

Teenage pregnancy

To obtain accurate statistics on teenage pregnancy, the following would all need to be considered:

- live births
- abortions (elective terminations of pregnancy)
- pregnancies in which the fertilised ovum is lost prior to the pregnancy being detected
- miscarriages (spontaneous abortions) and stillbirths

Accurate Australian data is available for live births only. Reliable statistics relating to abortions are limited and estimates only are available in the other categories. (For discussion and estimates of pregnancy complications in this age group, see: *Australia's young people: their health and wellbeing 2003*, p.132 – Reference below.)

Live births

National data on live births is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Age-Specific Fertility Rates, 15-19 year old women

(Births per 1000 of the estimated resident 15-19 years female population)

Year	NT	TAS	QLD	WA	NSW	SA	VIC	ACT	Aust
1971									55.5
1977									32.1
1980	98.9	38.1	36.9	30.2	28.0	26.3	21.0	19.9	27.6
1992	90.5	29.0	26.5	25.0	22.8	18.7	14.7	14.0	22.0
1997	75.5	27.3	25.6	21.2	19.5	16.2	12.4	13.5	19.8
2000	69.6	25.7	22.7	20.9	16.7	15.2	10.8	10.9	17.7
2001	70.0	32.7	22.5	19.4	17.0	14.4	11.4	9.8	17.7
2002	63.8	28.3	22.3	18.6	16.4	15.4	11.2	11.2	17.4
2003	65.0	26.2	21.6	18.6	15.1	14.9	10.4	8.8	16.3
2004	57.8	24.8	21.7	19.7	15.1	13.8	10.6	8.1	16.3

References: ABS. (2005) *Births Australia 2004* (p. 31). Cat 3301.0.

- the table above shows that in all years, Queensland's teenage birth rate was higher than the national average
- the numbers of teenagers giving birth has decreased significantly since the 1970s, both nationally and in Queensland, dispelling the myth that there has been a "teenage baby boom". Nationally, the rate of childbearing among teenagers peaked at 55.5 births per 1,000 females in 1971, falling to 16.3 in 2003 (ABS 2005, p. 31)
- the steady decline in the teenage fertility rate has been attributed to a "greater willingness of medical practitioners to prescribe contraceptives (particularly the contraceptive pill) to young unmarried females and a reinterpretation of and changes in state laws governing elective abortions." (AIHW 2003, p. 132)
- births to Australian teenagers represent a decreasing proportion of all births, 5.5% in 1997, decreasing to 4.6% in 2004; in Queensland in 2004, births to teenagers represented 6.0% of all births (ABS 1998, p.31; ABS 2005, p.32)

- the majority of Australian teenagers giving birth are aged 18 or 19 (ABS 2005, p. 42).
- teenage mothers are more likely to suffer adverse psychosocial and perinatal outcomes than older mothers. Premature births are more common for teens and “perinatal death rates are higher for babies with mothers less than 20 years.” (AIHW, 2003, p.114).

Rural, remote and disadvantaged areas

In a study of teenage birth rates in Queensland between 1988 and 1997, Michael Coory (2002) showed that:

- teenagers living in disadvantaged areas had two to four times higher birth rates than for all women in Queensland and 10 to 20 times higher rates than those from affluent areas
- birth rates are decreasing in urban-affluent areas; they have remained stable but high in disadvantaged-remote areas; and are increasing in disadvantaged-urban areas
- birth rates vary according to location and show a clear gradation from city areas to remote and regional areas.

The table below shows teenage birth rates across Queensland in 2004.

Mothers aged 15-19 years delivering in Queensland by Commonwealth Health Sub-Region of Usual Residence, 2004

Commonwealth Health Subregion	Aged 15-19 years	All Ages	Percentage
Brisbane North	124	5,363	2.3%
Brisbane South	285	8,558	3.3%
Caboolture	289	4,337	6.7%
Central West	7	154	4.5%
Darling Downs	226	3,089	7.3%
Far North	299	3,459	8.6%
Fitzroy	220	2,627	8.4%
Logan River Valley	344	4,141	8.3%
Mackay	97	1,832	5.3%
North West	86	667	12.9%
Northern	172	2,731	6.3%
South Coast	154	4,048	3.8%
South West	26	360	7.2%
Sunshine Cooloola	170	3,306	5.1%
West Moreton	200	2,411	8.3%
Wide Bay/Burnett	261	2,487	10.5%
Other ^(a)	21	414	5.1%
Total	2,981	49,984	6.0%

(a) Includes interstate and overseas

Based on information supplied by Client Services, Health Information Branch, Queensland Health.

Source: *Perinatal Data Collection, Queensland Health* .

References and further reading:

AIHW. (2003). Australia's young people: their health and wellbeing 2003. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005). Births Australia 2004. Cat 3301.0. Canberra: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998). Births Australia 1997. Cat 3301.0. Canberra: ABS.

Coory, M. (2000). 'Trends in birth rates for teenagers in Queensland, 1988 to 1997: an analysis by economic disadvantage and geographic remoteness', Aust & NZ Jnl Public Health, 24(3): 316-319.

Queensland Health. *Perinatal data collection 2004 (Date Extracted 20/02/2006)*. Information supplied by Client Health Services, Health Information Centre, Queensland Health.

Live births to Australian teenagers – comparison with other countries

- Australia's 2004 teenage birth rate is lower than some comparable countries in the developed world but still much higher than those with the lowest rates.

	Reference year	Births per 1,000 females aged 15-19 years
United States	2004	41.1
England & Wales	2004	26.9
New Zealand	2002	25.6
Australia	2004	16.3
* See below for statistical sources for the above countries		
Singapore	2004	5.23
Netherlands	2004	4.77
Switzerland	2004	4.64
Japan	2004	3.72
* Source for countries immediately above: World Bank HNP Statistics (2004) WDI Data Query		

Sources:

ABS (2005). Births Australia 2004. Cat 3301.0

NZ data 2002. Statistics New Zealand (2003). *Teenage fertility in New Zealand*.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/Articles/teen-Sep03.htm>

US data for 2004: Hamilton, Brady E., Ventura, Stephanie J., Martin, Joyce A. and Sutton, Paul D.

"Preliminary Births for 2004." Tables 1 and 2. National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, Maryland: 2005. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelim_births/prelim_births04.htm

UK data for 2004: Office for National Statistics (ONS), Birth Statistics 2004 Series FM1 No 33. Table 7.3

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/FM1_33/FM1_33.pdf

World Bank HNP Statistics (2004). WDI Data Query. Series: Adolescent fertility rate, selected countries.

Accessed at: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/hnpstats/query/default.html>, August 2006.

Births to Indigenous teenagers

- for Indigenous women in 2004, the teenage fertility rate (71 babies per 1,000 women) was more than 4 times the fertility rate of all teenage women (16 babies). (ABS, 2005, p.21)
- in 2004, Queensland Indigenous teenagers experienced the third highest fertility rate (68 babies) of all states and territories behind the Northern Territory and Western Australia. (ABS, 2005, p.22)

The following table relates to confinements of Indigenous women only, not to births where the father is Indigenous and the mother non-Indigenous.

Age-specific birth rates, 15-19 year olds

(Births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years)

	1997	1998	2001	2002	2003	2004
Queensland - Indigenous population	84.9	69.5	74.2	74.6	76.0	68.0
Queensland - general population	25.6	23.3	22.5	22.3	21.6	21.7
Australia - general population	19.5	18.5	17.0	17.1	16.3	16.3

References:

ABS. *Births Australia 1997, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005* Cat 3301.0.

Abortions

Accurate statistics on abortion are available for South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory only. Of these, data is publicly accessible only in South Australia

where abortions are notifiable by law and reported annually (Ford 2003, p. 46). In other states, Medicare statistics provide a conservative estimate of elective terminations of pregnancy in the 15 to 19 year old age group. Medicare statistics do not include abortions performed in public hospitals. They show that in 2004-05, 13,980 Medicare rebates were claimed for abortions performed in Queensland. Of these, 2,283 were for women under 20 years, down from 2,561 in 1994/5.

Abortions compared with live births 2004 – Age group 15–19 years

Since figures for all the abortions carried out in Australia are not available, it is likely that there are slightly more abortions than live births.

	QLD	WA	NSW/ACT	SANT	VIC/TAS	AUST
Abortions 2004/05	2283	1391	4296	1095	2205	11270
Live births 2004	2860	1358	3384	1081	2095	10779

References:

- ABS (2005). *Births Australia 2004. Table 7.2 Cat.3301.0*, p. 47.
 Parliament of South Australia. (2005) Second Annual Report of the South Australian Abortion Reporting Committee for the year 2004. Adelaide: Govt Printer. Table 1 p. 6.
 Ford, J., Nassar N., Sullivan E.A., Chambers G. & Lancaster, P. (2003). *Reproductive Health Indicators Australia 2002*. AIHW Cat No. PER20. Canberra: AIHW NPSU.
 Medicare Australia (2006). *Total Services for Medicare Item Number 35643 by Financial Year, Age Group and State 2004-2005*. Medicare Australia website, accessed at <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au>, 21 August 2006

Abortions in Queensland compared with national total

(Percentage of total abortions by age groups)

Age Group	% Total Qld abortions					% Total Australian Abortions				
	1991	1993	1995	1998	2005	1991	1993	1995	1998	2005
10 - <20	21.6	19.8	18.4	16.1	15.8	18.5	16.4	16.0	15.0	14.1
20 - <35	66.1	67.4	68.0	67.3	63.9	67.5	68.3	68.1	66.2	62.7
35 - 65+	12.3	12.8	13.6	16.6	20.3	14.0	15.3	15.9	18.8	23.2

Adapted from Medicare Australia (2006). *Total Services for Medicare Item Number 35643 by Financial Year, Age Group and State 2005-2006*. Medicare Australia website, accessed at : <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au>, 21 August 2006.

* SA figures not included

Disclaimer

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