

# Births, 2019

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, September 29, 2020

---

In 2019, there were 372,038 live births in Canada, excluding Yukon. Similar to previous years, the proportion of boys (51.3%) was slightly higher than the proportion of girls (48.7%). New 2019 birth information is available today from the Canadian Vital Statistics: Birth Database. A historical comparison dating back to 1959, one of the earliest years for which comparable data on first-time mothers is available, is included. These data also provide an important benchmark for understanding the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadian birthrates.

## Canada's total fertility rate hits a record low

In 2019, the total fertility rate (TFR), or the number of children that a woman would have over the course of her reproductive life, declined to 1.47 births per woman from 3.94 in 1959. Canada's TFR has been below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per women since 1971, meaning that the number of babies being born is not enough for the current population to replace itself. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that birth rates may have changed. In addition, if immigration levels were to fall, fertility rates would become more important for population growth to be sustained.

## In 2019, Canadian women waited an additional 6 years before having their first child compared with 60 years prior

Over the last six decades, the average age of first-time mothers increased from 23.2 years in 1959 to 29.4 years in 2019. This trend, common in other countries including the United States, coincides with increased participation for women aged 25 to 54 years in the workforce and a rise in university-educated women. According to data from the Labour Force Survey, the percentage of women in the workforce increased from 22% in 1950 to 84% in 2019, and the proportion of women with a university degree nearly tripled from 14% in 1990 to 40% in 2019.

The distribution of births by the mother's age has also changed over the years. Over the last 60 years, fertility rates among women younger than 25 years have decreased significantly. In 1959, women aged 20 to 24 years were the most likely to have children (age-specific fertility rate of 233.8 births per 1,000 women), but by 2019, the fertility rate for this age group had dropped significantly (31.8 births per 1,000 women). This pattern was also reflected in first-time mothers aged 20 to 24 years, where 45% of women giving birth for the first time in 1959 were in this age group, compared with 14% in 2019. In 2019, women aged 30 to 34 years were more likely to have a baby than women of any other age group and represented the greatest percentage of first-time mothers.

## Older first-time mothers were more than twice as likely to give birth to twins or triplets

The chance of having multiples increases with age. In Canada, older first-time mothers were more than twice as likely to have twins, triplets or more, than their younger counterparts. In 2019, 4.3% of first-time mothers 40 years or older gave birth to multiples compared with less than 1.6% of first-time mothers younger than 40. One of the explanations for this difference relates to the fact that older women have higher levels of naturally occurring follicle-stimulating hormone, which stimulate ovulation and increase the possibility of multiple eggs being released.



### Note to readers

For 2019, in an effort to be more timely, the duration of data collection has been shortened compared with previous years. The 2019 data are therefore considered preliminary. Data will be revised with subsequent releases.

Data for 2017 and 2018 births have been revised and include new and updated data received at Statistics Canada by August 4, 2020.

Data for 2017, 2018 and 2019 births occurring in Yukon are not available. To avoid confusion, data for these same years for births to residents of Yukon that occurred in other provinces and territories, were also suppressed.

The age-specific fertility rate (ASFR) is the number of live births per 1,000 women in a specific age group. Exceptionally, the ASFR for women 15 to 19 years is the number of live births to women under age 20 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19.

The total fertility rate (TFR) is an estimate of the average number of live births a woman can be expected to have in her lifetime, based on the ASFR of a given year. The TFR = SUM of single year of ASFRs.

Further information on births is available in tables [13-10-0417-01](#) and [13-10-0418-01](#).

**Available tables:** [13-10-0414-01](#) to [13-10-0416-01](#) and [13-10-0419-01](#) to [13-10-0426-01](#) .

**Definitions, data sources and methods:** survey number [3231](#).

More information about births to first-time mothers in Canada is available in the infographic "[First-time mothers in Canada, 2019](#)," released today as part of the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics (11-627-M)*.

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](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).