Termination of Pregnancy Statistics
Year ending December 2018
A National Statistics publication for Scotland
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About this release
This release by Information Services Division (ISD) provides an annual update on Termination of Pregnancy Statistics to December 2018. These data are derived from the Notifications of Abortion to the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland (CMO) under the Abortion (Scotland) Regulations 1991. Information is provided by age, gestation, method of termination, NHS Board of residence, deprivation area, previous termination and ground(s) for termination. Some comparative data for England and Wales are also included.

Main Points
• The number and rate of terminations of pregnancy in Scotland in 2018 were at a ten year high: there were 13,286 terminations which is a rate of 12.9 per 1,000 women (aged 15-44). It is not yet clear exactly which factors have led to the apparent increase in terminations from 2015 to 2018.

Number of terminations of pregnancy in Scotland between 1968 and 2018

![Graph showing number of terminations of pregnancy in Scotland between 1968 and 2018.]

• Over the last five years the rate and number of terminations of pregnancy have increased across all age groups except the under 20s. Within this particular group there has been a significant decline in the number of terminations. In 2018, 14% (1,817 out of 13,286) of all terminations were in the under 20 age group compared with 25% a decade ago (3,233 out of 13,112).
The highest rate in 2018 was in the 20-24 group (21.3 per 1,000 women aged 20-24). For the fifth consecutive year, the lowest termination rate was in the under 16 age group (1.4 per 1,000 women aged 13-15).

This publication provides the first full year of data allowing reporting on the number of women now able to take misoprostol (the second drug used in a medical termination) in the home setting, where strict inclusion criteria must be met for administering misoprostol. In 2018, nearly 30% of medical terminations involved self-administration of misoprostol in the home setting. This proportion varied significantly by NHS Board of treatment (ranging from 2.8% to 85.7%).

From late 2017 onwards women from Northern Ireland have been able to access termination services in Scotland free of charge. This publication also provides the first full year of data on the number of women giving a Northern Ireland address of residence who accessed termination services in Scotland. Fewer than ten women gave a Northern Ireland address but had a termination of pregnancy in Scotland in 2018.

Background
An abortion is defined as a termination of pregnancy and is either induced (therapeutic) or spontaneous (miscarriage). The termination of pregnancy statistics reports on induced abortions only. A termination of pregnancy can be performed surgically (eg vacuum aspiration, dilation and curettage) or medically. Medical methods of termination are carried out using drugs such as mifepristone (an antiprogesterone) and misoprostol (a prostaglandin).

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

All notifications are validated prior to analysis. Data quality is 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. Please see News and Updates section of our website for more details.

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Further Information
Find out more in the full report. The data from this publication is available to download from our web page along with a background information and glossary.

For more information on Terminations of pregnancy see the terminations section of our website. For related topics, please see the sexual health pages.

The next release of this publication will be 26 May 2020.