

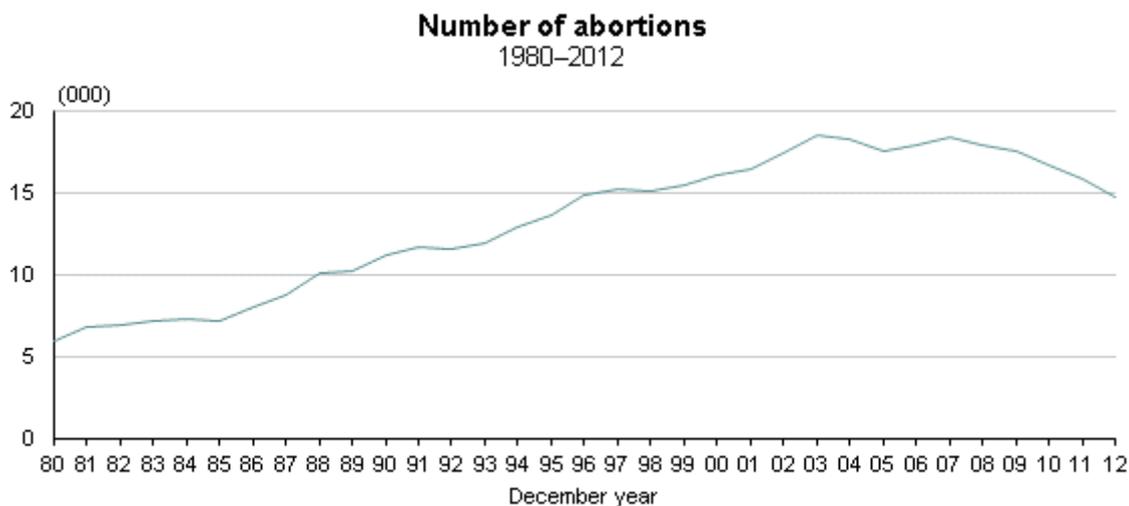
Abortion Statistics: Year ended December 2012

Embargoed until 10:45am – 19 June 2013

Key facts

In the year ended December 2012:

- 14,745 abortions were performed in New Zealand, the lowest number since 1995 (13,652).
- The general abortion rate was 16.1 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years, down from 17.3 per 1,000 in 2011.
- Women aged 20–24 years had the highest abortion rate (29 abortions per 1,000 women aged 20–24 years).
- The median age of women having an abortion was 25 years.
- Most abortions (62 percent) were a woman's first abortion.
- 55 percent of abortions were performed before the 10th week of the pregnancy.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

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19 June 2013
ISSN 1178-0193

Commentary

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Induced abortions down in 2012

Number of abortions: A total of 14,745 abortions were performed in New Zealand in the year ended December 2012, down from 15,863 in 2011. This is the lowest number since 1995 (13,652). The highest number of induced abortions recorded in New Zealand was 18,511 in 2003.

Previous abortions: In 2012, 9,160 abortions were the woman's first abortion, down from 9,821 in 2011. About 25 percent of women having an abortion in 2012 reported having had one previous abortion and 13 percent reported two or more.

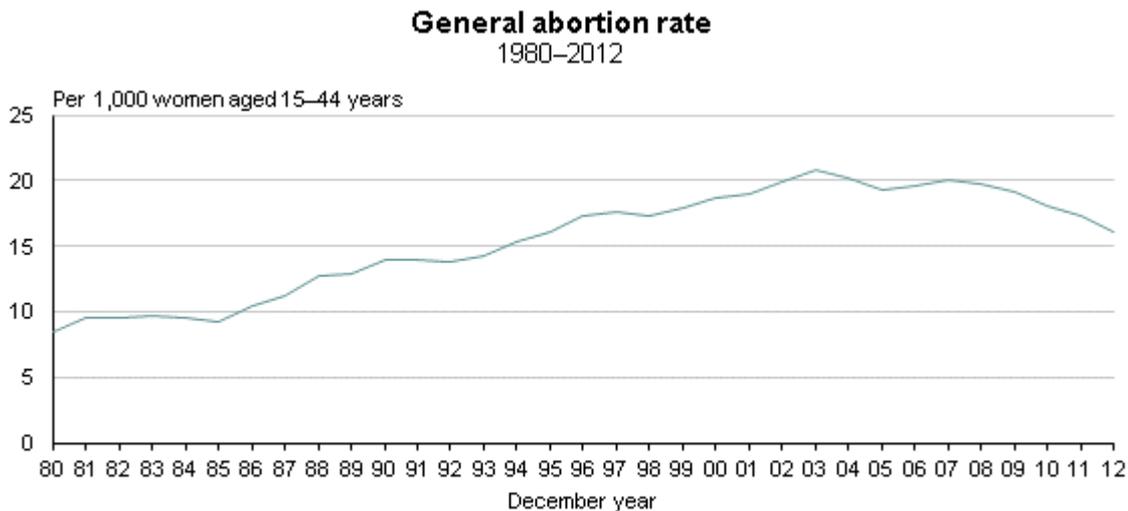
Duration of pregnancy: A greater proportion of abortions are now performed earlier in the pregnancy. In 2012, 55 percent of abortions were performed in the ninth week of gestation or earlier, compared with 36 percent in 2006. In contrast, 39 percent of abortions were performed between the 10th and 13th week, compared with 59 percent in 2006.

Abortion rate drops in 2012

It is important to note that the legal environment and the provision of abortion services affect comparisons over time in abortion rates and in the number of abortions.

The [Definitions](#) and [Data quality](#) sections have more information.

Abortion rates: The general abortion rate (abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) decreased from 17.3 per 1,000 in 2011 to 16.1 per 1,000 in 2012. This is the lowest rate since 1995, when it was also 16.1 per 1,000.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

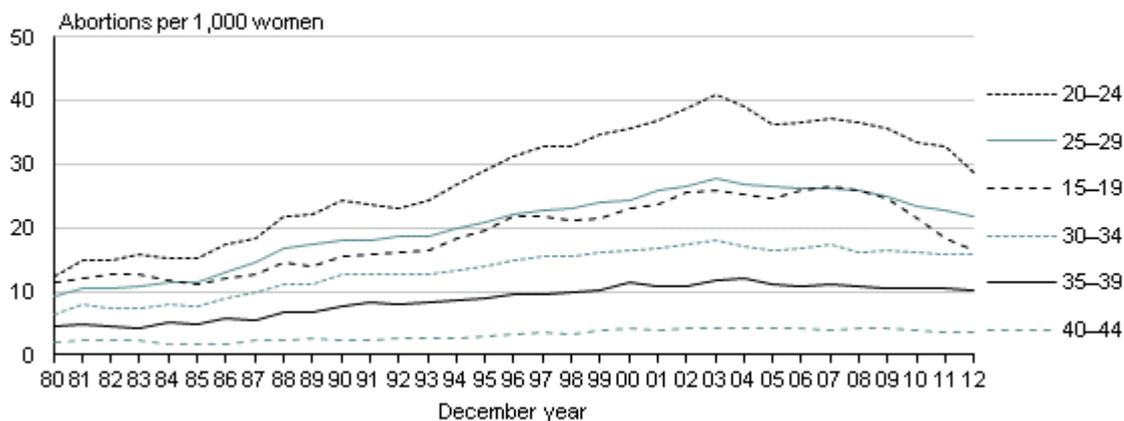
The total abortion rate measures the average number of abortions that 1,000 women would have during their life (based on current age-specific abortion rates). The total abortion rate for 2012 was 484 abortions per 1,000 women, 7 percent lower than the rate of 520 per 1,000 in 2011.

Abortion rates and age of woman: Women aged 20–24 years have more abortions than any other age group, accounting for approximately 3 out of 10 abortions in any year. However, the abortion rate for women in this age group has dropped from a peak of 41 abortions per 1,000 women aged 20–24 years in 2003, to 29 in 2012.

There has also been a notable decrease in the abortion rate for women aged 15–19 years – down from 27 per 1,000 in 2007 to 16 in 2012.

Lower abortion rates indicate that the decrease in the number of abortions was due to fewer women having abortions, rather than to changes in the size or age structure of the population.

Age-specific abortion rates
1980–2012



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Proportion of known pregnancies ending in an abortion: In 2012, the abortion ratio was 193 abortions per 1,000 known pregnancies, compared with 204 in 2011. The 2012 ratio is the lowest recorded since 1995 (191 per 1,000). Known pregnancies include live births, stillbirths, and induced abortions combined.

International comparisons should be interpreted with care

Statistical coverage and laws relating to induced abortion affect international comparisons of abortion statistics. Induced abortions are not a notifiable procedure in many countries and statistics on abortion rates are not available for many countries. Consequently, differences between abortion rates for New Zealand and other countries should be interpreted with care.

International data for 2012 is not available for many countries, so comparisons are made using 2011 data unless otherwise stated. In 2011, the general abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) for New Zealand was 17.3 per 1,000.

The following countries had lower rates:

- the Netherlands (8.7)
- Finland (10.7)

- Scotland (12.0)
- Norway (15.6).

In England and Wales (17.2) the abortion rate was similar to New Zealand, while Australia (19.3 in 2004), the United States (19.6 in 2008), and Sweden (20.9) had higher rates.

For more detailed data see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Definitions

About abortion statistics

Abortion is defined as foetal loss excluding stillbirths. Induced abortions are those initiated voluntarily with the intention of terminating a pregnancy. All other abortions are called spontaneous abortions (miscarriages), even if an external cause is involved, such as injury or high fever.

All abortion statistics and derived abortion rates included in this release are based on legally induced abortions registered in New Zealand. In New Zealand the grounds on which an abortion is permitted are described in the [Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977](#) and in section 187A of the [Crimes Act 1961](#). In any year, 98–99 percent of all abortions are performed because of serious danger to the mental health of the woman. No information is available on spontaneous abortions.

Statistics New Zealand produces and disseminates induced abortion statistics on behalf of the Abortion Supervisory Committee.

More definitions

Duration of pregnancy: refers to the Xth week not complete weeks. For example, 7 weeks and 5 days is recorded as 8 weeks.

Estimated de facto population: is an estimate of all people present in a given area at a given date. The estimated de facto population of New Zealand includes all people present in New Zealand. Visitors from overseas are included, but New Zealand residents who are temporarily overseas are excluded.

Estimated resident population: is an estimate of all people who usually live in a given area at a given date. The estimated resident population of New Zealand includes all residents present in New Zealand. Visitors from overseas are excluded and New Zealand residents who are temporarily overseas are included.

Live births: live births registered in New Zealand by date of registration.

Median age: half are younger and half are older than this age.

Stillbirth: from 1 September 1995, is a child born dead that either weighs 400g or more at birth or is born after the 20th week of gestation. Before 1 September 1995, a stillbirth is defined as a child born dead after 28 weeks of gestation.

For more definitions, see [Glossary of Common Terms](#).

Related links

Upcoming releases

Abortion Statistics: Year ended December 2013 will be released on 18 June 2014.

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Data quality

General information

This section has information about data that does not change between releases.

- [Data source](#)
- [Ethnicity](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [More information](#)
- [Timing of published data](#)

Data source

Abortion information is obtained from the Abortion Supervisory Committee. For every abortion carried out as approved under the [Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977](#), a 'Notification of Abortion' form (ASC Form No. 4) must be filled in by the licensed abortion institution. This is then sent to the Abortion Supervisory Committee. Statistics New Zealand produces and disseminates induced abortion statistics on behalf of the committee.

Ethnicity

Women having an abortion can state more than one ethnicity on the abortion notification form. For this reason, the number of abortions by ethnicity sum to more than the total number of abortions. In abortion statistics, almost all women in the 'other' ethnic group identify with the New Zealander ethnic group.

Confidentiality

In order to comply with Statistics NZ's confidentiality protocols, some categories are collapsed or aggregated in tables and datasets.

More information

See more [Information about Abortion Statistics](#).

Liability

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Timing of published data

Statistics NZ's aim is to publish Abortion Statistics within 22 weeks of the end of the reference year.

Timed statistical releases are delivered using postal and electronic services provided by third parties. Delivery of these releases may be delayed by circumstances outside the control of Statistics NZ. Statistics NZ accepts no responsibility for any such delays.

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Tables

The following tables are available in Excel format from the 'Downloads' box. If you have problems viewing the files, see [opening files and PDFs](#).

1. Induced abortions, rates, and ratios, 1980–2012
2. Induced abortions by previous abortions, 1991–2012
3. Induced abortions by age of woman, 1991–2012
4. Abortion rates by age of woman, 1991–2012
5. Induced abortions by previous live births, 1991–2012
6. Induced abortions by duration of pregnancy, 1991–2012
7. Induced abortions by ethnicity of woman, 2002–12
8. General abortion rate, New Zealand and selected low-fertility countries, 2000–11

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For this release, select the following categories from the Infoshare homepage:

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Group: **Abortion Statistics**