

# Abortion in Ireland – An Eircode Lottery: Barriers to Early Abortion Access in the Southeast of Ireland

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## Introduction

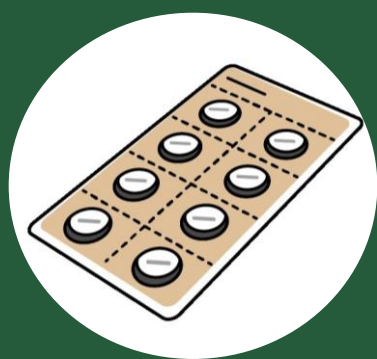
Ireland voted in 2018 to legalise early abortion and the Irish model of care is innovative: Up to 9 weeks gestation GPs can provide early medical abortions (EMA) with maternity units providing abortions from 9 to 12+0 weeks gestation. However, barriers to accessing abortion care within this new service remain.

We aim to identify potential barriers to accessing abortion in the Ireland's southeast through evaluation of abortion services in the region.

## Methods

A retrospective chart review of all women attending University Hospital Waterford (UHW) Ireland for termination services from 01/01/2023 to 30/06/2023 was performed. Anonymised patient data was collected on an encrypted database on a password protected computer.

## Results



Medical termination of pregnancy was given to all women, with only one woman receiving surgical termination following failed medical terminations



Four women exceeded the 12-week gestational limit and were referred for counselling regarding travelling abroad for an abortion.



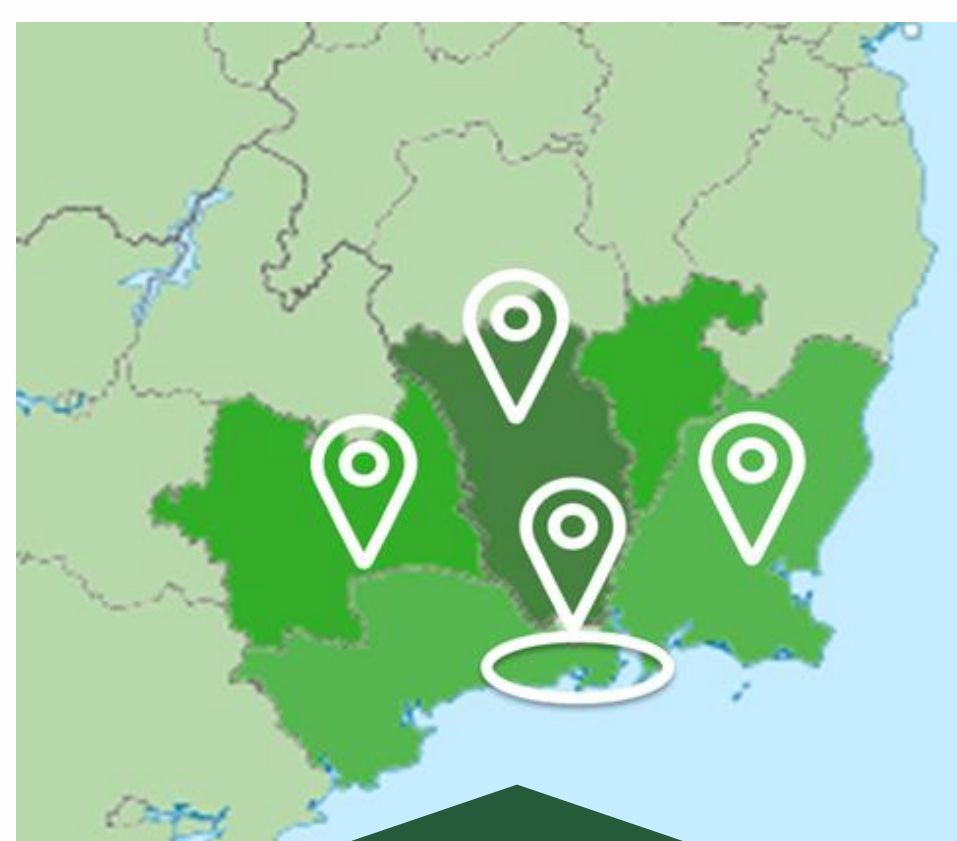
Barriers to offering surgical termination included difficulties accessing operating theatres and staffing resources including availability of conscientious providers



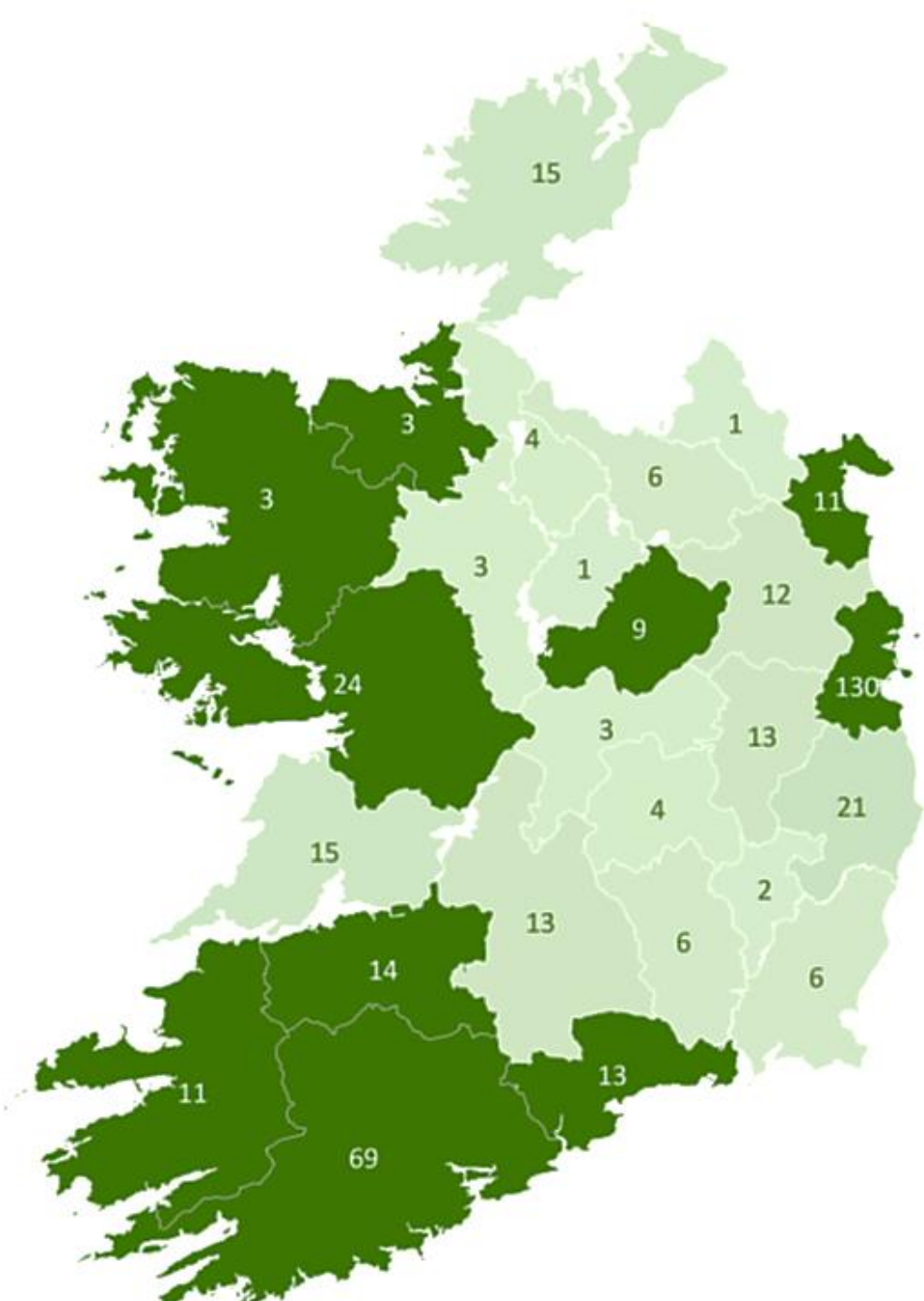
97% women were required to attend the hospital for two or more appointments.

Fewer GPs provide early medical abortion in this region when compared to the urban centres of Dublin, Cork, and Limerick

GP ToP contracts May 2022 (total = 412)



Only one of four maternity units in the region provides abortion services, covering a large geographical region including counties Waterford, Kilkenny, Wexford, Carlow and Tipperary primary provider and some patients travels from Wicklow and Laois



## Conclusion

Our study demonstrates that barriers to abortion care access persist, all imposing logistical and financial burdens on women. These include;

- A 12-week gestational limit on terminations under section 12
- Uneven geographical access to abortion
- Limited access to surgical TOP
- Multiple appointments mandated by a three-day waiting period

Many women must make two journeys over long distances to access abortion care in Ireland and such barriers are more acutely experienced by poorer and vulnerable women, migrants, asylum seekers, traveller women, and disabled women.