

Publication Summary



Abortion Statistics

Year ending 31 December 2013

Publication date – 27 May 2014



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 2013.

Key Points

- Over the last five years there has been a reduction in the number and rate of abortions with 11,777 in 2013 compared to 13,904 in 2008 (representing rates of 11.2 per 1,000 women aged 15-44 in 2013, and 13.3 in 2008). This fall since 2008 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 15.5% fall in abortion rates between 2008 and 2013, there has only been a 9.0% fall in live birth rates over this period.
- The fall in abortion rates between the peak of 2008 and 2013 has been greatest in younger women, with a reduction of 33.7% in those aged 16 to 19, closely followed by a 32.4% reduction in the under sixteen's.
- Although there has been a recent marked reduction in abortions in younger women, the rate of terminations in 2013 is still highest in this group, at 16.3 per 1,000 aged 16-19 and 19.1 per 1,000 in those aged 20-24. Lower rates are seen in the older age groups: women aged 25-29 (14.8 per 1,000); aged 30-34 (10.4 per 1,000); aged 35-39 (6.6 per 1,000) and in women aged 40 and over (2.4 per 1,000).
- The proportion of early terminations has been rising steadily in recent years, with 69.2% of all terminations performed at less than 9 weeks in 2013, compared to 62.2% in 2009. There has also been a sustained increase in the use of medical methods compared to surgical terminations.
- In 2013 the vast majority of terminations (11,614; 98.6%) were carried out under Ground C (the pregnancy has not exceeded its 24th week and that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman). There were 142 terminations carried out under Ground E (there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously

handicapped), of which 47 were for chromosomal abnormalities (such as Down's syndrome), 37 were for congenital anomalies of the nervous system, and 28 were for other specific congenital anomalies (such as of the cardiovascular or urinary systems).

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.

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Further Information

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

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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.

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