

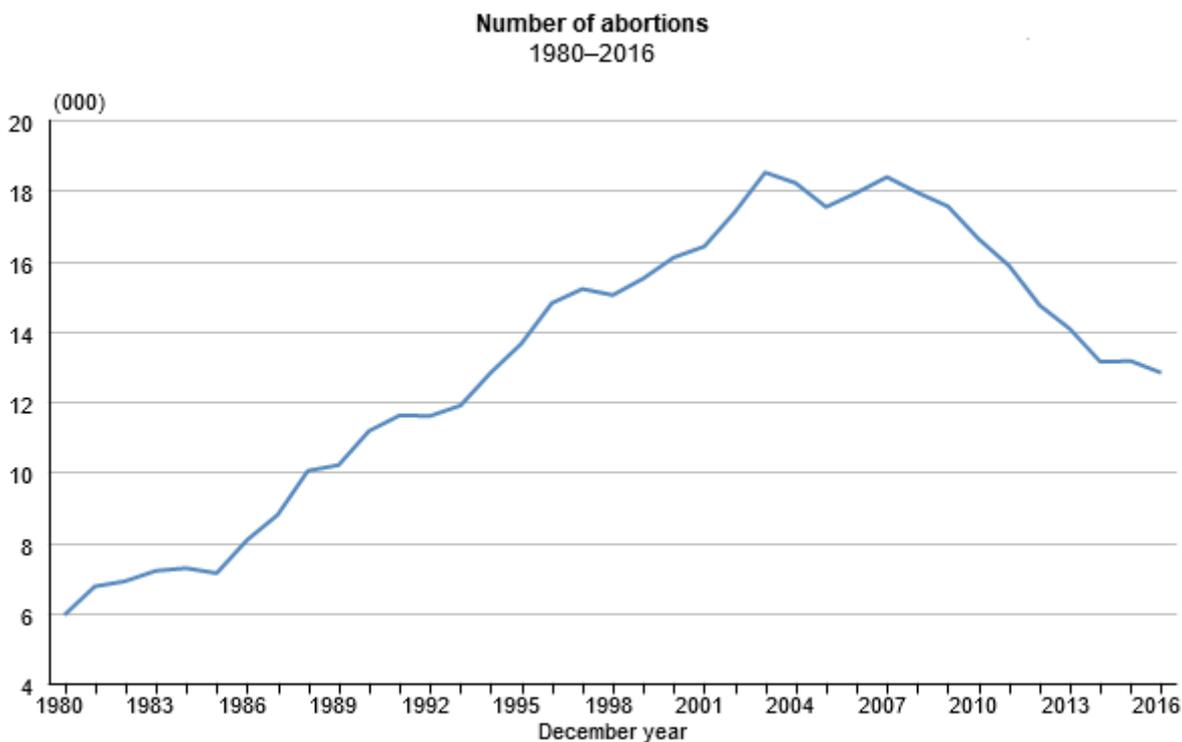
Abortion Statistics: Year ended December 2016

Embargoed until 10:45am – 19 June 2017

Key facts

In the year ended December 2016:

- 12,823 abortions were performed in New Zealand, 332 (3 percent) fewer than in 2015 (13,155).
- The general abortion rate was 13.5 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years, down from 14.2 per 1,000 in 2015.
- Women aged 20–24 years had the highest abortion rate (21 abortions per 1,000 women aged 20–24 years), down from a high of 41 in 2003.
- Most abortions (64 percent) were a woman's first abortion.
- 57 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 2016* [commentary](#) and [tables](#) for more information.

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Commentary

- [Fewer abortions in 2016](#)
- [Lower abortion rate in 2016](#)
- [Interpret international comparisons with care](#)
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Fewer abortions in 2016

Fewer abortions than in 2015: A total of 12,823 abortions were performed in New Zealand in the year ended December 2016, 332 (3 percent) fewer than the 13,155 performed in 2015. 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 2016, 8,144 abortions (64 percent) were the woman's first abortion. Just over 23 percent of women having an abortion in 2016 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 2016, 57 percent of abortions were performed in the ninth week of gestation or earlier, compared with 36 percent in 2006. In contrast, 37 percent of abortions were performed between the 10th and 13th week in 2016, compared with 59 percent in 2006.

Many women already have children: In 2016, 57 percent of women having an abortion had already had one or more previous live births, compared with 49 percent in 2003. This reflects a drop in the proportion of younger women having abortions. In 2016, 39 percent of women having an abortion were aged under 25 years, compared with 51 percent in 2003.

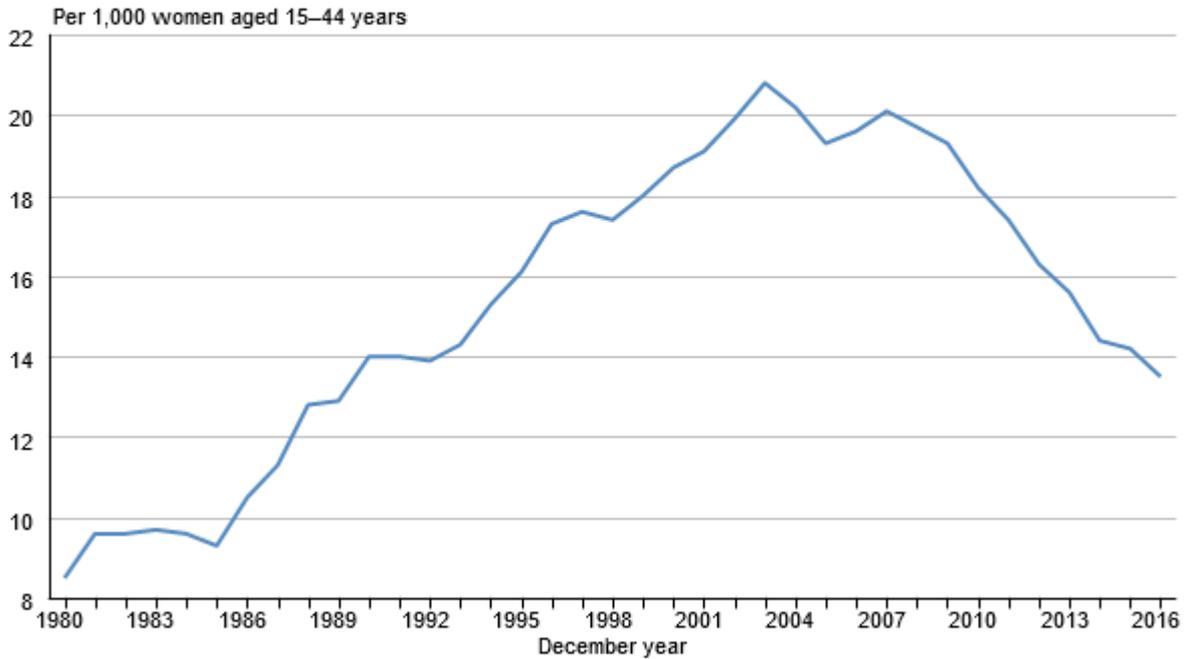
Lower abortion rate in 2016

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 affecting this series.

Abortion rates: The general abortion rate (abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) decreased from 14.2 per 1,000 in 2015, to 13.5 in 2016. The rate has dropped each year since 2008. The 2016 rate is the lowest in over 25 years (in 1989 it was 12.9 per 1,000), and significantly lower than the peak of 20.8 per 1,000 in 2003.

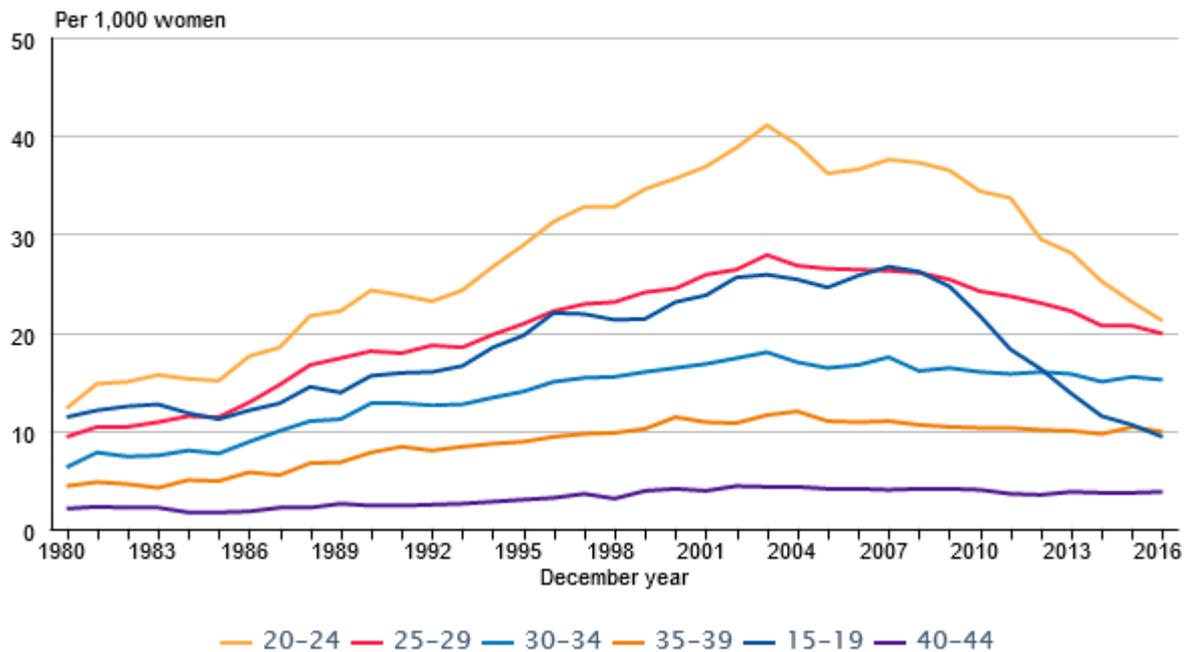
General abortion rate 1980–2016



Women aged 20–24 have highest abortion rate: Women aged 20–24 years have more abortions than any other age group, accounting for about 28 percent of abortions in 2016. 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 21 per 1,000 in 2016.

The abortion rate for women aged 15–19 years decreased to a record low, down from 26 per 1,000 in 2003 to 9 per 1,000 in 2016.

Age-specific abortion rates 1980–2016



Source: Stats NZ

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 2016 was 399 abortions per 1,000 women, 6 percent lower than the rate of 422 per 1,000 in 2015. 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: The abortion ratio was 177 abortions per 1,000 known pregnancies in 2015 and 2016. Although the number of abortions in 2016 was lower than in 2015, there were also fewer births compared with 2015. This combination of fewer abortions and fewer births meant that the abortion ratio remained essentially unchanged between 2015 and 2016. The 2015 and 2016 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 2016 is not available for many countries, so the following comparisons use 2015 data unless otherwise stated. In 2015, the general abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years) for New Zealand was 14.2 per 1,000.

The following countries had lower rates:

- Germany (7.0)
- the Netherlands (8.6)
- Finland (9.7)
- Scotland (11.7).

The rates for Norway (13.8), Denmark (14.6), and United States (14.6 in 2014) were similar to New Zealand (14.2), while England and Wales (16.6), France (17.1) and Sweden (20.9) 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'.

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Abortion Statistics concepts – DataInfo+

Definitions of terms used in 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
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8. International general abortion rates

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