

Pills taken for most abortions

Kat Lay Health Correspondent

More medical than surgical abortions were carried out in England and Wales last year for the first time, figures have revealed.

Of more than 190,000 abortions, 51 per cent were medical, where a pill is taken to end a pregnancy. Ten years ago medical abortions made up only 20 per cent of procedures, while in 2013 the number was 49 per cent.

The total number of abortions last year was down slightly from 190,800 in 2013, and has fallen every year since 2007. Ninety-two per cent of abortions were performed at less than 13 weeks, and 80 per cent were carried out at less than ten weeks, compared with 60 per cent a decade ago.

Genevieve Edwards, the director of policy at Marie Stopes UK, said: "It is encouraging that women are increasingly able to get rapid access to abortion, with access to medical abortion playing an important role. If we want to see a significant drop in numbers we must ensure all women can also access the full range of contraception."

Thirty-seven per cent of abortions were provided to women who had had at least one previous abortion, and 54 per cent to women who had already had a child.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service said that women often experienced unwanted pregnancy shortly after giving birth, and that more should be done to support their contraceptive needs at that time.

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