1.3 Maternal age:

The majority of births (79.9%) were to women aged 20-34 years (Figure 5, Table 4). However, the percentage of women 35 years or more giving birth has increased significantly by a factor of 2.5 over 20 years (35+ vs <35; odds ratio 2.85; 95% confidence limits 2.73, 2.97), while birth to women in the age groups 20-34 years and less than 20 years has relatively decreased (20-34 vs others; odds ratio 0.54; 95% confidence limits 0.52, 0.56, and <20 vs 20+; odds ratio 0.74; 95% confidence limits 0.70, 0.78) (Figure 6, Table 4).

Fig 5: Number of births in Queensland 1988-2007 by Maternal Age (refer Table 4)

Fig 6: Percentage of births in Queensland 1988-2007 by Maternal Age Group (refer Table 4)
The majority of women aged less than 20 years (61,469, 97.2%) gave birth in public hospitals. In contrast, 568,222 women aged 20-34 years (73.8% of 770,043) and 77,862 women aged 35 or more (59.5% of 130,764) gave birth in public hospitals. Two thousand, six hundred and seventy-two (2,672) women gave birth at home, with 75.4% being women aged between 20 and 34 years, and 23.2% women aged 35 years or more. (Figures 7-9, Table 5)
Fig 9: Number of births to women 35 or more years of age by Care Provider, Queensland 1988-2007 (refer Table 5)
1.4 Gestation at birth:

In the 20 years 1988 to 2007 62,909 women gave birth at less than 37 weeks gestation (Figure 10, Tables 6 and 7). There was a trend to an increase in the percentage of preterm birth despite development, over these years, of techniques designed to delay birth in the setting of preterm labour. However, this trend is not significant if the influence of multiple births is removed (see section 1.5).

Fig 10: Percentage of women giving birth in Queensland 1988-2007 at less than 37 weeks gestation (refer Tables 6 and 7)

There has been a highly significant trend to a reduction in pregnancies proceeding past 41 weeks gestation (41+ vs <41; odds ratio 0.20; 95% confidence limits 0.18, 0.23) (Figure 11, Tables 6 and 7).

Fig 11: Percentage of women giving birth in Queensland 1988-2007 at 42 or more weeks gestation (refer Tables 6 and 7)
The distribution of babies born is, as expected, similar to the distribution of mothers giving birth, with 79,696 babies being born at less than 37 weeks gestation (Figure 12, Tables 6 and 7).

Fig 12: Number of babies born in Queensland 1988-2007 at less than 37 weeks gestation (refer Tables 6 and 7)