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## Older moms help boost fertility rate [CA]

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## EXCERPTS

Canada recorded its highest number of births and peak fertility rate of the last seven years in 2005, according to a report released Friday by Statistics Canada.

However, the country's fertility rate is still well below replacement levels.

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The most fertile provinces, Alberta and Quebec, together accounted for almost three-quarters (71 per cent) of all births in Canada in 2005 and had growth rates of 3.3 and 3.1 per cent, respectively.

Yukon saw the steepest decline in births, with a 12.3 per cent drop. The number of births also fell in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, while Newfoundland and Labrador's numbers were virtually unchanged from 2004. The 0.9 per cent increase in Ontario was well below the national average of 1.5 per cent.

The average age of women giving birth has been steadily rising over the last 25 years and was 29.2 in 2005, up from 26 years in 1980. In 1995 and 2000, women aged 25 to 29 had the highest fertility rates, but by 2005, they shared that distinction with women aged 30 to 34. Women in that age group accounted for the largest proportion of births, with 107,524 babies or 31.4 per cent of all births.

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Births in Canada plunged to their lowest numbers since the Second World War in 2000 and with the exception of 2002, they've gone up every year since.

The baby boomers' children, known as the echo generation, have been responsible for most of the births over the last six years because they're now in their prime childbearing years, according to StatsCan.

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