

Births, 2015 and 2016

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There were 382,392 live births in Canada in 2015 and 383,102 in 2016. These figures represent a slight decrease from 2014 (384,100) and follow the trend of relatively stable birth numbers observed since 2009. This trend contrasts with the annual rates of increase of around 3% observed from 2005 to 2008.

In 2016, boys accounted for a slight majority at 51.3%, while girls made up the other 48.7%.

Fertility rates among Canadian women continue to decrease

The total fertility rate (TFR) for 2015 was 1,563 births per 1,000 women. In 2016, the TFR was 1,543 births per 1,000 women. The TFR in Canada has shown a general decline since 2008, when it was 1,681 births per 1,000 women. The TFR is an estimate of the average number of live births that 1,000 women would have in their lifetime, based on the age-specific fertility rates of a given year.

Taking mortality between birth and 15 years of age into consideration, developed countries such as Canada need an average of around 2,060 children per 1,000 females to renew their population based on natural increase and without taking immigration into account. The last year in which Canada attained fertility levels sufficient to replace its current population was 1971.

While the TFR is a good indicator of fertility in Canada as a whole, this national average can hide major provincial and territorial differences. From 2000 to 2016, Nunavut was the only province or territory to consistently have fertility levels above the replacement rate, with a TFR of 2,986 live births per 1,000 women in 2016. With the exception of the Prairie provinces and the Northwest Territories, every other province and territory had TFRs during this period that rarely exceeded 1,700 births per 1,000 women.

In 2016, for the 16th consecutive year, Saskatchewan had the highest TFR among the provinces, at 1,934 births per 1,000 women. It was followed by Manitoba (1,847), the Northwest Territories (1,793) and Alberta (1,694). British Columbia was the province with the lowest fertility rate at 1,404 births per 1,000 women, followed by Nova Scotia (1,422) and Newfoundland and Labrador (1,425).

The decrease in fertility is particularly evident among mothers under the age of 30. The fertility rate among women aged 25 to 29 declined from 102.0 live births per 1,000 women in 2008, to 87.6 per 1,000 in 2016. Among women aged 20 to 24, it dropped from 53.0 to 37.6 per 1,000 women, and from 14.3 to 8.5 per 1,000 women among those aged 15 to 19. The fertility rate changed little among women age 30 to 34 (from 107.4 to 107.6), while it increased among women aged 35 and older. Among women aged 35 to 39, the fertility rate increased from 50.1 live births per 1,000 women in 2008 to 56.0 per 1,000 in 2016. It grew from 8.4 to 11.5 per 1,000 among women aged 40 to 44, and from 0.4 to 0.7 per 1,000 among women aged 45 to 49.

The average age of Canadian mothers is increasing

A consequence of the differing evolution of age-specific fertility is a continual increase in the average age at delivery of Canadian mothers over two decades. In 1996, the average age of a Canadian mother giving birth was 28.4 years. By 2016, it had increased to 30.3 years. The average age of mothers has increased in all provinces and territories over this period, exceeding 30 years in 2016 in Quebec (30.2), Ontario (30.8), Alberta (30.2), British Columbia (31.1) and Yukon (30.9). At 25.5 years, Nunavut had the lowest average age of motherhood.

While 56.3% of live births in 1996 were to women under the age of 30, this proportion fell to 42.6% in 2016. Over the last two decades, women have also become more likely to delay the birth of their first child. In 2016, 45.9% of first births were to women aged 30 to 49, up from 30.4% in 1996.



The average birthweight of infants is decreasing

In 2016, low birthweight indicators continued their upward trend compared with 2000. The proportion of live births where the infant weighed less than 2,500 grams increased from 5.6% in 2000 to 6.4% in 2016. Over the same period, the average birth weight decreased by 2.3%, going from 3,413 grams to 3,334 grams.

The proportion of low birthweight babies differs by age of mother. In 2016, infants weighing less than 2,500 grams represented 7.6% of live births among women under the age of 20, 6.0% of births among women aged 20 to 34, and 7.7% of live births among women aged 35 to 49.

The average birthweight decreased in all provinces and territories from 2000 to 2016. This decrease was most evident in Yukon (-3.0%), Alberta (-2.8%) and Manitoba (-2.6%). The smallest decreases occurred in Quebec (-1.4%), British Columbia (-2.0%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (-2.0%).

In 2016, the average birthweight in the Northwest Territories (3,466 grams) was 4% higher than the Canadian average. Since 2003, the average birthweight in the Northwest Territories has been the highest among all provinces and territories. In 2016, the Northwest Territories were followed by Prince Edward Island (3,432 grams) and Newfoundland and Labrador (3,404 grams). Alberta (3,291 grams) had the lowest average birthweight for the seventh year in a row. Alberta was followed by Nunavut (3,302 grams), Quebec (3,324 grams) and Ontario (3,329 grams).

Infants born preterm (i.e. before 37 weeks of gestation) represented 7.9% of live births in Canada in 2016. The percentage of such births has fluctuated around 7.6% annually since 2000. The rate of premature births was highest in Nunavut (13.7%), followed by Yukon (9.5%), Manitoba (8.7%), Alberta (8.6%), the Northwest Territories (8.6%), Newfoundland and Labrador (8.5%) and Nova Scotia (8.2%). Quebec (7.0%) had the lowest rate in 2016. Elsewhere, the rates were close to the national average.

Sustainable Development Goals

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) — the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

The Births release is an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. This release will be used in helping to measure the following goal:



Note to readers

Data on births are collected by the Vital Statistics – Birth Database and Vital Statistics – Stillbirth Database, administrative surveys that collect demographic and medical information annually from all provincial and territorial vital statistics registries on all live births and stillbirths in Canada.

The data are used to calculate basic indicators (such as counts and rates) on births of residents of Canada. Information from these databases are also used in the calculation of statistics, such as age-specific fertility rates.

Data for reference years 2015 and 2016 from the Vital Statistics – Birth Database and Vital Statistics – Stillbirth Database are now available.

Available in CANSIM: tables [102-0030](#), [102-0506 to 102-0508](#), [102-0562](#) and [102-4501 to 102-4516](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3231](#) and [3234](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).