

Australia's mothers and babies 2006

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The AIHW National Perinatal Statistics Unit (NPSU) is a collaborating unit of the AIHW, established in 1979. The NPSU aims to improve the health of Australian mothers and babies through the collection, analysis and reporting of information on reproductive, perinatal and maternal health. It maintains national collections on perinatal health, maternal deaths, congenital anomalies and assisted reproduction technology. The NPSU is located at the Sydney Children's Hospital and is part of the School of Women's and Children's Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales.

Please note that as with all statistical reports there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report over its life. Please refer to the online version at <www.npsu.unsw.edu.au>.

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Australia's mothers and babies 2006

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASCCSS	Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
g	gram
IPPR	intermittent positive pressure respiration
LMP	first day of the last menstrual period
METeOR	metadata online registry
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
NHDD	National Health Data Dictionary
NHISSC	National Health Information Standards and Statistics Committee
NICU	neonatal intensive care unit
NMDS	National Minimum Data Set
NPDC	National Perinatal Data Collection
NPDDC	National Perinatal Data Development Committee
NPSU	AIHW National Perinatal Statistics Unit
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PSANZ-PDC	Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Perinatal Death Classification
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SACC	Standard Australian Classification of Countries
SCN	special care nursery
Tas	Tasmania
UNSW	University of New South Wales
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WHO	World Health Organization
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not published

Key findings

Australia's mothers and babies 2006 is the 16th annual report on pregnancy and childbirth in Australia. The report provides national information on women who gave birth in 2006 and the characteristics and outcomes of their babies. The report is based primarily on the National Perinatal Data Collection.

In 2006, 277,436 women gave birth to 282,169 babies in Australia. This included 280,078 live births and 2,091 fetal deaths. The increase in births continued, with 9,750 more births (3.6%) than reported in 2005.

Mothers

Of women who gave birth in 2006:

- their age at the time of birth has increased
 - the average age was 29.8 years, compared with 28.7 years in 1997
 - 21.4% were aged 35 years or older, up from 15.0% in 1997
 - more had deferred starting a family, with 14.0% of first births being to women aged 35 years or older, compared with 8.3% in 1997
- 10,183 were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, making up 3.7% of all mothers
- 41.6% gave birth for the first time, with an average age of 28.2 years
- 17.3% reported smoking at all during pregnancy, showing no real change over the previous four years
- 1.7% had a multiple pregnancy, compared with 1.4% in 1997
- 25.1% had their labours induced, the most commonly reported reason being prolonged pregnancy
- 58.1% had a spontaneous vaginal birth, 0.4% had a vaginal breech birth, while deliveries using forceps accounted for 3.5% and vacuum extractions for 7.2%
- 30.8% gave birth by caesarean section, compared with 20.3% in 1997
- 83.5% of those who had previously had a caesarean section had a further caesarean section in 2006
- the median length of stay in hospital was 3.0 days, and was longer for women who had a caesarean section (5.0 days).

Babies

Of babies born in 2006:

- 8.2% were preterm (less than 37 weeks gestation), compared with 7.3% in 1997
- 6.4% of liveborn babies were of low birthweight (less than 2,500 grams)
- 14.9% of liveborn babies were admitted to a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit
- the death rate prior to birth was 7.4 per 1,000 births and the death rate up to 28 days after birth was 3.0 per 1,000 live births, giving a total perinatal death rate of 10.3 per 1,000 births. The most common cause of perinatal death was congenital abnormality.

1 Introduction

Australia's mothers and babies 2006 is the 16th in the annual series prepared by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) National Perinatal Statistics Unit (NPSU). The report provides national information on the pregnancy and childbirth of mothers, and the characteristics and outcomes of their babies. It is a collaborative effort of the NPSU and states and territories, and can be used by researchers, academics, students, policy makers and health service planners, and those providing services in reproductive health. The report is based primarily on data from the National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC).

Purpose of this report

The purpose of *Australia's mothers and babies 2006* is to provide information on the women who gave birth to liveborn or stillborn babies in 2006, and on their babies.

This is achieved through:

- reporting against the Perinatal National Minimum Data Set
- providing national information on women who gave birth in 2006, including demographics, risk factors and characteristics relating to the pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium
- providing national information on the characteristics and perinatal outcomes of babies born in 2006
- providing information for state and territory comparison
- providing information for international comparison.

Structure of this report

This chapter provides background information and describes the data source.

The remainder of this report is divided into the following chapters:

- Chapter 2: Summary data

This chapter contains summary data on the number of women who gave birth and the number of babies born in 2006, as well as key perinatal health measures derived from the NPDC.

- Chapter 3: Mothers

This chapter contains information on women who gave birth in 2006, including their demographic profile (e.g. maternal age), maternal characteristics (e.g. parity), and characteristics of the labour, birth and puerperium (e.g. onset of labour, method of birth, perineal status).

- Chapter 4: Babies

This chapter contains information on the characteristics and outcomes of babies born in 2006, including birth status, gestational age, birthweight and sex ratios.

- Chapter 5: Perinatal mortality

This chapter includes data from the NPDC on fetal, neonatal and perinatal deaths. It also presents deaths from some jurisdictions classified using the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Perinatal Death Classification (PSANZ-PDC).

Appendix 1 presents the underlying data for the figures in the report.

The Perinatal National Minimum Data Set

An NMDS is a core set of data elements endorsed by the National Health Information Standards and Statistics Committee (NHISSC) for mandatory collection and reporting at a national level. An NMDS includes agreement on specified data elements as well as the scope of the application of those data elements and the statistical units for collection. Definitions of all data elements that are included in National Minimum Data Sets are included in the AIHW's online metadata registry, 'METeOR'.

The Perinatal NMDS is a specification for data collected on all births in Australia in hospitals, birth centres and the community. Data are collected from perinatal administrative and clinical record systems and forwarded regularly to the relevant state or territory health authority. Data for the year ending 31 December are then provided annually to the NPSU for national collation.

The Perinatal NMDS was first specified in 1997. It includes data items relating to the mother, including demographic characteristics and factors relating to the pregnancy, labour and birth, and data items relating to the baby, including birth status, sex and birthweight. A recent evaluation of compliance with the Perinatal NMDS specifications showed an improvement for 2005 data (Laws 2008).

Current definitions are available in the *National health data dictionary* (NHDD) Version 13 (HDSC 2006) and on METeOR online at <www.meteor.aihw.gov.au>. A list of the current Perinatal NMDS data elements can be found in Appendix 2. Versions 12 and 13 of the NHDD were current at the time of collection of the 2006 data (NHDC 2003; HDSC 2006).

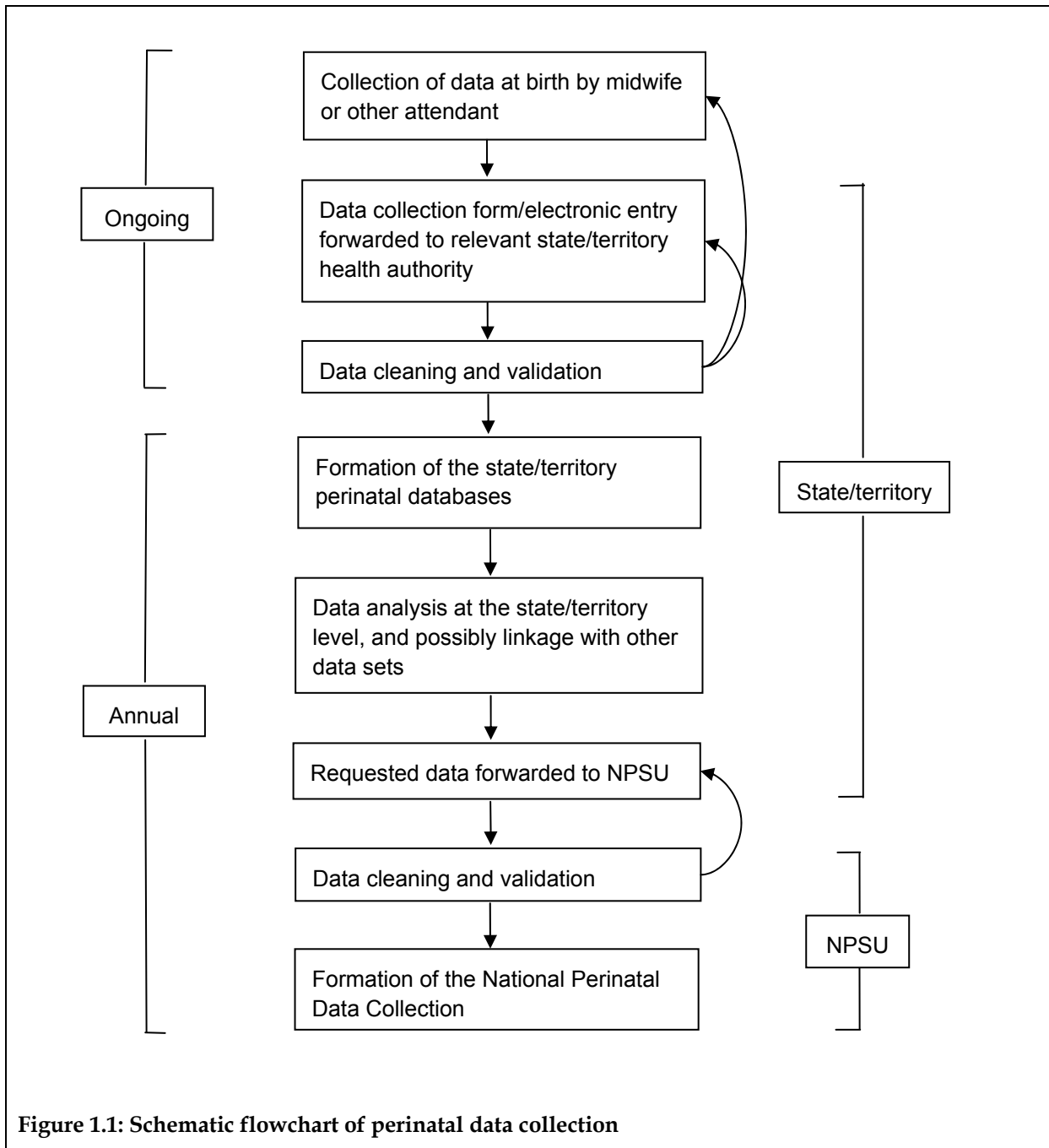
The National Perinatal Data Development Committee

The primary role of the National Perinatal Data Development Committee (NPDDC) is to undertake perinatal data development. New data items and changes to existing items that are endorsed by the Committee are submitted to NHISSC for endorsement for inclusion in METeOR and the Perinatal NMDS. The NPDDC is comprised of representatives from each state and territory health authority, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the NPSU, with temporary members invited on a transitory basis as their expertise is required. The Committee works in consultation with clinical reference groups.

A program of perinatal data development has led to improvements in data provision and reporting. The program of data development involves revision of existing Perinatal NMDS items, data development work on existing perinatal METeOR items and the development of new perinatal items.

National Perinatal Data Collection

The 2006 national data on births are based on notifications to the perinatal data collection in each state and territory. Midwives and other staff, using information obtained from mothers and from hospital or other records, complete notification forms for each birth in each jurisdiction. Information is included in the NPDC for all live births and stillbirths of at least 400 grams birthweight or at least 20 weeks gestation. Figure 1.1 shows the pathway of perinatal data to the NPSU for national collation.



Each state and territory collects more information than is specified on the Perinatal NMDS, and the NPSU requests some of these additional items. The information includes characteristics of the mother, such as previous pregnancies and perineal status after vaginal birth, and characteristics of the baby, such as resuscitation and admission to special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit. New data items were requested for 2006: *main reason for induction of labour* and *main reason for caesarean section*.

The state and territory health authorities undertake data processing, analysis and publication of reports. Each state and territory provided data in an electronic format to the NPSU. Due to data editing and subsequent updates of state and territory databases, the numbers in this report may differ slightly from those in reports published by the states and territories. See Appendix 3 for a list of state and territory reports on the 2006 data and Appendix 4 for state and territory contact details.

Explanatory notes

Tabulated data in this report are based on births in each state and territory in 2006 meeting the criteria for inclusion in the NPDC. Each state and territory has its own form and/or electronic system for collecting perinatal data. Unless otherwise stated, the data in this report relate to the state or territory of occurrence of births in 2006 rather than to the state or territory of usual residence of the mother.

Data are presented for all states and territories where available. Although the perinatal collections are based on the NMDS, in some jurisdictions the data are collected in different categories. Where data are not available from all states and territories in the required format, this is indicated in the footnotes of tables or figures.

All states and territories have a data item to record Indigenous status on their perinatal form, although there are some differences among the jurisdictions. According to the NHDD, Indigenous status is a measure of whether a person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (NHDC 2003). This separately identifies mothers as those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, and non-Indigenous mothers. No information is collected about the father's or baby's Indigenous status.

The number of babies is marginally higher than the number of mothers because of multiple births. The terms 'mothers' or 'women who gave birth' have been used in this report when referring to maternal characteristics, whereas 'births' refers to babies.

Australian Capital Territory data

The Australian Capital Territory data contain a high proportion of New South Wales residents who gave birth in the Australian Capital Territory. The proportion of non-residents who gave birth in the Australian Capital Territory was 16.3% in 2006. When interpreting the data it is important to note that these births to non-residents are likely to include a greater proportion of high risk and multi-fetal pregnancies associated with poorer perinatal outcomes. Therefore, percentages or rates such as those for preterm birth and perinatal deaths may be inflated for births in the Australian Capital Territory.

Data quality

The data received from states and territories are checked for completeness, validity and logical errors. Changes are made as necessary in consultation with the state and territory perinatal data providers.

Quality of Indigenous status data

All jurisdictions are working towards improving the ascertainment of Indigenous status in their perinatal collections. In 2007, the NPSU, in collaboration with the AIHW's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Unit, released a report on Indigenous mothers and their babies. This project included an assessment of Indigenous status data quality (Leeds et al. 2007).

There are a small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who give birth in the Australian Capital Territory, and the proportion fluctuates from year to year, making this jurisdiction less comparable to other jurisdictions. In 2006, 76 of the 105 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth in the Australian Capital Territory were Australian Capital Territory residents.

Data presentation

This report presents perinatal data that can largely be compared with data presented in *Australia's mothers and babies 2005* (Laws et al. 2007). There are three new tables: Tables 3.16, 3.20 and 3.25.

Cell sizes of less than five in state and territory tables have not been published in line with AIHW guidelines for protecting privacy of individuals (SIMC 2007). Exceptions to this are small numbers in 'Other' and 'Not stated' categories. Where n.p. (not published) has been used to protect confidentiality, the suppressed numbers are included in the totals.

Throughout the report, for totals, percentages may not add up to 100.0, and for subtotals, they may not add up to the sum of the percentages for the categories. This is due to rounding.

For multiple pregnancies, items presented for mothers which may be different for each baby, such as place of birth, are classified according to the characteristics of the first born baby. Where these items are presented for babies, each baby of a multiple birth is assigned the value of the first born baby. The exceptions are gestational age, presentation at birth and method of birth, for which the value for each baby of a multiple birth is presented.

Minor changes to data presentation, including where a jurisdiction has not provided a data item or data have not been published for other reasons, are detailed in the footnotes to the tables.

2 Summary data

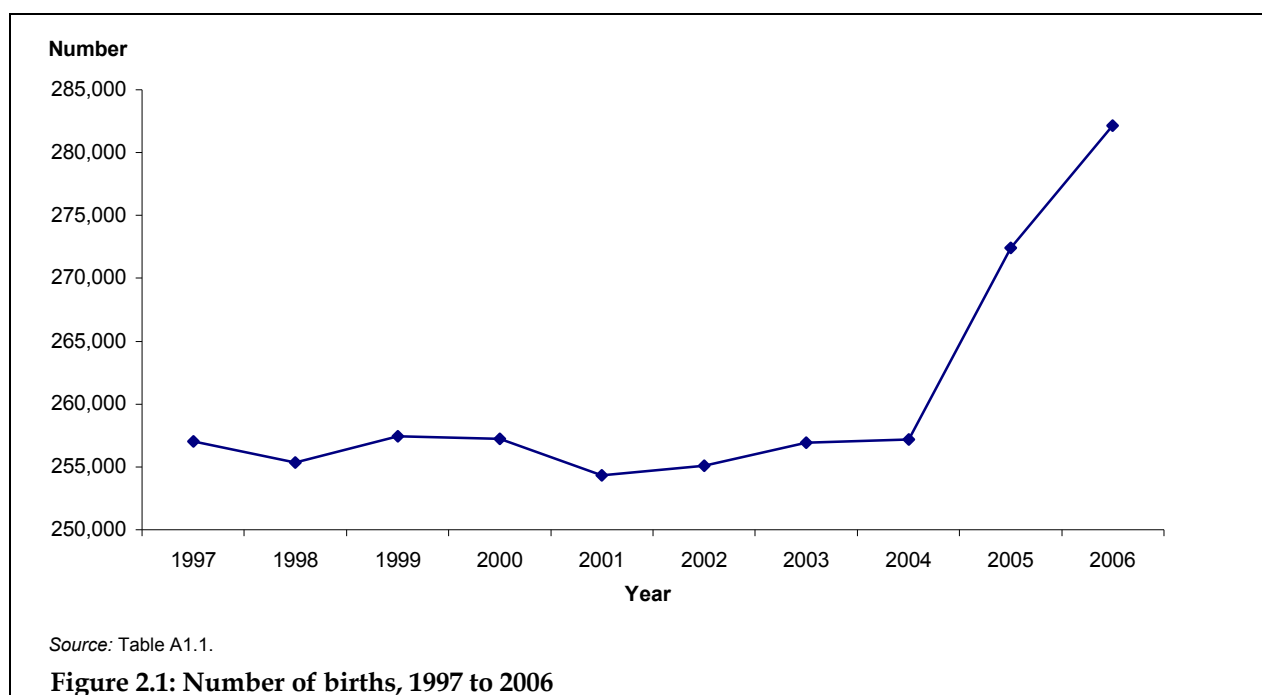
Women who gave birth and births

There were 277,436 women who gave birth in 2006 reported to the NPDC, resulting in a total of 282,169 births. Of these, 2,091 were fetal deaths (Table 2.1). This showed an increase of 9,750 births (3.6%) from the 272,419 reported in 2005.

Table 2.1: Women who gave birth and births, by state and territory, 2006

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Mothers	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Fetal deaths	592	626	391	209	140	42	50	41	2,091
Live births	92,176	69,230	56,317	28,455	18,662	6,101	5,435	3,702	280,078
All births	92,768	69,856	56,708	28,664	18,802	6,143	5,485	3,743	282,169

Ten years earlier, in 1997, there were 257,032 births. The number of births has been increasing since 2001, when the lowest number of births was reported (254,326) (Figure 2.1).



There were 280,078 live births in 2006 reported to the NPDC (Table 2.1). This was 14,129 more than the 265,949 live births registered in Australia in 2006 (ABS 2007). For further information about the differences between these data collections, see *Australia's mothers and babies 2005* (Laws et al. 2007).

Summary measures of perinatal health

Table 2.2 presents summary perinatal health information for Australia derived from the NPDC for births in 2006. Data include measures of pregnancy-related interventions, maternal risk factors and birth outcomes.

Table 2.2: Summary measures of perinatal health for Australia, 2006

Variable	Description of measure	Value
Maternal age	Percentage of mothers who were teenagers (less than 20 years)	4.3
Maternal age	Percentage of first-time mothers aged 35 years and older	14.0
Smoking	Percentage of women smoking at all during pregnancy ^(a)	17.3
Indigenous status	Percentage of mothers who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	3.7
Maternal country of birth	Percentage of mothers born in Australia	76.3
Hospital sector	Percentage of women who gave birth in hospital who were in public hospitals	70.1
Multiple pregnancy	Multiple pregnancies per 1,000 mothers	16.7
Spontaneous onset of labour	Percentage of mothers who had a spontaneous onset of labour	56.6
Induction of labour	Percentage of mothers who had an induced onset of labour	25.1
Instrumental vaginal deliveries	Percentage of mothers who had an instrumental (forceps or vacuum extraction) delivery ^(b)	10.7
Caesarean section	Percentage of mothers who had a caesarean section ^(b)	30.8
Previous caesarean section	Percentage of multiparous mothers having had previous caesarean sections	25.8
Mother's postnatal stay	Median length of stay in hospital of birth (days) for those who were discharged home	3.0
Preterm birth	Percentage of all births that were less than 37 weeks gestation	8.2
Low birthweight	Percentage of liveborn babies weighing less than 2,500 grams at birth	6.4
Apgar scores	Percentage of liveborn babies with an Apgar score of less than 7 at 5 minutes	1.3
Assisted reproduction technology	Estimated percentage of births resulting from assisted reproduction technology treatment ^(c)	3.1
Perinatal death rate	Perinatal deaths per 1,000 births	10.3

(a) Excludes Vic.

(b) For multiple births, the method of birth of the first born baby was used.

(c) The source for the number of babies born following assisted reproduction technology was the Australian and New Zealand Assisted Reproduction Database (ANZARD) held by NPSU.

3 Mothers

Demographic profile

Maternal age

Maternal age is an important risk factor for both obstetric and perinatal outcome. Adverse outcomes are more likely to occur in younger and older mothers (Gortzak-Uzan et al. 2001; Joseph et al. 2005). The age of mothers ranged from less than 15 years to 55 years in 2006. The average age of women who gave birth in Australia has increased gradually in recent years. The mean age in 2006 was 29.8 years, compared with 28.7 years in 1997, while the median age in 2006 was 30.0 years. The trend in delayed childbearing can be attributed to a number of factors including social, educational and economic, and increased access to assisted reproduction technology (Carolan 2003; Cleary-Goldman et al. 2005).

In 2006, the average age of mothers was higher in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory (both 30.6 years) and lower in the Northern Territory lower (27.4 years) than the national average (Table 3.1). Nationally, the number of teenage mothers (less than 20 years) dropped from 13,234 in 1997 to 11,977 in 2006, a decline of 9.5% over the decade. The proportion of women who gave birth in 2006 who were teenagers was 4.3%, and ranged from a low of 2.5% in the Australian Capital Territory to 13.3% in the Northern Territory.

The proportion of mothers aged 20–24 years fell from 17.1% in 1997 to 14.6% in 2006 (40,461 mothers). The proportion of older mothers, aged 35 years and over, has continued to increase from 15.0% in 1997 to 21.4% in 2006.

Table 3.1: Women who gave birth by maternal age and state and territory, 2006

Maternal age (years)	NSW	Vic^(a)	Qld	WA	SA^(b)	Tas	ACT^(c)	NT	Australia
Mean	30.0	30.6	29.1	29.4	29.5	28.5	30.6	27.4	29.8
Number									
Less than 20	3,470	1,964	3,076	1,514	892	439	133	489	11,977
20–24	12,683	7,825	9,739	4,635	2,920	1,234	593	832	40,461
25–29	24,551	17,142	15,376	7,427	5,049	1,652	1,395	912	73,504
30–34	30,780	24,877	17,174	8,897	5,879	1,715	1,932	909	92,163
35–39	16,525	14,031	8,750	4,885	3,210	853	1,094	454	49,802
40 and over	3,236	2,700	1,604	895	568	160	207	92	9,462
Not stated	58	8	—	—	—	—	—	1	67
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Per cent									
Less than 20	3.8	2.9	5.5	5.4	4.8	7.3	2.5	13.3	4.3
20–24	13.9	11.4	17.5	16.4	15.8	20.4	11.1	22.6	14.6
25–29	26.9	25.0	27.6	26.3	27.3	27.3	26.1	24.7	26.5
30–34	33.7	36.3	30.8	31.5	31.7	28.3	36.1	24.6	33.2
35–39	18.1	20.5	15.7	17.3	17.3	14.1	20.4	12.3	18.0
40 and over	3.5	3.9	2.9	3.2	3.1	2.6	3.9	2.5	3.4
Not stated	0.1	0.0	—	—	—	—	—	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) For Vic, maternal ages presented here may differ from those produced by the Victorian Perinatal Data Collection Unit, due to rounding differences.

(b) For SA, the mean maternal age presented here may differ from that produced by the Pregnancy Outcome Statistics Unit, that used maternal age to four decimal places for this calculation. The NPDC contains maternal age in completed years.

(c) 16.3% of women who gave birth in the ACT were non-ACT residents. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers

The data presented on Indigenous status are influenced by the quality and completeness of Indigenous identification, which may vary among jurisdictions. Further detail about the collection and reporting of Indigenous status data are presented in the report *Indigenous mothers and their babies, Australia 2001–2004* (Leeds et al. 2007).

In 2006, 10,183 women who identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander gave birth in Australia, representing 3.7% of all women who gave birth. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers accounted for a much greater proportion of all mothers in the Northern Territory (39.6%) than in other jurisdictions. There were also high proportions of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers in Western Australia (6.2%) and Queensland (5.3%). Because of their larger overall populations, there were more Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth in Queensland (2,937), New South Wales (2,610) and Western Australia (1,741) than in the Northern Territory (1,461) (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Women who gave birth by Indigenous status and state and territory, 2006

Indigenous status	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT ^(a)	NT	Australia
Number									
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2,610	565	2,937	1,741	548	216	105	1,461	10,183
Non-Indigenous	88,165	67,957	52,768	26,512	17,969	5,837	5,227	2,193	266,628
Not stated	528	25	14	—	1	—	22	35	625
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Per cent									
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.9	0.8	5.3	6.2	3.0	3.6	2.0	39.6	3.7
Non-Indigenous	96.6	99.1	94.7	93.8	97.0	96.4	97.6	59.4	96.1
Not stated	0.6	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	—	0.4	0.9	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) 16.3% of women who gave birth in the ACT were non-ACT residents. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages. For example, 76 of the 105 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth in the ACT in 2006 were ACT residents.

More Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers have their babies at a younger age compared with non-Indigenous mothers. The average age of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth in 2006 was 25.0 years, compared with 30.0 years for non-Indigenous mothers. More than one in five (20.9%) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers were teenagers, compared with 3.7% of non-Indigenous mothers.

Geographical location of the mother's usual residence

State and territory of the mother's usual residence

Table 3.3 shows that, of women who gave birth in the Australian Capital Territory, 16.3% lived outside of the Australian Capital Territory (16.2% in New South Wales). For the remaining jurisdictions, the proportion of women who gave birth outside their state or territory of usual residence ranged from 0.1% in both Western Australia and Tasmania to 2.7% in the Northern Territory.

Table 3.3: Women who gave birth by state and territory of usual residence and state and territory of birth, 2006

State/territory of usual residence	State/territory of birth								Total
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	
	Number								
NSW	90,573	1,273	437	9	30	—	870	10	93,202
Vic	20	67,150	16	<5	35	<5	<5	<5	67,229
Qld	550	n.p.	55,200	<5	8	—	—	5	55,793
WA	7	16	8	28,219	<5	<5	—	31	28,284
SA	<5	23	<5	<5	18,416	—	<5	50	18,497
Tas	<5	20	<5	—	6	6,047	—	—	6,076
ACT	45	<5	—	<5	—	—	4,480	<5	4,528
NT	<5	5	14	10	20	—	<5	3,587	3,640
Non-resident ^(a)	98	30	38	<5	<5	<5	—	—	173
Not stated	4	—	—	8	—	—	—	2	14
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
	Per cent								
NSW	99.2	1.9	0.8	0.0	0.2	—	16.2	0.3	33.6
Vic	0.0	98.0	0.0	n.p.	0.2	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	24.2
Qld	0.6	n.p.	99.1	n.p.	0.0	—	—	0.1	20.1
WA	0.0	0.0	0.0	99.9	n.p.	n.p.	—	0.8	10.2
SA	n.p.	0.0	n.p.	n.p.	99.4	—	n.p.	1.4	6.7
Tas	n.p.	0.0	n.p.	—	0.0	99.9	—	—	2.2
ACT	0.0	n.p.	—	n.p.	—	—	83.7	n.p.	1.6
NT	n.p.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	—	n.p.	97.2	1.3
Non-resident ^(a)	0.1	0.0	0.1	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	—	—	0.1
Not stated	0.0	—	—	0.0	—	—	—	0.1	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Not usually resident in Australia.

n.p. Data not published to maintain confidentiality of small numbers.

Remoteness Area of the mother's usual residence

Data on the geographical location of the usual residence of the mother were provided as state and Statistical Local Area (a small unit within the ABS's Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)) and/or postcode. These data have been mapped to levels of remoteness using the ASGC remoteness structure.

The distribution of Remoteness Area of mothers varied by state and territory of usual residence. In Queensland, 59.4% of women who gave birth resided in major cities compared with around 70.0% in the other populous states. The Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory presented different profiles of Remoteness Area, with almost all Australian Capital Territory resident mothers giving birth in a major city compared with Northern Territory women who lived in outer regional, remote and very remote areas (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Women who gave birth by Remoteness Area of usual residence and state and territory of usual residence, 2006

Remoteness Area	State/territory of usual residence								Total
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	
	Number								
Major cities	70,194	51,335	33,136	19,661	13,376	—	4,519	—	192,221
Inner regional	16,785	12,925	11,313	3,329	2,144	3,981	8	—	50,485
Outer regional	5,566	2,936	8,961	2,783	2,198	1,997	—	1,882	26,323
Remote	549	28	1,444	1,556	562	80	—	820	5,039
Very remote	99	—	936	936	216	18	—	928	3,133
Total	93,193	67,224	55,790	28,265	18,496	6,076	4,527	3,630	277,201
	Per cent								
Major cities	75.3	76.4	59.4	69.6	72.3	—	99.8	—	69.3
Inner regional	18.0	19.2	20.3	11.8	11.6	65.5	0.2	—	18.2
Outer regional	6.0	4.4	16.1	9.8	11.9	32.9	—	51.8	9.5
Remote	0.6	0.0	2.6	5.5	3.0	1.3	—	22.6	1.8
Very remote	0.1	—	1.7	3.3	1.2	0.3	—	25.6	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Excludes mothers not usually resident in Australia and those whose state or territory of usual residence was 'Not stated'.

Remoteness Area of mother's usual residence also varied by Indigenous status. Of non-Indigenous women who gave birth in 2006, 71.0% lived in major cities, followed by 18.2% in inner regional areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were more evenly spread across Remoteness Areas, with 26.5% living in major cities and 26.2% in outer regional areas. Few non-Indigenous women who gave birth lived in very remote areas compared with Indigenous mothers (0.5% compared with 17.7%) (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Women who gave birth by Remoteness Area of usual residence and Indigenous status, 2006

Remoteness Area	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Not stated	Total
	Number			
Major cities	2,694	189,132	409	192,235
Inner regional	1,878	48,478	129	50,485
Outer regional	2,664	23,594	68	26,326
Remote	1,136	3,896	8	5,040
Very remote	1,802	1,328	3	3,133
Total	10,174	266,428	617	277,219
	Per cent			
Major cities	26.5	71.0	66.3	69.3
Inner regional	18.5	18.2	20.9	18.2
Outer regional	26.2	8.9	11.0	9.5
Remote	11.2	1.5	1.3	1.8
Very remote	17.7	0.5	0.5	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Excludes mothers not usually resident in Australia.

Maternal country of birth

The country of birth of the mother may be an important risk factor for outcomes such as low birthweight and perinatal mortality. For 2006, seven of the jurisdictions used the four-digit ABS Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (ABS 1998) to classify countries of birth and one jurisdiction used the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS).

Of women who gave birth in Australia in 2006, 23.1% were born in countries other than Australia. Mothers born in the United Kingdom constituted 3.0% of all mothers and accounted for a relatively higher proportion of all mothers in Western Australia (7.1%). New Zealand-born mothers constituted 2.7% of all women who gave birth. One in 12 women who gave birth was born in an Asian country (8.6%). Larger proportions of mothers born in non-English speaking countries gave birth in the more populous states, New South Wales and Victoria (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Women who gave birth by country of birth and state and territory, 2006

Country of birth	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
	Number								
Australia	65,217	51,509	46,002	20,533	15,670	5,676	4,284	2,772	211,663
New Zealand	2,343	1,335	2,639	899	200	49	91	56	7,612
United Kingdom	2,334	1,762	1,333	1,998	577	69	115	62	8,250
Former Yugoslavia	279	537	38	79	27	—	n.p.	<5	972
Other Europe and former USSR	2,184	1,510	850	716	411	41	141	33	5,886
Lebanon	1,547	464	30	22	23	—	n.p.	<5	2,100
Other Middle East and North Africa	2,166	1,777	280	319	186	33	44	8	4,813
China and Hong Kong	2,125	969	290	170	99	13	60	7	3,733
India	1,294	1,126	170	149	105	n.p.	82	<5	2,946
Philippines	1,220	570	473	163	122	20	26	44	2,638
Vietnam	1,720	1,565	361	299	280	<5	55	n.p.	4,298
Other Asia	4,270	2,882	1,223	1,135	422	52	216	90	10,290
Northern America	692	395	302	208	92	13	48	14	1,764
South and Central America and the Caribbean	765	449	206	118	63	n.p.	43	<5	1,662
Africa (excluding North Africa)	1,100	1,151	551	725	192	36	52	20	3,827
Other countries	1,585	545	950	82	49	17	68	18	3,314
Not stated	462	1	21	638	—	—	6	540	1,668
Total	91,303	51,509	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436

(continued)

Table 3.6 (continued): Women who gave birth by country of birth and state and territory, 2006

Country of birth	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
	Per cent								
Australia	71.4	75.1	82.6	72.7	84.6	93.8	80.0	75.1	76.3
New Zealand	2.6	1.9	4.7	3.2	1.1	0.8	1.7	1.5	2.7
United Kingdom	2.6	2.6	2.4	7.1	3.1	1.1	2.1	1.7	3.0
Former Yugoslavia	0.3	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.1	—	n.p.	n.p.	0.4
Other Europe and former USSR	2.4	2.2	1.5	2.5	2.2	0.7	2.6	0.9	2.1
Lebanon	1.7	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1	—	n.p.	n.p.	0.8
Other Middle East and North Africa	2.4	2.6	0.5	1.1	1.0	0.5	0.8	0.2	1.7
China and Hong Kong	2.3	1.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.2	1.1	0.2	1.3
India	1.4	1.6	0.3	0.5	0.6	n.p.	1.5	n.p.	1.1
Philippines	1.3	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.5	1.2	1.0
Vietnam	1.9	2.3	0.6	1.1	1.5	n.p.	1.0	n.p.	1.5
Other Asia	4.7	4.2	2.2	4.0	2.3	0.9	4.0	2.4	3.7
Northern America	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.9	0.4	0.6
South and Central America and the Caribbean	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3	n.p.	0.8	n.p.	0.6
Africa (excluding North Africa)	1.2	1.7	1.0	2.6	1.0	0.6	1.0	0.5	1.4
Other countries	1.7	0.8	1.7	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.3	0.5	1.2
Not stated	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.3	—	—	0.1	14.6	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

n.p. Data not published to maintain confidentiality of small numbers.

Maternal characteristics and risk factors

Parity

Parity is the number of a woman's previous pregnancies that resulted in a birth. In 2006, 41.6% of mothers had their first baby and 33.4% had their second baby. One in six mothers (15.4%) had given birth twice previously and 9.4% had given birth three or more times (Table 3.7).

A parity of three or more was more common in mothers in the Northern Territory than mothers in the other states and the Australian Capital Territory. In the Northern Territory, 8.9% of mothers had given birth three times previously and 7.4% four or more times, compared with 5.6% and 3.8% respectively for Australia (Table 3.7).

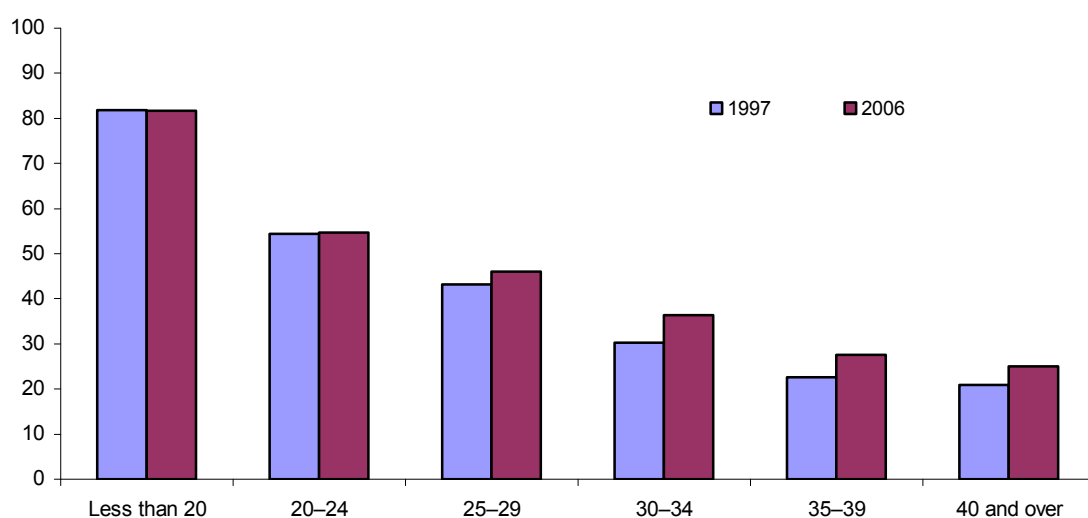
In 2006, 30.5% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers were having their first baby and 69.2% had given birth previously. More than one-quarter of Indigenous women had given birth three or more times previously (27.4%).

Table 3.7: Women who gave birth by parity and state and territory, 2006

Parity	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Number									
None	37,852	29,641	22,208	11,804	7,623	2,458	2,357	1,390	115,333
One	30,351	23,418	18,221	9,240	6,553	1,984	1,892	1,075	92,734
Two	14,010	10,063	9,010	4,385	2,813	985	708	624	42,598
Three	5,166	3,351	3,603	1,630	949	365	269	327	15,660
Four or more	3,385	2,074	2,677	1,194	580	261	128	273	10,572
Not stated	539	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	539
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Per cent									
None	41.5	43.2	39.9	41.8	41.2	40.6	44.0	37.7	41.6
One	33.2	34.2	32.7	32.7	35.4	32.8	35.3	29.1	33.4
Two	15.3	14.7	16.2	15.5	15.2	16.3	13.2	16.9	15.4
Three	5.7	4.9	6.5	5.8	5.1	6.0	5.0	8.9	5.6
Four or more	3.7	3.0	4.8	4.2	3.1	4.3	2.4	7.4	3.8
Not stated	0.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The average age of first-time mothers increased from 26.8 years in 1997 to 28.2 years in 2006. The median age of first-time mothers was 28.0 years in 2006. Nevertheless, in 2006 more than half of first-time mothers were aged less than 30 years (57.0%).

Figure 3.1 shows the increase in the proportion of first-time mothers in the older age groups between 1997 and 2006. Of women aged 35–39 years, 27.6% were first-time mothers compared with 22.6% in 1997. Of women aged 40 years and over, one-quarter had their first baby in 2006, compared with 20.8% in 1997. Of all first-time mothers, 14.0% were aged 35 years or older in 2006, compared with 8.4% in 1997. The proportion of mothers who had given birth at least twice previously increased with maternal age from 2.1% for teenagers to 43.4% for mothers aged 40 years and over (Table 3.8).



Source: Table A1.2.

Figure 3.1: First-time mothers in each maternal age group, 1997 and 2006 (per cent)

Table 3.8: Women who gave birth by parity and maternal age, 2006

Parity	Less than 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and over	Not stated	Total
Number								
None	9,783	22,143	33,818	33,463	13,725	2,370	31	115,333
One	1,935	12,611	23,623	33,695	17,915	2,941	14	92,734
Two	217	4,231	10,131	15,640	10,481	1,889	9	42,598
Three	28	1,137	3,807	5,433	4,258	991	6	15,660
Four or more	5	299	2,018	3,742	3,278	1,225	5	10,572
Not stated	9	40	107	190	145	46	2	539
Total	11,977	40,461	73,504	92,163	49,802	9,462	67	277,436
Per cent								
None	81.7	54.7	46.0	36.3	27.6	25.0	46.3	41.6
One	16.2	31.2	32.1	36.6	36.0	31.1	20.9	33.4
Two	1.8	10.5	13.8	17.0	21.0	20.0	13.4	15.4
Three	0.2	2.8	5.2	5.9	8.5	10.5	9.0	5.6
Four or more	0.0	0.7	2.7	4.1	6.6	12.9	7.5	3.8
Not stated	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	3.0	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Previous caesarean sections

In 2006, 25.8% of multiparous women who gave birth in Australia had a history of previous caesarean section. This proportion ranged from 22.6% in the Australian Capital Territory to 29.3% in South Australia (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9: Multiparous women who gave birth by number of previous caesarean sections and state and territory, 2006

Previous caesarean sections	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT ^(a)	NT	Total
	Number								
None	38,781	28,591	24,117	11,819	7,705	2,773	2,003	1,719	117,508
At least one	12,047	10,315	9,393	4,630	3,190	822	676	580	41,653
One	9,568	8,195	7,260	n.a.	2,557	636	564	439	29,219
Two	2,076	1,729	1,693	n.a.	523	149	90	102	6,362
Three or more	403	391	440	n.a.	110	37	22	39	1,442
Not stated	2,084	—	1	—	—	—	318	—	2,403
Total	52,912	38,906	33,511	16,449	10,895	3,595	2,997	2,299	161,564
	Per cent								
None	73.3	73.5	72.0	71.9	70.7	77.1	66.8	74.8	72.7
At least one	22.8	26.5	28.0	28.1	29.3	22.9	22.6	25.2	25.8
One	18.1	21.1	21.7	n.a.	23.5	17.7	18.8	19.1	18.1
Two	3.9	4.4	5.1	n.a.	4.8	4.1	3.0	4.4	3.9
Three or more	0.8	1.0	1.3	n.a.	1.0	1.0	0.7	1.7	0.9
Not stated	3.9	—	0.0	—	—	—	10.6	—	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as 10.6% of data were not stated.

n.a. Data not available.

Smoking during pregnancy

Smoking is a risk factor for pregnancy complications, and is associated with poorer perinatal outcomes such as low birthweight, preterm birth, small for gestational age babies and perinatal death (Laws et al. 2006).

For 2006, data were available for seven states and territories: New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The proportion of women who smoked while pregnant ranged from 13.5% in New South Wales to 29.3% in the Northern Territory. Overall, 17.3% of women in these states and territories smoked during pregnancy (Table 3.10). There has been no real change in this proportion over the previous four years.

Table 3.10: Women who gave birth by tobacco smoking status during pregnancy and state and territory, 2006

Smoking status	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA ^(a)	Tas	ACT	NT ^(b)	Total
Number									
Smoked	12,302	n.a.	11,298	4,941	4,082	1,647	741	1,081	36,092
Did not smoke	77,408	n.a.	44,250	23,312	14,230	4,356	4,613	2,277	170,446
Not stated	1,593	n.a.	171	—	206	50	—	331	2,351
Total	91,303	n.a.	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	208,889
Per cent									
Smoked	13.5	n.a.	20.3	17.5	22.0	27.2	13.8	29.3	17.3
Did not smoke	84.8	n.a.	79.4	82.5	76.8	72.0	86.2	61.7	81.6
Not stated	1.7	n.a.	0.3	—	1.1	0.8	—	9.0	1.1
Total	100.0	n.a.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) For SA, 'Smoked' includes women who quit before the first antenatal visit.

(b) For NT, smoking status was recorded at the first antenatal visit.

n.a. Data not available.

Note: Mother's tobacco smoking status during pregnancy is self-reported.

The average age of mothers who smoked during pregnancy was 27.0 years compared with 30.1 years for those who did not smoke. Teenage mothers accounted for 11.6% of all mothers who reported smoking during pregnancy, and 42.0% of teenagers reported smoking.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers accounted for 13.9% of mothers who smoked during pregnancy in the jurisdictions which provided smoking data. Over half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking during pregnancy (52.2%), compared with 15.6% of non-Indigenous women who gave birth.

Labour and birth characteristics

Place of birth

Actual place of birth

Most births in Australia occur in hospitals, in conventional labour-ward settings. There were 269,835 women who gave birth in hospitals (97.3%) in 2006 (Table 3.11). A further 5,460 women gave birth in birth centres (2.0%). Planned homebirths and other births, such as those occurring unexpectedly before arrival in hospital or in other settings, were the two categories accounting for the smallest proportion of women who gave birth (2,053 women, 0.7%).

Table 3.11: Women who gave birth by actual place of birth and state and territory, 2006

Place of birth	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Number									
Hospital	88,844	66,705	54,898	27,688	17,091	5,920	5,127	3,562	269,835
Birth centre	1,870	1,294	472	264	1,271	87	202	—	5,460
Home	125	197	47	194	86	12	13	34	708
Other	385	351	300	107	70	34	12	^(a) 86	1,345
Not stated	79	—	2	—	—	—	—	7	88
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Per cent									
Hospital	97.3	97.3	98.5	98.0	92.3	97.8	95.8	96.6	97.3
Birth centre	2.0	1.9	0.8	0.9	6.9	1.4	3.8	—	2.0
Home	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.3
Other	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.2	^(a) 2.3	0.5
Not stated	0.1	—	0.0	—	—	—	—	0.2	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) The majority of these births occurred in remote community health centres.

Note: For multiple births, the place of birth of the first born baby was used.

Intended place of birth

The jurisdictions collect intended place of birth at different times during the pregnancy. Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania collect this item at the time of booking, while the remaining states and territories collect the intended place of birth at the onset of labour. Care must be taken when comparing data across the jurisdictions.

In 2006, the intended place of birth was hospital for 96.1% of mothers and birth centres for 3.4%. Only 0.5% intended to give birth at home or in other settings (Table 3.12).

Around 3.9% of mothers intended to give birth outside of a conventional labour-ward setting in 2006 (Table 3.12). Only 2.7% of mothers actually did so, giving birth in places such as birth centres or at home.

Table 3.12: Women who gave birth by intended place of birth and state and territory, 2006

Place of birth	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Number									
Hospital	87,556	66,141	55,054	27,270	16,048	5,870	4,959	3,613	266,511
Birth centre	3,118	2,097	571	704	2,328	n.p.	379	<5	9,368
Home	172	230	77	230	102	n.p.	16	n.p.	886
Other	388	—	12	48	40	—	—	^(a) 11	499
Not stated	69	79	5	1	—	—	—	18	172
Total	91,303	68,547	55,719	28,253	18,518	6,053	5,354	3,689	277,436
Per cent									
Hospital	95.9	96.5	98.8	96.5	86.7	97.0	92.6	97.9	96.1
Birth centre	3.4	3.1	1.0	2.5	12.6	n.p.	7.1	n.p.	3.4
Home	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.6	n.p.	0.3	n.p.	0.3
Other	0.4	—	0.0	0.2	0.2	—	—	^(a) 0.3	0.2
Not stated	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	—	—	—	0.5	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Includes remote community health centres.

n.p. Data not published to maintain confidentiality of small numbers.

Note: Intended place of birth at time of booking for Vic, SA and Tas. Intended place of birth at onset of labour for NSW, Qld, WA, ACT and NT.

Duration of pregnancy

Different methods may be used for estimating the duration of a pregnancy, which is reported as the number of completed weeks of gestation. Estimates may be made based on the calculated interval between the first day of the last menstrual period (LMP) and the baby's date of birth. For the majority of pregnancies, the gestational age derived from the known menstrual dates provides a good estimate of the duration of pregnancy. When the date of LMP is not known or is uncertain, gestational age can be estimated using ultrasound measurements taken in early pregnancy (before the 20th week of gestation). Estimates of gestational age may be revised if there is a discrepancy between gestational ages calculated from dates and ultrasounds, as most pregnant women have at least one ultrasound examination in early pregnancy.

Preterm birth (less than 37 completed weeks gestation) occurred for 7.4% of all mothers in 2006. The average duration of pregnancy in Australia was 38.9 weeks. A minority of mothers gave birth at 20–27 weeks (0.8%) or 28–31 weeks (0.7%), while 5.8% gave birth at 32–36 weeks. There was a higher incidence of preterm birth in the Northern Territory (11.0%) than elsewhere (Table 3.13).

Of women who gave birth in 2006, 91.5% gave birth at 37–41 completed weeks of gestation (term) and 1.2% gave birth at 42 or more weeks gestation (post-term). Post-term births were least common in South Australia (0.4%) and most common in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (both 1.6%) (Table 3.13).

The numbers reported here are based on the duration of pregnancies of mothers, and so differ from the figures on gestational age in Chapter 4, which are based on the gestational age of their babies. The numbers differ because the lower gestational age associated with multiple births is

