

INDUCED ABORTION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1999-2004

**REPORT OF THE
WA ABORTION NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

JULY 2005

Maternal and Child Health Unit
Information Collection and Management
Department of Health
Western Australia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge with thanks the medical practitioners who completed and submitted the notification forms on which the data collection is based.

Thanks are also due to the administrative staff at hospitals and clinics who assisted with the notification process, and to the clerical staff in the Maternal and Child Health Unit for coding and collating the data.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Ms Vivien Gee
Manager, Maternal and Child Health Unit
Information Collection and Management
Department of Health
189 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004

Telephone: (08) 9222 4262
Facsimile: (08) 9222 4236
Email: vivien.gee@health.wa.gov.au

Internet: www.health.wa.gov.au/publications

CITATION

The citation below should be used in reference to this publication.

Straton J, Godman K, Gee V. (2005). Induced abortion in Western Australia 1999-2004. Report of the WA Abortion Notification System. Department of Health. Perth, Western Australia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. BACKGROUND	2
1.1 Legal status of induced abortion in Western Australia.....	2
1.2 The Abortion Notification System	2
2. TIME TRENDS IN ABORTION RATES	3
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN HAVING INDUCED ABORTIONS	4
3.1 Age	4
3.1.1 <i>Percentage distribution of abortions by age</i>	4
3.1.2 <i>Abortion rates and birth rates by age group</i>	5
3.1.3 <i>The abortion proportion by age group</i>	6
3.2 Place of residence	7
4. DETAILS ABOUT THE INDUCED ABORTIONS	9
4.1 Facilities where abortions were performed	9
4.2 Gestational age (duration of pregnancy)	10
4.3 Method of induced abortion	11
4.5 Abortions for suspected or identified congenital malformations	12
5. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS	13
Appendix A	14
Appendix B	15

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Number and rate of induced abortions, WA, 1999-2004.....	3
Table 2. Induced abortions by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004	4
Table 3a. Induced abortion rates ¹ by age of woman. WA, 2002-2004	5
Table 3b. Birth rates by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004	5
Table 4a. Induced abortions by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004	6
Table 4b. Livebirths by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004	6
Table 4c. Abortion proportion per 100 (livebirths plus abortions) by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004 ...	6
Table 5. Induced abortions by place of residence, WA, 2002-2004	8
Table 6. Induced abortions by facility, WA, 2002-2004.....	9
Table 7. Induced abortions by gestational age, WA, 1999-2004	10
Table 8. Induced abortions by method, WA, 2002-2004.....	11
Table 9. International comparisons of induced abortions ^{1 2}	13
Table A1. Population data ¹ by age for women aged 15-44, WA, 2002-2004.....	14
Table A2. Population data ¹ by place of residence for women aged 15-44, WA, 2002-2004	14

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Rates of induced abortions, WA, 1999-2004	3
Figure 2. Percentage distribution of abortions by age, WA, 2004.....	4
Figure 3. Age-specific rates of induced abortions and births, WA, 2004	5
Figure 4. Abortion proportion per 100 (livebirths plus abortions), WA, 2004	7
Figure 5. Abortion rate by place of residence, WA, 2004	8
Figure 6. Percentage distribution of abortions by facility, WA, 2004.....	9
Figure 7. Percentage distribution of abortions by gestational age, WA, 2004	11
Figure 8. Percentage distribution of abortion method, WA, 2004	12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the statistics on induced abortion in WA since the passage of the *Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act* in 1998. Because of changes to the notification form in 2001, the most complete information is available from 2002 onwards.

The report includes information about time trends in abortion rates, characteristics of women having abortions (age and place of residence), and details about the abortions including the method, duration of pregnancy and the facilities where the abortions were performed. A comparison with national and international rates is also provided.

The rates of induced abortion in WA since 1998 are comparable with estimates of the rates in the late 1980's and early 1990's, before the passage of the legislation. There has been a slight decline in the abortion rate in the past two years, but only among women living in the metropolitan area.

In 2004, there were 7847 induced abortions in WA, and the rate of induced abortion was 18.2 per 1000 women of reproductive age (15-44 years). An estimate of the proportion of pregnancies ending in induced abortion (abortion proportion) indicates that approximately 24 per cent of pregnancies resulted in termination.

Induced abortions occur across the reproductive age range, with women in their twenties having the highest abortion rates. As might be expected, the groups with the highest proportion of pregnancies being terminated are those at the extremes of reproductive age (teenagers and women over 40). More than half the pregnancies in WA teenagers ended in induced abortion.

Rates of induced abortion according to the place of residence of the woman were 25% lower in rural areas than in the metropolitan area, and there was some variation in the rates in rural areas. Although 17% of abortions were performed on women with a non-metropolitan place of residence, only 5% of abortions took place in rural public hospitals.

Over 90% of induced abortions in WA took place in the first three months of pregnancy and were carried out by vacuum aspiration, the accepted method of surgical abortion. Abortions over 20 weeks accounted for 0.5% of all abortions.

More than 90% of induced abortions took place in the private sector, almost half in private clinics in the metropolitan area.

From the figures presented here it appears that women in WA do have ready access to early abortion, although this does not exclude limited access or undue delay for some groups or individuals. There may be issues of access for rural women and disadvantaged women.

The most recent rates of induced abortion in WA (18.2 per 1000) are somewhat higher than those in South Australia (16.7 per 1000) but they are comparable with national estimates (19.7 per 1000). A number of other developed countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, have significantly lower induced abortion rates and abortion proportions than either Western Australia or Australia as a whole¹. While some of the international differences may reflect differences in access to abortion services, it is clear that there is considerable scope for reducing rates of unplanned pregnancy in WA. The figures provided in this report can act as a benchmark against which to judge the success of such efforts in WA.

¹ Chan A, Sage LC. Estimating Australia's abortion rates 1985-2003. *MJA* 2005; 182 (9): 447-452

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Legal status of induced abortion in Western Australia

The *Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act* was enacted in May 1998. Prior to that time, induced abortion had been readily available in WA for several years (with the procedure claimable under Medicare), but the legal position was uncertain and there had never been a test case. The 1998 Act made changes to the provisions relating to abortion in the *Criminal Code* and introduced a new section to the *Health Act 1911* setting out the requirements for the performance of an abortion to be justified.

The effect of the amendments was to make it lawful to perform an abortion where the abortion is:

- a) performed by a medical practitioner in good faith and with reasonable care and skill; and
- b) justified under section 334 of the *Health Act*

Abortion is available at the request of the women up to 20 weeks gestation, provided she has given informed consent. The counselling requirements for informed consent are spelled out in Section 334 of the *Health Act*. There are additional requirements for informed consent with respect to dependent minors. After 20 weeks gestation, the performance of the abortion must be approved by a medical panel appointed by the Minister for Health and it must be carried out in an approved facility².

1.2 The Abortion Notification System

Section 335 (d) of the *Health Act 1911* requires that *when a medical practitioner performs an abortion, the medical practitioner shall notify the Executive Director Public Health of the fact in the prescribed form within 14 days of the abortion being performed*. Paragraph 335 (e) states that *a notification under paragraph (d) must not contain any particulars from which it may be possible to ascertain the identity of the patient*.

The notification form developed in June 1998, immediately after the passage of the legislation, was modified in 2001 after wide consultation. Accordingly, information about some variables is only available from 2002 onwards. The notification form is attached to this report (see appendix B). The notification system is managed by the Information Collection and Management Branch in the Department of Health. Further details about the notification process are available from:

<http://www.notifications.health.wa.gov.au/notifications/maternal/abortions.cfm>

² Department of Health, WA. *Notes for medical practitioners on the abortion legislation in Western Australia*. 2001.

2. TIME TRENDS IN ABORTION RATES

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the trends in the rate of induced abortion per 1000 women aged 15-44 years for the years 1999-2004, based on the Abortion Notification System. The rates were fairly constant in the first part of the period, immediately after the passage of the legislation, but there has been a slight decline in the past two years.³

There are no estimates of rates of induced abortion in WA from the years immediately before the passage of the abortion legislation in 1998, but an earlier Health Department report⁴ estimated rates of abortion which are comparable with those in WA following the legislation. That report estimated the number of induced abortions by adding the numbers of induced abortions carried out in hospitals (from the Hospital Morbidity Data System) to the numbers carried out in the private clinics.⁵ For example, in 1991, the rate was 18.5 per 1000 women aged 15-49 or 20.7 per 1000 women aged 15-44. This is a slightly higher rate than those from 1999 onwards, but there is recent evidence that using hospital data overestimates the numbers of induced abortions (see below).

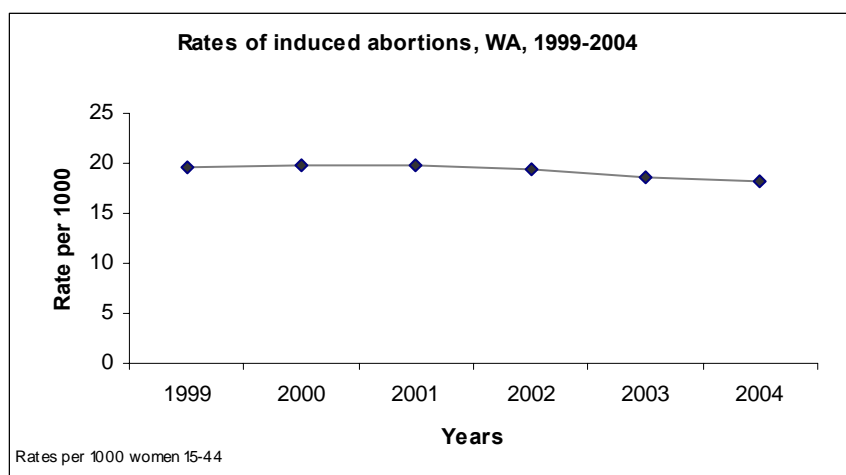
Chan and Sage have recently estimated national abortion rates using a combination of Medicare claims and hospital data for public patients⁶. Adjusting for over and underestimation, they calculated the national rate for 2003 to be 19.7 per 1000, slightly above the WA rate of 18.6 per 1000 for that year. The only other State with compulsory notification comparable to WA is South Australia, where the rate was 16.7 per 1000 in 2003.

Table 1. Number and rate of induced abortions, WA, 1999-2004

Year	Number of Abortions	Pop ⁿ of Women 15-44 ²	Rate per 1000 ¹
1999	8220	417,578	19.7
2000	8337	419,838	19.9
2001	8378	420,758	19.9
2002	8262	424,944	19.4
2003	7933	426,756	18.6
2004	7847	429,844	18.2

¹ Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44. Numerator includes abortions at all ages

Figure 1



³ It should be noted that the denominator for this rate is the female population aged 15-44 years, a range which is used in international statistics. To facilitate national and international comparisons, abortions at all ages are included in the numerator, although it is acknowledged that a small number of these occur in women outside the age range.

⁴ Dawes, V *Early pregnancy losses, Western Australian 1980-1991*. Health Department of WA, Statistical Series 38, 1993.

⁵ The Hospital Morbidity Data System (HMDS) covers all hospital admissions.

⁶ Chan A, Sage LC. Estimating Australia's abortion rates 1985-2003. *MJA* 2005; 182 (9): 447-452

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN HAVING INDUCED ABORTIONS

3.1 Age

There are various ways of looking at induced abortion by age, including the way in which abortions are distributed across the age groups (Table 2, Figure 2), the rate of abortion per 1000 women in each age group (Table 3, Figure 3) and the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion (Table 4, Figure 4).

3.1.1 Percentage distribution of abortions by age

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, abortions are performed across the reproductive age range with women in their twenties accounting for almost half the number of abortions performed. Almost 20 percent of abortions were performed in teenagers.

Table 2. Induced abortions by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Total	Age group (yrs)							
		<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
Number									
2002	8091 ¹	23	1564	2261	1695	1331	844	338	35
2003	7862 ²	20	1504	2196	1671	1262	816	358	35
2004	7791 ³	35	1487	2152	1605	1264	851	363	34
Percentage ⁴									
2002	8091 ¹	0.3	19.3	27.9	21.0	16.5	10.4	4.2	0.4
2003	7862 ²	0.3	19.1	27.9	21.2	16.1	10.4	4.5	0.5
2004	7791 ³	0.5	19.1	27.6	20.6	16.2	10.9	4.7	0.4

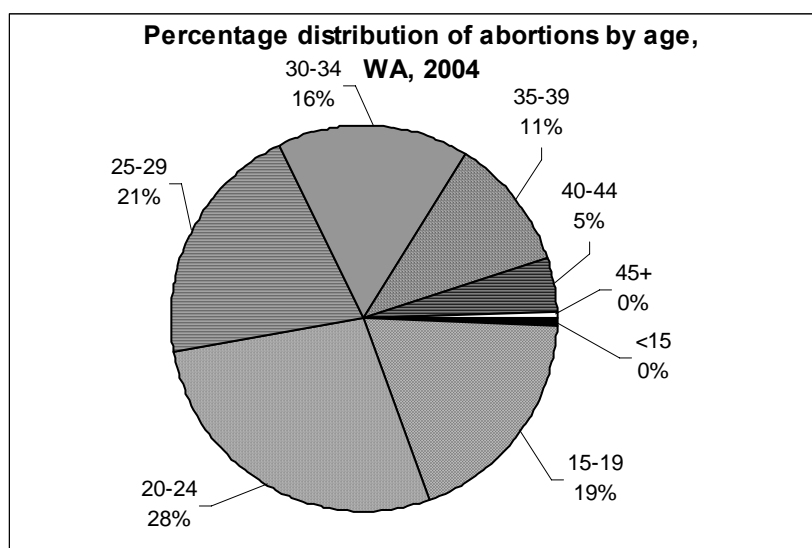
¹ Note: For 2002, there are 171 records with missing data on age

² Note: For 2003, there are 71 records with missing data on age

³ Note: For 2004, there are 56 records with missing data on age

⁴ Percentages are row percentages for each year

Figure 2



Note: percentages are rounded to nearest whole number

3.1.2 Abortion rates and birth rates by age group

Looking at abortion rates and birth rates in each age group, (Table 3, Figure 3), the highest abortion rates (31 per 1000 in 2004) are in women in the 20-24 year age group, followed by women aged 25-29 years. The highest birth rate is in women aged 30-34 years followed by the 25-29 year age group.

Table 3a. Induced abortion rates¹ by age of woman. WA, 2002-2004

Year	Age group (yrs)						Overall Rate ⁵
	15-19 ³	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44 ⁴	
2002	22.8	34.0	25.6	18.2	11.5	4.9	19.0
2003	21.8	32.4	25.6	17.1	11.2	5.1	18.4
2004	21.7	30.8	24.5	17.1	11.6	5.1	18.1

¹ Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women for each age group.

³ The abortion rate for women aged 15-19 years includes abortions for younger ages

⁴ The abortion rate for women aged 40-44 years includes abortions for older ages

⁵ The total abortion rate includes all abortions where age was known

Table 3b. Birth rates² by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Age group (yrs)						Overall Rate
	15-19 ⁶	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44 ⁷	
2002	20.5	60.6	107.7	107.4	47.3	8.7	57.9
2003	19.0	55.9	103.5	111.0	50.7	9.5	57.4
2004	19.8	56.5	105.5	113.6	54.1	9.6	58.9

² Birth Rate = Number of live births per 1000 women for each age group.

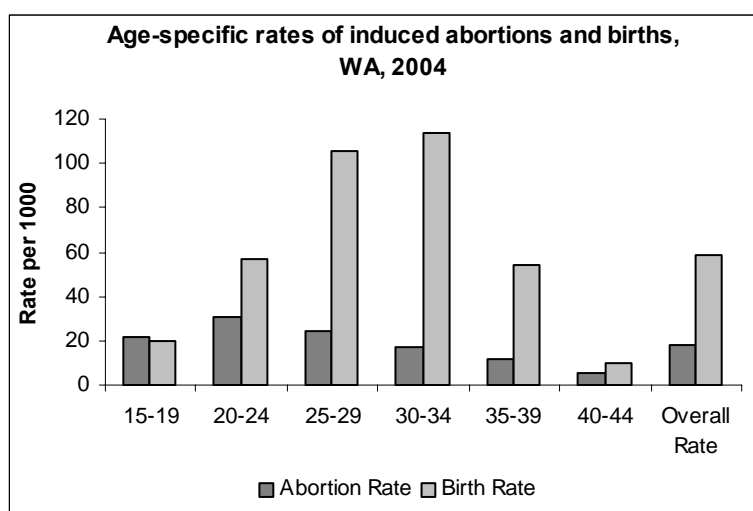
⁶ The birth rate for women aged 15-19 years includes births for younger ages

⁷ The birth rate for women aged 40-44 years includes births for older ages

Source: WA Midwives notification system

Refer to Appendix A for population data

Figure 3



3.1.3 The abortion proportion by age group

The abortion proportion is expressed as the number of abortions per 100 (abortions plus livebirths). While the figure “abortions plus live births” clearly does not include *all* pregnancies (spontaneous abortions and stillbirths are not included), it has been used here because it is the international standard way of reporting the abortion proportion.

As would be expected, the proportion of pregnancies ending in induced abortion is highest at each end of the reproductive age range. Among teenagers and among women over 45, more than half of the “known pregnancies” (abortions plus livebirths) end in induced abortion. The lowest proportions of pregnancies ending in induced abortion are in women in their thirties.

Table 4a. Induced abortions by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Total	Age group (yrs)							
		<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
2002 ¹	8091	23	1564	2261	1695	1331	844	338	35
2003 ²	7862	20	1504	2196	1671	1262	816	358	35
2004 ³	7791	35	1487	2152	1605	1264	851	363	34

¹ Note: For 2002, there are 171 records with missing data on age

² Note: For 2003, there are 71 records with missing data on age

³ Note: For 2004, there are 56 records with missing data on age

Table 4b. Livebirths⁴ by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Total	Age group (yrs)							
		<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
2002	24609	18	1413	4026	7139	7873	3481	628	31
2003	24499	15	1315	3789	6769	8173	3703	697	36
2004	25253	16	1374	3946	6919	8374	3955	716	25

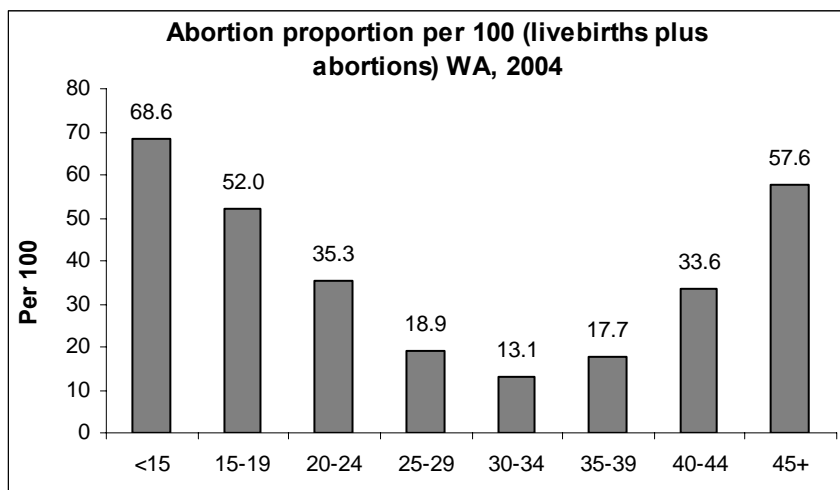
⁴ Source: WA Midwives Notification System 2002-2004

Table 4c. Abortion proportion⁵ per 100 (livebirths plus abortions) by age of woman, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Age group (yrs)								
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+	Overall
2002	56.1	52.5	36.0	19.2	14.5	19.5	35.0	53.0	24.7
2003	57.1	53.3	36.7	19.8	13.4	18.1	33.9	49.3	24.3
2004	68.6	52.0	35.3	18.9	13.1	17.7	33.6	57.6	23.6

⁵ Abortion proportion = Abortions / (Abortions + Live Births)

Figure 4



3.2 Place of residence

The postcode of the woman's place of residence is collected on the notification form. These postcodes have been grouped according to the boundaries of the various health service areas (North Metropolitan, South Metropolitan and Southwest Area Health Service, and the various regions of WA Country Health Services). Table 7 gives the abortion rate for each area per 1000 women aged 15-44 in that area. The Southwest Area Health Service has been included in the non-metropolitan total.

As Table 7 and Figure 5 show, the overall non-metropolitan abortion rate in 2004 was almost 25% lower than the metropolitan rate. It is not clear whether these represent differences in access to abortion or differences in preferences, but these findings are consistent with an earlier study in WA⁷. Women living in non-metropolitan areas accounted for 22% of the female population of reproductive age, and 17% of the induced abortions.

The abortion rates in most non-metropolitan areas are fairly consistent for the three years (2002-2004), except for the Kimberley where there was a marked drop in the abortion rate over the three-year period. This may reflect a change in the availability of staff to carry out the procedure.

Over the past three years, there has been a decline in the abortion rate in the metropolitan area (from 20.1 per 1000 women aged 15-44 to 18.8 per 1000), while the overall non-metropolitan rate has stayed steady.

In 2004, the highest rates were in the metropolitan area, both North and South, while among the non-metropolitan regions the highest rates were in the Pilbara Gascoyne and Southwest. The differences between regions may reflect differences in a number of factors, such as the proportion of women at different ages, the rates of unwanted pregnancy, preferences for pregnancy outcomes or access to induced abortion.

⁷ Straton JAY Abortion in Western Australia, 1985. in Moore DJ *Perinatal Statistics in Western Australia*. Health Department of WA, 1987 pp 1-30

Table 5. Induced abortions by place of residence, WA, 2002-2004

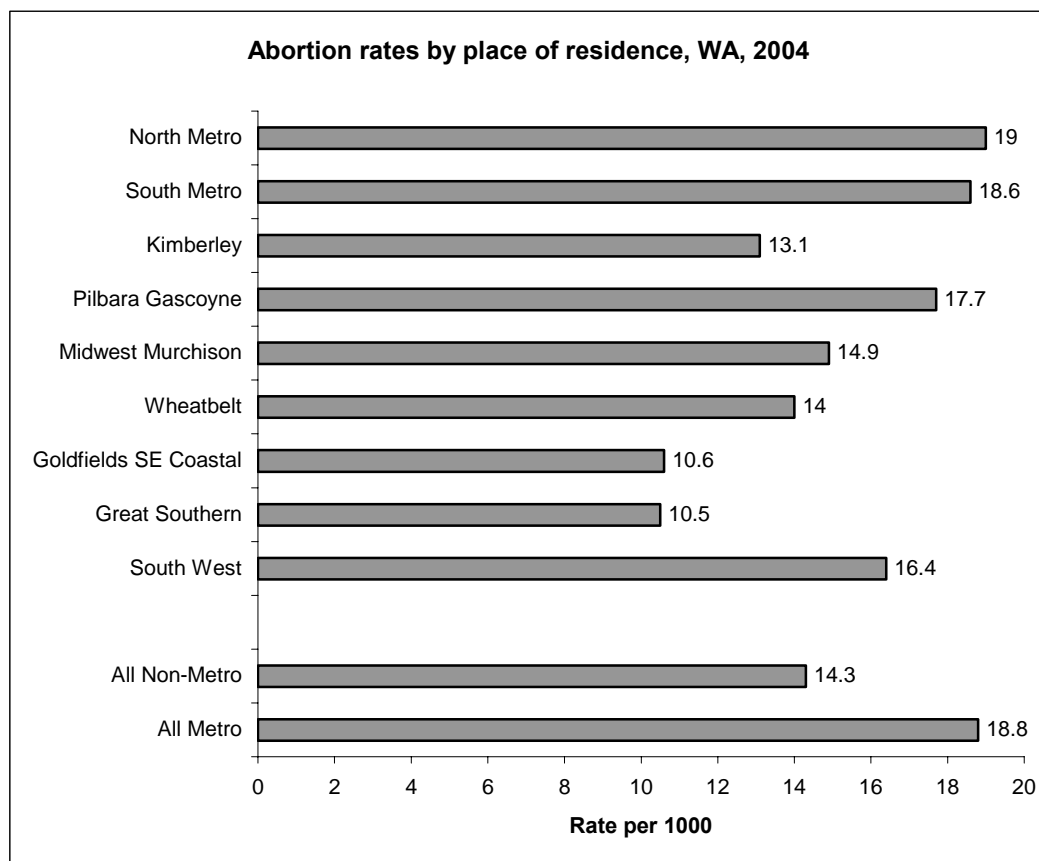
Residence ¹	2002		2003		2004	
	Number	Rate ²	Number	Rate ²	Number	Rate ²
Metropolitan						
North Metro	3651	20.4	3486	19.3	3439	19.0
South Metro	3002	19.7	2916	19.0	2882	18.6
Total Metropolitan	6653	20.1	6402	19.2	6321	18.8
Non-Metropolitan						
Kimberley	155	19.2	127	15.5	110	13.1
Pilbara Gascoyne	188	16.2	210	18.2	202	17.7
Midwest Murchison	160	15.5	145	14.3	150	14.9
Wheatbelt	154	11.2	144	10.7	191	14
Goldfields SE Coastal	106	8.5	159	12.9	128	10.6
Great Southern	135	13	129	12.6	108	10.5
South West	437	15.9	427	15.6	455	16.4
Total Non-Metropolitan	1335	14.2	1341	14.4	1344	14.3
Other	274	na	190	na	182	na
Overall State	8262	19.4	7933	18.6	7847	18.2

¹ Place of residence is grouped into Area Health Services or WA Country Health Service Regions

² Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44. Numerator includes abortions at all ages

Refer to Appendix A for population data

Figure 5



4. DETAILS ABOUT THE INDUCED ABORTIONS

4.1 Facilities where abortions were performed

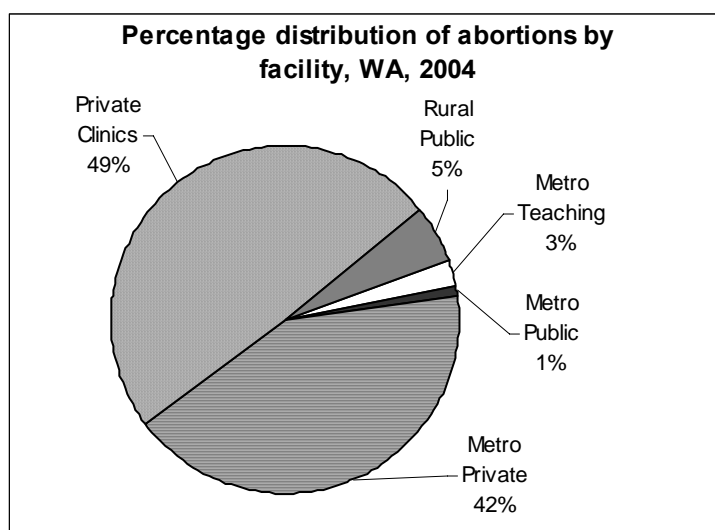
As shown in Table 6 and Figure 6, almost half of the induced abortions in WA were carried out in private clinics in the metropolitan area, with another 40% in metropolitan private hospitals. In 2004 over 90% of abortions were carried out in the private sector. Abortion procedures in metropolitan teaching hospitals were mainly late abortions. Although rural women accounted for 17% of abortions, only 5% of abortions were carried out in rural public hospitals. While some women may prefer to travel to the city for reasons of privacy, there are likely to be substantial travel costs for many women, and the issue of access to abortion services for rural women is an important one.

Table 6. Induced abortions by facility, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Total	Facility				
		Metro Teaching	Metro Public	Metro Private	Private Clinics	Rural Public
Numbers						
2002	8262	205	213	3218	4103	523
2003	7933	183	81	3061	4113	495
2004	7847	202	57	3294	3886	408
Percentage ¹						
2002	8262	2.5	2.6	38.9	49.7	6.3
2003	7933	2.3	1.0	38.6	51.9	6.2
2004	7847	2.6	0.7	41.9	49.6	5.2

¹ Percentages are row percentages for each year

Figure 6



Note: percentages are rounded to nearest whole number

4.2 Gestational age (duration of pregnancy)

The safest time for induced abortion is early in pregnancy, ideally less than 12 weeks from the last menstrual period (in the first trimester of pregnancy). There is good evidence that the rate of complications increases with increasing duration of pregnancy and the rate of complications rises sharply after 14 weeks. After 16 weeks the procedure may involve dilatation and evacuation or induction of labour, and require admission to hospital.

Overall, there is little evidence of undue delay in abortion procedures in WA, although this does not rule out delay in individual cases. In 2004, 71% of induced abortions were carried out in the first 8 weeks, 86% in the first 10 weeks, and 94% at 12 weeks or less. Only 0.5% of abortions were carried out at 20 weeks or over.

Table 7. Induced abortions by gestational age, WA, 1999-2004

Year	Total	Gestational Age					
		≤ 8 weeks	9-10 weeks	11-12 weeks	13-15 weeks	16-19 weeks	20 + weeks
Number							
1999 ¹	8187	5663	1606	554	189	147	28
2000 ²	8310	5935	1365	595	223	155	37
2001 ³	8316	5835	1347	662	258	187	27
2002 ⁴	8240	5724	1340	682	279	184	31
2003 ⁵	7919	5685	1208	540	294	161	31
2004 ⁶	7838	5565	1224	614	249	148	38
Percentage ⁷							
1999 ¹	8187	69.2	19.6	6.8	2.3	1.8	0.3
2000 ²	8310	71.4	16.4	7.2	2.7	1.9	0.4
2001 ³	8316	70.2	16.2	8.0	3.1	2.2	0.3
2002 ⁴	8240	69.4	16.3	8.3	3.4	2.2	0.4
2003 ⁵	7919	71.8	15.3	6.8	3.7	2.0	0.4
2004 ⁶	7838	71.0	15.6	7.8	3.2	1.9	0.5

¹ Note: In 1999 gestational age was not recorded for 33 cases

² Note: In 2000 gestational age was not recorded for 27 cases

³ Note: In 2001 gestational age was not recorded for 62 cases

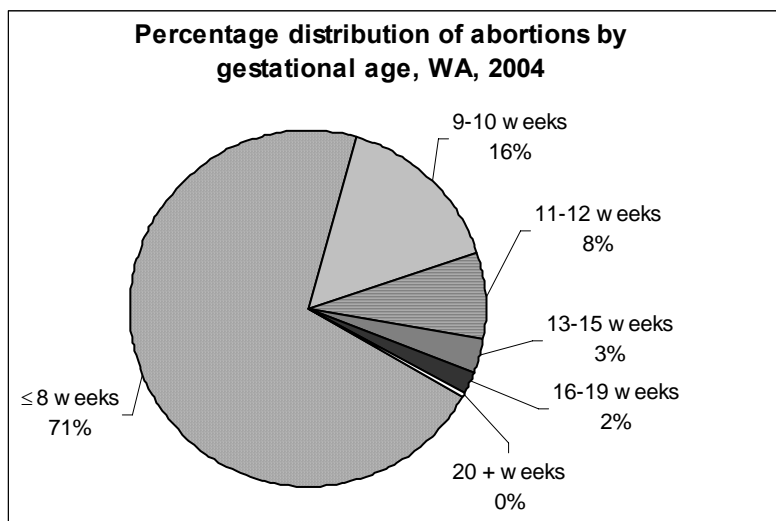
⁴ Note: In 2002 gestational age was not recorded for 22 cases

⁵ Note: In 2003 gestational age was not recorded for 14 cases

⁶ Note: In 2004 gestational age was not recorded for 9 cases

⁷ Percentages are row percentages for each year

Figure 7



Note: percentages are rounded to nearest whole number

4.3 Method of induced abortion

Consistent with the fact that over 90% of induced abortions took place in the first three months, the main method of abortion was vacuum aspiration or suction curettage (96% in 2004). Dilatation and evacuation accounted for 2% and other methods, including prostaglandin, intravenous or intra-uterine infusion, another 2%.

Table 8. Induced abortions by method, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Total	Method of Abortion			
		Vacuum Aspiration	Dilatation & Curettage	Dilatation & Evacuation	Other ⁴
Number					
2002 ¹	8242	7852	28	240	122
2003 ²	7928	7620	18	162	128
2004 ³	7837	7541	10	136	150
Percentage⁵					
2002 ¹	8242	95.3	0.3	2.9	1.5
2003 ²	7928	96.1	0.2	2.1	1.6
2004 ³	7837	96.2	0.2	1.7	1.9

¹ Note: For 2002, there are 20 records with missing data on method of abortion

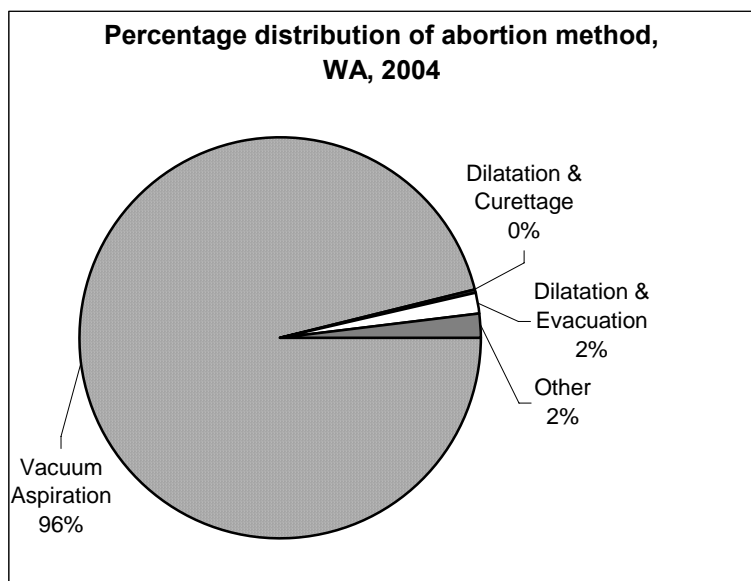
² Note: For 2003, there are 5 records with missing data on method of abortion

³ Note: For 2004, there are 10 records with missing data on method of abortion

⁴ Note: Other methods include- Prostaglandin, I/V Infusions, I/U Injection

⁵ Percentages are row percentages for each year

Figure 8



Note: percentages are rounded to nearest whole number

4.5 Abortions for suspected or identified congenital malformations

One question on the notification form asks whether the abortion was carried out for suspected or identified congenital malformations or for selective reduction of multiple pregnancy. Over the period 2002-2004, 1.9% of all induced abortions (447 cases in 3 years) were carried out for suspected or identified congenital malformations and 0.05% (11 cases in 3 years) for selective reduction of multiple fetuses.

5. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Table 9 shows how abortion rates and abortion proportions in WA compare with international abortion statistics, with figures from the comparable South Australian notification system, and with recent estimates of Australian figures by Chan and Sage⁸, using a combination of Medicare and hospital data.

The most recent rates of induced abortion in WA (18.2 per 1000) are somewhat higher than those in South Australia (16.7 per 1000) but they are comparable with national estimates (19.7 per 1000). A number of other developed countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, have significantly lower induced abortion rates and abortion proportions than either Western Australia or Australia as a whole. While some of the international differences may reflect differences in access to abortion services, it is clear that there is considerable scope for reducing rates of unplanned pregnancy in WA. The figures provided in this report can act as a benchmark against which to judge the success of such efforts in WA.

Table 9. International comparisons of induced abortions^{1 2}

Country	Abortion Rate³	Abortion Proportion⁴
Germany	7.7	15.2
The Netherlands	8.7	12.7
Finland	10.9	16.4
Norway	14.8	19.6
Canada	15.4 (2000)	24.2 (2001)
England and Wales	16.1	22.8
South Australia	16.7 (2003)	22.7 (2003)
Western Australia	18.2 (2004)	23.6 (2004)
Sweden	19.6	25.8
Australia (estimated)	19.7 (2003)	25.5 (2002)
New Zealand	20.2 (2004)	23.7 (2004)
United States	21.3 (2000)	24.5 (2000)

¹ Figures for 2002 unless otherwise specified

² Chan and Sage op cit (reproduced with permission)

³ Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years

⁴ Abortion proportion = Abortions / (Abortions + Live Births)

⁸ Chan A and Sage LC, Estimating Australia's abortion rates 1985-2003. *MJA* 2005; 182 (9): 447-452.

Appendix A

Table A1. Population data¹ by age for women aged 15-44, WA, 2002-2004

Year	Age group (yrs)						Total 15-44
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
2002	69,633	66,472	66,263	73,276	73,663	75,637	424,944
2003	69,996	67,774	65,370	73,651	72,971	76,994	426,756
2004	70,250	69,863	65,567	73,708	73,090	77,366	429,844

¹ Source: ABS 3235.5.55.001, Population by age & sex, Western Australia

Table A2. Population data² by place of residence for women aged 15-44, WA, 2002-2004

Residence ³	2002	2003	2004
	Metropolitan		
North	178834	180075	180970
South	152110	153445	155200
Total Metropolitan	330944	333520	336170
Non-Metropolitan			
Kimberley	8071	8211	8405
Pilbara Gascoyne	11582	11517	11384
Midwest Murchison	10289	10109	10090
Wheatbelt	13778	13489	13617
Goldfields SE Coastal	12415	12265	12108
Great Southern	10414	10255	10327
South West	27451	27390	27743
Total Non-Metropolitan	94000	93236	93674
Total State	424944	426756	429844

² Source: Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health Western Australia 2004

³ Place of residence is grouped into Area Health Services or WA Country Health Service Regions

Appendix B

FORM 1

(Regulation 2)

Health Act 1911
Health (Section 335 (5) (d) Abortion Notice) Regulations 1998
Notification by Medical Practitioner of Induced Abortion

To Executive Director, Public Health¹

Under section 335 (5) (d) of the *Health Act 1911*, I

(please print full name)

provide notice² of an abortion I performed, at

(address where procedure performed)

on

(date of abortion)

1. Gestational age at date of abortion (best estimate):

weeks

2. Method of termination: (tick one or more)

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| Vacuum aspiration (suction curettage) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Dilatation and curettage (sharp) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Dilatation and evacuation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Vaginal prostaglandin or analogue instillation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |
| Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (5) |

3. Reason for termination of pregnancy: (tick one)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|
| Reason other than fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Suspected fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Actual fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Specify if known | | |
| Selective reduction of multiple pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |

4. Patient's age (last birthday): **years**

5. Origin of patient

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |
| Not stated | <input type="checkbox"/> | (5) |

6. Postcode of residence of patient:

Signature

(Signature of Medical Practitioner)

Date:

Notes

¹ Executive Director, Public Health, PO Box 8172, Stirling Street, Perth 6849

² As required by section 335 (5) (d) of the *Health Act 1911* notice must be given within 14 days of the abortion being performed.

*Forward completed form (top copy) to Executive Director, Public Health
Duplicate (yellow copy) to be retained by medical practitioner*