

BZgA

**Bundeszentrale
für
gesundheitliche
Aufklärung**

**Frequently asked
questions
on the subject of**

*Teenage
pregnancies*

Legal notice

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FIGURES, FACTS, HELP ...

How are abortion statistics collected?*

Federal statistics on abortion in Germany are calculated every quarter under the Pregnancy Conflict Law [Schwangerschaftskonfliktgesetz], version 21.08.1995. The Law stipulates how the data should be collected (in the form of centralized statistics at quarterly intervals, directly from the Federal Statistical Office), which information is requested and who is obliged to provide it. Owners of doctors' surgeries and managers of hospitals where abortions are carried out are obliged to provide statistics.

What information is collected for abortion statistics?*

Statistics are collected in the following categories: age and marital status of the woman; number of live children she has borne and number of children living in her household; legal justification for the abortion (indication or regulations of the pregnancy counselling service); duration of pregnancy; abortion technique employed and type of anaesthesia used and any complications observed; where abortion took place (hospital or doctor's surgery); length of hospital stay for inpatients; Federal State [Bundesland] where the abortion took place; Federal State where the woman is resident.

Do changes in the reporting procedure affect the statistics?*

The changes in the law which took effect in respect of abortion statistics on 01.01.1996 included changes in the reporting procedure. Before then, providers had been obliged to provide statistics but, since reporting was anonymous, there was no way to check up on them. Since the change in the law, these doctors and hospitals have to give their address on a separate, detachable section of the form, so it is possible to tell whether they report regularly. If they do not, they receive a warning.

For this reason, comparable data have been available only since 1996.

Are the abortion statistics complete?*

Since the change in the law governing abortion statistics, which took effect on 01.01.1996, it has been possible to check that doctors/hospitals with reporting obligations have fulfilled these obligations. It has also been possible to identify further providers who should be reporting by checking publicly accessible address listings.

We can therefore assume that the abortion statistics contain no more inaccuracies than we are obliged to accept in the case of any other raw statistics.

Why are there no figures for the total number of underage pregnancies?*

We are always being asked about the number of pregnancies in Germany, especially so-called “teenage

pregnancies”. Official statistics do not record pregnancies in a systematic or methodologically uniform manner. Estimates of the number of pregnancies can mainly be obtained from abortion statistics and birth statistics (excluding miscarriages and stillbirths). Merely adding the two figures together can generate inaccuracies because different age definitions may be used (e.g. actual age versus age calculated by taking the difference between the year of reporting and the year of the mother’s birth).

What are the trends in pregnancy and abortion in underage girls?*

The number of live births to underage mothers (using the mother’s exact age at the time of the child’s birth) fell from 7126 in 2000 (0.9% of all live births) to 4112 in 2013 (0.6% of all live births). In the same period, the number of abortions in this age group fell from 6337 to 3619. In 2014, 3560 abortions were recorded in this age group. The percentage of abortions in this age group, as a proportion of all abortions, was 4.7% in 2000 and 3.6% in 2014.

The latest figures can be obtained from the Federal Statistical Office.

How “objective” are the recorded statistics?*

Statistics can be presented in various ways. Therefore, when looking at changes in percentages, we should always bear in mind the magnitude of the absolute figures since, with smaller numbers, even a small change will alter the percentages considerably. The number of abortions carried out on underage girls between 2000 and 2014 fell by 2777, which is equivalent to -43.8%. If we confine ourselves to subgroups with

a smaller total size, such as girls under 15, the percentage change in the abortion rate between 2000 and 2014 is -35.7%. In absolute terms, that represents 205 fewer abortions, i.e. the figure fell from 574 to 369.

Which figures from the abortion statistics are valuable for comparison purposes?*

In order to estimate the relative significance of an absolute figure, we use the so-called “quota” or “indicator” method of calculation. In this method, the absolute figures (here the number of abortions) are quoted relative to a basic population, such as the female population in various age groups or the number of births. This enables comparisons to be made over time and between different regions, since it takes into account the demographic factor.

The abortion rate per 10 000 women is calculated from the number of abortions per 10 000 women from the Federal State concerned, or from the relevant age group. Another way of generating indicators is to calculate the abortion rate in relation to the number of births (live births and stillbirths).

Do regional differences emerge from an analysis of the abortion statistics? What do comparisons between the Federal States say about under-age pregnancy?*

Abortion statistics, giving results for each Federal State, are published regularly (e.g. on the website of the Federal Statistical Office (www.destatis.de) under “Facts & Figures – Society & State – Health – Abortions”) [in English].

For comparison purposes, we will quote the rate of abortions per 10 000 women of the relevant age group. Thus, between 2000 and 2014 (provisional figures), the rate of abortions among underage girls in the pre-1990 Federal Republic of Germany fell from 15 to 10. In the new Federal States, the figure for 2014 is 18, which is higher than for 2000 (21). In Berlin between 2000 and 2014, the rate fell from 35 to 23.

Do teenage pregnancies occur in all social classes?*

Social criteria are not recorded in the abortion statistics (the information collected is stipulated in Article 16 of the Pregnancy Conflict Law), so the Federal Statistical Office cannot draw any conclusions on this issue. The same is true of birth statistics. We therefore have to rely on the evidence of those working in the field, especially the experts of the pregnancy counselling centres. Contrary to the widespread belief that underage pregnancies occur in all social classes, recent evidence indicates that they predominate in so-called “socially disadvantaged” groups. Various studies in a number of Federal States show that girls with poor employment and life prospects often opt to proceed with a teenage pregnancy.

At what age do young people become sexually active?

34% of girls and 28% of boys aged between 14 and 17 have had sexual intercourse.** Among girls from a migration background, the figure is 24%, and among boys from a migration background it is 32%.**

Are young people careless about contraception?

The sociological studies conducted by BZgA show that, compared with other countries, contraceptive behaviour among young people in Germany is generally good. The vast majority behave responsibly even the first time they have sex: 76% of girls and 70% of boys used condoms and/or 48% of girls and 47% of boys reported that the girl used the Pill. As they gain more sexual experience, their contraceptive behaviour improves even further, and the majority of young people generally behave responsibly when it comes to sex.***

How can contraceptive behaviour be improved?

The survey Youth Sexuality 2015 indicates that young people from a migration background do not always learn enough about contraception and sex from their families. 13% of boys and 9% of girls from a migration background do not use contraception the first time they have sex, compared with only 6% of German girls and 9% of German boys.***

From an educational point of view, this means that sex education must start early (at pre-school age). The provision of contraceptive advice in schools is particularly important for young people from migrant families, since there is less sex education within the family.

How can sex education help to prevent teenage pregnancies?

Many different actors bear a responsibility for sex education, which is a vital element of health education and health promotion. Through sex education, children and young people learn about contraception, love and relationships, are encouraged to think about issues which come up in sex education and are helped to build up their own identities and take responsibility for their own sexual lives. Children's and young people's great interest in the subject of pregnancy should be strongly exploited in sex education activities.

What work does BZgA do and what help can it provide?

Since 1993, the Federal Centre for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung – BZgA) has had a legal mandate under Article 1 of the Law on Assistance for Women for Termination of Pregnancy in Special Cases [Gesetz zur Hilfe für Frauen bei Schwangerschaftsabbrüchen in besonderen Fällen – SFHG] to develop and disseminate media and activities for sex education and family planning, aimed at specific target groups. These activities aim to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Children and young people are one of the main target groups of BZgA's mandate.

In this area of its work, as in all others, BZgA uses a wide range of media and activities, delivered through the mass media or individually targeted approaches and aimed at children from kindergarten age through primary education to puberty. Information on all BZgA's products is available in our current catalogue and at www.sexualaufklaerung.de.

Is the “morning-after” pill suitable for emergencies?

If unprotected intercourse has taken place, either because contraception was not used or because it failed, the “morning-after” pill is one way of preventing an unwanted pregnancy. For this reason, girls – and boys, too – should be informed about this emergency medication, which can be obtained from pharmacies without a doctor’s prescription.

Where can underage pregnant girls obtain help and support?

Pregnancy counselling centres give advice about the girl’s legal rights and the help she can obtain to make it easier to proceed with the pregnancy and care for her baby, and also about termination of pregnancy. The pregnancy counselling centre is listed in the local telephone directory. The major providers are the Workers’ Welfare Association [Arbeiterwohlfahrt], Association of Independent Voluntary Welfare Organizations [Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband], German Caritas Association [Deutscher Caritasverband], German Red Cross, Protestant Welfare Association [Diakonisches Werk], Donum Vitae e.V., women’s health centres, pro familia, Catholic Women’s Welfare Service [Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen], Women’s Dignity [Frauenwürde e.V.]. In addition, local health authorities often offer advice.

The federal foundation “Mother and child – protecting the unborn life” [“Mutter und Kind – Schutz des ungeborenen Lebens”] helps women in economic difficulties who want to proceed with their pregnancy. Grants from the foundation are not dependent on the recipient’s age, so underage girls are eligible too.

Pregnant women in difficult circumstances can apply for assistance from the foundation through their local pregnancy counselling centres.

What is the legal situation of pregnant underage girls?

Under Article 219 of the Criminal Code, both underage girls and adult women have the right to individual counselling and to remain anonymous if they wish.

If the girl decides to terminate her pregnancy, her parents' consent may be required, depending on her age. If she is between 16 and 18, she is considered to be capable of understanding and appreciating the implications of her decision (she is considered to have "insight"). Between the ages of 14 and 16, the doctor treating the girl decides whether she has the necessary degree of maturity.

Who pays for the abortion?

Since it is assumed that underage girls do not have any significant income of their own, they are entitled to reimbursement of the cost of the abortion by their sickness insurance fund. They will receive full details of the procedure to be followed and the regulations applying to their particular case from the pregnancy counselling centre as part of their pregnancy conflict counselling.

* Answer from Federal Statistical Office, Group VIII A, Evelyn Laue

** Youth Sexuality 2015 | *** Youth Sexuality 2015

BZgA on the Internet

www.bzga.de

www.sexualaufklaerung.de

www.familienplanung.de

www.forschung.sexualaufklaerung.de

Federal Statistical Office on the Internet

www.destatis.de



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