



FSRH Statement on Release of the Department of Health and Social Care's Abortion Statistics, England and Wales, 2018

17th June 2019

Statistics published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) last week show that abortion rates have increased by 4% since 2017. The figure for 2018 was 200,608. This number is the highest on record.

FSRH strongly supports women's access to abortion care. We are concerned, however, that an increase in abortion rates may signal an unmet need for contraception. Our members continue to report reduced access to contraception in general practice, citing fragmented healthcare, reduced funding and a lack of training as key causes of this.

Of particular concern is the situation of women aged 30 and over; with abortion rates for women aged 30-34 increasing from 15.6 per 1,000 women in 2008 to 19.9 in 2018, and rates for women aged 35 and over increasing from 6.7 per 1,000 women in 2008 to 9.2 per 1,000 women in 2018. Whilst we welcome contraceptive services aimed at younger women, which are undoubtedly crucial, these statistics clearly underline the likely need for women over the age of 30 to have equal focus in terms of contraceptive provision.

The data also indicates that women living in more deprived areas are much less able to access contraception, presenting a worrying trend of abortion rates rising as levels of deprivation increase. The rate in the most deprived decile is 25.2 per 1000. This is over twice the rate in the least deprived decile - 11.6.

With these statistics in mind, FSRH emphasises that access to contraceptive provision and information must be understood as vital features of abortion care for all age groups, no matter their geographical location. Likewise, women must be able to access safe and legal abortion care quickly should they require it.

Commenting on the statistics, FSRH President, Dr Asha Kasliwal, said:

"The figures released today should prompt concern for a number of reasons. The data may indicate that women's contraceptive needs are not being met. In addition, this data also indicates that 'older' age groups, and those in more disadvantaged areas, continue to be disproportionately deprived of reproductive healthcare.

As FSRH has [evidenced](#) time-and-time again, a lack of integrated healthcare and continued cuts to public health funding, substantially undermines women's rights to contraception, timely abortion care, and information.

This makes little economic sense – access to sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) can be highly cost-saving, with Public Health England recently [reporting](#) that for every £1 spent on publicly-funded contraceptive services, £9 is saved.

FSRH therefore repeats its request for health and social care leaders to secure well-structured and integrated healthcare pathways around contraception, with accessible abortion care and accurate information for women of all ages and backgrounds."



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Notes to editors:

- The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000 members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care. For more information please visit: www.fsrh.org
- Department of Health Report on abortion statistics in England and Wales for 2018 available [here](#).

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