

HEALTH SURVEILLANCE INDICATORS: AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST-TIME MOTHERS



Public Health Relevance

The average age of first-time mothers is a useful indicator for interpreting childbearing patterns. There is a growing trend towards delayed childbearing in Canada and other developed countries such as Japan and the United States. Since fertility starts to decline in women approaching 30 years of age, delaying the first birth reduces the window of opportunity for subsequent births.

Women of advanced maternal age who become pregnant are more likely to experience pregnancy complications and adverse birth outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight birth, chromosomal abnormalities in the baby and stillbirth. Nonetheless, women of advanced maternal age are able to have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby when they receive the appropriate support and care.

Highlights

1. The average age of first-time mothers in Toronto increased from 2002 to 2011.
2. Almost half of Toronto births annually were to first-time mothers.
3. Single first-time mothers in Toronto were significantly younger compared to those married or divorced/separated/widowed.
4. The average age of first-time mothers born in Canada was older than those born outside of Canada.
5. First-time mothers in Toronto were older compared to the rest of Ontario, and the rest of the GTA.

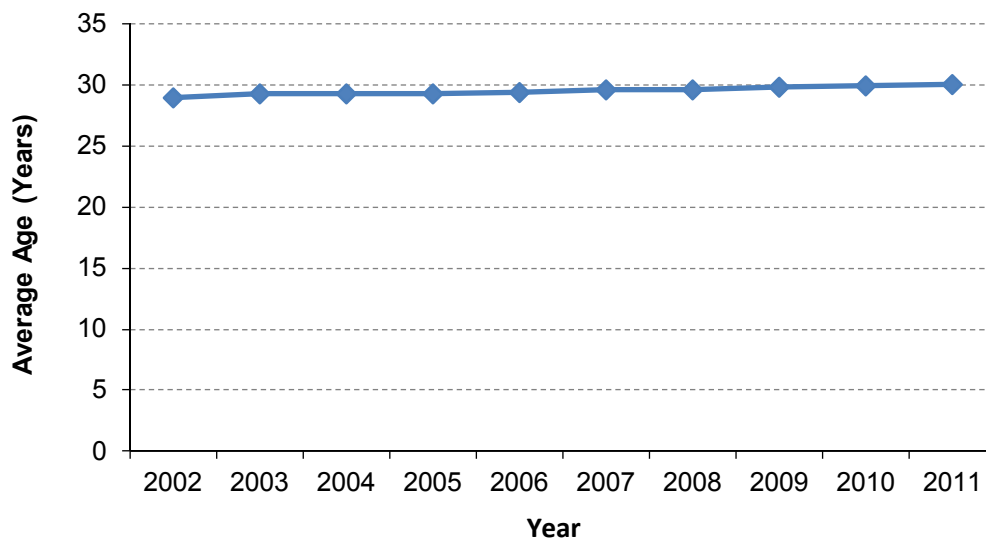
Trends Over Time

The average age of first-time mothers in Toronto increased from 2002 to 2011. Almost half of births annually were to first-time mothers.

In Toronto, the average age of first-time mothers increased over the last 10 years from 29.0 years in 2002 to 30.1 in 2011.

Over this period, first-time mothers accounted for an average of 48% of all births to Toronto women. According to the most recent data available, there were just over 14,300 births to first-time mothers in 2011.

Figure 1: Average Age of First-Time Mothers, Toronto, 2002 to 2011



Source: See Data Notes.

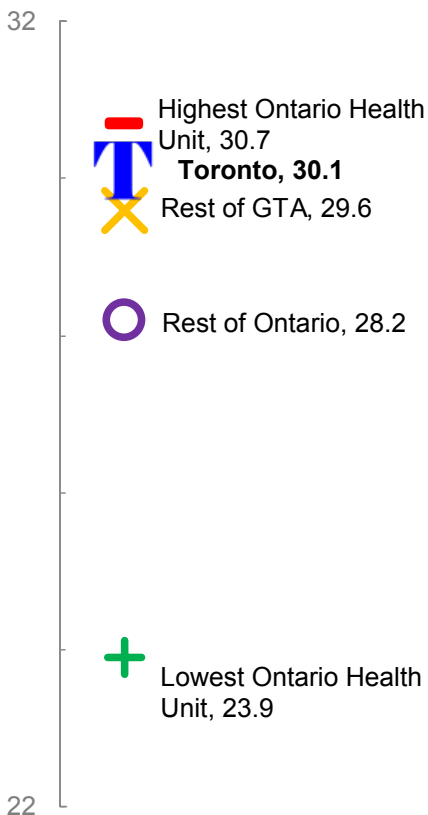
Regional Comparisons

First-time mothers in Toronto were older compared to the rest of Ontario and the rest of the GTA.

Figure 2 shows the average age of first-time mothers in Toronto in 2011, compared to the rest of Ontario, rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the highest and lowest health unit areas.

The average age of first-time mothers in Toronto was among the highest in Ontario, at 30.1 years. Toronto ranked 3rd of the 36 health units in Ontario, with the first ranked health unit having the highest rate. On average, first-time mothers in Toronto were older compared to the rest of Ontario and the rest of the GTA .

Figure 2: Average Age of First-Time Mothers, Toronto Compared to Other Selected Regions Ontario, 2011



Source: See Data Notes.

Socio-Demographics

Single first-time mothers were significantly younger compared to those married or divorced/separated/widowed. On average, first-time mothers born in Canada were older than those born outside of Canada.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the distribution of births to first-time mothers and the average age of first-time mothers by selected maternal demographic characteristics, based on 2011 data for Toronto.

Of all births to first-time mothers:

- Approximately 6 in 10 (63%) were to women age 25 to 34.
- Approximately 7 in 10 (72%) were to women who were married. However, this distribution needs to be interpreted with caution because more than 10% of records had missing information on mother's marital status, which may bias the distribution.
- Approximately 6 in 10 (57%) were to women who were born outside of Canada.

The average age of single first-time mothers was significantly lower compared to those who were married or those who were divorced/separated/widowed.

The average age of first-time mothers born in Canada was significantly higher compared to those born outside of Canada.

Table 1: Distribution of Births to First-Time Mothers, by Mother's Age, Toronto, 2011

Mother's Age Group	Number of Births	Percent of total
Less than 20 years	481	3.4%
20 to 24 years	1,809	12.6%
25 to 29 years	4,006	27.9%
30 to 34 years	5,023	35.0%
35 to 39 years	2,423	16.9%
40 plus years	608	4.2%

Totals for each category may not match overall total because analysis excluded birth records with missing information. When the proportion of records with missing information exceeds 5% (e.g., Marital Status), these records are included in the analysis and reported separately.

Source: Live Births, See Data Notes for more details.

Table 2: Distribution of Births to First-Time Mothers and Average Age by Marital Status, Toronto, 2011

Mother's Marital Status	Number of Births	Percent of total	Average Maternal Age
Single (never married)	2,443	17.0%	26.3
Married	10,324	72.0%	31.0
Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	155	1.1%	30.7
Unspecified	1,425	9.9%	30.1

Totals for each category may not match overall total because analysis excluded birth records with missing information. When the proportion of records with missing information exceeds 5% (e.g., Marital Status), these records are included in the analysis and reported separately.

Marital status refers to the legal conjugal status of the mother at the time of delivery. See data notes for detailed definition.

Source: See Data Notes.

Table 3: Distribution of Births to First-Time Mothers and Average Age of First-Time Mothers, by Mother's Place of Birth, Toronto, 2011

Mother's Place Birth	Number of Births	Percent of total	Average Maternal Age
Canada	6,006	43.0%	30.4 ^H
Outside Canada	7,951	57.0%	29.9
Total Births to First-Time Mothers	14,347	100.0%	30.1

^H Significantly higher than the births to first-time mothers born outside Canada.

Source: See Data Notes.

Data Notes

Notes

- Ontario Live Birth Data, accessed via the IntelliHEALTH Ontario system, does not capture births to Ontario women that occurred outside of the province. This data source only contains data on births that occurred in Ontario and were registered with the Office of the Registrar General. Initiation of birth registration fees by some municipalities in mid-1996 and 1997 appears to have deterred parents from registering their newborns. A study looking at data from 1990 to 1998 found that unregistered births were more likely to be births with lower birth weight or births to teenage mothers. In 2008/2009, the responsibility of birth registration was gradually transferred from municipalities to the provincial government and birth registration became a free service. In Toronto, birth registration has been processed by the Province of Ontario since November 2009.
- Time trend analysis is conducted for the most recent ten years of available data. The number of years available for reporting is determined by the frequency of data collection.
- Toronto is compared to Ontario without Toronto as opposed to the Ontario total because Toronto comprises a large proportion of the Ontario population. The same is true for comparison the the rest of the GTA.

Definitions

First-Time Mother refers to a woman giving birth for the first time. Women who have had a previous stillbirth would not be considered first-time mother based on this definition. Current analysis considered three data elements when determining whether a birth was to a first-time mother: birth type (refers to current birth), number of live births to mother (includes current birth), number of stillbirths to mother (includes current birth).

Marital Status refers to the legal conjugal status of the mother at the time of delivery. There are five legal marital status categories: single – never been married, separated, divorced, married, or widowed. Women in common-law relationships are expected to select the most appropriate category that corresponds to their legal marital status.

Ontario excluding Toronto means Ontario with Toronto removed from the Ontario data.

Sources

Live Births, Vital Statistics 2002- 2011, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, Date Extracted: March 2013.

Used in:

- Figures 1 and 2
Tables 1, 2 and 3

Health Surveillance Indicator: Average Age First-Time Mothers

Category: Reproductive Health

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This indicator report is part of a series that informs the ongoing assessment of Toronto's health status. For a full list of the indicators, please go to: www.toronto.ca/health