



2005

3301.0

# BIRTHS

AUSTRALIA

EMBARGO: 11.30AM (CANBERRA TIME) TUES 17 OCT 2006

## CONTENTS

|                                 | <i>page</i> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Notes .....                     | 2           |
| List of tables and graphs ..... | 3           |

### CHAPTERS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1 Main features .....                                | 7  |
| 2 Summary of findings .....                          | 9  |
| 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births ..... | 22 |
| 4 Recent changes in Australia's fertility .....      | 28 |
| 5 Delayed birth registrations in Australia .....     | 35 |

### DETAILED TABLES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 6 Fertility tables .....                                    | 42 |
| 7 Births tables .....                                       | 52 |
| 8 Confinements tables .....                                 | 57 |
| 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births tables ..... | 70 |

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Explanatory Notes .....  | 79 |
| Appendix 1 Differences between collections .....   | 84 |
| Appendix 2 Characteristics available .....   | 87 |
| Appendix 3 Feature articles list .....   | 88 |
| Appendix 4 Estimated resident population .....   | 89 |
| Appendix 5 Experimental projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait<br>Islander population ..... | 90 |
| Glossary .....   | 91 |
| Bibliography .....   | 95 |

## INQUIRIES

For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070 or Olivia Agius on Canberra (02) 6252 5862.

# NOTES

|                          |  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
|--------------------------|--|-----|---------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|------|--|------|-----------------------------|------|---|-------|-----------|-----|---------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|-----|--------|----|---|-----|-----------------|----|--------------------|---|-------------|-----|------------|---|---------|----|-----------------|----|----------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|-------------------------|------|----------|-----|----------------------|------|----------|----|-------------------|---|---|
| ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION   | This publication brings together statistics and indicators for births in Australia.  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| DATA IN THIS PUBLICATION | This publication contains birth registration data for live births, except where otherwise stated. Populations used in the calculation of rates for 2005 are the revised estimated resident population by age and sex at 30 June 2005. Unless otherwise stated, state or territory relates to the state or territory of usual residence.  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| ROUNDING                 | In commentary based on the statistics in this publication, it is recommended that the relevant statistics be rounded. All data are affected by errors in reporting and processing. Birth registration data are also affected by delays in registration. No reliance should be placed on statistics with small values. Where necessary, tables have had small values suppressed or randomised to protect confidentiality.   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES | <p>The following symbols and abbreviations are used in this publication:</p> <table><tr><td>ABS</td><td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td></tr><tr><td>ACT</td><td>Australian Capital Territory</td></tr><tr><td>AIHW</td><td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td></tr><tr><td>ASFR</td><td>age-specific fertility rate</td></tr><tr><td>ASGC</td><td>Australian Standard Geographical Classification</td></tr><tr><td>Aust.</td><td>Australia</td></tr><tr><td>Bal</td><td>balance</td></tr><tr><td>ERP</td><td>estimated resident population</td></tr><tr><td>LGA</td><td>Local Government Area</td></tr><tr><td>NMDS</td><td>National Minimum Dataset</td></tr><tr><td>no.</td><td>number</td></tr><tr><td>np</td><td>not available for publication but included in totals where applicable</td></tr><tr><td>NSW</td><td>New South Wales</td></tr><tr><td>NT</td><td>Northern Territory</td></tr><tr><td>p</td><td>preliminary</td></tr><tr><td>Qld</td><td>Queensland</td></tr><tr><td>r</td><td>revised</td></tr><tr><td>SA</td><td>South Australia</td></tr><tr><td>SD</td><td>Statistical Division</td></tr><tr><td>SEIFA</td><td>Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas</td></tr><tr><td>SLA</td><td>Statistical Local Area</td></tr><tr><td>SSD</td><td>Statistical Subdivision</td></tr><tr><td>Tas.</td><td>Tasmania</td></tr><tr><td>TFR</td><td>total fertility rate</td></tr><tr><td>Vic.</td><td>Victoria</td></tr><tr><td>WA</td><td>Western Australia</td></tr><tr><td>–</td><td>nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)</td></tr></table> | ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics | ACT | Australian Capital Territory | AIHW | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | ASFR | age-specific fertility rate | ASGC | Australian Standard Geographical Classification | Aust. | Australia | Bal | balance | ERP | estimated resident population | LGA | Local Government Area | NMDS | National Minimum Dataset | no. | number | np | not available for publication but included in totals where applicable | NSW | New South Wales | NT | Northern Territory | p | preliminary | Qld | Queensland | r | revised | SA | South Australia | SD | Statistical Division | SEIFA | Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas | SLA | Statistical Local Area | SSD | Statistical Subdivision | Tas. | Tasmania | TFR | total fertility rate | Vic. | Victoria | WA | Western Australia | – | nil or rounded to zero (including null cells) |
| ABS                      | Australian Bureau of Statistics  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| ACT                      | Australian Capital Territory   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| AIHW                     | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| ASFR                     | age-specific fertility rate  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| ASGC                     | Australian Standard Geographical Classification  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| Aust.                    | Australia  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| Bal                      | balance  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| ERP                      | estimated resident population  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| LGA                      | Local Government Area  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| NMDS                     | National Minimum Dataset   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| no.                      | number   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| np                       | not available for publication but included in totals where applicable  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| NSW                      | New South Wales  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| NT                       | Northern Territory   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| p                        | preliminary  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| Qld                      | Queensland   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| r                        | revised  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SA                       | South Australia  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SD                       | Statistical Division   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SEIFA                    | Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SLA                      | Statistical Local Area   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| SSD                      | Statistical Subdivision  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| Tas.                     | Tasmania   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| TFR                      | total fertility rate   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| Vic.                     | Victoria   |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| WA                       | Western Australia  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |
| –                        | nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)  |     |                                 |     |                              |      |  |      |                             |      |   |       |           |     |         |     |                               |     |                       |      |                          |     |        |    |   |     |                 |    |                    |   |             |     |            |   |         |    |                 |    |                      |       |                                  |     |                        |     |                         |      |          |     |                      |      |          |    |                   |   |   |

Peter Harper  
Acting Australian Statistician

## INTRODUCTION

ABS birth statistics are based on information provided by state and territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages on births registered in their jurisdictions. There is usually an interval between the occurrence and registration of a birth, referred to in this article as a registration delay. In addition there may be some births that are never registered. Recently, demographic commentators have expressed concern that under-registration of births appears to be increasing and is introducing uncertainty in fertility rates reported by the ABS (McDonald 2005).

This article provides information about the registration process, and explores the magnitude and length of registration delays at the national and state level over the past ten years. Births registered in 2005 that occurred in 2004 or earlier years are reviewed in terms of their demographic characteristics such as age, Indigenous status and country of birth of mother, and nuptiality (that is, the registered marital status of the parents at the time of birth of the child).

USE OF AUSTRALIAN  
BIRTHS STATISTICS

Australian birth statistics are used to produce quarterly estimates of natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) as a component of population change in the calculation of population estimates, and in the analysis of fertility in Australia. Trends in fertility are also used in the development of assumptions on future levels of fertility for population projections.

The primary uses of Australian population estimates are in the determination of the number of seats in the House of Representatives for each state and territory, as well as in the distribution of Australian Government funds to state, territory and local governments. Population estimates are also used for a wide range of government, community and business decisions, both directly and indirectly, by contributing to a range of other economic and social indicators.

Birth statistics provide information on the numbers of births, including the demographic characteristics of women having children (for example, by age and geographic distribution), and when used in conjunction with population estimates, allow the measurement of fertility. Fertility analysis informs a range of government and community decisions, particularly within the areas of demographic planning, family formation, planning for various demographic groups, health and education services.

## THE BIRTH REGISTRATION PROCESS

The collection of births statistics in Australia dates back to 1839, when the first civil registration of births (as well as deaths and marriages) was enforced in Tasmania. Collected initially for purely administrative reasons, over the years the data became a valuable source of statistical information.

The collection, processing, compilation and dissemination of births data is the joint responsibility of the various state and territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the ABS. The registries are responsible for administering the registration process, while the ABS is responsible for the aggregation and production of births statistics.

The process of birth registration is closely linked with the administration of hospitals and birth clinics, where an overwhelming majority of births in Australia take place. Registries supply Birth Registration Statements (also known as the Birth Registration Form or Birth Registration Application in some states) to hospitals and birth clinics for distribution to parents. Parents return their completed registration form to the relevant registry, usually by mail. ABS birth statistics are collated from the information collected from these forms.

In addition to the distribution of birth registration forms, hospitals and birth clinics notify the registries of the occurrence of births on a regular basis. Midwives and doctors are also required to report births which they deliver away from hospitals and birth clinics (including home births). Births that the registry is notified of and that are not registered within a prescribed time period are followed up by sending a reminder letter to the parent(s).

## DELAYS IN THE REGISTRATION OF A BIRTH

Parents are provided with a birth registration form by a midwife or other health professional shortly after the birth of their child. There is a legislative requirement to register a birth within 60 days, with the onus on the parent(s) to submit a completed birth registration form to the relevant state or territory registry (that is, the state or territory in which the birth occurred). It is then the responsibility of the registry to process the registration form. A delay in registration may therefore be the result of either a delay by the parent(s) in returning their completed registration form, or a delay by the registry in processing the form.

Delays in registering a birth by the parent(s) or the registry can arise for a variety of reasons. Despite the legislative requirement to register a child within 60 days of birth, the parent(s) may not return their form promptly. Delays in the processing of forms at the registry may be due to follow up activity due to missing information on the form, or periodic resource limitations.

## BIRTHS THAT OCCURRED IN THE YEAR THEY WERE REGISTERED

Of the 259,800 births registered in 2005, 89.0% (231,200) occurred in 2005. The remaining 11.0% (28,600) occurred in 2004 or earlier years. Prior to 2005, the proportion of births that occurred in the year they were registered had been declining. In 1995, 89.4% of births registered in 1995 occurred in that year. By 2004 this proportion had declined to 86.6%. The increase in the proportion of births registered in 2005 that occurred in 2005 is largely attributable to recent changes to follow-up procedures introduced by the New South Wales Registry.

BIRTHS THAT OCCURRED  
IN THE YEAR THEY WERE  
REGISTERED *continued*

**5.1** REGISTERED BIRTHS THAT OCCURRED IN THE YEAR OF REGISTRATION



Between 2004 and 2005 all states and territories experienced improvements in the timeliness of registrations. Prior to 2005, all states and territories except the Northern Territory and Tasmania had been experiencing decreases in the proportion of births registered in the same year as they occurred. Between 1995 and 2004, the proportion of births registered in the same year as they occurred decreased by 0.5 percentage points per year in Queensland (from 89.1% in 1995 to 84.7% in 2004), by 0.4 percentage points per year in Victoria, by 0.3 in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, and by 0.1 in the Australian Capital Territory.

**5.2** REGISTERED BIRTHS THAT OCCURRED IN THE YEAR OF REGISTRATION

| State/territory of registration | 1995        | 2000        | 2001        | 2002        | 2003        | 2004        | 2005        |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                 | %           | %           | %           | %           | %           | %           | %           |
| New South Wales                 | 87.1        | 86.0        | 85.0        | 84.3        | 85.1        | 84.8        | 89.7        |
| Victoria                        | 91.4        | 89.6        | 88.4        | 87.6        | 88.2        | 88.3        | 89.6        |
| Queensland                      | 89.1        | 86.3        | 85.1        | 84.1        | 85.2        | 84.7        | 85.4        |
| South Australia                 | 91.9        | 89.4        | 90.0        | 89.3        | 90.1        | 89.3        | 90.9        |
| Western Australia               | 90.2        | 87.4        | 88.7        | 87.9        | 86.1        | 87.7        | 88.9        |
| Tasmania                        | 90.6        | 85.8        | 84.0        | 93.5        | 93.9        | 93.4        | 94.3        |
| Northern Territory              | 90.4        | 90.6        | 91.0        | 91.6        | 90.3        | 91.6        | 92.5        |
| Australian Capital Territory    | 90.6        | 90.8        | 86.3        | 88.5        | 89.4        | 89.3        | 90.2        |
| <b>Australia</b>                | <b>89.4</b> | <b>87.5</b> | <b>86.6</b> | <b>86.2</b> | <b>86.7</b> | <b>86.6</b> | <b>89.0</b> |

LENGTH OF DELAY IN  
BIRTH REGISTRATIONS

The length of delay in registration can be calculated by comparing the year and month of registration of a birth with the year and month of occurrence of the birth. While more precise results would have been gained by comparing day of registration with day of birth, information relating to day of registration is not retained by the ABS.

LENGTH OF DELAY IN  
BIRTH REGISTRATIONS  
*continued*

The length of delays in registration have increased over time (table 5.3). The proportion of births registered up to one month after the occurrence of the birth decreased from 78.7% in 1995 to 74.7% in 2005. This declining proportion was somewhat offset by increasing proportions of births registered within two to 12 months. Delays of two to three months increased from 16.6% in 1995 to 18.2% in 2005, while delays of four to six months increased from 2.2% in 1995 to 3.0% in 2005.

The proportion of delayed registrations of four to five years, typically the age at which most children start school, increased from 0.2% in 1995 to 0.6% in 2004, then declining to 0.3% in 2005. Delays of greater than 10 years were increasing gradually over time, but returned to the 1995 levels in 2005.

**5.3** LENGTH OF DELAY IN BIRTH REGISTRATION

|                               | YEAR OF REGISTRATION |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                               | 1995                 | 2000  | 2001  | 2002  | 2003  | 2004  | 2005  |
| <i>Delay in registration</i>  | %                    | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     | %     |
| Up to one month after birth   | 78.7                 | 69.9  | 71.9  | 70.7  | 70.7  | 70.5  | 74.7  |
| 2–3 months                    | 16.6                 | 22.3  | 19.8  | 20.8  | 20.6  | 20.4  | 18.2  |
| 4–6 months                    | 2.2                  | 3.4   | 3.1   | 3.1   | 3.1   | 3.1   | 3.0   |
| 7–12 months                   | 1.0                  | 1.7   | 1.9   | 1.9   | 2.0   | 1.9   | 1.8   |
| More than 1 year to 2 years   | 0.5                  | 0.9   | 1.2   | 1.1   | 1.1   | 1.2   | 0.7   |
| More than 2 years to 3 years  | 0.2                  | 0.5   | 0.5   | 0.6   | 0.6   | 0.6   | 0.3   |
| More than 3 years to 4 years  | 0.2                  | 0.3   | 0.4   | 0.4   | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.3   |
| More than 4 years to 5 years  | 0.2                  | 0.3   | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.5   | 0.6   | 0.3   |
| More than 5 years to 10 years | 0.2                  | 0.3   | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.6   | 0.7   | 0.4   |
| More than 10 years            | 0.3                  | 0.3   | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.5   | 0.5   | 0.3   |
| Total                         | 100.0                | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

At the national level, the decline in the proportion of registrations up to one month after the occurrence of a birth has been primarily driven by declines in Queensland (down from 76.9% of births in 1995 to 67.0% in 2005), Victoria (down from 82.5% in 1995 to 78.3% in 2005), and South Australia (down from 87.4% in 1995 to 82.5% in 2005). Queensland, Victoria and South Australia each reported an increased proportion of registrations two to twelve months after the birth between 1995 and 2005 (table 5.4).

Improvements made by the New South Wales Registry are supported by the increase in registrations up to one month after a birth. In 2005, the proportion of births registered up to one month after a birth (71.5%) was higher than the 2004 proportion (61.6%).

All states and territories, except the Northern Territory (and New South Wales in 2005) have recorded increasing proportions of registrations delayed between one and six years. Queensland increased from 1.0% in 1995 to 3.7% in 2005, Victoria increased from 0.2% in 1995 to 2.0% in 2005 and Western Australia from 1.1% to 2.7%.

LENGTH OF DELAY IN  
BIRTH REGISTRATIONS  
*continued*

**5.4** LENGTH OF DELAY IN BIRTH REGISTRATION—1995, 2004 and 2005

|                              | NSW  | Vic. | Qld  | SA   | WA   | Tas. | NT   | ACT  | Aust. |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <i>Delay in registration</i> | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| 1995                         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Up to 1 month after birth    | 74.3 | 82.5 | 76.9 | 87.4 | 81.6 | 86.3 | 63.3 | 77.4 | 78.7  |
| 2–3 months                   | 19.0 | 14.2 | 18.4 | 10.8 | 13.9 | 10.9 | 30.4 | 19.9 | 16.6  |
| 4–6 months                   | 2.4  | 2.3  | 2.3  | 0.9  | 2.0  | 0.9  | 4.3  | 2.7  | 2.2   |
| 7–12 months                  | 1.4  | 0.6  | 1.2  | 0.2  | 1.1  | 0.8  | 1.6  | 0.1  | 1.0   |
| More than 1 year to 6 years  | 2.1  | 0.2  | 1.0  | 0.3  | 1.1  | 0.9  | 0.3  | —    | 1.1   |
| More than 6 years            | 0.8  | 0.3  | 0.1  | 0.3  | 0.3  | 0.2  | 0.1  | —    | 0.4   |
| 2004                         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Up to 1 month after birth    | 61.6 | 77.9 | 64.4 | 82.7 | 77.5 | 95.7 | 72.2 | 79.4 | 70.5  |
| 2–3 months                   | 26.8 | 14.3 | 25.3 | 13.1 | 13.6 | 0.5  | 26.9 | 17.7 | 20.4  |
| 4–6 months                   | 4.1  | 2.6  | 3.5  | 1.5  | 2.9  | 0.1  | 0.7  | 1.4  | 3.1   |
| 7–12 months                  | 2.3  | 2.3  | 1.9  | 0.6  | 2.0  | —    | —    | 0.5  | 1.9   |
| More than 1 year to 6 years  | 4.0  | 2.5  | 4.2  | 1.2  | 3.2  | 1.5  | 0.1  | 0.8  | 3.2   |
| More than 6 years            | 1.2  | 0.4  | 0.8  | 0.9  | 0.9  | 2.1  | 0.1  | 0.1  | 0.9   |
| 2005                         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Up to 1 month after birth    | 71.5 | 78.3 | 67.0 | 82.5 | 79.5 | 96.1 | 77.0 | 81.6 | 74.7  |
| 2–3 months                   | 21.9 | 14.8 | 23.0 | 13.2 | 12.5 | 0.4  | 22.4 | 15.5 | 18.2  |
| 4–6 months                   | 3.6  | 2.7  | 3.6  | 1.5  | 2.6  | —    | 0.5  | 1.5  | 3.0   |
| 7–12 months                  | 2.1  | 2.1  | 1.9  | 0.7  | 1.7  | —    | —    | 0.4  | 1.8   |
| More than 1 year to 6 years  | 0.8  | 2.0  | 3.7  | 1.1  | 2.7  | 1.3  | —    | 0.8  | 1.9   |
| More than 6 years            | 0.1  | 0.2  | 0.9  | 1.0  | 1.0  | 2.2  | 0.1  | 0.2  | 0.5   |

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

AVERAGE LENGTH OF  
DELAY IN BIRTH  
REGISTRATION

Table 5.5 shows the average length of delay (in months) in birth registrations for each state and territory. In order to reduce the effect of extremely late registrations on the calculation of these averages, delays of more than 72 months (that is, 6 years) were counted as delays of 72 months.

The average length of delay in registration for Australia increased over the period 1995 to 2004, from 1.8 months to 3.0 months respectively. Between 2004 and 2005 the delay decreased to an average of 2.2 months. In general, the states and territories have followed a similar trend. Between 2004 and 2005 New South Wales recorded the largest decrease in average delay, from 3.9 months to 1.8 months.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF  
DELAY IN BIRTH  
REGISTRATION*continued***5.5** AVERAGE LENGTH OF DELAY IN BIRTH REGISTRATION (a)

| <i>State/territory of registration</i> | 1995       | 2000       | 2001       | 2002       | 2003       | 2004       | 2005       |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|  | months     | months     | months     | months     | months     | months     | months     |
| New South Wales                        | 2.5        | 3.3        | 3.3        | 3.6        | 3.7        | 3.9        | 1.8        |
| Victoria                               | 1.2        | 1.6        | 2.1        | 2.0        | 2.1        | 2.2        | 2.0        |
| Queensland                             | 1.6        | 2.1        | 2.5        | 2.8        | 3.0        | 3.4        | 3.3        |
| South Australia                        | 1.2        | 1.8        | 2.0        | 2.0        | 1.9        | 1.9        | 2.0        |
| Western Australia                      | 1.5        | 2.1        | 2.2        | 2.4        | 2.6        | 2.7        | 2.5        |
| Tasmania                               | 1.2        | 2.2        | 2.3        | 1.9        | 2.2        | 2.5        | 2.5        |
| Northern Territory                     | 1.6        | 1.2        | 1.1        | 1.1        | 1.2        | 1.2        | 1.1        |
| Australian Capital Territory           | 1.2        | 1.3        | 1.5        | 1.4        | 1.4        | 1.2        | 1.3        |
| <b>Australia</b>                       | <b>1.8</b> | <b>2.4</b> | <b>2.6</b> | <b>2.7</b> | <b>2.8</b> | <b>3.0</b> | <b>2.2</b> |

(a) In order to reduce the effect of very long delays in registration on the calculation of average registration delay length, delays of more than 72 months (that is, 6 years) have been counted as delays of 72 months.

CHARACTERISTICS OF  
DELAYED REGISTRATIONS

Understanding the demographic characteristics of parents who are more likely to delay the registration of the birth of their child can assist with targeting follow-up activities and educational programs to improve the overall timeliness of birth registrations. This section explores delayed birth registrations through the characteristics of age, Indigenous status and country of birth of mother, and nuptiality. For the following analysis, delayed registrations are births that were registered in 2005 that occurred in 2004 or earlier years.

*Nuptiality*

Exnuptial births are more likely to be registered in the year(s) after the year of birth than nuptial births. Of all exnuptial births registered in 2005, 15.3% occurred in 2004 or earlier years, compared to 9.0% of all nuptial births (table 5.6). For exnuptial births where paternity was not acknowledged, registration is more likely to be delayed than for exnuptial births where paternity is acknowledged. Of all exnuptial births where paternity was not acknowledged in 2005, 23.1% occurred in 2004 or earlier years compared to 14.4% of exnuptial births where paternity was acknowledged.

*Age of mother*

Younger mothers are more likely to delay the registration of a birth than older mothers. Of all births registered in 2005, the proportion that occurred in 2004 or earlier years was highest for women aged 15–19 years (19.2%), followed by women aged 20–24 years (15.1%). Women aged 35–39 years and 30–34 years were most timely in registering the birth of their child with 9.3% and 9.4% of births registered in 2005 occurring in 2004 or earlier years respectively (table 5.6).

*Indigenous status*

A high proportion of Indigenous births are registered late. Of all Indigenous births registered in 2005, 22.2% occurred in 2004 or earlier years compared to 11.0% of all births (table 5.6).

*Country of birth of mother*

Overall, Australian-born and overseas-born mothers are similar in terms of the timeliness of registering the birth of their child. Of all births to overseas-born mothers, 10.5% occurred in 2004 or earlier years, compared to 11.1% of births to Australian-born mothers (table 5.6). However, variations do exist between different countries/regions of birth.



Country of birth of mother  
continued

**5.6** BIRTHS REGISTERED IN 2005 THAT OCCURRED IN 2004 OR EARLIER YEARS

|                            | All births<br>registered<br>in 2005 | Births registered<br>in 2005 that<br>occurred in<br>2004 and earlier |             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|
|                            |                                     | no.  | %           |
| Nuptiality                 |                                     |  |             |
| Nuptial                    | 176 078                             | 15 807   | 9.0         |
| Exnuptial                  | 83 713                              | 12 780   | 15.3        |
| Paternity acknowledged     | 75 353                              | 10 847   | 14.4        |
| Paternity not acknowledged | 8 360                               | 1 933  | 23.1        |
| Age of mother              |                                     |  |             |
| 15–19(a)                   | 10 744                              | 2 068  | 19.2        |
| 20–24                      | 36 482                              | 5 527  | 15.1        |
| 25–29                      | 69 420                              | 7 501  | 10.8        |
| 30–34                      | 89 158                              | 8 355  | 9.4         |
| 35–39                      | 44 873                              | 4 165  | 9.3         |
| 40–44                      | 8 376                               | 876  | 10.5        |
| 45–49(b)                   | 358                                 | 40   | 11.2        |
| Indigenous status          |                                     |  |             |
| Indigenous births          | 12 078                              | 2 681  | 22.2        |
| Country of birth of mother |                                     |  |             |
| Australian-born            | 197 350                             | 22 003   | 11.1        |
| Overseas-born              | 62 336                              | 6 538  | 10.5        |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>259 791</b>                      | <b>28 587</b>  | <b>11.0</b> |

(a) Includes births to women aged less than 15 years.

(b) Includes births to women aged 50 years and over.

## REFERENCES

McDonald P, 2005, 'Has the Australian fertility rate stopped falling?', *People and Place*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 1–5.