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One in three babies delivered by caesarean section in 2023

Share of caesarean sections more than doubled within 30 years; significant regional differences

Vienna, 2024-06-21 – According to Statistics Austria, 32.4% of the 76 939 live births in Austria in 2023 were delivered by caesarean section. Styria had the highest rate of caesarean sections at 36.8%, followed by Burgenland with 34.5%, while Vorarlberg had the lowest caesarean section rate at 29.2%, followed by Upper Austria with 29.3%.

“The trend towards caesarean births continues. In 2023, every third baby in Austria was born by caesarean section. In 1995, when this type of delivery was first recorded statistically, the proportion was 12.4%. The doubling of the caesarean section rate in just under 30 years is partly due to the fact that women are becoming mothers later and later and the likelihood of a caesarean section delivery increases with age. In 2023, 52.5% of all caesarean sections were planned,” says Tobias Thomas, Director General of Statistics Austria.

Late motherhood causes more caesarean sections

Late motherhood increases the likelihood of caesarean delivery. Women aged 35 years or older at delivery were 1.6 times more likely to have a caesarean section than women younger than 25 years (caesarean section rate 39.4% vs. 25.3%).

Also the trend towards later motherhood continued in 2023. The average age of the mothers at the time of delivery was 31.5 years in 2023, which is 3.5 years more than around 30 years ago (1995: 28.0 years). In the same period, the average age of women at first birth rose from 26.2 years to 30.3 years (up 4.1 years). The proportion of mothers under 25 giving birth has fallen sharply in recent decades (1995: 28.0%; 2023: 10.6%), while the proportion of women who became mothers at the age of 35 or later has almost tripled (1995: 9.0%; 2023: 25.2%).

A key indicator for caesarean delivery is the position of the baby in the womb. A caesarean section was performed in more than half of cases (55.7%) in which the baby was born in an abnormal vertex presentation, and in the vast majority of cases (94.7% and 98.7%) in which the baby was born in a breech presentation or transverse presentation. A caesarean section was also predominantly performed for multiple births (79.7%).

Around 1 000 babies born at home

In 2023, the majority of children (98.3%) were born in a hospital, while in 186 live births (0.2%) the mother chose to give birth in a maternity home or midwifery practice. 1 006 babies (1.3%) were home births, meaning they were born at the mother's place of residence. 35 babies were born on the way to hospital.

Around 5% of single births and 57% of multiple births were preterm

92.9% of live births were born on schedule, i. e. between the 37th and 42nd week of pregnancy. 6.8% were born preterm and 0.2% were carried over. Thus, the preterm birth rate decreased slightly compared to the previous year (–0.1 percentage points). The highest rate of premature births to date was 8.9% in 2008.

A new-born girl weighed an average of 3 260 grams and was 50.4 cm long. Boys were slightly heavier at 3 387 grams and also taller at 51.1 cm. 6.0% of babies born in 2023 had a birth weight of less than 2 500 grams (underweight). A high birth weight of 4 500 grams or more was recorded for 1.2% of new-born boys and 0.5% of girls.

Multiple births are still a very rare occurrence – only 2.8% of live births in 2023 were twins or triplets. Premature birth and low birth weight are much more common in these births: 57.0% of the babies born as twins or triplets were born before the 37th week of pregnancy, and 57.9% had a birth weight of less than 2 500 grams. For singletons, these proportions were 5.4% and 4.5%, respectively.

For detailed results and further information please refer to our [website](#).

Table 1a: Live births 2023 by selected medical characteristics

Characteristics	absolute	in percent
Total live births ¹ (absolute)	76 939	100.0
Place of delivery		
Hospital	75 622	98.3
Maternity home/midwifery practice	186	0.2
Mother's home	1 006	1.3
At transport	35	0.0
Another place	90	0.1
Age of mother at birth		
Under 20 years	890	1.2
20 to 24 years	7 293	9.5
25 to 29 years	21 330	27.7
30 to 34 years	28 060	36.5
35 to 39 years	15 664	20.4
40 to 44 years	3 441	4.5
45 years and older	261	0.3
Average age at childbirth (in years)	31.5	-
Average age at first birth (in years)	30.3	-
Mode of delivery		
Spontaneous delivery	46 447	60.4
Total caesarean section	24 892	32.4
Primary (before birth, planned)	13 078	17.0
Secondary (during birth, not planned)	11 814	15.4
Ventouse delivery	5 570	7.2
Forceps delivery	24	0.0
Manual delivery	6	0.0

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Vital statistics.

1) Live births with domestic place of birth and residence of the mother in Austria.

Table 1b: Live births 2023 by selected medical characteristics

Characteristics	absolute	in percent
Position of the baby at birth		
Normal vertex	68 526	89.1
Abnormal vertex	4 083	5.3
Breech	3 630	4.7
Transverse lie	393	0.5
Unknown/not determinable	307	0.4
Duration of pregnancy¹		
Under 22+0	54	0.1
Preterm birth (22+0 to 36+6) ²	5 265	6.8
Term birth (37+0 to 41+6)	71 442	92.9
Transferred births (42+0 and more)	178	0.2
Average length of pregnancy (in weeks)	39.3	-
Birth weight in gram		
Underweight (under 2 500 g)	4 579	6.0
Normal weight (2 500 to under 4 500 g)	71 727	93.2
Overweight (4 500 g and more)	633	0.8
Average birth weight – total	3 326	-
Boys	3 387	-
Girls	3 260	-
Body length in cm		
Average body length – total	50.8	-
Boys	51.1	-
Girls	50.4	-

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Vital statistics.

1) Live births with domestic place of birth and residence of the mother in Austria. – 2) For the calculation of the preterm birth rate, only live births from pregnancy week 22+0 are considered.

Table 2: Live births in 2023 by federal province and selected medical characteristics

Char-acter-istics	Bur-gen-land	Carinthia	Lower Aus-tria	Upper Aus-tria	Salz-burg	Styria	Tyrol	Vor-arl-berg	Vi-enna
Total live births ¹ (absolute)	1 968	4 184	13 443	13 542	5 048	10 313	6 694	3 842	17 905
Hospital births in %	98.3	96.8	97.7	98.1	98.7	98.6	98.8	98.8	98.6
Caesarean section rate in %	34.5	32.7	32.1	29.3	29.7	36.8	33.9	29.2	32.8
Underweight births in %	6.5	6.7	6.8	6.4	6.1	7.7	7.0	6.8	6.9

Average birth weight (in grams)	5.8	7.0	5.5	5.2	5.6	6.6	5.8	6.5	6.3
Average body length (in centimetres)	3 328	3 305	3 349	3 352	3 320	3 297	3 289	3 318	3 327
Pre-term birth rate ² in %	50.4	50.9	50.7	50.9	51.0	50.7	50.5	51.1	50.7

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Vital statistics.

1) Live births with domestic place of birth and residence of the mother in Austria. – 2) For the calculation of the preterm birth rate, only live births from pregnancy week 22+0 are considered.

Information on methodology, definitions:

The legal basis for birth statistics is the Civil Status Act (BGBl. No. 16/2013 as amended) and the Midwives Act (BGBl. No. 310/1994 as amended), which define the characteristics to be reported by midwives at births. Most recently, with the establishment of a central civil status register (ZPR) as of 1 November 2014, a revision of the medical and socio-medical survey characteristics on the birth certificate took place.

Live birth: Regardless of the duration of pregnancy, a foetus is considered to be born alive if, after complete emergence from the mother's womb, either breathing begins or some other sign of life can be detected, such as heartbeat, pulsation of the umbilical cord or clear movement of voluntary muscles, regardless of whether the umbilical cord has been cut or not or whether the placenta has been expelled or not (definition according to the WHO guidelines).

Place of delivery: An institutional birth is a birth in a hospital. A birth can also take place in a maternity home or a midwifery practice. A home birth is a birth at the mother's place of residence. If the baby is born on the way to hospital, it is coded "At transport".

Age at birth: Age of the mother in completed years at the time of birth. The average age of the mother is the arithmetic mean of the age of the women at the time of birth.

Length of pregnancy: in completed weeks plus days (the next week or part thereof). A gestation period of 22+0 to 36+6 is called preterm, 37+0 to 41+6 is called term birth, 42+0 and over is called transferred birth (definition according to WHO guidelines).

Birth position: The position of the child at birth refers to the relationship of the longitudinal axis of the child to the longitudinal axis of the mother or the uterus. A distinction is made between normal vertex position, abnormal vertex position, breech position, transverse position and unknown/not determinable.

Birth weight: Live births with a birth weight of 2 500 g to less than 4 500 g are considered normal-weight; those with less than 2 500 g are considered underweight; values of 4 500 g or more are considered very high birth weight (definition according to WHO guidelines).

Further enquiries:

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