

Australian women's pregnancy intentions

Results from the 2024 National Women's Health Survey (NWHS) show that most Australian women of reproductive age currently want to avoid pregnancy. Many say they want to have children or more children in the future, but there are also many who are unsure. Equitable access to reproductive health information and services, including effective contraception, is needed to enable people to choose whether and when to try to become pregnant.

Background

The 2023 Senate inquiry report "Ending the postcode lottery – Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia" highlighted the importance of increasing the availability of tailored reproductive health information, as well as increasing access to effective forms of contraception, to improve sexual and reproductive health in Australia.¹

To better understand Australian women's reproductive health information and service needs, the 2024 NWHS explored women's past, present and future pregnancy experiences and intentions. We asked women aged 18 to 44 about:

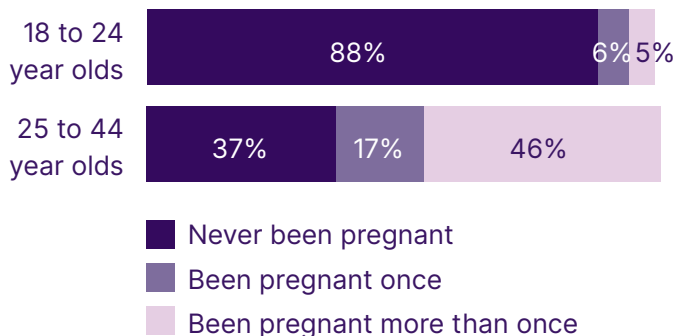
- past pregnancies
- how important it is for them to avoid getting pregnant now
- whether they want children or more children in the future
- when they might want children or more children.

Most Australian women of reproductive age currently want to **avoid** pregnancy.

Past pregnancies

Most women aged 18 to 24 had never been pregnant (88%). Around 1 in 10 (11%) said they had been pregnant at least once, and just under 1 in 10 (8%) said they'd had an unplanned pregnancy.

Women aged 25 to 44 were more likely than younger women to have been pregnant in the past. Around 6 in 10 (63%) said they had been pregnant at least once, and around 3 in 10 (32%) said they'd had an unplanned pregnancy.



Around half (52%) of 18 to 24-year-old women said that they **definitely** wanted children or more children in the future.



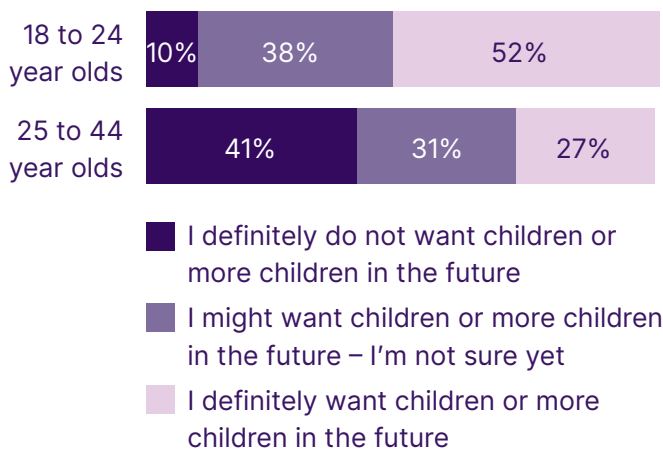
Current views on pregnancy

Most women said that it was currently important or very important for them to avoid getting pregnant. Avoiding pregnancy was more important to women aged 18 to 24, with around 8 in 10 (78%) saying that it was important or very important, compared with around 6 in 10 (61%) aged 25 to 44.

Future pregnancy intentions

Around half (52%) of 18 to 24-year-old women said that they definitely wanted children or more children in the future.

In contrast, just over a quarter (27%) of 25 to 44-year-old women said that they definitely wanted children or more children in the future.



Many women were undecided, with around 4 in 10 (38%) aged 18 to 24 and 3 in 10 (31%) aged 25 to 44 expressing uncertainty around their future pregnancy intentions.

Timing of future pregnancies

Women who said they might or definitely want children or more children in the future were asked about the potential timing.

Most 18 to 24-year-olds (8 in 10) were planning to wait more than 2 years before having children. Very few (2%) were planning to have a child in the next 12 months.

Timeframes were more spread out for 25 to 44-year-olds. Around 1 in 10 (12%) said they wanted to have a child in the next year, 2 in 10 (22%) in the next 1 to 2 years, and another 2 in 10 (23%) in more than 2 years.

So what?

- Most Australian women of reproductive age currently want to avoid pregnancy.
- Around half of women aged 18 to 24 say they definitely want children or more children in the future; another 4 in 10 are undecided.
- Just over a quarter of women aged 25 to 44 say they definitely want children or more children in the future; 3 in 10 are undecided.
- These findings reinforce the need for equitable access to reproductive health information and services, including effective contraception, to enable people to choose whether and when to try to become pregnant.
- The 2024 NWHS provides a snapshot of women's current views on pregnancy. Of course, there are many individual, social, economic and environmental factors that influence whether or not a woman has a child² – all of which can shift and change throughout a woman's life.



References

- 1 Senate Community Affairs References Committee (2023). *Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia*. Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House: Canberra. Accessed May 1, 2025. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/ReproductiveHealthcare/Report
- 2 Gray E, Reimondos A, Lazzari E, et al. (2022). *Impacts of policies on fertility rates*. Australian National University: Canberra. Accessed April 8, 2025. https://population.gov.au/sites/population.gov.au/files/2022-03/ANU_Impacts-of-Policies-on-Fertility-Rates-Full-report.pdf

About the National Women's Health Survey

The Jean Hailes National Women's Health Survey (NWHs) is an annual survey designed to help us better understand the issues that affect women in Australia, their attitudes and behaviours and the health information and policy changes that will help improve their health and wellbeing.

The NWHs is funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

The 2024 NWHs explored Australian women's experiences, attitudes and beliefs related to pregnancy, abortion and contraception. It was conducted online in mid-2024 with a national, unselected sample, but only in English. A total of 3,537 women aged 18 to 50 years residing in Australia participated in the survey. This report includes results from the 2,674 respondents aged 18 to 44 years old.

The 2024 NWHs was conducted in collaboration with the SPHERE Centre of Research Excellence.

For more information about the NWHs, see the technical report on the [Jean Hailes website](#).