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wind: 4m/s SSW
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Thousands of Irish women accessing abortion pills online said they felt grateful, report finds

October 17, 2016 . By Erica Doyle Higgins (<http://irishpost.co.uk/author/erica-doylehiggins/>)

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Accessing pills to terminate a pregnancy in Northern Ireland can carry a criminal conviction. Picture: iStock

OVER 5,000 Irish and Northern Irish women who have had 'at home' abortions since 2010 have said they felt grateful, a report has found.

The report (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1471-0528.14401/full>), published by the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, was completed by ARA Aiken, R Gomperts, J Trussell of the University of Austin, Texas.

Between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2015, 5,650 Irish and Northern Irish women requested at-home medical pregnancy terminations through Netherlands-based Women on Web.

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Of the 5,650 women, almost half (49.9 per cent) were aged 25 to 34. One-in-10 were aged 40 and over.

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The majority of terminations were conducted before seven weeks.

Citing the reasons for the medical termination of pregnancy, 62 per cent said they couldn't cope with a child, 43 per cent said they had no money to raise a child and 23 per cent said their families were already completed.

A total of 97.2 per cent of women said a medical termination at home was the right choice for them - 94.2 per cent said they were grateful.

When asked how they felt after the terminations, 70 per cent of Irish and Northern Irish women said they were relieved, 35 per cent said they were satisfied and 26.8 per cent said they were happy.

Out of the women surveyed, 46.1 per cent expressed feelings of guilt, sadness, loss, feeling low and disappointment.

In conclusion, the study said there was evidence that more pregnancy termination services were needed in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

"This study provides evidence of the unmet need for termination of pregnancy services in Ireland and Northern Ireland, particularly among a population of women who lack the financial means to travel abroad to access services," the report said.

Although these women's experiences with at-home medical TOP are positive, especially in light of the harm to their health and wellbeing that would have resulted had this option been unavailable to them, they nonetheless risk criminal prosecution."

"These insights contribute a new dimension to the policy debate surrounding abortion laws in Ireland and Northern Ireland, highlighting the public health advantages of providing safe, legal TOP services, and calling attention to a profound inequity in reproductive health access," it read.

The data was supplied by Women on Web, a digital community who support abortion rights.

Women on Web (<https://www.womenonweb.org/en/i-need-an-abortion>) offers consultations with a licensed doctor to women seeking an abortion, and if necessary, access to a medical abortion pills which are delivered to the patient's address.

To avail of the service the pregnancy must be less than 10 weeks, and women must be in countries to restricted access to abortion services and the patient must not have severe illnesses.

The BJOG report examined the 'experiences and characteristics' of Irish and Northern Irish women seeking and completing at-home medical termination of pregnancy online.

Under current legislature, abortion is only performed in the Republic of Ireland where the life of the woman is at risk.

In Northern Ireland, abortion can only be performed if the woman's life is at risk or there is a permanent or serious risk to her mental or physical health.

Accessing pills to terminate a pregnancy in Northern Ireland can carry a criminal conviction.

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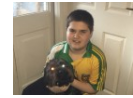
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Erica Doyle Higgins is a Digital Reporter with The Irish Post. You can follow her on Twitter @EDoyleHiggins



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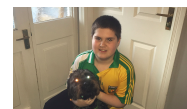
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