Births by caesarean section (%)

Rationale for use

Births by caesarean section is an indicator of access to and utilization of health care during childbirth.

Definition

Percentage of births by caesarean section among all live births in a given time period.

Associated terms

Live birth (see Probability of dying under age 5 years).

Data sources

Household surveys: Birth history - detailed questions on the last child or all children a woman has given birth to during a given period preceding the survey (usually 3 to 5 years), including characteristics of birth(s). The number of live births to women surveyed provides the denominator.

Routine health service statistics: Number of women having given birth by caesarean section (numerator). Census projections or in some cases vital registration data can be used to provide the denominator (numbers of live births).

Methods of estimation

Empirical data from household surveys are used.

Disaggregation

By location (urban/rural, major regions/provinces) and socio-economic and demographic characteristics (e.g. women's education level, wealth quintile, age).

References


- Guidelines for monitoring the availability and use of obstetric services. UNICEF/ WHO/UNFPA, 1997

Database

- Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS): (http://www.measuredhs.com)

Comments

This indicator does not provide information on the reason for undergoing caesarean section and includes caesarean sections that were performed without a clinical indication as well as those that were medically indicated. The extent to which caesarean sections are performed according to
clinical need, therefore, is not possible to determine. However, roughly a figure of less than 5% indicates that all women who are in need may not be receiving caesarean section at birth.