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Hundreds seeking abortion pills online 'due to healthcare barriers', experts warn

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Medics have called for abortion to be decriminalised *Getty Images/Canopy*

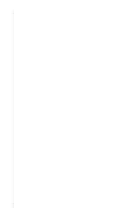
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has found.

A study published in *Contraception Journal* found women in England, Scotland and Wales are shunning traditional routes such as the NHS in favour of seeking help online.

Experts found that more than 500 women contacted Women on Web in just four months - between November last year and March this year.



*Voir mentions légales sur le site

Women on the Web is an online abortion help service often helping people in countries where there is no access to "safe abortion service" - but all these women were living in Wales, Scotland and England, where abortion is legal.

The study looked at the anonymous emails of 180 of the women to see what reasons they gave for seeking abortions via online services.





One in five women were seeking online help because they were in a controlling relationship (Shutterstock)

Among all the reasons, 49 per cent listed barriers to getting an abortion the conventional way, including long waiting times, distance to clinic, work or childcare commitments, lack of eligibility for free NHS services and prior negative experiences of abortion care.

Of the women, 30 per cent gave concerns about privacy as the reason, including a lack of confidentiality of services, perceived or experienced stigma and preferring the privacy and comfort of using pills at home.

Almost one in five were where the woman felt controlled by a violent partner or her family.

The study, which included experts from the University of Edinburgh and the Netherlands, concluded: "Despite the presence of abortion services in Great Britain, a diverse group of women still experiences logistical and personal barriers to accessing care through the formal healthcare system, or prefer the privacy of conducting their abortions in their own homes.

"The presence of multiple barriers to accessing abortion care in Great Britain highlights the need for future guidelines to recommend a more woman-centred approach to service provision.



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"Reducing the number of clinic visits and designing services to meet the needs of those living in controlling circumstances are particularly important goals."

Clare Murphy, director of external affairs at BPAS, which provides abortions, said: "The numbers of women in Britain seeking abortion pills online documented in this study are quite staggering, particularly given that it covers just one service over a four-month period.

"It really underlines the need for a thorough overhaul of our abortion laws so that no woman faces clinically unnecessary obstacles in accessing care.

"It also concerns us deeply that women using pills bought online are at risk of life in prison if caught."

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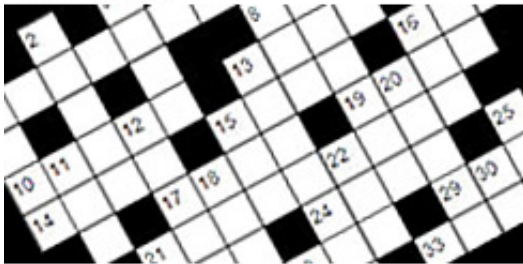


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