Termination of pregnancy statistics

Year ending December 2019
A National Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) provides an annual update on Termination of Pregnancy Statistics to December 2019. 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 and treatment, deprivation area, previous termination and ground(s) for termination. Some comparative data for England and Wales are also included.

Main Points

• In 2019, the second highest number of terminations was recorded since the Regulations were introduced: 13,583 (13 per 1,000 women aged 15-44).
• Half of all terminations were to women in their twenties in 2019.
• Termination rates in the 40 plus age group have been steadily rising. In the early 2000s the termination rate was 2 per 1,000 women aged 40-44 and by 2019 it reached 4 per 1,000 women aged 40-44.
• Almost half of medical terminations in 2019 involved self-administration of misoprostol in the home setting. This is the second stage of treatment for early medical terminations; the first drug (mifepristone) has been taken at the clinic. This proportion varied significantly by NHS Board of treatment - ranging from 10% in NHS Highland to 75% in NHS Lothian.

Percentage of medical terminations and the proportion of medical terminations where the second drug is taken at home, Scotland 2010 to 2019

![Percentage of medical terminations and the proportion of medical terminations where the second drug is taken at home, Scotland 2010 to 2019](image-url)
Background

An abortion can be induced (therapeutic) or spontaneous (miscarriage). An induced abortion can be performed either medically (using approved drugs) or surgically. This annual publication reports on induced (therapeutic) abortions only. Throughout the report induced abortions are referred to as terminations of pregnancy to avoid confusion with spontaneous abortions (miscarriages).

There is a legal requirement to notify the CMO of all terminations carried out in Scotland. PHS 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.

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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.

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 25 May 2021.

PHS and Official Statistics

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS 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 Statistics. Further information about our statistics.