, although small dips for short periods have been observed before. Birth rates also peaked in 2008, but whereas there has been a 9.5% fall in abortion rates between 2008 and 2012, there has only been a 5.2% fall in live birth rates over this period (NRS Preliminary Annual Figures: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/stats/births-marriages-deaths-preliminary/bdve-2012-preliminary-tablep1b.xls>).
- The fall in abortion rates between the peak of 2008 and 2012 has been greatest in younger women, with a reduction of 27.5% in those aged 16 to 19.
- Although there has been a recent marked reduction in abortions in younger women, the rate of terminations in 2012 is still highest in this group, at 17.8 per 1000 aged 16-19 and 21.1 per 1000 in those aged 20-24. Lower rates are seen in the older age groups: women aged 25-29 (15.5 per 1000); aged 30-34 (11.2 per 1000); aged 35-39 (6.8 per 1000) and in women aged 40 and over (2.5 per 1000).
- The proportion of early terminations has been rising steadily in recent years, with 69.8% of all terminations performed at less than 9 weeks in 2012, compared to 62.2% in 2009. There has also been a sustained increase in the use of medical methods compared to surgical terminations.
- In 2012, the rate of abortions continues to show a clear link with the level of deprivation. In areas of high deprivation the rate is 16.1 per 1000, nearly double the rate of 8.6 per 1000 for the least deprived areas of Scotland.
- Approaching a third (30.7%) of the 12,447 women having a termination in 2012 had a previous termination. The proportion of women having had a previous termination varies

across mainland NHS boards from 26.9% in the NHS Fife to 36.8% in NHS Tayside. The Island boards (Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles) recorded the lowest proportion at 20.6%.

- In 2012, the vast majority (11,761; 94.5%) of terminations were carried out under Ground C. There were 159 terminations carried out under Ground E "...substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped" of which 30 were for Down's syndrome, 15 for anencephaly, 13 for musculoskeletal conditions and 12 for other chromosomal conditions.

## Background

There is a legal requirement to notify the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland of all terminations carried out in Scotland. The Information Services Division is responsible for the collation of data derived from notifications of abortions on behalf of the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland.

All notifications are validated prior to analysis. Occasionally, this results in information queries being sent to a named contact in the unit where the termination occurred. Data quality is, therefore, considered to be high, although occasional omissions and administrative errors in submitting notification forms are inevitable, leading to some under-reporting. All late submissions of notification forms are included in the following year's statistics release as revised figures.

## Contact

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## Further Information

Further information can be found in the [Full Publication Report](#) or on the [ISD website](#)

### About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland - and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government Health Department and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

### Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](#) [www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/](http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/About-Our-Statistics/)