

## Prenatal Education in Ontario

# Prenatal Education Class Participation



Prenatal education is designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills they need to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes and helps prepare participants for early parenting.

BORN data provides valuable information about participation in prenatal education classes (online and in-person) among women who delivered at an Ontario hospital. The results in this fact sheet are derived from the BORN Information System (BIS) and are related to prenatal education participation during the woman's pregnancy at the time of data collection for 2015/16.

Within Ontario, approximately 1 in 4 women participated in prenatal education classes during their pregnancy at the time of data collection (23.5%) and certain demographic groups were less likely to participate. Trends were observed in relation to both individual and neighbourhood demographics, such as parity, maternal age, socioeconomic status, language, place of birth, and ethnicity.

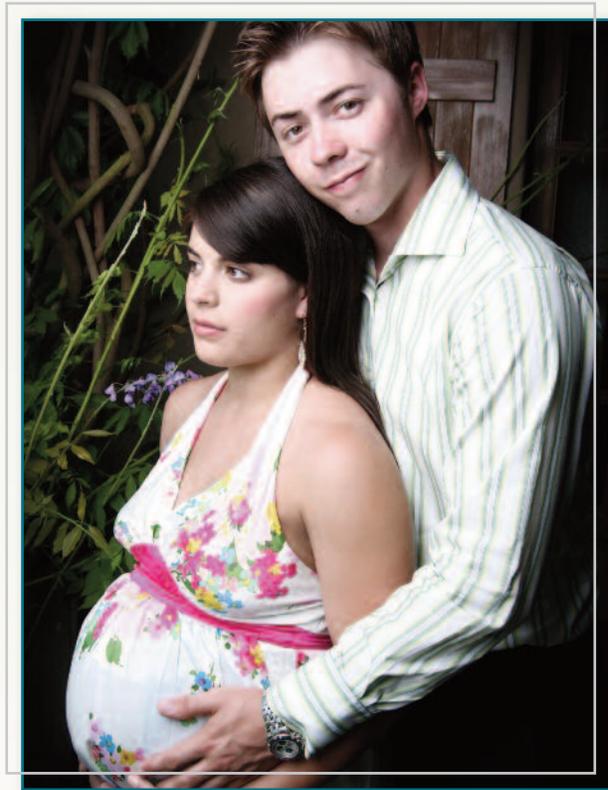
## Individual Demographics

Differences in prenatal education class participation were observed in relation to individual factors such as maternal age, parity and language.

### Maternal Age

Prenatal education class participation varied within specified age groups.

- 26.7% who were younger than 20 years of age participated
- 18.2% who were between 20-24 years of age participated
- 24.0% who were between 25-29 years of age participated
- 25.6% who were between 30-34 years of age participated
- 22.3% who were between 35-39 years of age participated
- 19.8% who were at least 40 years of age participated



### Parity

The rate of prenatal education class participation decreased as parity (number of previous births) increased.

- 42.9% who had no previous birth participated
- 10.2% who had 1 previous birth participated
- 7.4% who had at least 2 previous births participated

### Language

The first language of expectant mothers had an association with participation in prenatal education classes, with French speaking women having the highest rate of participation.

- 25.1% of women whose first language was French participated
- 23.4% of women whose first language was English participated
- 15.9% of women whose first language was neither English or French participated

## Neighbourhood Demographics

Differences in prenatal education class participation were also observed in relation to neighbourhood factors such as neighbourhood income, education, employment, visible minority status, and immigration.

### *Income*

When neighbourhoods across the province were analyzed according to median household incomes, it was found that there was a higher rate of participation in prenatal education classes among women living in neighbourhoods with higher incomes.

- 28.6% of women in the neighbourhoods with the highest income quartile participated
- 18.2% of women in the neighbourhoods with the lowest income quartile participated

### *Education*

When neighbourhoods across the province were analyzed according to educational attainment (the proportion of residents with/without a diploma), it was found that the rate of participation in prenatal classes was higher among women living in neighbourhoods with higher education levels.

- 30.0% of women living in the most educated neighbourhood quartile participated
- 18.3% of women living in the least educated neighbourhood quartile participated

### *Employment*

When the neighbourhoods within Ontario were analyzed according to employment, it was found that participation in prenatal education classes was higher in neighbourhoods with lower unemployment rates.

- 24.3% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the lowest unemployment participated
- 19.4% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the highest unemployment participated

### *Visible Minority Status*

When the neighbourhoods within Ontario were analyzed according to visible minorities it was found that participation was lowest in both neighbourhoods with the highest and lowest proportions of visible minorities.

- 21.9% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the lowest proportion of visible minorities participated
- 22.1% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the highest proportion of visible minorities participated

### *Immigration*

When neighbourhoods were analyzed according to residents' place of birth, it was found that prenatal education class participation was lowest in both neighbourhoods with the highest and lowest proportion of immigrants.

- 22.2% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the lowest concentration of immigrants participated
- 22.0% of women living in the neighbourhood quartile with the highest concentration of immigrants participated

## Promoting Prenatal Education in Ontario

Based on the BORN data, prenatal class participation (online and in-person) was low for all pregnant women. For example less than 1 in 4 pregnant women participated in prenatal classes and less than half of pregnant women with no previous births participated. Priority populations with lower rates of prenatal class participation included:

- Mothers with one or more previous births
- Mothers aged 20-24 and over 40
- Mothers whose first language is not English or French
- Mothers who live in neighbourhoods with lower incomes
- Mothers who live in neighbourhoods with lower education levels
- Mothers who live in neighbourhoods with higher unemployment rates

Women and their partners/support people may receive prenatal information in a variety of ways, such as from a midwife, drop-in program, books, an online course, or an in-person prenatal class. While the information in this fact sheet is limited to women who had a hospital birth and participated in online or in-person prenatal classes, it is important that all women have an understanding of the benefits of prenatal education and have the opportunity to receive this important health information in a timely manner. In addition, efforts need to be made to meet the needs of priority populations.

It is a shared responsibility of all service providers to promote the benefits of prenatal education and to encourage participation as early as possible in pregnancy. The benefits of prenatal education should be promoted to all women, prior to and early in pregnancy.



## References

Better Outcomes Registry & Network (BORN) Ontario. Prenatal Education data for 2015-16. *BORN Information System*. Accessed: 01 March 2017.

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