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INDUCED ABORTIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2006 - 2009

REPORT OF THE WA ABORTION NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

May 2011

Maternal and Child Health
Data Integrity Directorate
Performance and Quality Division
Department of Health, Western Australia

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2006–2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maternal and Child Health Unit in Data Integrity Directorate, Performance Activity and Quality Division, Department of Health, Western Australia (WA), collects and reports statistics on induced abortions in WA as required under the *Health Act 1911*

This report continues a series of reports on induced abortions in WA since the passage of the *Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act 1998*. The focus of this report is on the four completed years, 2006-2009, though some data from 1999 to 2009 are also used for trends analysis. The report presents characteristics (age, place of residence and ethnic origin) of women having abortions, and details about abortions such as method, gestational age and types of facilities where abortions were performed. Comparisons are also made with the rest of Australia and some developed countries.

From 1999 to 2009, the annual number of abortions in WA was between 8 and 9 thousand, except for the period from 2003 to 2005 when it dropped below 8000. In 2009, the number of abortions in WA was 8885, a rate of 19.1 per 1000 women of reproductive age (15-44 years). This represents about 22.3 percent of pregnancies. The 11 year trend fluctuated with the highest rate for all years being 19.9 per 1000 women in 2001 and the lowest being 18.2 per 1000 women in 2005, and since then the trend has been up to 19.1 in 2009 (Table 1). The 2009 figure is in the middle of this range.

Abortions occurred across the reproductive age range. The Mean age of women having abortions in 2009 was 26 years and the median age was 25 years. These figures are consistent with previous years. The groups with the highest proportion of terminated pregnancies were those at the extremes of the reproductive age (teenagers and women 45 years of age and over). From 2006 to 2009, more than half of the pregnancies in teenagers (15-19 years of age) ended in abortion (Table 8).

Abortion data are tabulated by the residential postcode of the woman. From 2006-2009, the metropolitan abortion rate was significantly higher than the non-metropolitan rate. Overall, there were some variations in abortion and age-specific rates between regions. Among the non-metropolitan regions, the highest abortion rates were in the Pilbara (16.3 per 1000 women) and South West (15.7 per 1000 women). It should be noted that there was a significant decrease in abortion rates in the Pilbara area between 2006 and 2008 (from 21.4 per 1000 in 2006 to 12.5 in 2008) but in 2009 the rates went up to 16.3 per 1000 women (Table 9).

In 2009, non-Aboriginal women aged 15–44 years was recorded a higher abortion proportion (22.4 per cent) compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (11.8 per cent) (Table 12).

About 93 per cent of abortions were performed in the private sector in 2009. Only 4.2 per cent of abortions were performed in rural public hospitals (Table 13).

Consistent with previous years, over 93 per cent of abortions in WA took place in the first three months of pregnancy and were performed by vacuum aspiration. Abortions over 20 weeks accounted for 0.4 per cent of all abortions (Table 14 and Table 15). Such abortions require approval through a formal process (see p3 Introduction)

Approximately 2.7 per cent of all abortions were carried out for suspected or identified congenital malformations in 2009 (Table 16).

WA's abortion proportion (i.e. the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion) has been relatively high, around 22.0 since 2006, while the abortion proportion of other States was around 21.0, except in New South Wales (24.7). Globally, in 2007, a number of developed countries such as Germany (7.3 per 1000 women), Netherlands (8.6 per 1000 women) and Finland (10.7 per 1000 women) had significantly lower abortion rates than that in WA (19.0 per 1000 women). Conversely, the United States, New Zealand and Sweden had slightly higher abortion rates (Table 17 and Table 18).

BACKGROUND

1.1 Legal status of induced abortion in Western Australia

An induced abortion is defined as the termination of pregnancy via medical or surgical intervention, excluding spontaneous abortions or miscarriages¹. While abortion was available in WA before 1998 (with the procedure claimable under Medicare) its legal status was unclear as there had not been a test case. In May 1998, changes to the provisions relating to abortions were made with the introduction of the *Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act 1998* (the *Amendments*). A subsequent review of the *Amendments* in 2002 recommended enhancements to the collection of abortion data.³

The effect of the *Amendments* in 1998 made it lawful to perform abortion in WA where the abortion is (1) performed by a medical practitioner in good faith and with reasonable care and skill; and (2) justified under section 334 of the *Health Act 1911*². An abortion is justified for women up to 20 weeks gestation if:

- a) *the woman concerned has given informed consent; or*
- b) *the woman concerned will suffer serious personal, family or social consequences if the abortion is not performed; or*
- c) *serious danger to the physical or mental health of the woman concerned will result if the abortion is not performed; or*
- d) *the pregnancy of the woman concerned is causing serious danger to her physical or mental health.*

*(Sections (b), (c) and (d) do not apply unless the woman has given informed consent or in the case of sections (c) and (d) it is impractical for her to do so).*²

The medical practitioner is required by law to advise the women of the medical risks of terminating or continuing pregnancy and refer them to appropriate counselling. The woman's counsellor should not be the medical practitioner who performs the abortion. Hospital or medical staff can choose not to be involved in abortion procedures.^{2,3}

There are additional requirements for informed consent with respect to a woman who is considered a dependent minor (under the age of 16 years). A dependent minor can only give informed consent if a custodial parent or guardian has been informed an abortion is being considered, and has been given an opportunity to attend counselling sessions and medical consultations with the dependent minor. If the dependent minor chooses not to disclose this information, the custodian must seek permission from the Children's Court.^{2,3}

The performance of abortion for pregnancy after 20 weeks gestation requires approval from a medical panel appointed by the Minister for Health, and it should be done in a facility approved by the Minister.^{2,4}

Under section 335 (5) (d) of the *Health Act 1911* when a medical practitioner performs an induced abortion, the medical practitioner shall notify the Executive Director Public Health of the fact in the prescribed form within 14 days of the abortion being performed. Paragraph 335 (e) further states that a notification under paragraph (d) must not contain any particulars from which it may be possible to

*ascertain the identity of the patient.*² However, the review of the *Amendments* in 2002 recommended improvements to the collection of abortion data; and three additional variables, age, ethnic origin and residential postcode were added into the abortion notification form to improve the data validation process.

1.2 The Abortion Notification System

Induced abortion notification data are stored in a *Microsoft Access* database managed by the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Unit. The database contains all data from June 1998.

The notification form (Appendix B) was last updated with additional data items in 2002 and hence information of these variables was not available in prior years. Under statutory requirement, the medical practitioner performing the abortion completes the notification form and arranges to post a duplicate copy to the MCH Unit. An MCH clerk enters the information on the form into the database and follows-up with any incomplete information. Up-to-date information about the notification process is available at: <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/288/3/terminationsof.pm>.

1.3 Data Validation

A systematic data validation process requires information that can be used to identify individuals from existing data collections. The lack of relevant demographic information renders the validation process for induced abortion data inconclusive. Information presented in this report is therefore purely based on notified induced abortions.

One feasible attempt to validate the data was to identify the differences in aggregated numbers between abortion data and hospital admissions in the WA Hospital Morbidity Data Collection, based on specific clinical codes (004.0, 004.1, 004.3-004.9, 006.0, 006.1, 006.4, 006.9-007.1, 007.3, 007.4, 007.9, 031.1) using the International Statistics Classification of Disease and Related Health Problems, with Revision Australia Modification. However, as there was an array of record keeping systems at the clinics ranging from electronic to paper-based format, and in the absence of identifying information in the abortions collection, it was almost impossible to systematically validate the differences in the induced abortion data.

A register was developed in early 2008 to monitor the monthly number of abortions by facility and medical practitioner, with the aim of improving the validation process for data collected from 2008 onwards. This is similar to the process that has been put in place in the South Australian termination notification system.⁵ Improvement such as this will greatly assist the collection and validation processes and further enhance the quality of induced abortion data in WA.

2 TIME TRENDS IN INDUCED ABORTION RATES

Table 1 shows the rate of abortion per 1000 women aged 15-44 years from 1999–2009. There was a slight decrease in abortion rate from 2001 to 2005. From 2006, it increased to just over 19 per 1000 women and in 2009, the rate was 19.1 per 1000 women.

Table 1. Trend data of induced abortions, WA, 1999–2009

Year	Number of Abortions	Population of Women 15-44 years	Rate per 1000 Women
1999	8216	417,578	19.7
2000	8328	419,838	19.8
2001	8378	420,758	19.9
2002	8262	424,944	19.4
2003	7941	426,756	18.6
2004	7869	429,844	18.3
2005	7825	430,765	18.2
2006	8336	436,471	19.1
2007	8424	443,747	19.0
2008	8664	450,330	19.2
2009	8885	466,402	19.1

(a) Abortion Rate = Number of abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years. Numerator includes abortions at all ages

Note: The denominator for the abortion rate is the female population aged 15-44 years and the numerator is abortions at all ages, although it is acknowledged that a small number of these occur in women outside the age range.

Source of population data: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN HAVING INDUCED ABORTIONS

3.1 Age

There are various ways of looking at abortions by age, including the way that abortions are distributed across age groups (Table 2 and Figure 1), the rate of abortions and/or births per 1000 women in each age group (Table 3, 4, 5 and Figure 2) and the proportion of pregnancies ending in an abortion (Table 6, 7 and 8).

3.1.1 Percentage distribution of induced abortions by age

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 1, abortions are performed across the reproductive age range with women in their low twenties accounting for nearly 30 per cent of abortions performed. Almost 20 per cent of abortions were performed in teenagers. There was a small decrease in abortion in the <20 age group between 2006 and 2009, with the rate decreasing from 20 percent to 18 percent. The mean age of women who had an abortion in 2009 was 26 years. This is consistent with previous years.

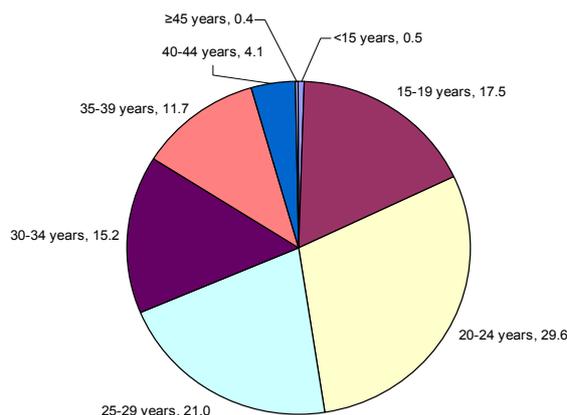
Table 2. Induced Abortions and Percentage of Abortions by Age of Woman, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Age group (years)								Total
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	≥45	
Number									
2006	36	1628	2395	1634	1303	923	364	35	8318
2007	25	1631	2448	1646	1262	986	391	35	8424
2008	37	1609	2497	1835	1301	991	357	33	8660
2009	44	1551	2634	1864	1353	1041	365	32	8884
Percentage									
2006	0.4	19.6	28.8	19.6	15.7	11.1	4.4	0.4	100
2007	0.3	19.4	29.1	19.5	15.0	11.7	4.6	0.4	100
2008	0.4	18.6	28.8	21.2	15.0	11.5	4.1	0.4	100
2009	0.5	17.5	29.6	21.0	15.2	11.7	4.1	0.4	100

For 2006 and 2008, there were 18 and 4 records with missing data on age, respectively.

For 2009, there was 1 case missing data on age

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Abortions by Age, WA, 2009



3.1.2 Abortion Rates and Birth Rate by Age Group

As shown in Table 3, women in the 20–24 year age group had the highest abortion rates (34.0 per 1000) in 2009, followed by women aged 25–29 years (24.5 per 1000). Table 4 shows that women in the 30–34 year age group had the highest birth rate (127.8 per 1000) in 2009, while the 25–29 year age group had the second highest birth rate (111.9 per 1000). However, teenagers in the 15–19 years of age had an abortion rate (21.1 per 1000) which was higher than the birth rate (19.4 per 1000) (Figure 2). There was a substantial difference between abortion rate and birth rate in women from 30–34 years old. In this age range, the birth rate was 127.8 per 1000 while abortion rate was 18.1 per 1000 women.

Table 3. Rates of Induced Abortions by Age of Woman, WA, 2006–2009

Year	Age Group (years)						Overall Rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
2006	23.5	33.3	24.3	18.1	12.1	5.1	19.1
2007	22.9	33.2	23.6	17.6	12.6	5.5	19.0
2008	22.4	33.4	25.5	18.1	12.4	5.0	19.2
2009	21.1	34.0	24.5	18.1	12.6	4.9	19.1

Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women for each age group.

The abortion rate for women aged 15-19 years includes abortions for younger ages.

The abortion rate for women aged 40-44 years includes abortions for older ages.

The total abortion rate includes all abortions where age was known.

Table 4. Birth Rates by Age of Woman, WA, 2006–2009

Year	Age Group (years)						Overall Rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
2006	21.5	64.5	110.9	124.5	64.8	11.6	65.2
2007	20.9	65.7	115.2	128.3	68.1	12.4	67.3
2008	20.8	64.4	114.1	129.0	69.2	13.2	67.6
2009	19.4	63.3	111.9	127.8	65.2	13.6	66.2

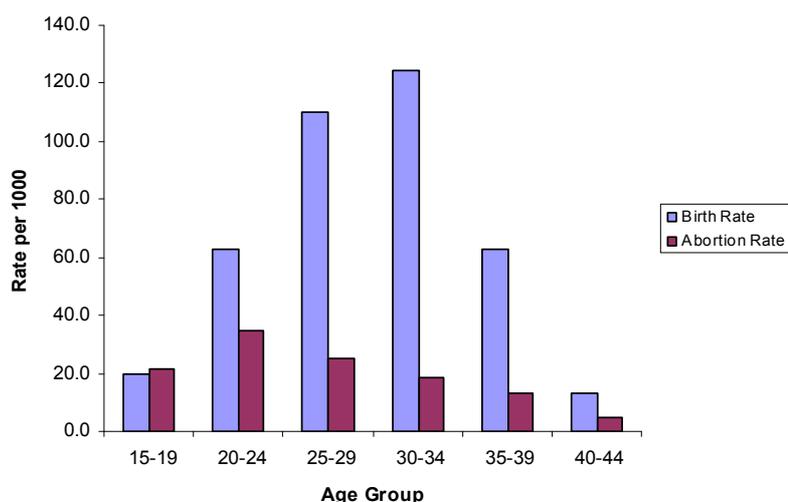
Birth Rate = Number of live births per 1000 women for each age group.

The birth rate for women aged 15-19 years includes births for younger ages.

The birth rate for women aged 40-44 years includes births for older ages.

Source: WA Midwives notification system accessed 22 November 2010

Figure 2. Age-Specific Rates of Induced Abortions and Births, WA, 2009



From 2006 to 2009, teenagers had more abortions than live births. For the past four years, abortion rate and pregnancy rate in teenagers have slightly decreased (Table 5).

Table 5. Teenage Induced Abortion, Birth and Pregnancy Rates, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Abortion Rate	Birth Rate	Pregnancy Rate
2006	23.5	21.5	44.9
2007	22.9	20.9	43.8
2008	22.4	20.8	43.3
2009	21.1	19.4	40.6

Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women for each age group.
 Birth Rate = Number of live births per 1000 women for each age group.
 Pregnancy Rate= Number of abortions and live births per 1000 women aged 15-19 years.
 Source: WA Midwives notification system accessed on 22 November 2010.
 Refer to Appendix C for population data.

3.1.3 The Abortion Proportion by Age Group

Table 6 shows the number of abortions by age and Table 7 shows the number of live births by age. The data in these tables are used to calculate the abortion proportion by age.

The proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion is the highest at each end of the reproductive age range (Table 8 and Figure 3). Teenagers less than 15 years of age terminated 70–80 per cent of pregnancies. Among teenagers (15–19 years) and women over 45 years, approximately half of the known pregnancies (live births plus induced abortions) ended in abortion. The lowest proportions of pregnancies ending in abortion were in women in their thirties.

Table 6. Induced Abortions by Age of Woman, WA, 2006–2009

Year	Age group (years)								Total
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	>45	
2006	36	1628	2395	1634	1303	923	364	35	8318
2007	25	1631	2448	1646	1262	986	391	35	8424
2008	37	1609	2497	1835	1301	991	357	33	8660
2009	44	1551	2634	1864	1353	1041	365	32	8884

For 2006, there are 18 records with missing data on age.
 For 2008, there were 4 records with missing data on age.
 For 2009, there was one record with missing data on age.

Table 7. Live births by Age of Woman, WA, 2006–2009

Year	Age group (years)								Total
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	>45	
2006	9	1514	4642	7470	8977	4943	863	38	28456
2007	9	1501	4846	8029	9191	5345	936	29	29886
2008	14	1514	4820	8227	9298	5544	992	40	30449
2009	12	1455	4897	8526	9531	5367	1050	43	30881

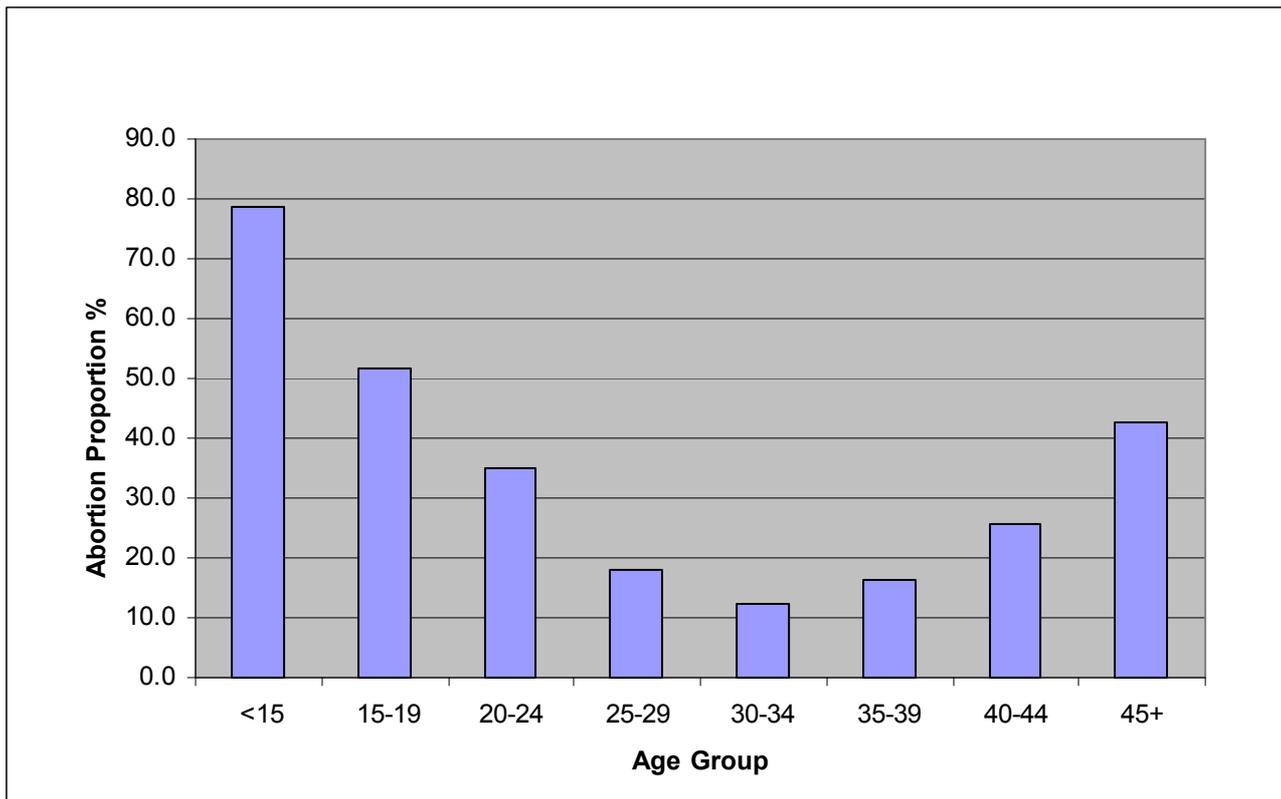
Source: WA Midwives Notification System 2006-2009, extracted on 22 November 2010.

Table 8. Abortion Proportion by Age of Woman, WA, 2006–2009

Year	Age group (years)								Overall
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	>45	
2006	80.0	51.8	34.0	17.9	12.7	15.7	29.7	47.9	22.6
2007	73.5	52.1	33.6	17.0	12.1	15.6	29.5	54.7	22.0
2008	72.5	51.5	34.1	18.2	12.3	15.2	26.5	45.2	22.1
2009	78.6	51.6	35.0	17.9	12.4	16.2	25.8	42.7	22.3

Abortion proportion = Abortions / (Abortions + Live births).
 Livebirth data for 2009 was extracted on 22 November 2010.

Figure 3. Age-Specific Abortion Proportion, WA, 2009



3.2 Place of Residence

The woman's place of residence is determined by their postcode. Postcodes have been grouped according to the boundaries of the various areas health service (North Metropolitan, South Metropolitan, and the seven non-metropolitan regions). Table 9 presents the abortion rate per 1000 women aged 15-44 years based on place of residence.

The metropolitan abortion rate in 2009 (20.2 per 1000) was significantly higher than the non-metropolitan rate (14.2 per 1000). Among the non-metropolitan regions the highest abortion rates were in the Pilbara (16.3), followed by the South West (15.7). There was a significant decrease in the Pilbara from 21.4 per 1000 in 2006 to 12.5 per 1000 in 2008 but in 2009 the rate went up to 16.3 per 1000.

Table 9. Induced Abortions by Place of Residence, WA, 2006-2009

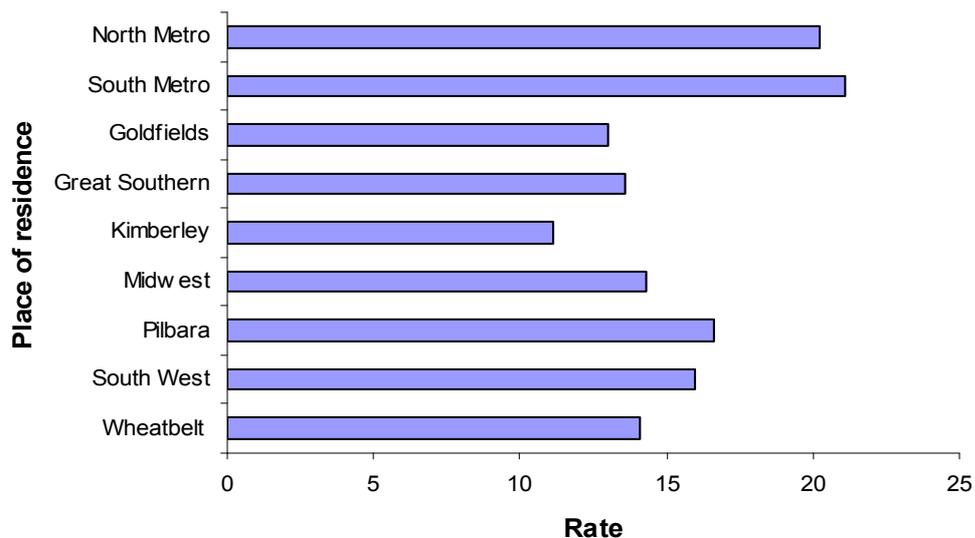
Place of Residence	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Metropolitan								
North Metro	3626	19.4	3,712	19.6	3,721	19.8	3,843	19.7
South Metro	3160	20.0	3,264	20.3	3,550	21.4	3,556	20.7
Total Metropolitan	6786	19.7	6,976	19.9	7271	20.5	7,399	20.2
Non-Metropolitan								
Goldfields	155	12.7	158	12.7	146	11.9	160	12.8
Great Southern	111	11.0	129	12.9	146	14.0	142	13.3
Kimberley	111	14.6	98	12.3	100	10.8	105	10.9
Midwest	158	13.3	150	12.5	164	13.2	179	14.0
Pilbara	218	21.4	179	17.4	133	12.5	171	16.3
South West	485	17.5	458	16.2	452	15.5	473	15.7
Wheatbelt	180	14.5	193	15.7	178	14.0	181	13.8
Total Non-Metropolitan	1,418	15.4	1,365	14.6	1,319	13.6	1411	14.2
Other	132	N/A	83	N/A	78	N/A	75	N/A
Overall State	8,336	19.1	8,424	19.0	8,668	19.2	8885	19.1

Place of residence is grouped into Area Health Services or WA Country Health Service Regions.

Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years. Numerator includes abortions at all ages.

Refer to Appendix C for population data.

Figure 4. Induced Abortions by Place of Residence, WA, 2009



There is a wide variation in the abortion rates based on age and place of residence across WA (Table 10). The 20-24 year age group recorded the highest abortion rate (33.8 per 1000 women) in every region and among this age group, the South Metropolitan Area Health Service had the highest abortion rate with 37.6 per 1000 women terminating pregnancies in 2009. The 40–44 year age group recorded the lowest abortion rate for all regions, with the lowest in the Kimberley with 1.2 per 1000 women terminating pregnancies.

Table 10. Rates of Induced Abortions by Place of Residence and Age, WA, 2009

Place of Residence	Age Group (years)						Overall Rate
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Metropolitan							
North Metro	21.0	34.5	25.6	18.5	14.0	5.4	19.7
South Metro	22.6	37.6	26.2	19.7	13.0	4.9	20.7
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	13.6	25.5	15.6	12.4	7.3	2.0	12.8
Great Southern	20.0	22.4	12.8	11.2	9.8	5.1	13.3
Kimberley	15.3	18.5	16.9	10.7	4.5	1.2	10.9
Midwest	20.6	22.4	16.0	14.0	9.5	3.9	14.0
Pilbara	17.3	28.1	20.6	16.7	9.9	5.1	16.2
South West	19.2	26.4	19.7	16.6	11.0	4.9	15.7
Wheatbelt	16.2	29.1	20.4	11.9	8.7	3.1	13.8
Overall State	20.9	33.8	24.2	18.0	12.6	4.9	18.9

Abortion Rate = Number of abortions per 1000 women for each age group.

The abortion rate for women aged 15-19 years includes abortions for younger ages.

The abortion rate for women aged 40-44 years includes abortions for older ages.

For 75 records place of residence was 'other' in the Abortion Notification System.

Refer to Appendix C for population data.

As illustrated in Table 11, there were large regional differences in teenage abortion, birth and pregnancy rates in 2009. Metropolitan regions report higher abortion rates compared to birth rates. Conversely, non-metropolitan regions report higher birth rates than abortion rates. The teenage abortion rate in Midwest (20.6 per 1000 women) was the highest in non-metropolitan regions, followed by Great Southern (19.5) and Southwest (19.2).

Table 11. Teenage Induced Abortion Rates, Birth Rates and Pregnancy Rates by Place of Residence, WA, 2009

Place of Residence	Abortion Rate	Birth Rate	Pregnancy Rate
Metropolitan			
North Metro	21.0	12.3	33.3
South Metro	22.6	19.0	41.6
Non-Metropolitan			
Goldfields	13.6	34.0	47.6
Great Southern	19.5	24.6	44.1
Kimberley	15.3	53.5	68.8
Midwest	20.6	39.1	59.7
Pilbara	17.3	51.9	69.2
South West	19.2	20.0	39.2
Wheatbelt	16.2	37.1	53.3
Overall State	20.9	19.0	40.0

Abortion rate = Number of abortions per 1000 women age 15-19 years.

Birth rate = Number of live births per 1000 women aged 15-19 years.

Pregnancy Rate = Number of abortions and live births per 1000 women aged 15-19 years.

Includes abortions and births for younger ages.

The pregnancy rate does not include stillbirths or spontaneous abortions.

For 75 records place of residence was 'other' in the Abortion Notification System.

For six records place of residence was 'other' in Midwives data (extracted on 22 November 2010).

3.3 Indigenous Status

As shown in Table 12, the non-Indigenous women recorded a higher proportion of abortions (22.4 per cent) compared to the Indigenous proportion (11.8 per cent) in 2009. Overall, WA Country Health region had lower abortion proportions than the Metropolitan area and the abortion proportions of non-Indigenous women in all regions were higher than those of Indigenous women.

Table 12. Indigenous Abortion Proportion by Place of Residence and Age, WA, 2009

Place of Residence	Age Group (years)						Overall
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Indigenous							
Metropolitan							
North Metro	16.5	11.1	13.4	15.0	23.8	0.0	14.1
South Metro	20.2	13.6	8.1	14.6	12.0	0.0	13.6
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	13.9	7.5	2.8	4.5	0.0	0.0	6.8
Great Southern	18.2	18.8	0.0	14.3	0.0	100.0	15.6
Kimberley	17.7	11.0	6.8	9.6	11.5	0.0	11.2
Midwest	14.6	12.5	16.3	13.2	26.7	33.3	15.3
Pilbara	7.3	6.5	9.4	10.7	20.0	25.0	9.2
South West	15.0	4.3	9.5	25.0	14.3	100.0	12.5
Wheatbelt	0.0	12.0	11.8	5.9	0.0	0.0	6.1
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	15.2	10.7	9.2	11.6	14.5	12.9	11.8
Non-Indigenous							
Metropolitan							
North Metro	66.4	42.9	20.4	12.1	15.8	25.2	23.8
South Metro	55.9	37.5	18.6	13.1	17.0	28.6	23.8
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	28.8	13.3	6.4	6.7	11.8	13.6	10.2
Great Southern	47.7	20.2	9.9	9.3	15.7	25.0	16.5
Kimberley	40.0	30.6	22.0	10.7	6.6	22.2	16.0
Midwest	47.8	24.3	13.5	12.2	15.7	34.8	19.3
Pilbara	37.0	18.3	12.2	9.5	11.2	18.2	13.6
South West	52.2	26.1	12.1	11.5	16.2	29.9	18.7
Wheatbelt	37.8	23.0	11.6	9.1	14.3	24.2	16.3
Other	76.5	43.2	31.1	25.5	24.1	37.5	35.0
Total	57.7	36.6	17.9	12.1	16.0	26.5	22.4

For six records of indigenous women, the place of residence was 'other'.

For 201 records, indigenous status was not provided.

The abortion proportion for women aged 15-19 years includes abortions for younger ages

The abortion proportion for women aged 40-44 years includes abortions for older ages.

Abortion proportion = Abortions / (Abortions + live births).

Extracted from Midwives System on 22 November 2010.

Refer to Appendix C for population data.

4 DETAILS ABOUT INDUCED ABORTIONS

4.1 Facilities where induced abortions were performed

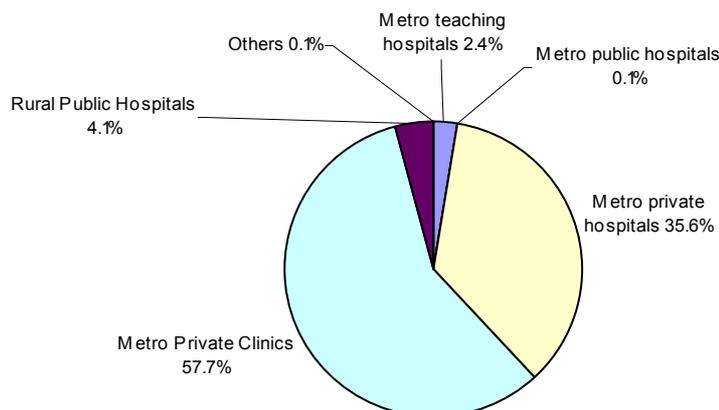
In 2009, over 93 per cent of abortions were carried out in the private sector (Table 13 and Figure 5). Over half of the abortions in WA were performed in private clinics in the metropolitan area, increasing from 54.4 per cent in 2006 to 58.6 per cent in 2008 and dropping slightly down to 57.7 per cent in 2009. From 2006 to 2009 over 35 per cent of abortions were performed in metropolitan private hospitals. Less than 5 per cent of abortions were carried out in rural public hospitals from 2006-2009.

Table 13. Induced Abortions by Facility, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Facility						Total
	Metro Teaching Hospitals	Metro Public Hospitals	Metro Private Hospitals	Metro Private Clinics	Rural Public Hospitals	Others	
Numbers							
2006	208	23	3158	4538	407	1	8335
2007	195	11	3033	4818	359	0	8424
2008	205	8	3081	5076	297	1	8668
2009	212	6	3167	5129	371	0	8885
Percentage							
2006	2.5	0.3	37.9	54.4	4.9	0.0	100
2007	2.3	0.1	36.1	57.2	4.3	0.0	100
2008	2.4	0.1	35.5	58.6	3.4	0.0	100
2009	2.4	0.1	35.6	57.7	4.2	0.0	100

Percentages are row percentages for each year.
 *** : number less than 5.

Figure 5. Percentage Distribution of Induced Abortions by Facility, WA, 2009



4.2 Gestational Age

Gestational age refers to duration of pregnancy. Gestational age at abortion is an important health indicator because as pregnancy advances the risk of serious complications increases, the methods become more complex and associated costs increase. The safest time for abortion is early in pregnancy, ideally less than 12 weeks from the last menstrual period (in the first trimester of pregnancy).⁷

In 2009, 74.4 per cent of abortions were carried out in the first 8 weeks, 87.6 per cent in the first 10 weeks, and about 94.4 per cent at 12 weeks or less (Table 14 and Figure 5). Only 0.4 per cent of abortions were carried out at 20 weeks or over.

Table 14. Abortions by Gestational Age, WA, 2006–2009

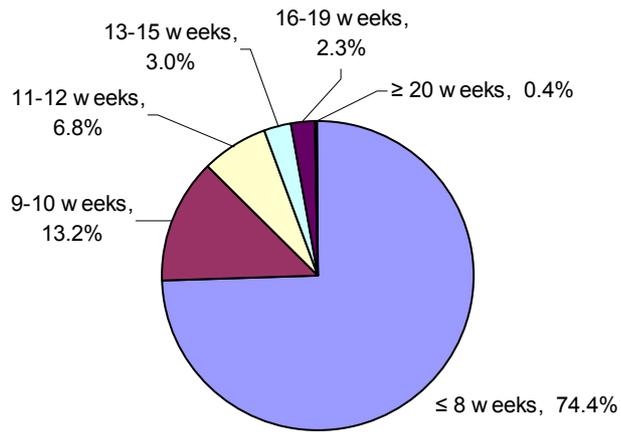
Year	Gestational Age						Total
	≤ 8 weeks	9-10 weeks	11-12 weeks	13-15 weeks	16-19 weeks	≥ 20 weeks	
Number							
2006	5961	1207	636	325	160	42	8331
2007	6059	1186	653	323	158	45	8424
2008	6261	1236	653	265	210	41	8666
2009	6607	1171	601	268	200	38	8885
Percentage							
2006	71.6	14.5	7.6	3.9	1.9	0.5	100
2007	71.9	14.1	7.8	3.8	1.9	0.5	100
2008	72.3	14.3	7.5	3.1	2.4	0.5	100
2009	74.4	13.2	6.8	3.0	2.3	0.4	100

In 2006 gestational age was not recorded for five cases.

In 2008, gestational age was not recorded for two cases.

Percentages are row percentages for each year.

Figure 6. Percentage Distribution of Abortions by Gestational Age, WA, 2009



4.3 Method of Induced Abortion

An induced abortion can be performed through either surgical or medical intervention. Surgical interventions are used from about seven week's gestation. Consistent with the fact that over 90 per cent of abortions took place in the first three months (Table 14), the main method of abortion was vacuum aspiration (suction curettage) of the uterus (94.5 per cent) in 2009, which was 3% lower compared to 2008. Normal clinical practice requires that after approximately 12-14 weeks gestation dilatation of the cervix and evacuation of the uterus should be used; these methods accounted for about 0.3 per cent of abortions. Other medical, non-surgical methods, including administration of prostaglandin, accounted for a further 5.2 per cent in 2009 which increased by 157% compared to 2008 (Table 15). Compared with previous years (2.9 per cent in 2002, 2.1 per cent 2003, 1.7 per cent 2004 and 2.5 per cent in 2005)¹⁹, dilatation and evacuation method was performed less often since 2006. On the other hand, vacuum aspirations were more frequently used.

Table 15. Induced Abortions by Method, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Method of Abortion				Total
	Vacuum Aspiration	Dilatation & Curettage	Dilatation & Evacuation	Other	
Number					
2006	8115	3	59	156	8333
2007	8163	10	31	220	8424
2008	8462	9	18	179	8668
2009	8389	6	26	460	8881
Percentage					
2006	97.4	0	0.7	1.9	100
2007	96.9	0.1	0.4	2.6	100
2008	97.6	0.1	0.2	2.1	100
2009	94.5	0.1	0.3	5.2	100

Note: Three cases missing on method of abortion in 2006.

Four cases missing on method of abortion in 2009

***: number less than five

Other methods include: Prostaglandin, I/V Infusions, I/U Injection.

4.4 Induced Abortions for Suspected or Identified Congenital Malformations

In 2009, there were 2.7 per cent of all abortions carried out for suspected or identified congenital malformations (Table 16). From 2006 to 2009, out of these 808 cases having congenital malformation, 16.5 per cent (133 cases) were due to suspected or identified Neural Tube Defects, such as anencephaly and spina bifida. Studies have found that up to 70-100 per cent of Neural Tube Defects are preventable^{9, 10}. Hence, these figures highlight the importance of primary prevention with the vitamin, folate before and in early pregnancy.

Table 16: Induced Abortions for Suspected or Identified Congenital Malformations, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Reason for Abortion					
	No Reasons		Congenital Malformation		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2006	199	2.4	8137	97.6	8336	100
2007	178	2.1	8246	97.9	8424	100
2008	190	2.2	8478	97.8	8668	100
2009	241	2.7	8644	97.3	8885	100
Total	808	2.4	33505	97.6	34313	100

5 INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND STATE COMPARISONS

International, national and state comparisons are affected by access to abortion services, statistical coverage and laws relating to abortions. Data for 2007 and 2008 are not available for many states and countries, thus comparisons have mainly been made using data from 2003 to 2006

Table 17 shows the comparison of the induced abortion proportion throughout Australia. WA has a relative high abortion proportion. It can be said that WA is the second highest after New South Wales. Victoria, Queensland and Southern Australia have had similar trends.

Table 17. National and State Induced Abortion Proportion

Country	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	24.7	23.7	23.0	22.6	22.0	22.2
New South Wales ⁽¹⁷⁾	26.1	26.0	24.4	24.7	..	..
Victoria ⁽¹⁸⁾	21.9	21.4	20.5	20.3	..	..
Queensland ⁽¹⁹⁾	22.9	21.9	21.5	21.5	..	..
Southern Australia ⁽²⁰⁾	23.0	22.3	20.9	21.1	..	..
Australia ⁽²¹⁾	25.2	22.1	21.1	21.3	..	..

.. figure not available.

Abortion Proportion = 100 * (Number of Abortion / Number live births and abortion).

Abortion rates in WA are relatively higher than those in some developed countries (Table 18). A number of these countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Scotland, have significantly lower abortion rates, while the United States, New Zealand and Sweden have slightly higher abortion rates than those in WA. Caution should be exercised in comparing international rates where figures relate to different time periods.

Table 18. International Induced Abortion Rates

Country	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	18.6	18.3	18.2	19.1	19	19.2	19.1
England and Wales ⁽¹³⁾	16.6	16.9	17	17.5	17.9	17.6	17.0
Finland ⁽¹¹⁾	10.8	11.2	11.1	10.8	10.7	10.6	..
Netherlands ⁽¹¹⁾	9	8.7	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.7	..
Germany ⁽¹¹⁾	7.6	7.8	7.5	7.3	7.3	7.2	..
Norway ⁽¹⁵⁾	12.8	13.3	13	13.2	13.8		14.0
New Zealand ⁽¹¹⁾	20.8	20.2	19.3	19.6	20.1	19.7	19.2
Sweden ⁽¹¹⁾	20.2	20	20.2	20.6	21	21.3	..
Scotland ⁽¹¹⁾	11.6	11.8	12	12.5	13	13.2	..
Canada ⁽¹²⁾	15.2	14.1	13.7	13.5	..	..	..
Denmark ⁽¹¹⁾	14.7	14.4	14.4	14.3	..	..	..
France ⁽¹⁴⁾	14.1	14.6	14.3	14.5	14.7	..	..
United States ⁽¹¹⁾	20.2	19.7	19.4

Abortion Rate = Number of Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years.

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APPENDIX B: INDUCED ABORTION NOTIFICATION FORM 2002 – PRESENT

FORM 1

(Regulation 2)

Health Act 1911

Health (Section 335 (5) (d) Abortion Notice) Regulations 1998

Notification by Medical Practitioner of Induced Abortion

To Executive Director, Public Health

Under section 335 (5) (d) of the Health Act 1911, I, _____
(please print full name)

provide notice¹ of an abortion I performed at _____
(address where procedure was performed)

on _____
(date of abortion)

1. Gestational age at date of abortion (best estimate): _____ weeks

2. Method of termination: (tick one or more)

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| Vacuum aspiration (suction curettage) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Dilatation and curettage (sharp) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Dilatation and evacuation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Vaginal prostaglandin or analogue instillation | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |
| Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | (5) |

3. Reason for termination of pregnancy: (tick one)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|
| Reason other than fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Suspected fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Actual fetal abnormality | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Specify if known _____ | | |
| Selective reduction of multiple pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |

4. Patient's age (last birthday): _____ years

5. Origin of patient

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (1) |
| Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (3) |
| Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) |
| Not stated | <input type="checkbox"/> | (5) |

6. Postcode of residence of patient: _____

Signature _____ Date: _____
(Signature of Medical Practitioner)

Notes

1. As required by section 335 (5) (d) of the Health Act 1911 notice must be given within 14 days of the abortion being performed.

Forward completed form (top copy), marked **Private & Confidential**, to Manager, Maternal and Child Health Unit, Department of Health, WA, Reply Paid 70042 (Delivery to Locked Bag 52) PERTH BC WA 6849
Duplicate (yellow copy) to be retained by medical practitioner

Form 1 last updated on 21/01/2009

APPENDIX C: POPULATION DATA

Table 1. Population Data by Age for Women aged 15–44, WA, 2006-2009

Year	Age group (years)						Total 15-44
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
2006	70,949	72,017	67,340	72,099	76,314	77,752	436,471
2007	72,290	73,757	69,671	71,633	78,533	77,863	443,747
2008	73,339	74,773	72,086	72,043	80,082	78,007	450,330
2009	73,886	75,526	74,388	72,892	80,561	78,926	456,179

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on 7 August 2009.

Table 2. Population Data by Place of Residence for Women aged 15–44, WA, 2006-2009

Place of Residence	2006	2007	2008	2009
Metropolitan				
North Metro	186,466	189,695	188,137	190,472
South Metro	157,917	160,795	165,745	168,344
Total Metropolitan	344,383	350,490	353,882	358,816
Non-Metropolitan				
Goldfields	12,232	12,406	12,225	12261
Great Southern	10,048	10,028	10,420	10474
Kimberley	7,607	7,937	9,260	9474
Midwest	11,914	12,022	12,465	12508
Pilbara	10,176	10,292	10,243	10287
South West	27,734	28,276	29,107	29511
Wheatbelt	12,377	12,296	12,728	12848
Total Non-Metropolitan	92,088	93,257	96,448	97363
Overall State	436,471	443,747	450,330	456,179

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on 7 August 2009.

Table 3. Population Data by Place of Residence for Women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2006

Place of Residence	Age Groups (years)						Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Metropolitan							
North Metro	30,288	31,088	28,979	30,793	32,393	32,925	186,466
South Metro	26,371	27,998	24,315	25,205	26,631	27,397	157,917
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	1,831	1,888	2,064	2,253	2,131	2,065	12,232
Great Southern	1,747	1,267	1,408	1,611	1,933	2,082	10,048
Kimberley	1,067	1,354	1,409	1,358	1,276	1,143	7,607
Midwest	1,904	1,629	1,837	1,993	2,227	2,324	11,914
Pilbara	1,245	1,553	1,841	2,084	1,843	1,610	10,176
South West	4,738	3,663	3,742	4,653	5,347	5,591	27,734
Wheatbelt	1,758	1,577	1,745	2,149	2,533	2,615	12,377
Overall State	70,949	72,017	67,340	72,099	76,314	77,752	436,471

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on Friday, 7 August 2009.

Table 4. Population Data by Place of Residence for Women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2007

Place of Residence	Age Groups (years)						Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Metropolitan							
North Metro	30,797	31,817	30,043	30,523	33,411	33,104	189,695
South Metro	26,792	28,693	25,304	25,215	27,340	27,451	160,795
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	1,945	1,911	2,088	2,244	2,143	2,075	12,406
Great Southern	1,799	1,281	1,410	1,526	1,959	2,053	10,028
Kimberley	1,039	1,439	1,529	1,378	1,365	1,187	7,937
Midwest	1,948	1,709	1,831	1,960	2,309	2,265	12,022
Pilbara	1,203	1,549	1,888	2,109	1,947	1,596	10,292
South West	4,938	3,801	3,780	4,613	5,539	5,605	28,276
Wheatbelt	1,829	1,557	1,798	2,065	2,520	2,527	12,296
Overall State	72,290	73,757	69,671	71,633	78,533	77,863	443,747

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on Friday, 7 August 2009.

Table 5. Population Data by Place of Residence for Women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2008

Place of Residence	Age Groups (years)						Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Metropolitan							
North Metro	30597	32038	29921	29915	33251	32415	188,137
South Metro	27353	28420	27069	26111	28537	28255	165,745
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	2014	2062	1869	1984	2295	2001	12,225
Great Southern	1741	1597	1610	1648	1913	1911	10,420
Kimberley	1385	1364	1559	1707	1701	1544	9,260
Midwest	1902	1860	2151	2006	2288	2258	12,465
Pilbara	1271	1501	1937	2050	1935	1549	10,243
South West	4998	4247	4212	4617	5525	5508	29,107
Wheatbelt	2078	1684	1758	2005	2637	2566	12,728
Overall State	73,339	74,773	72,086	72,043	80,082	78,007	450,330

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on Friday, 7 August 2009.

Table 6. Population Data by Place of Residence for Women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2009

Place of Residence	Age Groups (years)						Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Metropolitan							
North Metro	31,443	33,080	31,619	31,015	34,135	33,524	194,816
South Metro	28,273	29,315	28,584	27,279	29,413	29,211	172,075
Non-Metropolitan							
Goldfields	2,060	2,197	1,983	1,941	2,327	2,034	12,542
Great Southern	1,746	1,651	1,721	1,695	1,945	1,948	10,706
Kimberley	1,440	1,456	1,597	1,774	1,773	1,624	9,664
Midwest	1,944	1,917	2,246	2,074	2,311	2,296	12,788
Pilbara	1,272	1,531	2,043	2,090	2,015	1,569	10,520
South West	5,148	4,390	4,507	4,695	5,724	5,698	30,162
Wheatbelt	2,158	1,822	1,860	2,018	2,651	2,620	13,129
Overall State	75,484	77,359	76,160	74,581	82,294	80,524	466,402

Source: ABS Estimated Resident Populations for WA.

Data downloaded from the Epidemiology & GIS Branch web-site on Friday, 22 October 2010.

Table 7: Abortions by Place of Residence and Indigenous Status of Women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2009

Health Region	Non-Indigenous									Indigenous							
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+	Total	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	Total
Metropolitan																	
North Metro	12	635	1124	794	567	470	165	15	3782	.	13	12	9	6	***	.	45
South Metro	16	584	1054	715	508	366	128	11	3382	***	16	17	7	6	***	.	50
Non-Metropolitan																	
Goldfields	***	16	28	19	17	13	***	.	97	.	***	***	***	***	.	.	11
Great Southern	***	27	34	22	18	19	9	.	133	.	***	***	.	***	.	***	7
Kimberley	***	3	11	18	12	5	***	.	52	***	15	16	7	7	***	.	50
Midwest	***	32	35	29	24	18	7	***	147	***	***	7	7	***	***	***	31
Pilbara	***	15	26	34	27	15	6	.	125	.	***	6	***	***	***	***	22
South West	***	93	114	86	74	62	22	***	456	.	***	***	***	***	***	***	10
Wheatbelt	.	34	49	36	23	22	7	***	172	.	.	***	***	***	.	.	6
Other	.	13	16	19	13	7	***	.	71	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	38	1452	2491	1772	1283	997	352	32	8417	***	62	69	40	32	20	***	232

For six records for indigenous mothers, the place of residence was 'other' and For 234 records where indigenous status was 'not stated' in Abortion data.

***: number less than five

Source: WA Abortion Notification System 2009 extracted on 22 November 2010.

Table 8: Live births by Indigenous Status and place of residence for women aged 15–44 years, WA, 2009

Health Region	Non-Indigenous									Indigenous							
	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+	Total	<15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	Total
Metropolitan																	
North Metro	***	324	1494	3098	4136	2506	505	28	12095	.	66	96	58	34	16	***	274
South Metro	***	470	1753	3120	3374	1782	337	10	10849	***	65	108	79	35	22	6	317
Non-Metropolitan																	
Goldfields	.	42	182	276	238	97	18	***	854	.	31	49	35	21	12	***	150
Great Southern	.	34	134	201	176	102	25	***	674	.	9	13	8	6	***	.	38
Kimberley	.	6	25	64	100	71	6	***	273	***	77	129	96	66	23	***	397
Midwest	.	36	109	186	172	97	15	.	615	***	40	49	36	33	11	***	172
Pilbara	.	29	116	245	258	119	27	.	794	.	38	87	48	25	16	***	217
South West	.	86	322	625	567	321	60	***	1982	.	17	22	19	6	6	.	70
Wheatbelt	.	56	164	274	229	132	25	.	880	.	24	22	15	16	10	6	93
Other	.	***	21	42	38	22	***	.	132	.	***	***	***	***	.	.	***
Total	7	1087	4320	8131	9288	5249	1023	43	29148	***	368	577	395	243	118	27	1733

***: number less than five

Source: WA Midwives' Notification System 2009 extracted 22 November 2010.