

## One in 23 teenage girls had an abortion

by Melissa Kite, Deputy Political Editor, with additional reporting by Paul Ovenden  
Monday, 24 March 2008.

**One in 23 teenage girls in parts of Britain has had an abortion, according to figures<sup>o</sup> released by ministers.**

*numbers*



*What can be done to cut teenage pregnancy rates?*

South London and pockets of the North of England are shown to be teenage abortion “hotspots” by a regional breakdown<sup>o</sup> showing the number of terminations in each primary care trust area.

*detailed information  
abortion*

The figures have prompted<sup>o</sup> Conservative claims that Labour’s sex education policy had failed and that young women were being offered abortions in some areas as a form of contraception.

*to encourage sb to do sth*

Documents in the Commons library show that rates of teenage pregnancy and abortion among under-18s differ wildly across the country, with the highest in London and parts of the North.

The figures show that the south London borough of Lambeth has the highest rate of teenage abortion, with 44 in every 1,000 girls – one in 23 – having an abortion in 2006. Other parts of London also record a much higher teenage abortion rate than the average for England and Wales, which is one for every 55 teenage girls per year.

In 2006, 17,173 of 193,737 abortions carried out in England and Wales involved girls below the age of 18. Sixty per cent of pregnancies among under-

16s ended in termination, along with 49 per cent of those aged 16 and 17.

In Southwark, the figure is one in 25 – in nearby Lewisham it is one in 31. Other areas recording higher-than-average rates include Darlington in Co Durham, with one in 37 girls having an abortion and Blackpool where the figure is one in 40.

The Tories° said the figures showed that high rates of teenage pregnancy and abortion were endemic° in Labour-controlled areas. They claimed the rate was drastically lower in most Tory areas, even when differing prosperity° levels were factored in. In Buckinghamshire, one in 71 teenage girls had an abortion, and in Westminster, it was one in 67.

Nadine Dorries, Conservative MP° for mid-Bedfordshire, where the rate is one in 63, said: “These horrific statistics highlight the extent to which abortion is seen as just another form of contraception.

“Some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country, under Labour control have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy and abortion and highlight the total failure of government policy.”

Miss Dorries, who has campaigned since becoming an MP for changes to abortion law, is preparing amendments° to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill° to bring the upper limit at which abortion can legally take place down from 24 weeks to 20.

She has the support of David Cameron who has said he will vote for the limit to come down to 20 or 21 weeks.

However, despite being a free vote issue, most Labour MPs remain strongly pro-abortion and are unlikely to support the changes.

Miss Dorries said the latest evidence showed the need for change. “We now know that abortion leads to depression and mental health problems in later life, along with other complications in future pregnancies.

“The failure of government policy in some of the poorest areas in Britain has subjected young girls who have the least ability to access help advice and support to a lifetime of further problems.

“The government is in fact the architect of rising abortion rates. They have a duty of care to the most disadvantaged in society, and they have failed in that duty of care and let young women down badly.”

*members of the British Conservative party the state of being successful, especially financially*

*Member of Parliament*

*a small change or improvement*

*a written suggestion for a new law that is presented to a country's parliament so that its members can discuss it*

# Vocabulary exercise

a) Here you are given definition of words and phrases used in the text. Find them and put them down.

1. The practice of preventing a woman from becoming pregnant

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2. A medical operation to end a pregnancy at an early stage

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3. The state of expecting a baby

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4. The teaching, training and learning on human sexual behaviour

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5. A new problem or illness that makes treatment of a previous one more complicated or difficult

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b) Match the following definitions with the appropriate terms on the right hand side.

the state of being or becoming a mother	<b>to be expecting</b>
the legal act of permanently placing a child with a parent or parents other than the birth (or “biological”) mother or father	<b>maternity</b>
the illegal termination of a pregnancy	<b>adoption</b>
the crime of forcing sb to have sex with you, especially using violence	<b>backstreet abortion</b>
to be pregnant	<b>rape</b>
abortions which are performed during a later stage of pregnancy	<b>pregnancy test</b>
a method that ascertains whether or not a female is pregnant	<b>late-term abortion</b>

# Vocabulary exercise

Here you are given definition of words and phrases used in the text. Find them and put them down.

1. The practice of preventing a woman from becoming pregnant  
contraception
2. A medical operation to end a pregnancy at an early stage  
abortion, termination
3. The state of expecting a baby  
pregnancy
4. The practice of preventing a woman from becoming pregnant  
contraception
5. A new problem or illness that makes treatment of a previous one more complicated or difficult  
complication(s)

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