About this release
This release by Public Health Scotland (PHS) reports on pregnancy, childbirth and the early care of babies born in Scotland.

The health of a pregnant woman and her baby are closely linked and are influenced by a number of different factors during pregnancy, childbirth and the early period after birth. These include the mother’s social and economic circumstances, her previous and current health and health related behaviours such as diet, exercise and smoking, and also the medical care provided.

Main Points
In 2019/20:

- Deprivation continued to influence the health of pregnant women and babies across Scotland. Women from deprived areas were more likely to be overweight or obese, smoke, book later for antenatal care, have a low birthweight baby and to deliver their babies early compared to those from less deprived areas.

- The most common maternal age at first birth was also substantially lower in the most deprived areas at 24 years compared to 30 years in the least deprived. This gap has narrowed over time with 20 years being the most common age in the most deprived and 30 in the least deprived in 2010/11.

- Caesarean sections continued to increase with over one in three (34.5%) live singleton babies being delivered this way, which is the highest proportion since reporting began. Older women were more likely to have a caesarean section than younger women, however there is an increasing tendency for this method of delivery across all age groups.
Maternal obesity continued to increase which is a concern because obesity in pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of a number of adverse outcomes. More than half (53.3%) of pregnant women were overweight or obese, which is the highest proportion since reporting began.

Maternal smoking during pregnancy continued to decrease. Around 1 in 7 (13.8%) were current smokers at the time of their antenatal booking appointment, which is the lowest proportion since reporting began.

Women are attending their first antenatal booking appointment earlier in pregnancy. More than 9 out of every 10 pregnant women (91%) had their booking appointment within the first twelve weeks of pregnancy, compared with 76% in 2010/11.

Background
The data presented are mainly obtained from the Scottish Morbidity Record 02 (SMR02). An SMR02 record is submitted by maternity hospitals to PHS whenever a woman is discharged from an episode of day case or inpatient maternity care. Comparison of SMR02 with the number of births registered by National Records of Scotland (NRS) confirms the high completeness of SMR02. This data source provides an additional richness of demographic and clinical information associated with the mother and baby which are not collected by NRS. Data on neonatal discharges and level of neonatal care required are derived from the Scottish Birth Record (SBR).

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Further Information
Data from this publication are available from the publication page on our website. There is also a technical report which contains relevant background information and metadata.

Maternity and birth information has also been made available in open data format on the NHS Scotland open data platform. This enables users to conduct their own analysis across a range of topic areas rather than being presented fixed data tables.

The next release of this publication will be November 2021.

PHS and Official Statistics
Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.