

# Highlights of 2008–2009 Selected Indicators Describing the Birthing Process in Canada

## Background

This document summarizes key information on 2008–2009 select indicators that describe the birthing process in Canada, which is now available on Quick Stats. For all jurisdictions except Quebec, information on Quick Stats is a result of data availability in the 2008–2009 Discharge Abstract Database (DAD). Quebec data for 2008–2009 is from the Fichier des hospitalisations MED-ÉCHO, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. Quebec data for 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 was also updated in this Quick Stats release.

The 2008–2009 DAD was made available to external clients as of October 31, 2009.

## Highlights

### Assisted Deliveries

In 2008–2009, the rates of overall assisted delivery, vacuum-assisted delivery and forceps-assisted delivery in Canada were 14.0%, 9.9% and 3.3%, respectively.

Among the provinces, Alberta had the highest overall assisted-delivery rate (17.5%) in 2008–2009, followed by Saskatchewan (16.7%). Manitoba and Prince Edward Island had the lowest overall assisted-delivery rates (9.3% and 7.1%, respectively).

Figure 1 shows the 2008–2009 rates of vacuum extraction and forceps-assisted delivery in Canada. Among the provinces, the rate of vacuum-assisted delivery ranged from 12.9% in Saskatchewan and 12.5% in Alberta to 6.2% in Manitoba and 4.0% in Prince Edward Island. Forceps were used less frequently than vacuum extraction. The highest provincial rates of forceps-assisted delivery were observed in Newfoundland and Labrador (5.5%) and Nova Scotia (4.1%), while the lowest rates were observed in Saskatchewan (2.4%) and Prince Edward Island (2.3%).

### Who We Are

Established in 1994, CIHI is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that provides essential information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. Funded by federal, provincial and territorial governments, we are guided by a Board of Directors made up of health leaders across the country.

### Our Vision

To help improve Canada's health system and the well-being of Canadians by being a leading source of unbiased, credible and comparable information that will enable health leaders to make better-informed decisions.

Rates of vacuum-assisted delivery remained stable in all provinces except Quebec, where the rate slightly decreased between 2006–2007 and 2008–2009. Declines in rates of forceps-assisted delivery were observed in Ontario and British Columbia over the same period, while no significant changes were found in other provinces.

### **Epidural Indicators**

In 2008–2009, epidural rates among vaginal and all deliveries continued to vary among provinces. For instance, more than two-thirds (69.0%) of vaginal deliveries in Quebec and 60.0% in Ontario were preceded by an epidural, compared to 38.5% in Manitoba and 30.0% in British Columbia.

Between 2006–2007 and 2008–2009, Quebec and Ontario had the highest epidural rates among vaginal deliveries. There were significant increases in epidural rates among vaginal deliveries in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island over the same period (Figure 2). The most notable increases were found in Prince Edward Island (up from 30.2% to 39.5%) and in Nova Scotia (up from 48.4% to 54.6%). In contrast, the Yukon was the only territory that had a decrease in epidural rates among vaginal deliveries (down from 37.5% to 21.0%) among provinces and territories.

### **Primary Caesarean Section**

In 2008–2009, among the provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia had the highest primary Caesarean section (C-section) rates (23.1% and 22.3%, respectively); Quebec and Manitoba had the lowest rates (15.7% and 13.5%, respectively). Nunavut had the lowest primary C-section rate among provinces and territories (5.0%).

As shown in Figure 3, women age 35 and older had significantly higher primary C-section rates than their younger counterparts in most provinces and territories (except Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories). Among the provinces, the primary C-section rates in women 35 and older ranged from 31.8% in Newfoundland and Labrador and 27.3% in British Columbia to 20.2% in Quebec and 19.0% in Manitoba. Variations in primary C-section rates

remained across Canada between 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 (Figure 4). The primary C-section rate increased from 14.4% to 16.2% in Saskatchewan, while it decreased from 16.4% to 15.7% in Quebec. There were no significant changes in other provinces over this time.

### **Newborns and Low Birth Weight**

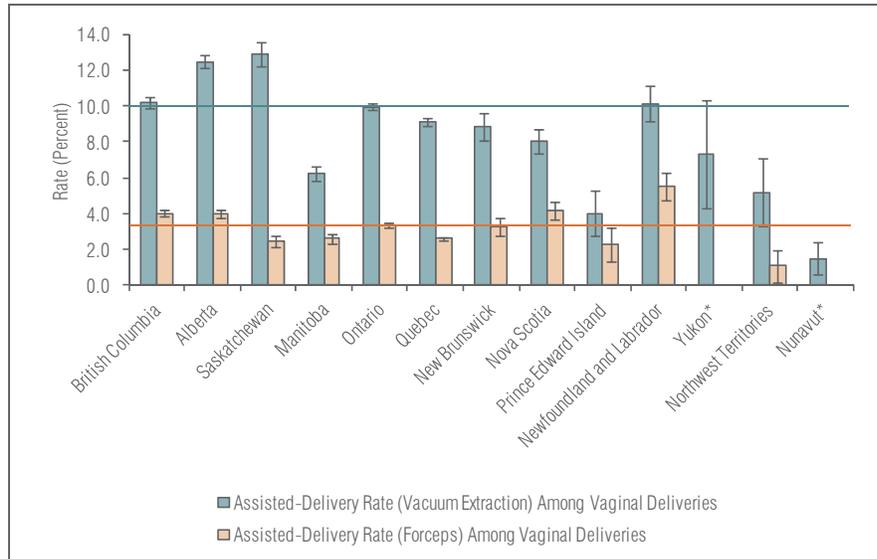
In 2008–2009, approximately 374,000 babies were born in a hospital in Canada. This represents an increase of 4.8% since 2006–2007. Among the provinces, the largest percentage increases in hospital births were reported by Saskatchewan (11.8%) and Alberta (9.7%); a decrease was reported by Prince Edward Island (1.4%).

In 2008–2009, 6.0% of babies who were born in a hospital in Canada had a birth weight of less than 2,500 grams. At the provincial level, low birth weight rates for babies less than 2,500 grams ranged from 4.9% in Prince Edward Island and 5.1% in Manitoba and Saskatchewan to 6.4% in Ontario and 6.7% in Alberta. Between 2006–2007 and 2008–2009, there were no significant changes in low birth weight rates among provinces and territories.

For more information, please go to CIHI's website ([www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)), click on "Quick Stats," select "by Topic" and then select "Pregnancy and Childbirth."

Information on total C-section rates for 2008–2009 will be released in the *Health Indicators 2010* report. For more information, please go to CIHI's website ([www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)), click on "Research & Reports," and select "Health Indicators."

**Figure 1**  
**Rates of Vacuum Extraction and Forceps-Assisted Vaginal Deliveries, Canada, 2008–2009**



**Notes**

\* 2008–2009 forceps-assisted vaginal delivery rates for the Yukon and Nunavut were suppressed. Data represents the province or territory where the patient was from (excluding non-residents of Canada).

I represents 95% confidence intervals.

The blue line is the Canadian rate of forceps-assisted delivery and the orange line is the Canadian rate of vacuum extraction–assisted delivery.

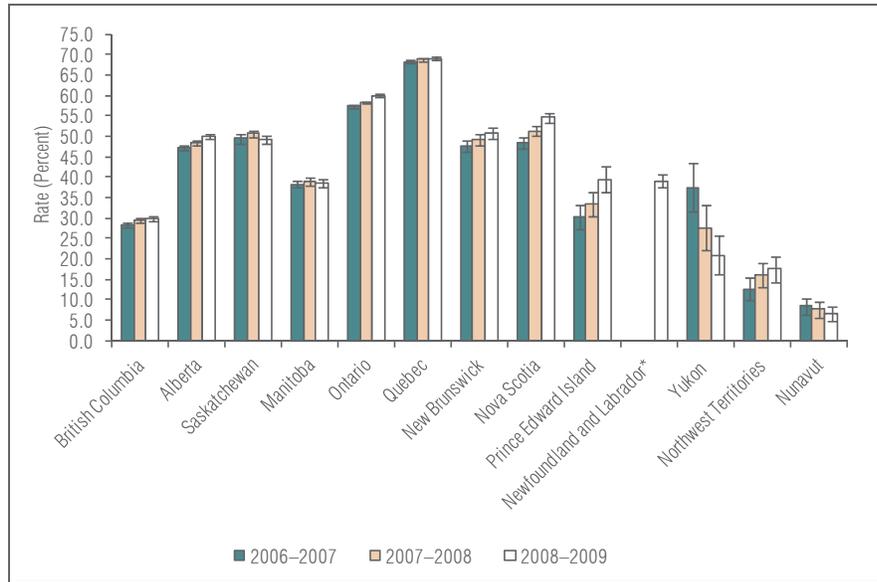
Coverage issues:

- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit two periods of data to the 2008–2009 DAD.

**Sources**

Discharge Abstract Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information; Fichier des hospitalisations MED-ÉCHO, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

**Figure 2**  
**Epidural Rates Among Vaginal Deliveries, Canada,**  
**2006–2007 to 2008–2009**



**Notes**

\* Rates for Newfoundland and Labrador for 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 were suppressed. Data represents the province or territory where the patient was from (excluding non-residents of Canada).

I represents 95% confidence intervals.

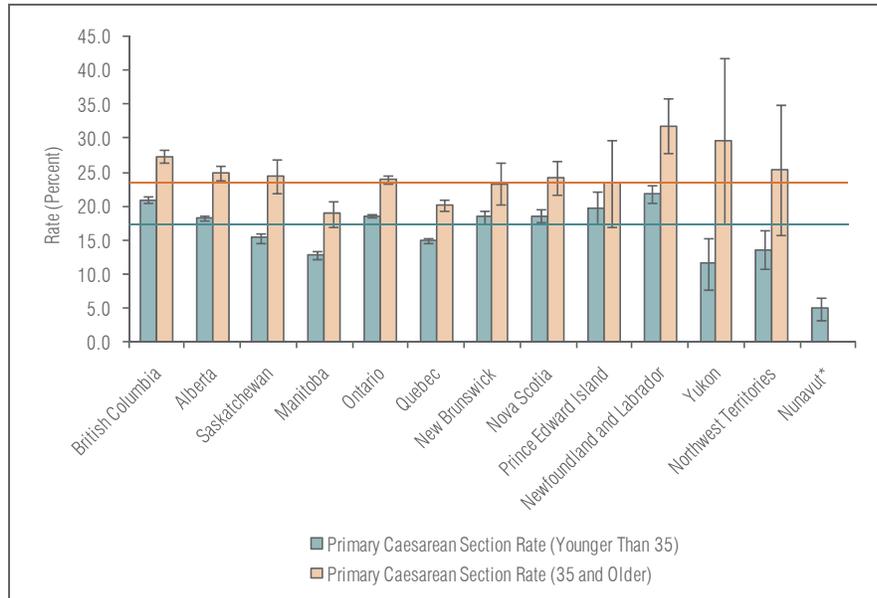
Coverage issues:

- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit three periods of data to the 2006–2007 DAD.
- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit two periods of data to the 2008–2009 DAD.

**Sources**

Discharge Abstract Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information; Fichier des hospitalisations MED-ÉCHO, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

**Figure 3**  
**Primary Caesarean Section Rate, by Age Group**  
**(Younger Than 35 and 35 and Older), Canada, 2008–2009**



**Notes**

\* The 2008–2009 Nunavut primary C-section rate for women age 35 and older was suppressed. Data represents the province or territory where the patient was from (excluding non-residents of Canada).

I represents 95% confidence intervals.

The blue line is the Canadian primary C-section rate for women younger than 35 and the orange line is the Canadian primary C-section rate for women 35 and older.

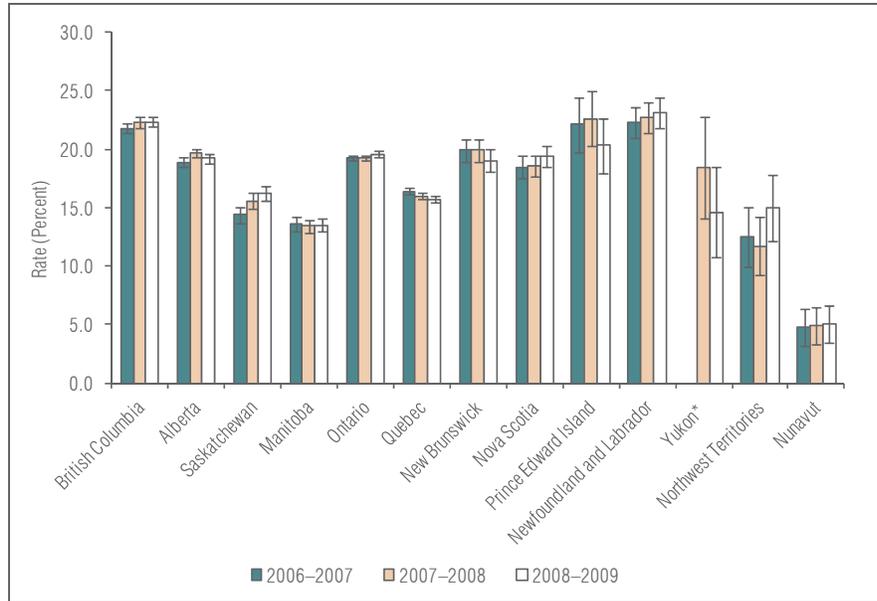
Coverage issues:

- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit two periods of data to the 2008–2009 DAD.

**Sources**

Discharge Abstract Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information; Fichier des hospitalisations MED-ÉCHO, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

**Figure 4**  
**Primary Caesarean Section Rate, Canada, 2006–2007 to 2008–2009**



**Notes**

\* The 2006–2007 Yukon primary C-section rate was suppressed.

Data represents the province or territory where the patient was from (excluding non-residents of Canada).

I represents 95% confidence intervals.

Coverage issues:

- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit three periods of data to the 2006–2007 DAD.
- One acute care facility in Alberta did not submit two periods of data to the 2008–2009 DAD.

**Sources**

Discharge Abstract Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information; Fichier des hospitalisations MED-ÉCHO, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.