

## Statement on later abortion

Abortion Rights believes that abortion should be available to women whenever it is needed. Women seek abortion when they are unable, for whatever reasons, to gestate and/or become a parent at the current time. Medical and legal frameworks should trust women to make responsible decisions.

Less than 1.5 percent of abortions in Britain occur after 20 weeks. Those that do, however, are often due to difficult circumstances in the woman's life. Later abortion disproportionately involves teenage or vulnerable women.

The reasons for women delaying seeking services include lack of recognition of pregnancy, family or relationship breakdown, domestic violence, sexual assault or rape, or denial of pregnancy due to social fears.

Many face delays and barriers, including getting two doctors signatures – the only medical procedure that requires this. This is in a climate where according to a [Marie Stopes attitude survey](#), 1 in 5 GPs declare that they are anti-abortion and cuts to NHS services are affecting waiting times for procedures.

Often, the nature of foetal screening means most scans cannot be conducted until at least 20 weeks and sometimes later. There can also be delays in the process of diagnosing a serious foetal abnormality from this point, which means women are then further along in their pregnancy than the standard 24 week cut off.

These are often wanted but unviable pregnancies. Any restrictions on the time limit would disproportionately impact women already in vulnerable and difficult personal situations.

Regardless of the gestational limit, the ability to access abortion is always critical to women's rights, health and wellbeing.