

Admissions of females aged 15 to 44 years for a Caesarean section, 2003/2004

A Caesarean section is a surgical procedure where an incision (a cut) is made through the abdominal wall and uterus to deliver the baby. A Caesarean section is usually performed when it is safer for the mother or the baby than a vaginal delivery, or a vaginal delivery is not possible. In other cases, a woman may choose to have a Caesarean section rather than deliver her baby vaginally. Thus, some Caesarean sections are planned and some are performed as an emergency. Australia's rate of Caesarean sections is high by international standards; and in South Australia in 2003, 30% of births were by Caesarean section, compared to 17% in 1981 (PC 2006). Caesarean section rates are also higher when mothers are treated as private patients in either public or private hospitals in Australia (Roberts et al. 2000).

As Caesarean sections are generally performed on women aged from 15 to 44 years, this age range has been used in standardising the data. The rates of admission in 2003/2004 for a Caesarean section for females in this age group were similar in Metropolitan Adelaide and country South Australia (Table 7.53).

Table 7.53: Admissions¹ of females aged 15 to 44 years for a Caesarean section, 2003/2004

Section of State	No. ¹	Rate ²
Metropolitan Adelaide (incl. Gawler)	3,834	30,245
Country	1,333	28,589
South Australia	5,167	29,800

¹Includes admissions to public acute hospitals, private hospitals and day surgery facilities, including admissions of same day patients

²Age-standardised rate per 100,000 births

Metropolitan regions

The metropolitan regions (excluding Gawler) had a slightly above average standardised admission ratio (SAR) for a Caesarean section, with an SAR of 101 (3,781 admissions).

There were notably more admissions than expected for Caesarean sections in SLAs throughout the Southern region, with low ratios in Central Northern.

The correlation analysis shows a weak association at the SLA level between high rates of admission for a Caesarean section and socioeconomic advantage (Table 8.1).

Central Northern Adelaide

There were fewer admissions for a Caesarean section than expected in Central Northern (an SAR of 97, 2,600 admissions). SLAs with elevated ratios (none of which were statistically significant) included Tea Tree Gully - Central (an SAR of 112, 98 admissions), Salisbury - North-East (111, 77) and Adelaide Hills - Ranges (108, 42).

Relatively large numbers of women admitted for a Caesarean section were recorded for the SLAs of Salisbury - South-East (126 admissions, an SAR of 97), Port Adelaide Enfield - East (122, 100), Tea Tree Gully - South (116, 96), Salisbury - Inner North (105, 105), Salisbury - Central (103, 99) and Tea Tree Gully - North (101, 98).

SLAs with fewer admissions than expected included Port Adelaide Enfield - Port (65**, 58), Walkerville (80, 13), Norwood Payneham St Peters - East (80, 44), Playford - Hills (80, 12), Charles Sturt - North-East (an SAR of 87, 99), Salisbury Balance (88, 42), Playford - West Central (88, 53) and - West (89, 26), and Port Adelaide Enfield - Inner (an SAR of 89, 73).

Southern Adelaide

Southern had 13% more admissions for a Caesarean section than expected (an SAR of 113**, 1,181 admissions). A number of SLAs had elevated ratios, including Onkaparinga - Reservoir (an SAR of 124*, 118), - Woodcroft (119*, 141), - Morphett (118, 105), - Hackham (118, 52) and - Hills (122, 39); Holdfast Bay - North (121, 60); Mitcham - Hills (120, 75) and - West (an SAR of 111, 91); and Marion - Central (an SAR of 116, 115) and - South (110, 85).

Marion - North had a relatively large number, with 92 admissions in 2003/2004 (an SAR of 105).

Onkaparinga - North Coast had 15% fewer admissions for a Caesarean section than expected from the State rates, with an SAR of 85 (46 admissions).

* indicates statistical significance: see page 24