

## Health Fact Sheets

# Preterm live births in Canada, 2000 to 2013



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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0<sup>s</sup> value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- <sup>P</sup> preliminary
- <sup>r</sup> revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- <sup>E</sup> use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- \* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

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Studies have shown that babies born preterm are at a higher risk of various medical problems such as respiratory distress syndrome, chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disorder, asthma, hearing and vision loss than are babies born during the normal gestation period<sup>1 2 3</sup> In 2013 there were 380,323 births in Canada, of which 29,716 (7.8%) were preterm births.<sup>4</sup> The proportion of all births represented by preterm births remained fairly constant throughout the period 2000 to 2013, ranging from 7.3% in 2001 to 8.0% in 2008.

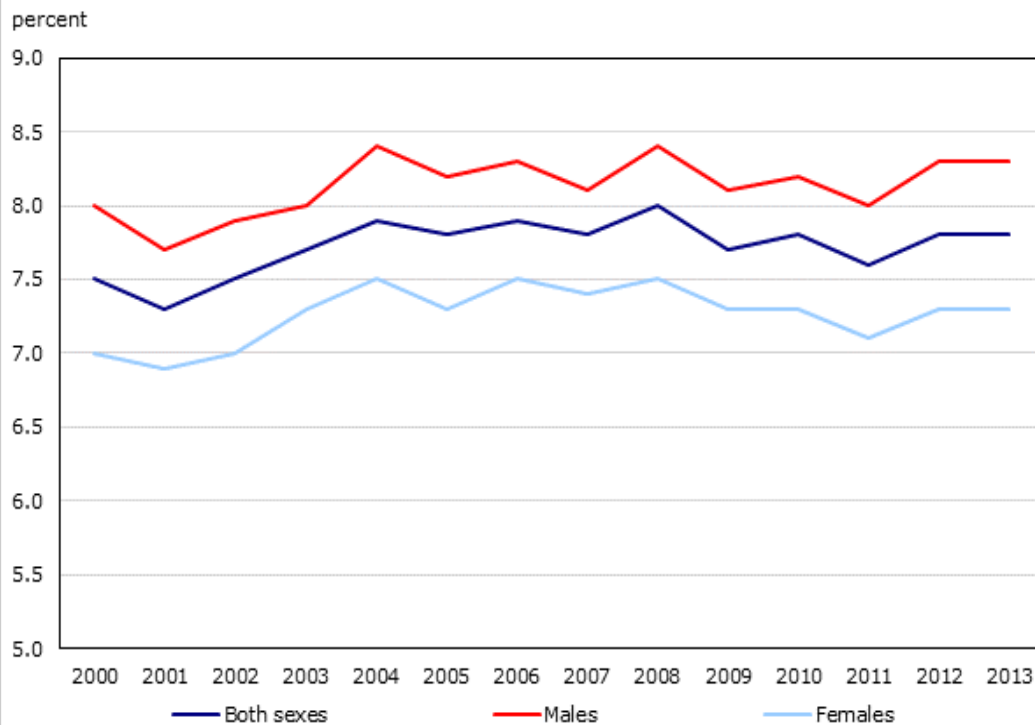
### About preterm live births

Preterm births are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as babies born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed.<sup>5</sup> A normal gestation period would be 37 to 41 weeks.

### More male preterm births than female preterm

In 2013, 8.3% of all male births were preterm births, compared to 7.3% for females (Chart 1). During the period 2000 to 2013, the preterm birth share of all male births ranged from 7.7% in 2001 to 8.4% in 2004 and 2008. In comparison, the female preterm birth share of all female births ranged from 6.9% in 2001 to 7.5% in 2004, 2006, and 2008.

**Chart 1**  
**Preterm births as a percentage of all live births, by sex,**  
**Canada, 2000 to 2013**

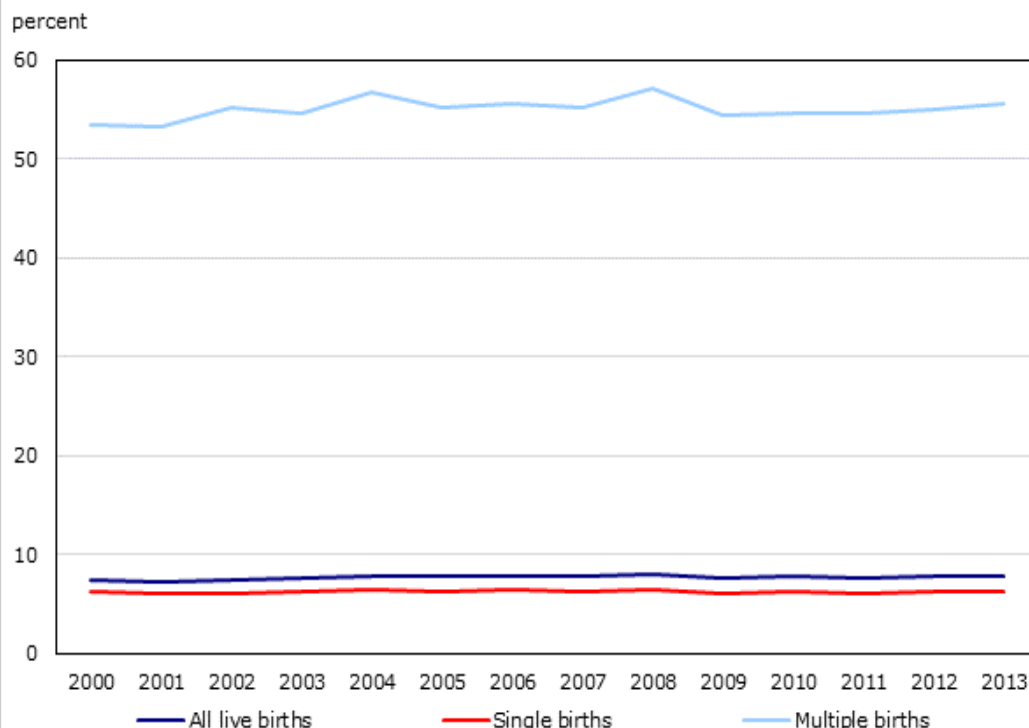


Source: Vital Statistics: Birth Database.

### More than half of multiple births are preterm births

In 2013, only 6.2% of all single births were preterm births, compared to over one-half (55.6%) of multiple live births (twins, triplets, etc.) (Chart 2). Among single births, the preterm birth share of all births fluctuated between 6.0% and 6.4% during the years 2000 to 2013. The preterm birth share of all multiple births ranged from 53.3% to 57.1% over the same period.

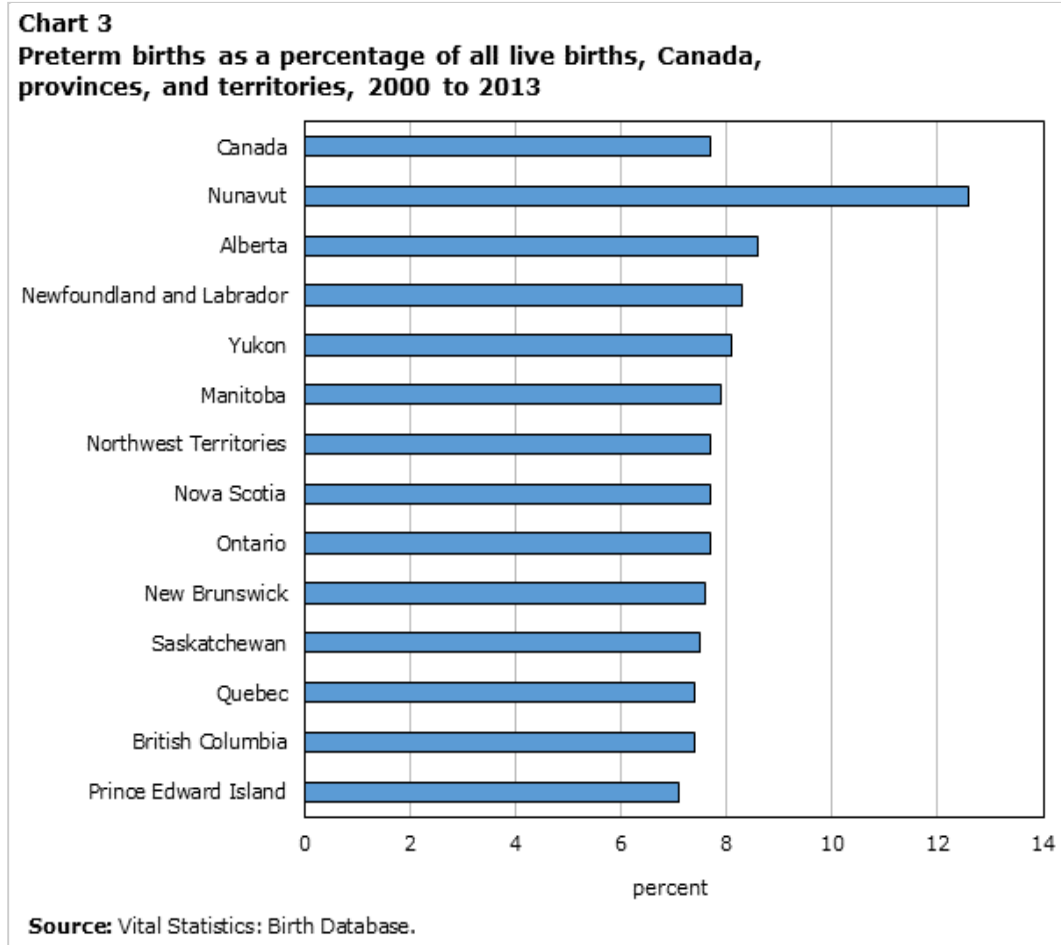
**Chart 2**  
**Preterm births as a percentage of all live births and by type of**  
**birth (single/multiple), Canada, 2000 to 2013**



Source: Vital Statistics: Birth Database.

### Preterm births by province or territory

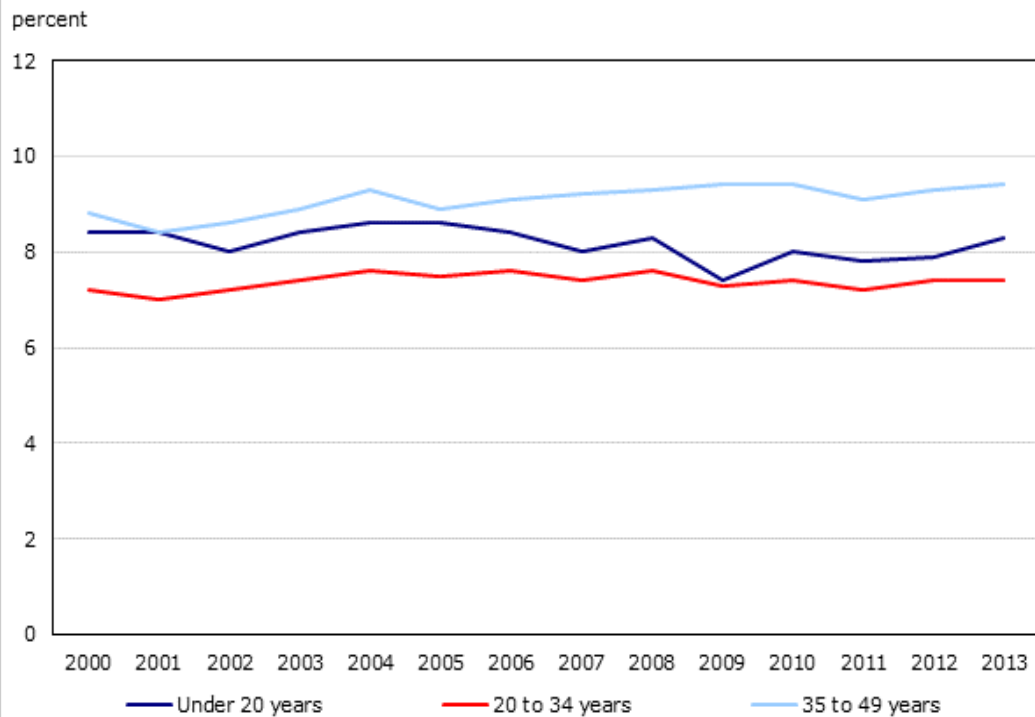
In terms of births within provinces and territories, 12.6% of all Nunavut's births were preterm births during the period 2000 to 2013, followed by Alberta (8.6%), Newfoundland and Labrador (8.3%), and Yukon (8.1%) (Chart 3). Conversely, Prince Edward Island had the lowest preterm birth rate during this period (7.1%), followed by British Columbia (7.4%), and Quebec (7.4%).



### Preterm births most prevalent among mothers aged 35 to 49 years

Throughout the years 2000 to 2013, preterm births accounted for the highest proportion of births among mothers aged 35 to 49 years, followed by mothers younger than 20 years of age and then mothers aged 20 to 34 years (Chart 4). In 2013, 9.4% of the births born to mothers aged 35 to 49 years of age were preterm births, compared to 8.3% for mothers younger than 20 years of age and 7.4% for mothers aged 20 to 34 years.

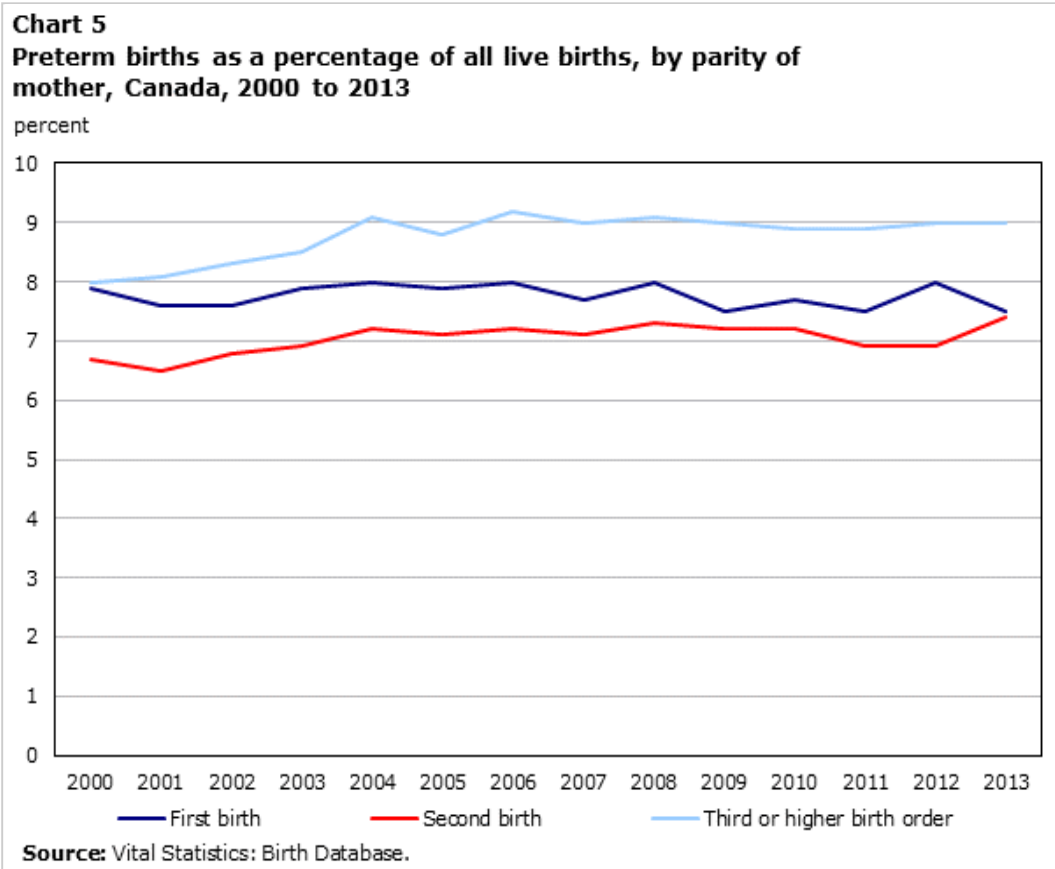
**Chart 4**  
**Preterm births as a percentage of all live births, by age group of mother, Canada, 2000 to 2013**



Source: Vital Statistics: Birth Database.

### Second-order births least likely to be preterm births

Parity refers to the number of live births a female has had to date. During the period 2000 to 2013, first-order births (first born) and third- or higher-order births had a higher percentage of preterm births than second-order births (Chart 5).<sup>6</sup> In 2013, 9.0% of the third- or higher-order births were preterm births, compared to 7.5% for first-order births and 7.4% for second-order births. While the preterm birth share of first-order and second-order births remained fairly stable since the year 2000, the preterm birth share among third or higher order births increased from 8.0% in 2000 to 9.0% in 2013.



## Data

Additional data on Canadian births and characteristics of mothers are available in CANSIM tables 102-4501 to 102-4513.

## Notes

- 1 Behrmann, R.E. and Butler, A.S., eds. 2007. "Mortality and acute complications in preterm infants." *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention*. Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on understanding premature birth and assuring healthy outcomes. Washington (DC): National Academies Press.
- 2 Sonnenschein-van der Voot, A.M., Arends, L.R., de Jongste, J.C., Annesi-Maesano, I., et al. 2014. "Preterm birth, infant weight gain, and childhood asthma risk: a meta-analysis of 147,000 European children." *Journal of Allergy Clinical Immunology*. 133 (5):1317-29.
- 3 Veen, S., Sassen, M.L., Schreuder, A.M., et al. 1993. "Hearing loss in very preterm and very low birth weight infants at the age of 5 years in a nationwide cohort." *International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology*. 26:11-28.
- 4 Vital Statistics: Birth Database. CANSIM table 102-4512.
- 5 World Health Organization. Media Centre. Fact Sheet No. 363. Updated November 2015.
- 6 The *multiple birth check* is a process that ensures a proper accounting of the parity of the mother and other information in the event of a multiple birth. This check was performed for years prior to 2012 and again for 2013, but not for 2012 data. Additionally, parity information was in general given greater scrutiny in 2013 than in years past.