



life

ABORTION: LAW, STATS & FACTS

CURRENT BRITISH LAW

Abortion is illegal in the UK under the Offences Against the Persons Act. However, the 1967 Abortion Act gives some exceptions. The law states:

"A person **shall not be guilty of an offence under the law** relating to abortion when a pregnancy is terminated by a registered medical practitioner if **two registered medical practitioners** are of the opinion, formed in **good faith** –

(a) that the pregnancy has **not exceeded its twenty-fourth 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 or any existing children of her family; *or*

(b) that the termination of the pregnancy is necessary to prevent **grave** permanent injury to the **physical or mental health** of the pregnant woman; *or*

(c) that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve **risk to the life of the pregnant woman**, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; *or*

(d) that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such **physical or mental abnormalities** as to be **seriously handicapped.**"

THE STATS & FACTS

In 2016, **190,406 abortions** were carried out in England & Wales. 5,190 of these were performed on women non-resident in England & Wales (66% from the Irish Republic, 16% from Northern Ireland.)

The abortion rate was highest for **women aged 22**, at 27.9 per 1000 women. From five regions in England & Wales, **London had the highest abortion rate**, at 20 per 1000 women.

- **38% of all women having abortions had undergone one or more abortions**
- 46% of abortions to women aged 35+ had one or more abortions
- 7% had undergone 2 previous abortions
- 58 women had 8 or more abortions

Just over four-fifths (81%) of all abortions were carried out for **single women**.

98%, in England & Wales are funded by the NHS; of those funded by the NHS, 68% take place in the independent sector (e.g. in BPAS clinics, Marie Stopes etc.) under NHS contract.

The vast **majority of abortions - 97%, 180,794** - were carried out for "**risk ... of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman**"

Of which **99.8%** were for risk to the **mental health** of the pregnant woman.

There were **3,208 abortions** for "**substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.**" Over half of these were for congenital malformations and 37% (1,187) were for chromosomal disorders, including **22%, 706, for Down's Syndrome.**



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