

TEEN BIRTHS: REGIONAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Introduction

This report looks at teenage birth rates over time, across regions and by age of mother, and includes data about a second or subsequent birth to a teenage mother.

Until relatively recently having a baby in the late teenage years was not an unusual occurrence, but with the increasing age of childbearing, teenage fertility is now a smaller component of overall fertility patterns. This report provides summary information from our full report in response to a ministerial request to the Families Commission on:

- › national and regional trends in adolescent births for the 10 year period 2002 to 2011 and broken down by age
- › the probabilities of a teenage mother going on to have a subsequent birth while still a teenager.

In the full report, data on induced abortions are also included to identify what proportions of known teenage conceptions result in a live birth or are terminated. The full report also contains international comparisons in levels of teenage childbearing together with data on ex-nuptial births to teenagers.

Method

There are two primary sources of data on all births. The first is birth registration data held by Statistics New Zealand. This data extends back over 50 years. The second is data from the Ministry of Health, covering the years 2002–2011. This data comes from the National Maternity Collection and is based on forms returned by lead maternity carers and from hospital administrative data. The sources then are:

- › Births Registration data (Statistics New Zealand)
- › National Maternity Collection (MAT) (Ministry of Health).

This later dataset has enabled the researchers to conduct some unique analysis and to determine the proportion of a cohort of young women who give birth before 20 years of age.

KEY FINDINGS

- › The numbers and percentages of all births to teenage women are relatively small. Teenage births make up 6.5 percent of all births.
- › The majority (70 percent) of births to teenagers are to women in their late teens – those 18 and 19 years of age.
- › Teenage childbearing is an infrequent event: our evidence has found that 12.6 percent of a group of women had a child as a teenager and that the majority of these women were aged 18 or 19 years when they gave birth; this means just under 90 percent will never have a first birth in this period of their lives.
- › As these women were part of a temporary increase in teenage fertility, the proportion of prior and later groups having a teenage birth will be lower.
- › Having two children in the teenage years is very rare in every region and almost unheard of until age 18 years. Just over 2 percent of the group gave birth to two children as teenagers.

Regional trends

- › Some regions have higher teen birth rates than others. Births to teen mothers are more likely to occur outside urban regions and in the North Island. Gisborne and Northland are among regions with relatively high levels of teen childbearing.
- › Most regions show a pattern of an increasing proportion of all births being to teen mothers between 2002 and 2006, followed by a decline in 2011 back to or slightly lower than 2002 levels.

Trends over time

- › Consistent with general fertility trends the teenage fertility rate declined significantly over the 1962–1985 period.
- › In 1972, 14.5 percent of all women giving birth were aged under 20 years and this proportion has declined to 6.5 percent in 2011.
- › The number of births to teenagers, and especially those aged 17 to 19 years, increased from 2002 to 2008, before declining.
- › There has been a decline in births to younger teenagers; between 2002–2011 the proportion of teenage mothers aged 17 years or younger has declined from 33 percent in 2002 to 29.5 percent in 2011.



Teenage birth data

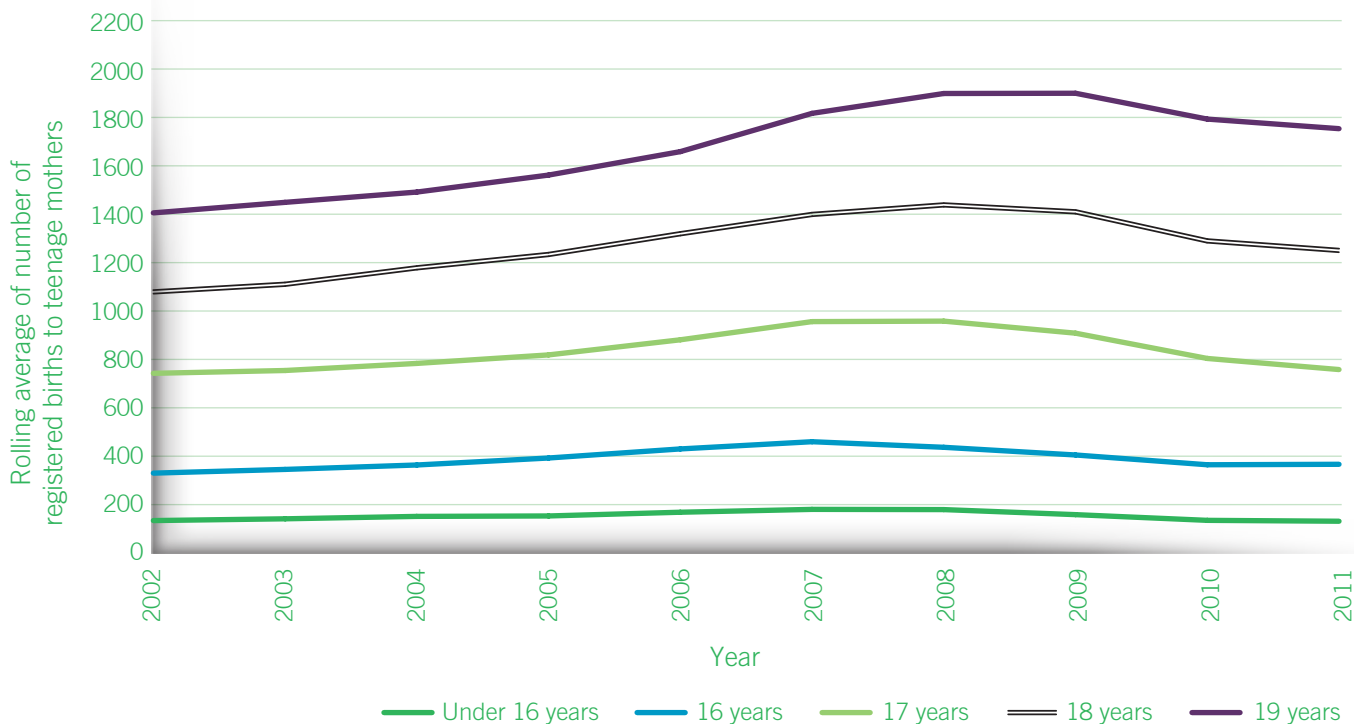
In 2011 teenage births made up 6.5 percent of all births in New Zealand. This figure has been relatively constant since 2002, but lower than in the past (eg in 1972 it was 14.5 percent of all births).

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ The number of births to teenage mothers across different ages, rose after 2002, peaked in 2008 and has fallen back since then, especially for teens under 18 years of age.
- ▶ In 2011 70.5 percent of all teenage births were to mothers aged 18 or 19 years.

Figure 1 shows the **number** of births per year since 2002 to teenagers. The two sources of data used in this report are in general agreement as to numbers and most births in any year are to 18 and 19 year olds.

Figure 1 Yearly averages of the number of births to teenage mothers registered (Birth Registration data) over the 2002–2011 period



Source: Birth registrations

* The number of births in each year are based on a three year rolling average except for the years 2002 and 2011, which are based on a two year average.



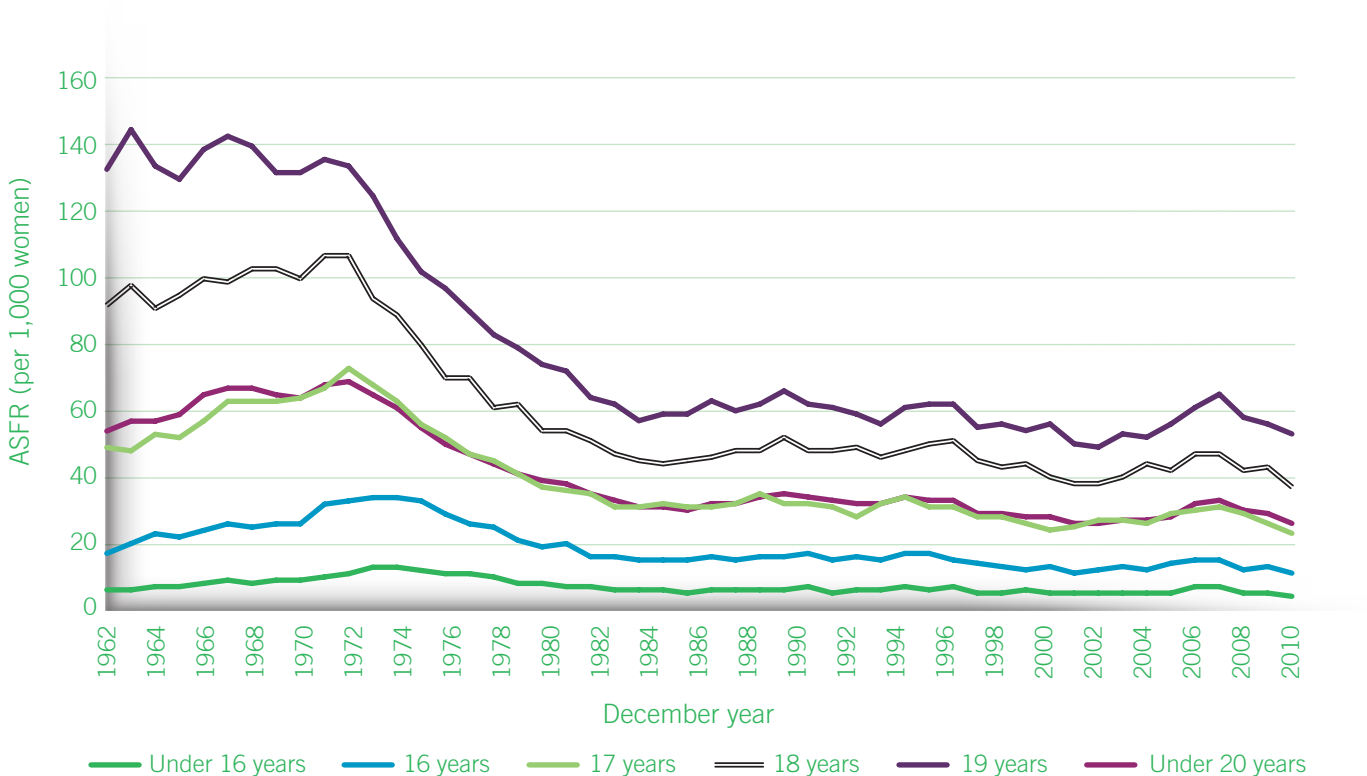
Teenage birth data over time

Figure 2 presents the change in teenage fertility rates for each teenage year from 1962 to 2011. The rate is the number of births per 1,000 women in the specific age group in the year.

KEY FINDINGS

- Fertility rates declined significantly over the 1962–1985 period for women of all ages (not shown in above figure). This decline followed the post-war period of increased fertility, resulting in the Baby Boom, which was characterised by younger childbearing in the 1960s and early 1970s.
- During the 1970s, teen fertility rates fell sharply and have since remained fairly stable except for a slight increase in 1990.
- Rates are highest at the oldest teenage years, 18 and 19 year olds, and these are the rates which have had the sharpest declines since the 1970s.
- Rates for the youngest ages, based on small numbers, have not changed greatly over the period although births to 16 year olds showed a slight surge during the late Baby Boom years in the early 1970s.

Figure 2 Age specific fertility rates (ASFR per 1,000) for teenage mothers over the period 1962–2011



Source: ASFRs provided by Statistics New Zealand

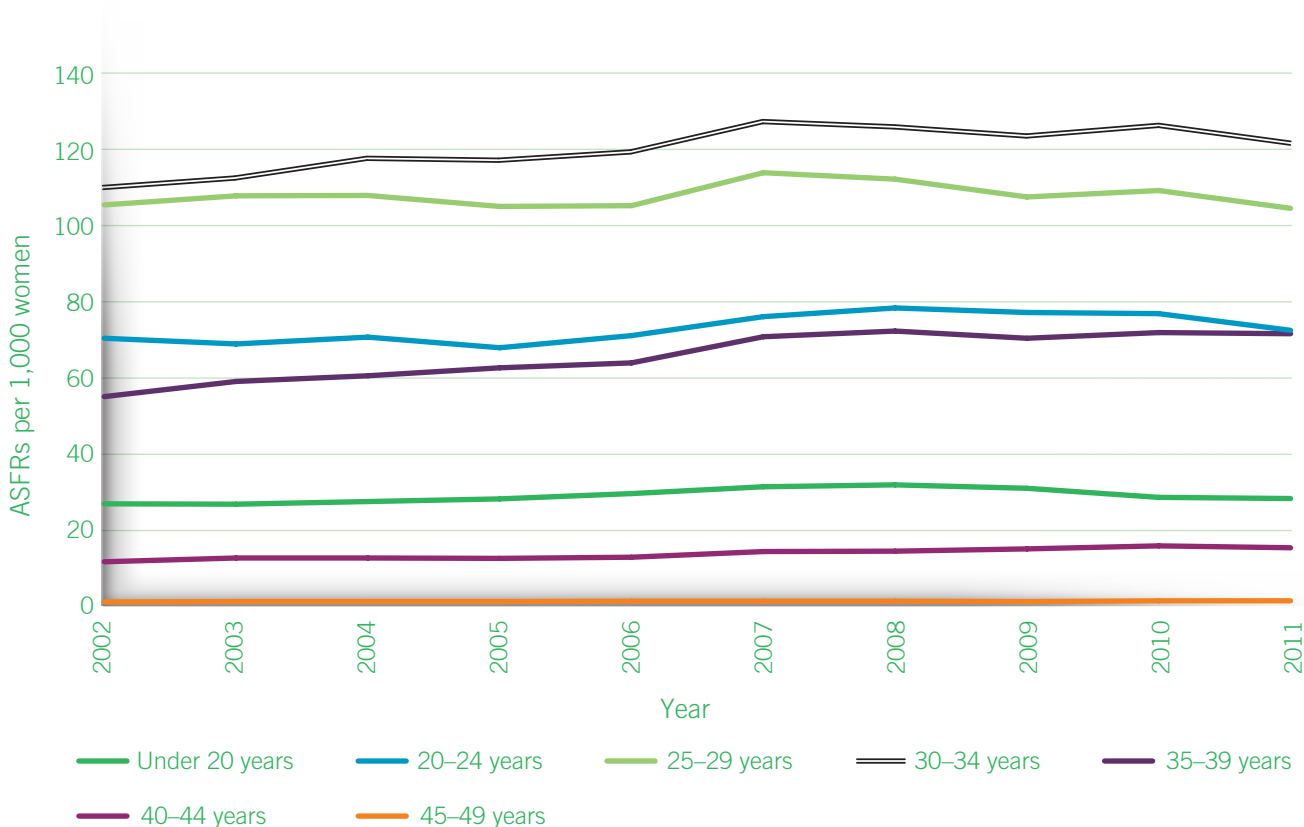


Figure 3 compares the teenage fertility rate with the fertility rate for other age groups since 2002.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ During the decade 2002 to 2011, childbearing among women under the age of 20 has been significantly lower than for all other age groups except for women in their 40s.
- ▶ Fertility rates for women over the age of 30 years have shown some increases over the period, reflecting the move to older childbearing.
- ▶ Birth rates for most ages, including teenagers, show the slight increase around 2006–2007.

Figure 3 Age specific fertility rates (ASFR per 1,000), 2002–2011



Based on Birth Registration data



Regional trends

Regional trends can be analysed in two ways. Firstly by looking at the proportion of all births in a region to teenagers (Figure 4) and secondly in terms of teenage birth rates (Figure 5).

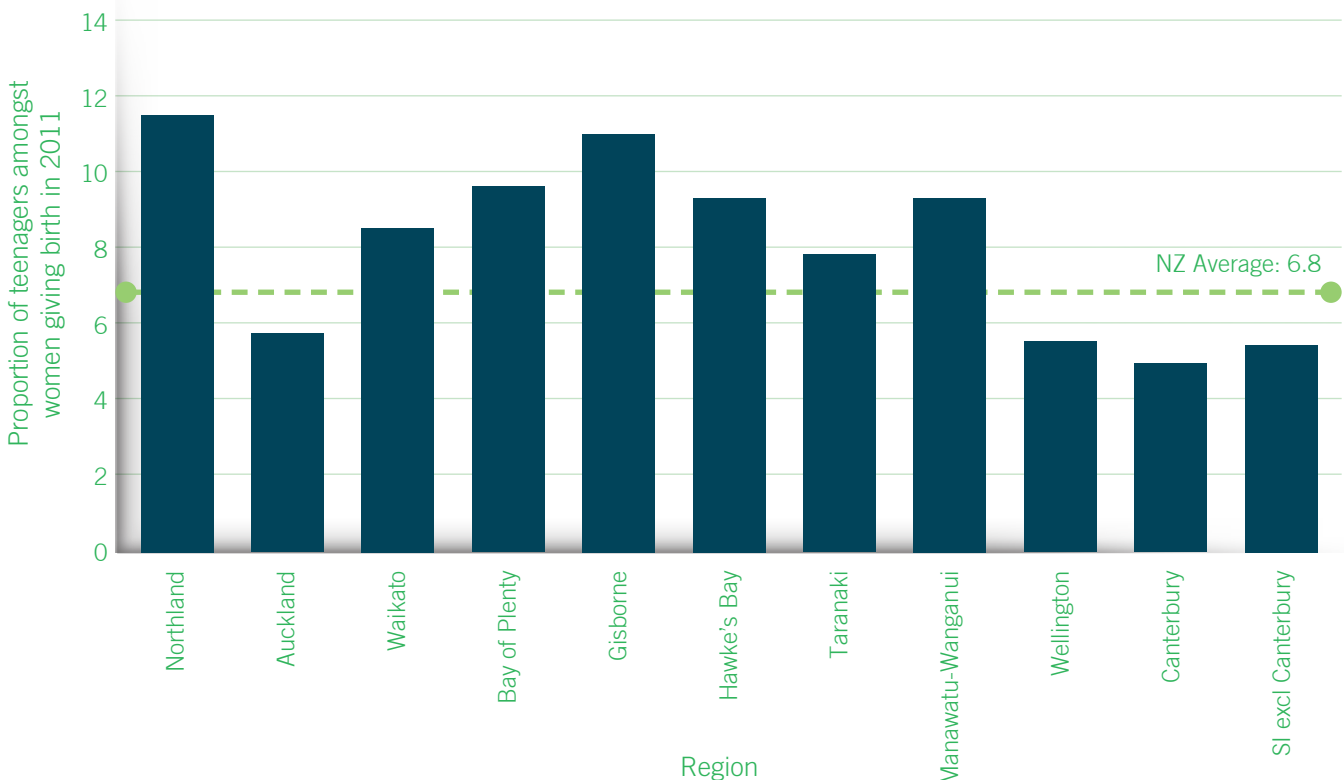
The first approach takes into account that some regions may have overall higher birth rates than others, so although the teenage rate may be high it could simply reflect the total region trend.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of all births in a region in 2011 that were to teenagers.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nationally in 2011, births to teenage mothers made up 6.5 percent of all births, but there is significant regional variation in this proportion.
- Births to teen mothers are more likely to occur outside the predominantly metropolitan regions and in the North Island.
- The metropolitan regions of Wellington, Auckland and Canterbury, and also the rest of the South Island, all have lower proportions of births to teenagers than New Zealand as a whole.
- The highest proportion of all births which were to teenage mothers occurred in Northland at almost 12 percent, followed by Gisborne at 11 percent.

Figure 4 Proportion of teenagers among all women (15–49 years) giving birth in 2011 by region



Based on Birth Registration data

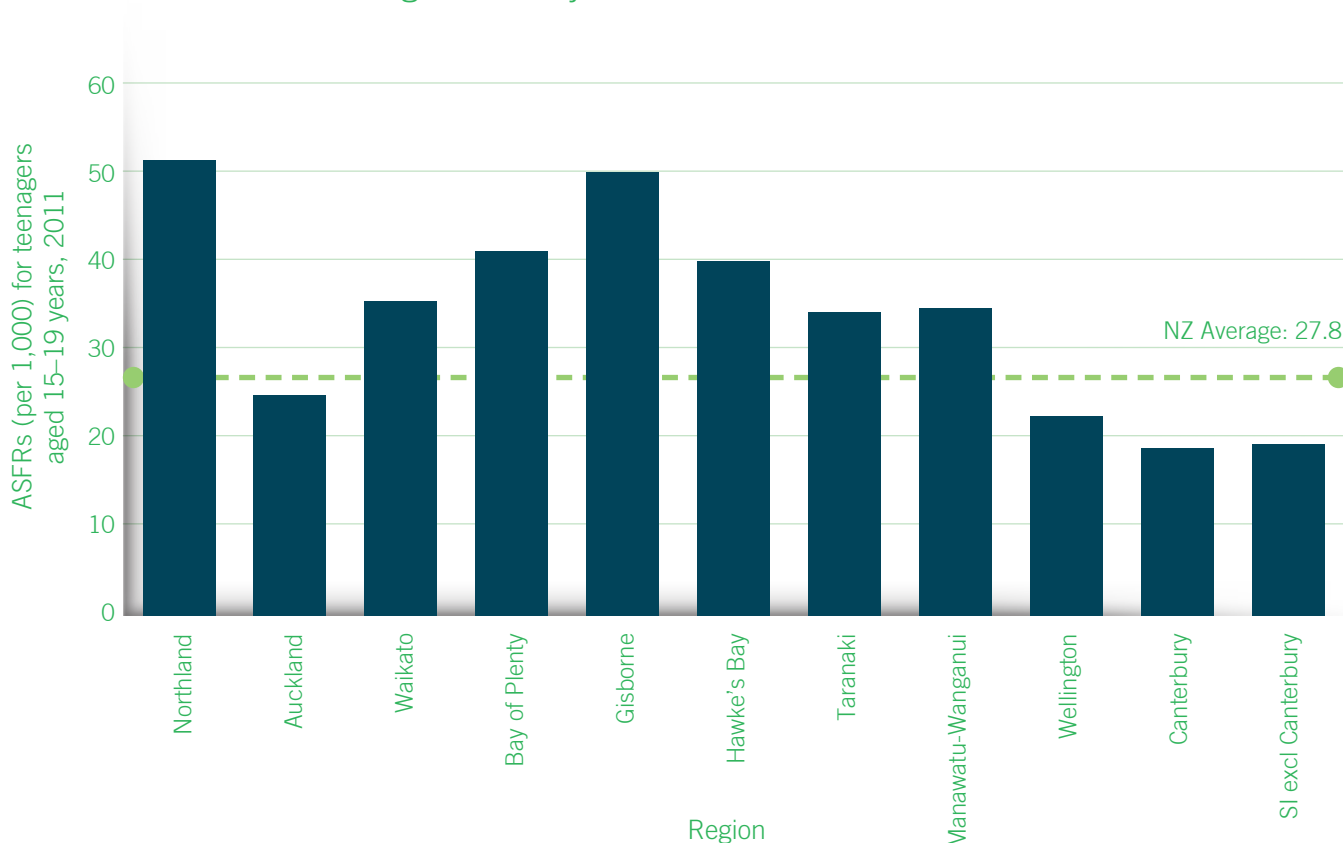


Figure 5 presents the teenage fertility rate (births per 1,000 teenagers in 2011) for these same regions.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ The fertility rate for 15–19 year olds nationally for 2010–11 was 27.8 births per 1,000 women. The predominantly metropolitan regions of Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury, as well as the rest of the South Island are all well below the New Zealand rate, with the lowest teen fertility rate being in Canterbury.
- ▶ The highest teen fertility rates are in Northland and Gisborne and these are significantly higher than the national rate at over 50 births per 1,000 females 15–19 years, and more than twice the levels found in the more urban regions.
- ▶ Other provincial regions of the North Island have relatively high teen fertility rates.

Figure 5 Regional age specific fertility rates (ASFR per 1,000) for teenage mothers aged 15–19 years in 2011



Based on Birth Registration data

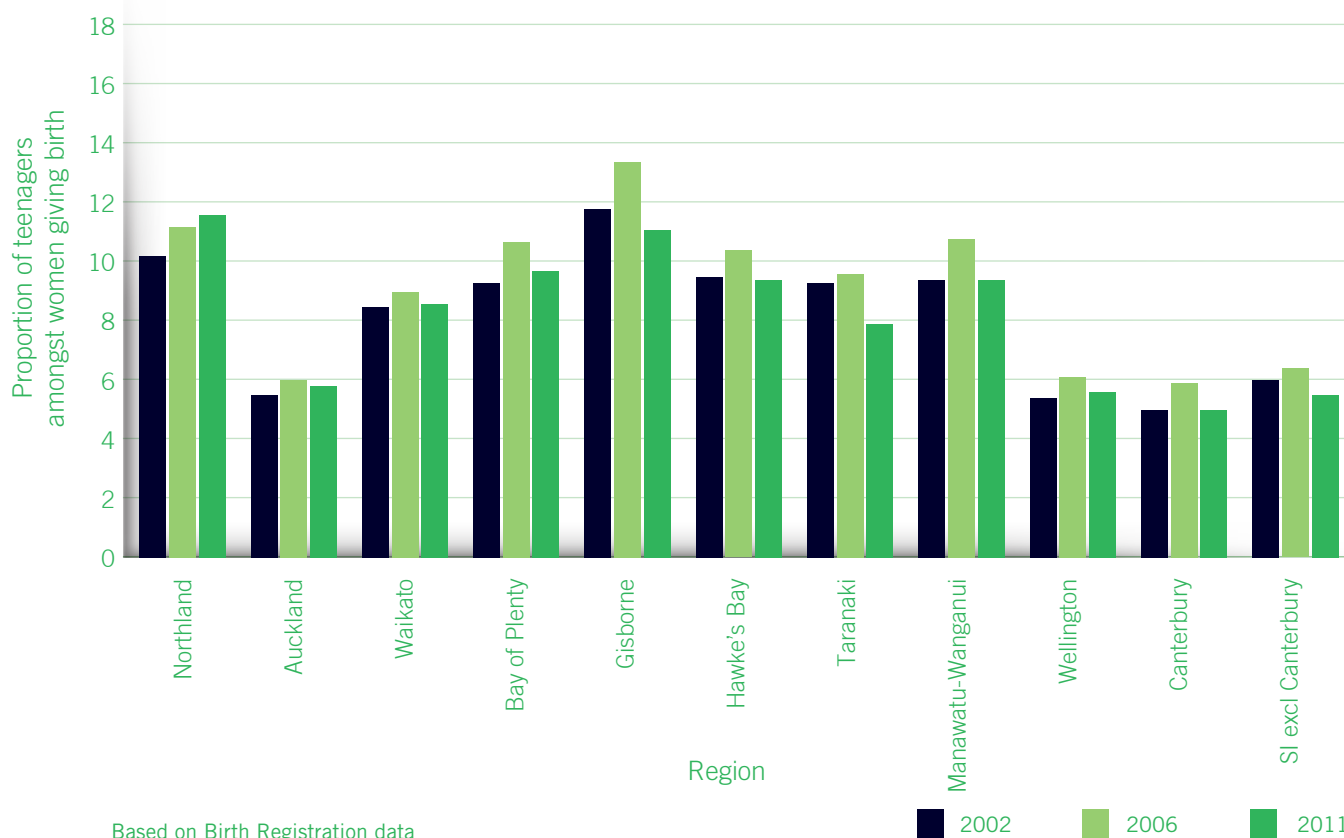


In order to look at trends over time, Figure 6 shows the trend in proportion of all births to teenagers by region at three year points since 2002.

KEY FINDINGS

- Most regions show a pattern of increasing proportions of all births to teen mothers between 2002 and 2006, followed by a decline in 2011 back to or slightly lower than 2002 levels.
- Exceptions are Northland where there appears to have been a steady increase, and to a lesser extent Auckland. In Auckland, however, the proportions of teen births are significantly lower than those found nationally.

Figure 6 Proportion of births to teenagers among all women (15–49 years) giving birth by region





Subsequent births

The availability of the National Maternity Collection data on births for the period 2002 to 2011 has enabled the researchers to conduct analysis of the probability of a cohort of women (those women born in a specific year) having a child during their teenage years.

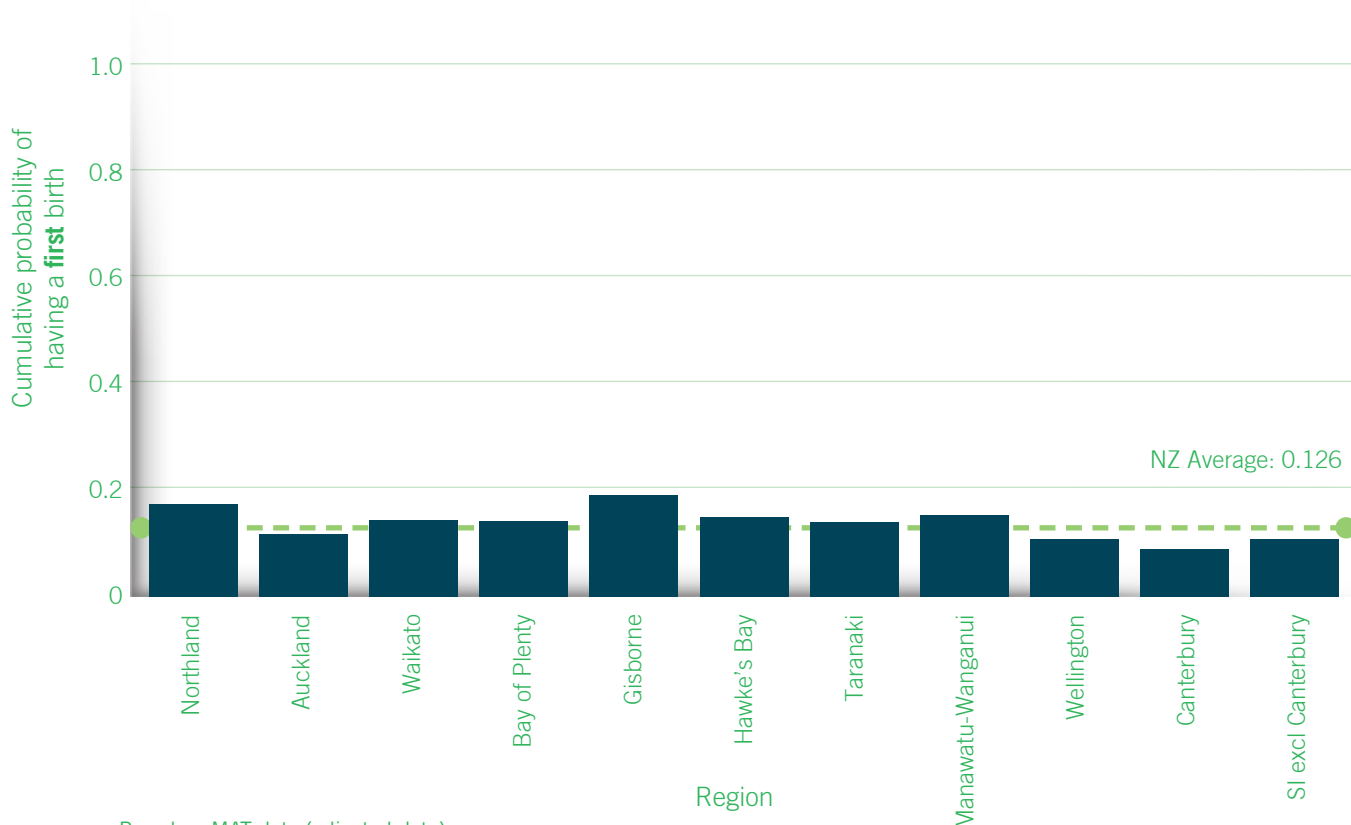
Up until now teenage birth rates (the number of births per 1,000 in a year) have been used to examine teenage childbearing, but these do not give the proportion of a cohort having a child as a teenager.

Figure 7 looks at the probability of a woman having at least one birth over the five years between 15 and 20 years of age.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ Teenage childbearing is an infrequent event: a minority of New Zealand women over their entire late teenage years have a first live or stillbirth; almost 90 percent will never have a first birth in this period of their lives.
- ▶ Only in Gisborne and Northland does the proportion in Figure 7 approach 20 percent.

Figure 7 Cumulative probability of a cohort having a first birth between exact age 15 and exact age 20 years, between 2006 and 2010, regions and New Zealand



Based on MAT data (adjusted data)

Note: Some of the trends might be due to random statistical errors rather than real issues.

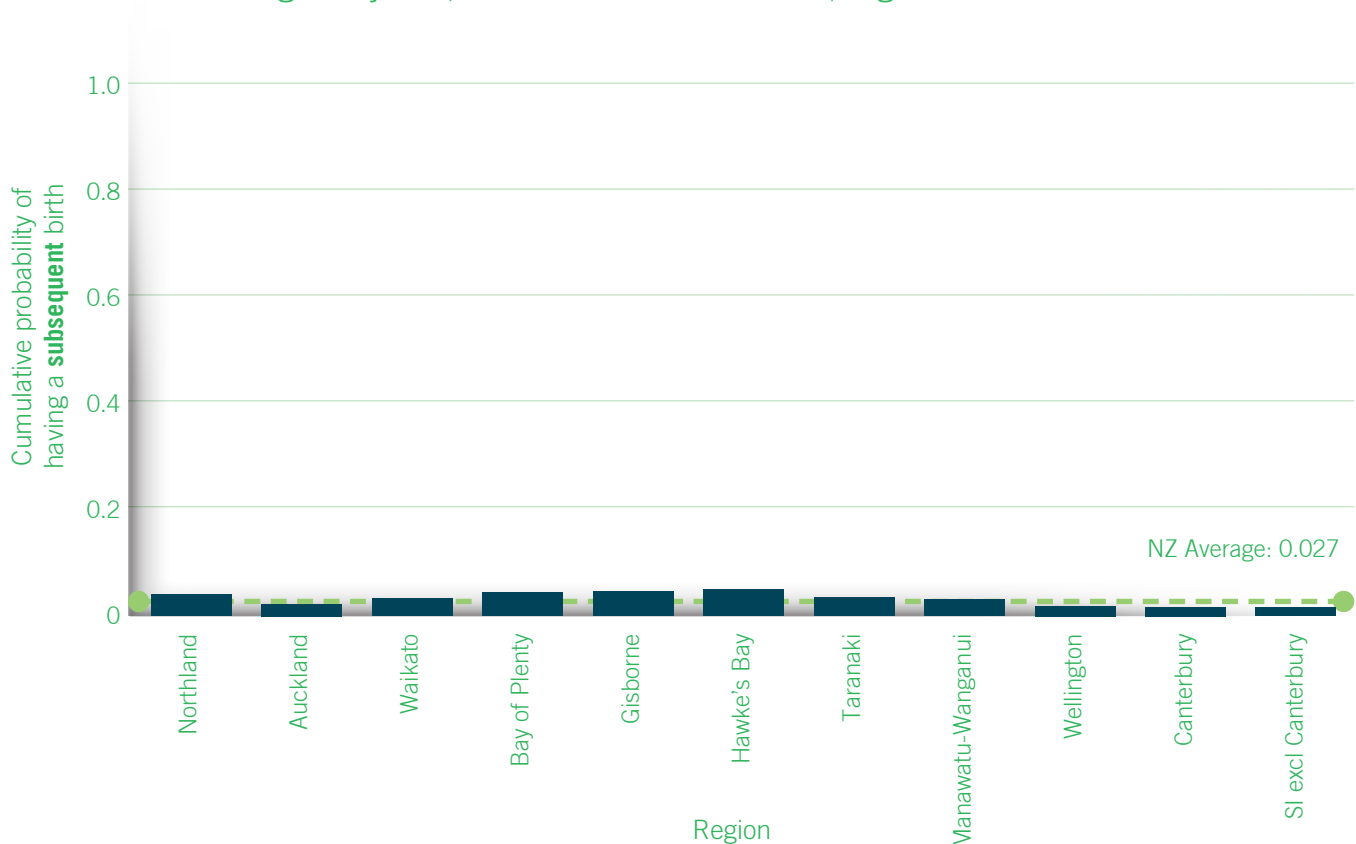


Figure 8 looks at the probability of a woman having a second birth as a teenager.

KEY FINDINGS

- Roughly one-fifth of teenage women who have a first birth then go on to have a second. This represents just over 2 percent of women having at least two children by age 20 years.
- The chances of having two births in the teenage years is very slight in every region and almost unheard of until age 18 years.
- There is regional variation but the differences are not great.

Figure 8 Cumulative probability of a cohort having a first birth and then progressing to a second birth between exact age 15 and exact age 20 years, between 2006 and 2010, regions and New Zealand



Based on MAT data (adjusted data)

Note: Some of the trends might be due to random statistical errors rather than real issues.



Conclusion

This analysis has shown that the numbers of births to teenage women is relatively small and that almost three quarters of these are to women in their late teens – 18 and 19 years of age. Births to teenage mothers today constitute a small proportion of all births (6.5 percent).

Young women from provincial regions are over-represented among adolescent mothers. Gisborne and Northland are among regions with relatively high levels of teen childbearing.

While fertility rates for all age groups have fallen dramatically since the 1980s and the levels of teenage childbearing in New Zealand have declined significantly, they remain considerably higher than those found in most other similar countries. This raises important questions as to why the decline has not been sustained but appears to have levelled out over the past 10 years.

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