

Mothers over 35 account for 40% of maternal deaths in Australia: study



A new study reveals the risks associated with older motherhood in Australia.

By Madeleine King

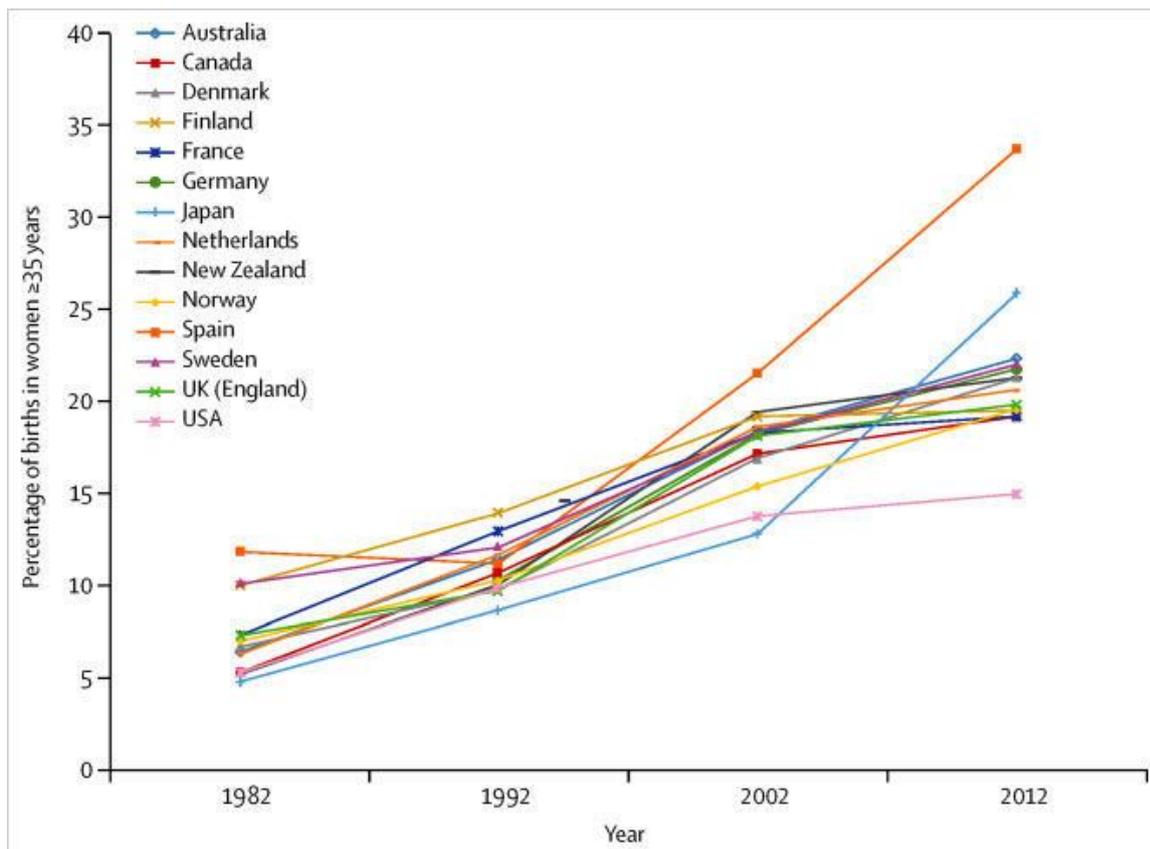
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A new [study](#) released in the medical journal, The Lancet, has found older mothers account for a significant portion of maternal deaths in Australia.

Despite only accounting for around 23 per cent of all childbirths in the country, the study found mothers over the age of the 35 made up 40 per cent of all maternal deaths.

The number is high in comparison to other childbearing years, with women only having a [5 per cent](#) monthly chance of conceiving once they reach 40.

The number of mothers over 35 in Australia has increased dramatically from just 5.5 per cent in 1975, the study also showed. It is the second highest figure in the world for older-age births, falling behind Spain.



Percentage of births in women over 35. Source: The Lancet

Speaking on next week's [Insight](#) program about older parents, gynecologist and obstetrics spokesperson for the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Dr Gino Pecoraro, says older mothers are at greater risk of health complications during pregnancy and birth.

"Once they've actually gotten pregnant, the risks are that we're putting the pregnancy on top of an older heart, an older set of lungs, an older set of kidneys and pregnancy does put a strain on all the body's organs," he says.

He also notes there are greater risks of the placenta growing over the cervix ([placenta previa](#)), developing high blood pressure, [pre-eclampsia](#), gestational diabetes, chromosomal changes to the baby and to deliver by caesarean section.



Dr Gino Pecoraro, on Insight.

"The average age of women in Australia getting pregnant is increasing, it's not decreasing with all the follow on effects of that," says Dr Pecoraro. "So we do need to talk about it."

"I do think we need to make sure that the generation coming up does understand the limits ... IVF isn't a panacea for everything."

Dr Pecoraro allows all circumstances are unique, and context is important when considering cases of older motherhood.

When asked why the rates of women over 40 having babies has increased, he acknowledges, "You can't pick when you fall in love."

The [study](#) also found Australia to be one of the most expensive countries in the world for childbirth, behind the United States.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/2016/09/16/mothers-over-35-account-40-maternal-deaths-australia-study>

