

Executive Summary

2009 was the 11th full year that the National Obstetric Information System has been collecting data on all deliveries taking place on the Maltese Islands. The following are some salient points from the 2009 Annual NOIS Report which covers pregnancy, delivery, and infant/fetal outcomes and trends over time.

Since the conception of NOIS, 1999 and 2000 were the years with the most deliveries, followed by a trend of decreasing births until 2005, after which figures started increasing again. While there was an 8.5% (330) increase in births from 2007 to 2008, 2009 showed a drop of 1.2% (48) births on 2008. In fact in 2009 there were a total of 4112 registered deliveries (4180 total births), of which 3871 deliveries (3937 births) occurred in Malta and the remaining 241 deliveries (243 births) occurred in Gozo. 99.8% (4102) of deliveries occurred in a hospital. The following table shows figures for the number of deliveries and births over the past 11 years, as well as the % change of total births from year to year.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Deliveries*</i>	<i>Total Births**</i>	<i>% change in births on previous year</i>	<i>Livebirths</i>
1999	4311	4382		4349
2000	4311	4377	- 0.1%	4361
2001	3918	3955	- 9.6%	3935
2002	3873	3927	- 0.7%	3906
2003	3995	4054	+ 3.2%	4036
2004	3838	3902	- 3.7%	3887
2005	3804	3865	- 0.9%	3857
2006	3822	3891	+ 0.7%	3880
2007	3853	3898	+ 0.2%	3886
2008	4154	4228	+ 8.5%	4199
2009	4112	4180	- 1.1%	4152

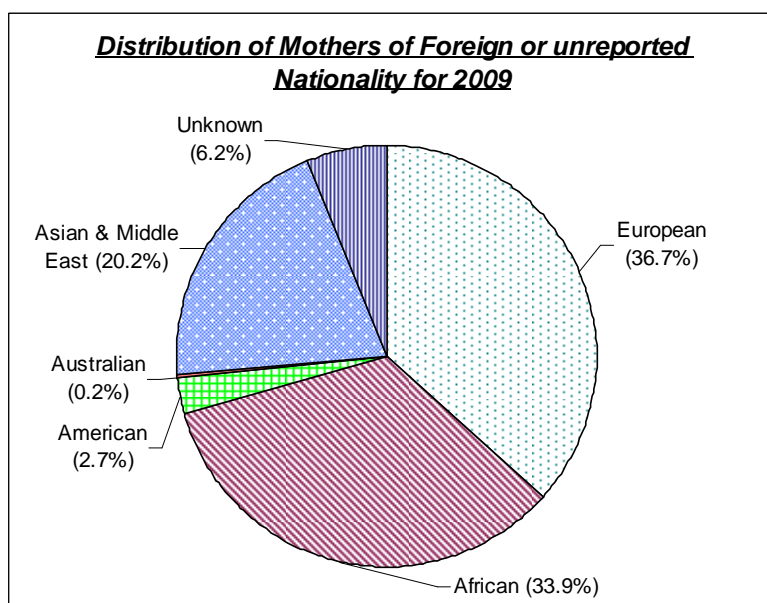
* Deliveries refer to maternal confinements irrespective of number of infants (twins etc) delivered.

** Total Births refer to the number of infants born and include both live and still births.

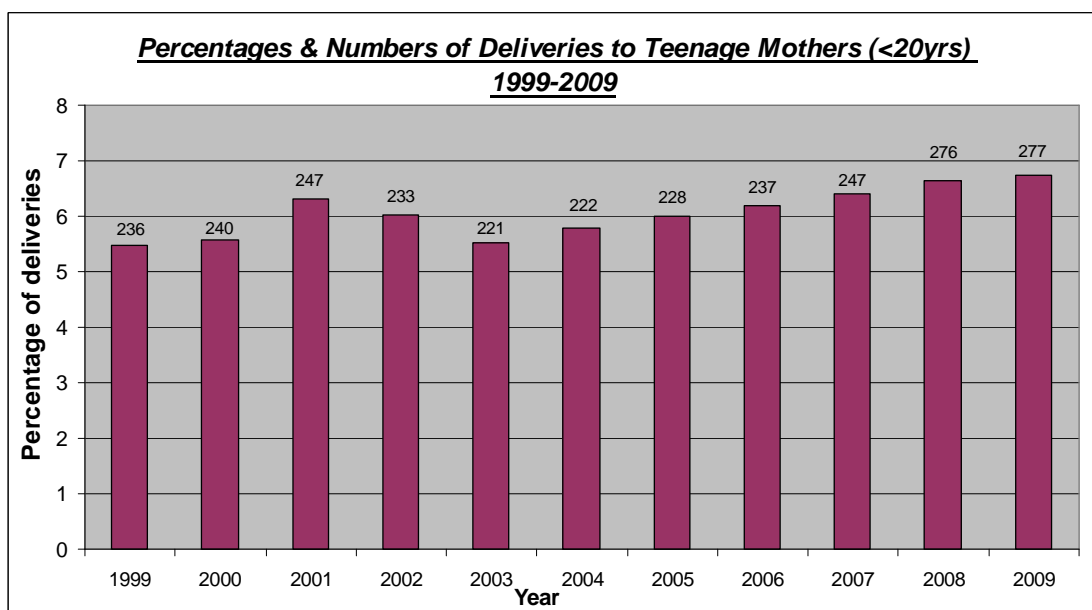
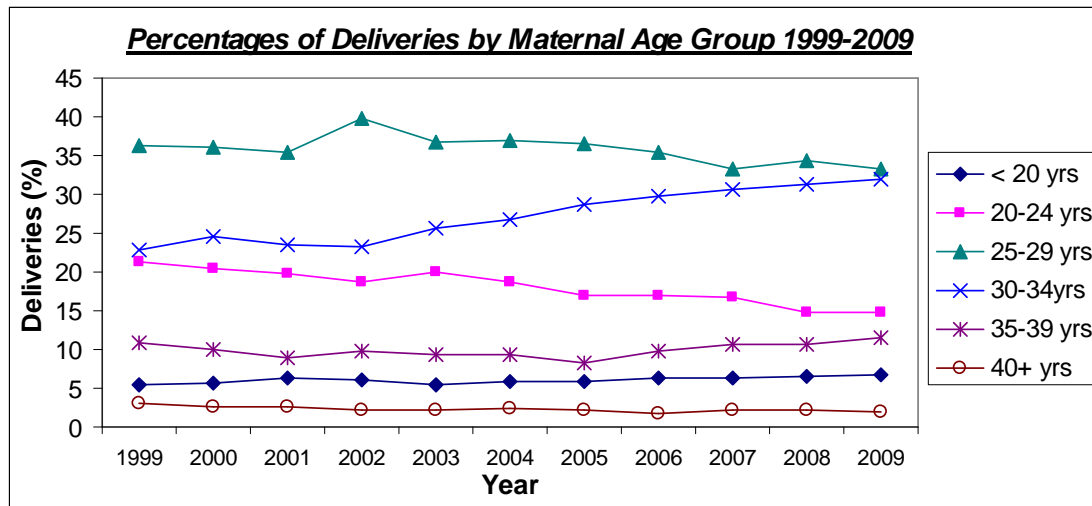
Number of deliveries and births in Malta and Gozo registered by NOIS since 1999

90.2% (3711) of deliveries occurred to women of Maltese Nationality. The percentage of non-Maltese mothers delivering on the Maltese Islands has practically doubled since 1999, when 4.5% (192) of 4311 deliveries were to non-Maltese. In 2009, 376 (9.2%) out of the total 4112 deliveries were to foreigners.

In 2009, mothers of Sub-Saharan African origin constituted the second largest group of non-Maltese national mothers (2.2% of all deliveries), following mothers of European nationalities (3.6% of all deliveries).

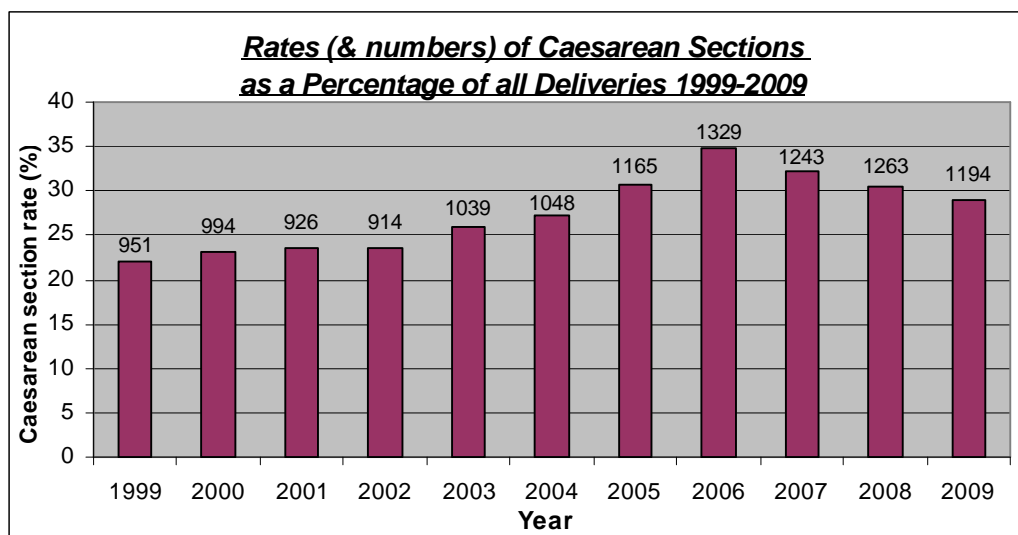


The maternal age group with the highest percentage of deliveries has consistently been the 25-29 year age group. In fact in 2009, 33.2% (1366) of deliveries were to mothers in this age-group, closely followed by the 30-34 year age group which represented 31.9% (1312) of mothers. Analysis of data from 2003 shows a steady decrease in the rate of deliveries to mothers aged 20-29 years while rates within other age groups showed an increase, most remarkable that being in the 30-34 year old age group. These trends can be seen in the following figures.



In 2009 there were a total of 4047 (98.4%) singleton and 62 (1.5%) twin deliveries, 3 triplet and no quadruplet deliveries. As usually seen, the gender distribution of the 4180 total births for 2009 was 52.1% (2178) male and 47.9% (2002) female, a similar ratio to previous years.

Of the 4180 infant/fetal births in 2009, 2743 (65%) were delivered as a normal vaginal delivery, 1259 (30.1%) by emergency or elective caesarian section, and 178 (4.3%) by assisted vaginal delivery (including forceps, ventouse and breech extraction). 1259 infants were delivered by caesarean section in 1194 caesarian operations. The operation rate was 29.0% of the total 4112 deliveries. This follows the decreasing trend since 2006, which reversed after several years of a steady increase and is demonstrated in the following bar graph.



The number of live births registered in 2009 was 4152, accounting for 99.3% of the total births. There were 28 stillbirths, of which 21 weighed 500g or more at birth. Of the live-births (4152), there were 14 cases of early neonatal deaths and 4 cases of late neonatal deaths. There were no maternal deaths in 2009.

Year	Fetal mortality rate (≥500g) Rate / 1000 total births	Neonatal mortality rate (≥500g) Rate / 1000 live births	Perinatal mortality rate (≥500g) Rate / 1000 total births
1999	6.2	4.8	9.9
2000	3.6	5.3	7.3
2001	5.1	3.0	7.6
2002	5.1	5.1	9.2
2003	3.9	5.0	8.4
2004	3.8	4.4	6.9
2005	2.1	4.4	5.4
2006	2.6	2.3	3.6
2007	2.8	4.4	6.4
2008	6.2	5.7	11.1
2009	5.0	4.1	8.1

Fetal, Neonatal and Perinatal mortality rates for infants and fetuses of birth weight 500g or more

Annex I of the full NOIS Annual Report gives some selected comparative birth and perinatal mortality statistics for Malta and the EU.

2009 was a particular year as WHO announced an Influenza pandemic in April 2009. The first cases of Influenza H1N1 were reported in Malta in July 2009. With vaccination unavailable in 2009, the Health Authorities recommended that all pregnant women with signs and symptoms of influenza be tested and advised antiviral treatment if confirmed positive for influenza. Of the 4112 mothers delivering in 2009, 6 mothers were reported to have been confirmed to be Influenza A H1N1 positive and a further 4 mothers confirmed to be Influenza A positive during pregnancy. Seven of these pregnant mothers took antivirals.

Nine of the 10 mothers were of Maltese nationality and their age distribution was similar to the national one. All cases were singleton pregnancies and all mothers delivered at term (37-41 weeks gestation). Nine cases were delivered as a normal vaginal delivery and one was a planned elective caesarean section for an unrelated reason. The babies born were of normal birth weight, with a median birth weight of 3308g (range 2600g–3740g) while the median birth weight nationally was 3238g. All babies were born alive and survived the perinatal period; none were reported with perinatal pathology or congenital anomalies.