

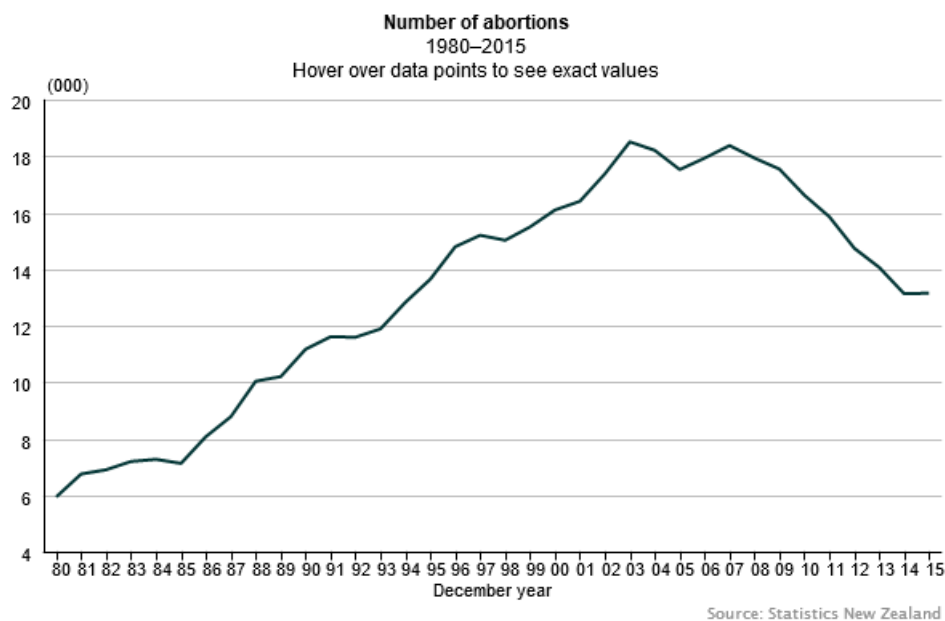
# Abortion Statistics: Year ended December 2015

Embargoed until 10:45am – 17 June 2016

## Key facts

In the year ended December 2015:

- 13,155 abortions were performed in New Zealand, similar to 2014 (13,137).
- The general abortion rate was 14.2 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years, down slightly from 14.4 per 1,000 in 2014.
- Women aged 20–24 years had the highest abortion rate (23 abortions per 1,000 women aged 20–24 years).
- Most abortions (63 percent) were a woman's first abortion.
- 55 percent of abortions were performed before the 10th week of the pregnancy.
- 18 percent of known pregnancies (live births, stillbirths, and abortions) ended in an abortion.



See the *Abortions Statistics: Year ended December 2015* [commentary](#) and [tables](#) for more information.

Carol Slappendel, Acting Government Statistician  
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## Commentary

- [Induced abortions stable in 2015](#)
- [Abortion rate falls slightly in 2015](#)
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### Induced abortions stable in 2015

**Number of abortions similar to 2014:** A total of 13,155 abortions were performed in New Zealand in the year ended December 2015, comparable with the 13,137 performed in 2014. The highest number of induced abortions recorded in New Zealand was 18,511 in 2003.

**Nearly two-thirds of abortions were the woman's first:** In 2015, 8,351 abortions (63 percent) were the woman's first abortion. Almost 24 percent of women having an abortion in 2015 reported having had one previous abortion and 13 percent reported two or more.

**Over half of abortions were performed before 10 weeks of pregnancy:** A greater proportion of abortions are now performed earlier in the pregnancy. In 2015, 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 in 2015, compared with 59 percent in 2006.

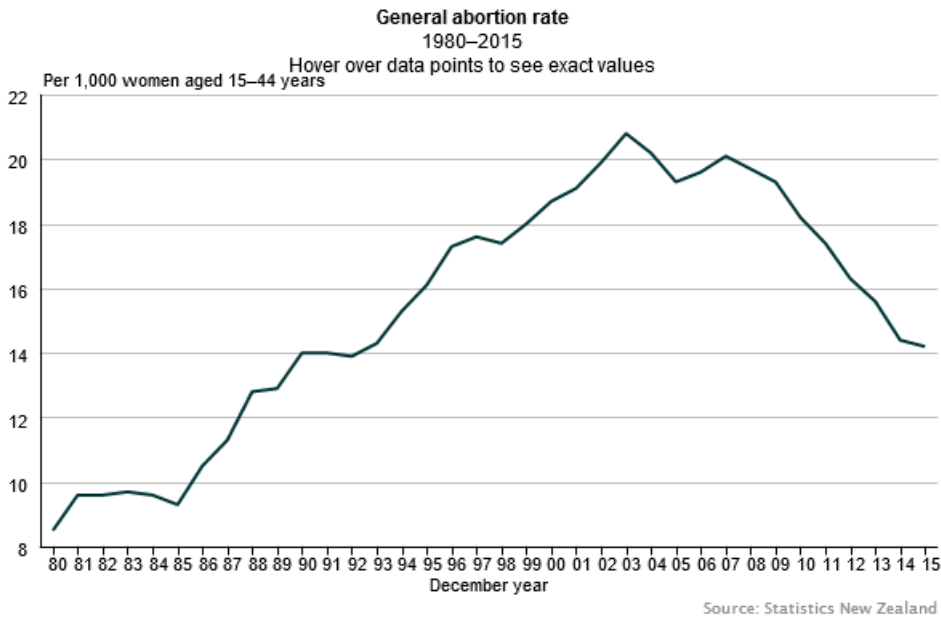
**Many women already have children:** In 2015, 57 percent of women having an abortion had already had one or more previous live births, compared with 49 percent in 2006. This reflects a drop in the proportion of younger women having abortions. In 2015, 41 percent of women having an abortion were aged under 25 years, compared with 52 percent in 2006.

### Abortion rate falls slightly in 2015

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.

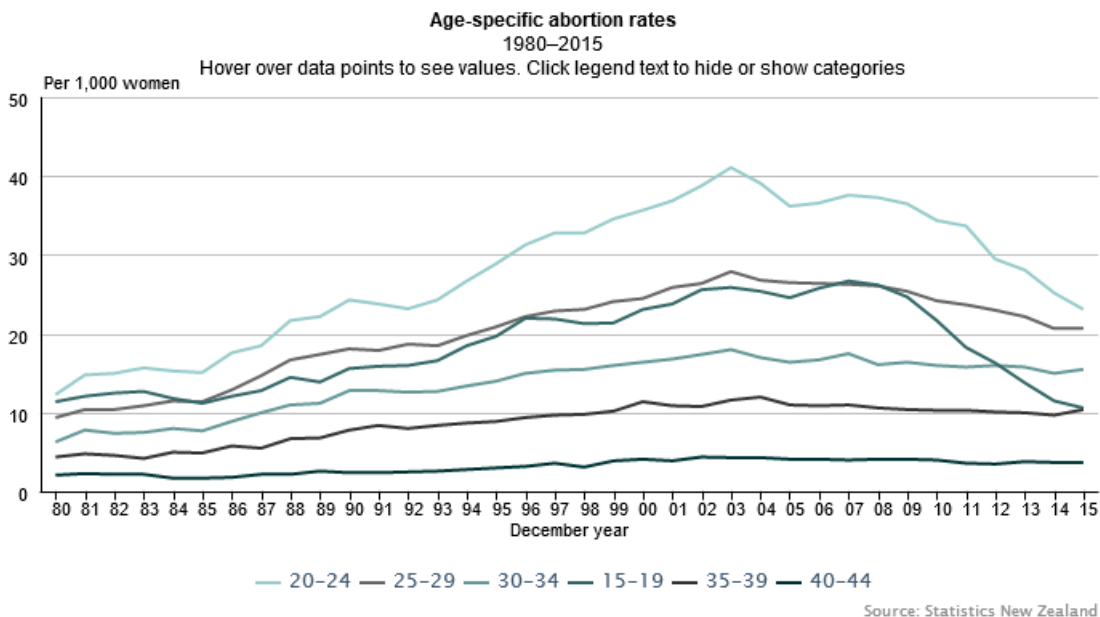
See [Abortion Statistics – DataInfo+](#) for more information about significant events impacting this series.

**Abortion rates:** The general abortion rate (abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) decreased slightly from 14.4 per 1,000 in 2014, to 14.2 in 2015. This is the lowest rate in over 20 years (in 1992 it was 13.9 per 1,000), and significantly lower than the peak of 20.8 per 1,000 in 2003.



**Women aged 20–24 have highest abortion rate:** Women aged 20–24 years have more abortions than any other age group, accounting for about 3 out of 10 abortions in any year. However, the abortion rate for women in this age group dropped from a peak of 41 abortions per 1,000 women aged 20–24 years in 2003, to 23 per 1,000 in 2015.

The abortion rate for women aged 15–19 years decreased to a record low, down from 26 per 1,000 in 2003 to 11 per 1,000 in 2015.



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 2015 was 422 abortions per 1,000 women, 2 percent lower than the rate of 432 per 1,000 in 2014. The

total abortion rate adjusts for changes in the age structure within the broader age group used by the general abortion rate.

**Nearly 18 percent of known pregnancies ended in an abortion:** In 2015, the abortion ratio was 177 abortions per 1,000 known pregnancies, compared with 186 in 2014. The 2015 ratio was the lowest recorded in over 20 years (in 1993 it was 168 per 1,000). Known pregnancies include live births, stillbirths, and induced abortions combined. The highest recorded abortion ratio was in 2003, with 1 in 4 (247 per 1,000) known pregnancies ending in abortion.

## **Interpret international comparisons with care**

Differences in 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, take care when you interpret differences between abortion rates for New Zealand and other countries.

International data for 2015 is not available for many countries, so the following comparisons use 2014 data unless otherwise stated. In 2014, the general abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) for New Zealand was 14.4 per 1,000.

The following countries had lower rates:

- Germany (7.0)
- the Netherlands (8.5)
- Finland (10.0)
- Scotland (11.3).

The rates for Norway (13.9) and Denmark (14.3) were similar to New Zealand (14.4), while England and Wales (16.5), and Sweden (20.2) had higher rates.

## **Find data tables**

For more information see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

For more tables (including regional data) and longer time series see the [Infoshare](#) tool from our website selecting the subject 'Health' and the group 'Abortion Statistics – ABN'.

## **Definitions**

See [Abortion Statistics concepts – DataInfo+](#) for definitions of terms used in this release.

The link to definitions is also available on the [Related links](#) page of this release.

## Related links

- [Next release](#)
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*Abortion Statistics: Year ended December 2016* will be released in June 2017.

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## Past releases

[Abortion statistics](#) has links to past releases.

## Data quality

### General information

#### **Abortion Statistics – DataInfo+**

General methodology used to produce these statistics.

#### **Abortion Statistics concepts – DataInfo+**

Definitions of terms used in this release.

## Related information

### **Abortion**

See links to reports, articles, and other information about abortion statistics.

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## **Data quality**

See [Abortion Statistics – DataInfo+](#) for the general methodology used to produce these statistics.

The link to methodology is also available on the [Related links](#) page of this release.

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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
2. Induced abortions by previous abortions
3. Induced abortions by age of woman
4. Abortion rates by age of woman
5. Induced abortions by previous live births
6. Induced abortions by duration of pregnancy
7. Induced abortions by ethnicity of woman
8. General abortion rate, New Zealand and selected low-fertility countries

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