

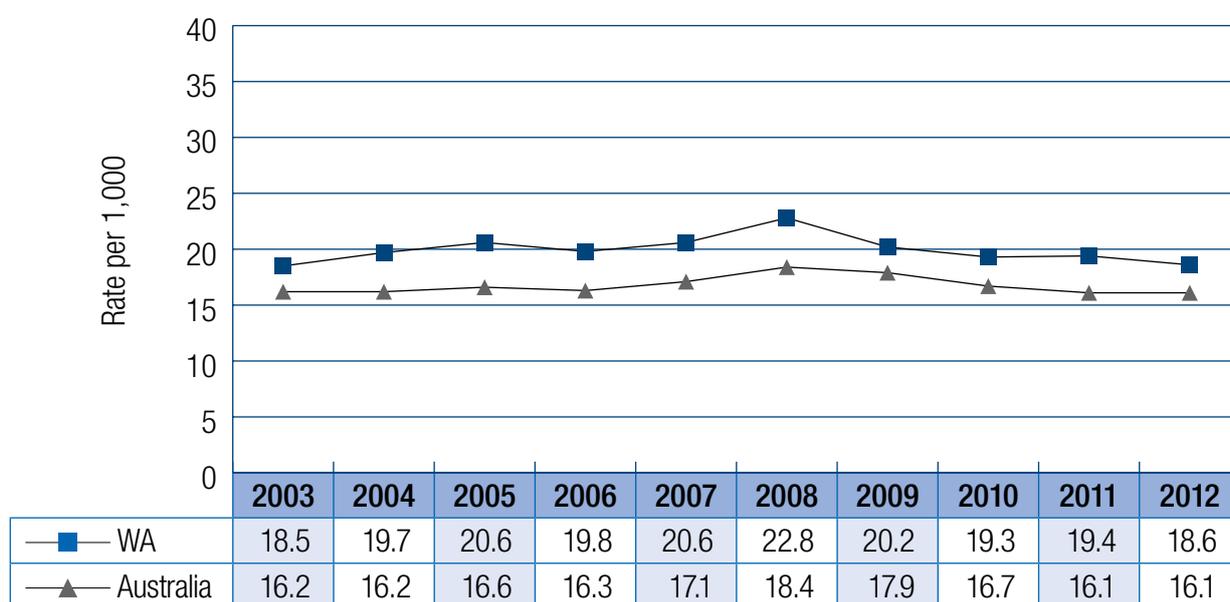
9.3 Births to teenage mothers

Why this measure is included

Births to teenage mothers are closely linked to less favourable health, education and economic outcomes for both mother and baby. Parenthood during the teenage years often means that schooling is interrupted, job prospects are limited, and there is an increased likelihood of dependency on government assistance.

Babies of teenage mothers are at greater risk of low birth weight and pre-term birth. This might be due to the age of the mother, but might also reflect certain risk factors which are more prevalent among teenage mothers. These include socioeconomic disadvantage, lone parenting, smoking during pregnancy and poor nutritional choices.⁴⁹³ Teenage mothers are also less likely to attend ante-natal care, which can be a protective factor against these increased risks.^{494 495}

Figure 9.7: Births to teenage women: age-specific fertility rate per 1,000 population 15 to 19 years, Western Australia and Australia, 2003 to 2012

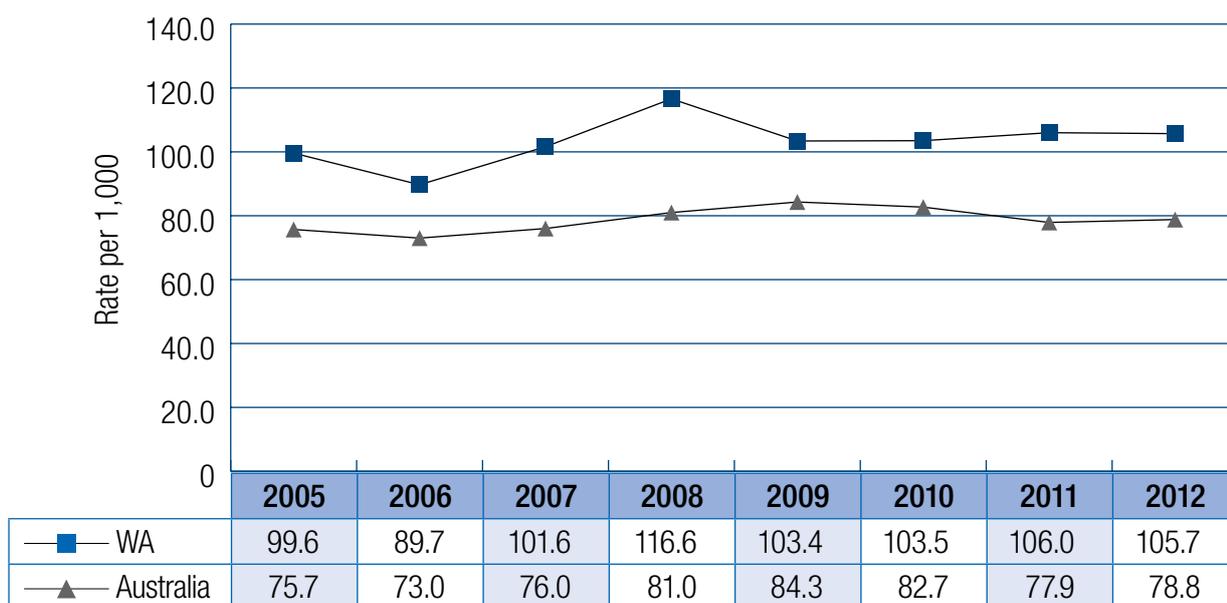


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Births, Australia, 2012*

Note: Data includes births to women aged less than 15 years.



Figure 9.8: Births to Aboriginal teenage women: age-specific fertility rate per 1,000 population 15 to 19 years, Western Australia and Australia, 2005 to 2012



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Births, Australia, 2012*

Note: Data includes births to women aged less than 15 years.

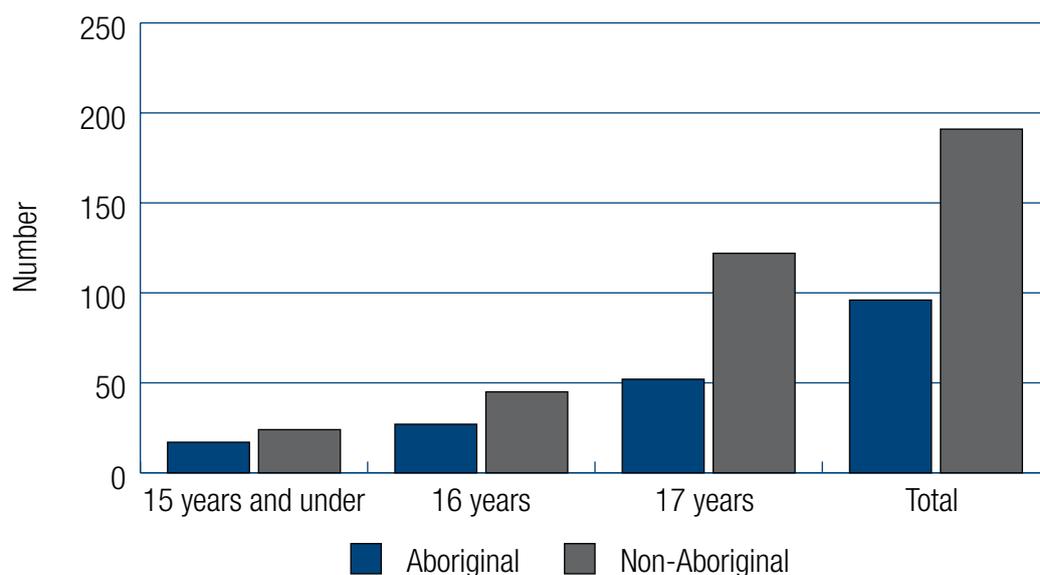
Table 9.5: Births to women 17 years and under: number, Western Australia 2007 and 2013

	2007	2013*	Percentage change
15 years and under	49	42	-14.3
16 years	135	74	-45.2
17 years	258	178	-31.0
Total	442	294	-33.5

Source: WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, custom report (unpublished)

* Data for 2013 only includes births registered up to 30 January 2014. Parents have 60 days to register their child's birth. This means that some babies born in late December 2013 may not be included in this table.

Figure 9.9: Births to women 17 years and under: number, by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, Western Australia, 2013⁴⁹⁶



Source: WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 2013, custom report

Table 9.6: Births to teenage women: age-specific fertility rate per 1,000 population 15 to 19 years, by region of WA, 2012

	Rate*
Mandurah	25.9
Perth – Inner	3.4
Perth – North East	17.5
Perth – North West	11.9
Perth – South East	18.3
Perth – South West	15.6
<i>Metropolitan area of WA</i>	14.9
Bunbury	19.2
WA – Outback**	52.0
WA – Wheat Belt	28.4
<i>Regional and remote areas of WA</i>	35.2
Total – WA	19.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Births, Australia, 2012*

* Age-specific and total fertility rates for sub-state regions (for example, regions of WA) are average rates for three years ending in the reference year. Rates for Australia and the states/territories are based on single years of birth registration data.⁴⁹⁷

** Includes Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid West, Gascoyne, Goldfields, and Esperance.

What is this measure?

This measure examines births to teenage mothers in WA and compares the results with national data.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) annual publication *Births, Australia* shows the age-specific fertility rates for women aged 15 to 19 years, that is, the number of live births per 1,000 females in this age group. Births to women aged less than 15 years are also included in this age group.

Additional data has been provided by the WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This provides information on the number of births in WA to young women aged 17 years and younger.

Commentary

The age-specific fertility rate for WA teenage women aged 15 to 19 years⁴⁹⁸ in 2012 was 18.6 births per 1,000 population of that age group. This rate was lower than the rate recorded for 2011 (19.4) and the lowest since 2003 (18.5) (Figure 9.7). In absolute numbers, in 2012, there were 1,413 births to women aged 15 to 19 years, which represented 4.2 per cent of all births in that year.⁴⁹⁹

In contrast, the age-specific fertility rate of Aboriginal teenage mothers in WA increased between 2005 and 2012, from 99.6 births per 1,000 population in 2005 to 105.7 per 1,000 in 2012 (Figure 9.7).

If only births to women aged 17 years and younger are considered, there was a decrease between 2007 and 2013 from 442 to 294. The decrease was most pronounced for 16 year-old women where the number of births dropped from 135 to 74, a 45.2 per cent change (Table 9.5).

Aboriginal women aged 17 years and younger accounted for about 33 per cent of births in this age group while representing only about six per cent of the population of WA women aged 17 years and younger.

Teenage women in regional and remote areas of WA have a higher age-specific fertility rate than their metropolitan peers. In 2012, the overall rate for teenage women in metropolitan Perth was 14.9 births per 1,000 population compared with a rate of 35.2 births for teenage women in regional and remote areas (Table 9.6).

Comparison with national data shows that the age-specific fertility rate of teenage mothers is higher for WA than for Australia overall. The Australian rate has remained largely unchanged between 2003 and 2012 at around 16 to 17 births per 1,000 population compared with a rate of around 18 to 19 births in WA (Figure 9.7). As in WA, the Australia-wide rate for Aboriginal young women is considerably higher than that for non-Aboriginal women and it also increased from 75.7 in 2005 to 78.8 in 2012.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has analysed Australian data on births, showing that birth rates among teenage women correlate with socioeconomic status, such that the highest rates of birth to teen mothers occur in the lowest socioeconomic group.⁵⁰⁰ Other research shows similar correlations.⁵⁰¹

The AIHW reported that in 2011, 35.8 per cent of teenage mothers smoked during pregnancy, nearly three times the overall rate of smoking during pregnancy. Babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy were almost twice as likely to be of low (under 2,500 grams) birth weight (11.2%) than those whose mothers did not smoke (6.3%).⁵⁰²

The AIHW also reported that the rate of deaths of babies born to young mothers was higher than any other group. This included fetal⁵⁰³ deaths (15.0 per 1,000), neonatal⁵⁰⁴ deaths (4.9 per 1,000) and perinatal⁵⁰⁵ deaths (19.8 per 1,000).⁵⁰⁶

Want to know more?

Data on teenage pregnancy

The *Australia's mothers and babies* series of reports, published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provide annual perinatal statistics on births in Australia, available at www.aihw.gov.au

The WA Department of Health publishes annual information on WA births, including regional births, available at www.health.wa.gov.au

Other information

Growing and Developing Relationships is a partnership between the WA Departments of Health and Education, and is supported by the Association of Independent Schools of WA. The curriculum support materials were first released in 2002 to all schools in WA. These materials approach relationship education in a positive way and are consistent with the WA Curriculum Framework. These materials include an interactive website which provides a range of age-appropriate learning activities and support to assist teachers to deliver relationship and sexual health education. Further information is available at www.gdhr.wa.gov.au/

Information for young people on sexual health can be found on the Get the Facts website www.getthefacts.health.wa.gov.au/

Information for parents about how to talk to children and young people about sexual health and related matters is available in the Talk Soon Talk Often resource developed by the Department of Health, available at www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/4011/2/TSTO_V2.pdf

Family Planning Association WA (FPWA) Sexual Health Services provide specific sexual health services for young people including a clinic, counselling and education service for young people aged under 25 years. Further information is available at www.fpwa.org.au/

The Department of Education has developed guidelines for schools to support students who are pregnant or parenting to continue their education. In addition, the Department is involved in programs and partnerships in the metropolitan area to facilitate access to school for young parents and pregnant teenagers, through the School of Isolated and Distance Education. The Departmental guidelines are available from www.det.wa.edu.au/childprotection/detcms/inclusiveeducation/child-protection/public/resources/Guidelines.en?oid=MultiPartArticle-id-13332213

The Young Parenting Education Network WA was formed in 2013 to advocate for improving educational outcomes for young people aged 12 to 21 years who are pregnant or parenting. The Network includes representatives from government and non-government organisations which provide services to support young people to engage in education and training.



Additional tables

Table 9.7: Births to teenage women: age-specific fertility rate per 1,000 population 15 to 19 years, by Aboriginal status, Western Australia and Australia, 2005 to 2012

	All teenage women 15 to 19 years		Aboriginal teenage women 15 to 19 years	
	WA	Australia	WA	Australia
2005	20.6	16.6	99.6	75.7
2006	19.8	16.3	89.7	73.0
2007	20.6	17.1	101.6	76.0
2008	22.8	18.4	116.6	81.0
2009	20.2	17.9	103.4	84.3
2010	19.3	16.7	103.5	82.7
2011	19.4	16.1	106.0	77.9
2012	18.6	16.1	105.7	78.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, *Births, Australia*, 2012

Note: Data includes births to women aged less than 15 years.

