



Parentline 2004

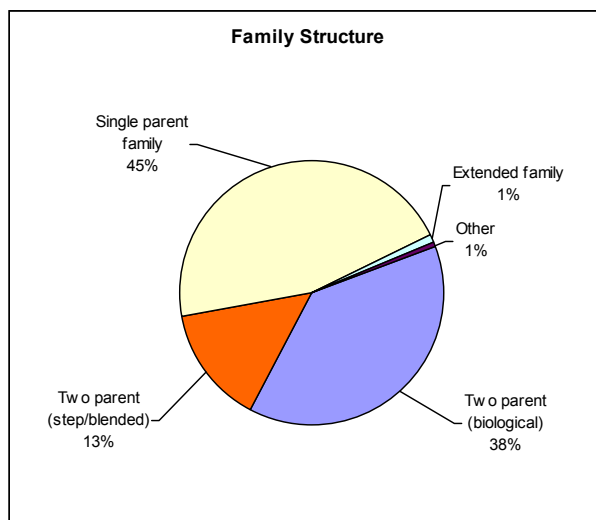
Parentline is a confidential telephone counselling service providing professional counselling and support for parents and care givers in Queensland and, since May 2004, the Northern Territory. Parentline is a shared initiative of BoysTown, the Queensland Department of Communities and the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services.

The service is available between 8am and 10pm, seven days a week for the cost of a local call. Demand for Parentline is at its highest on Monday and decreases steadily throughout the week. Numbers of calls peak following school holiday periods. Counsellors respond to about 60% of the 1,600 attempted calls made, on average, per month.

Non-identifying information is logged about each call and a comprehensive, computerised database has been developed that reflects the issues concerning parents and families. This data provides valuable information for advocating to enhance the status of parents and families. It can also be used for policy development at a number of levels within government and by community-based service providers.

CLIENT PROFILE

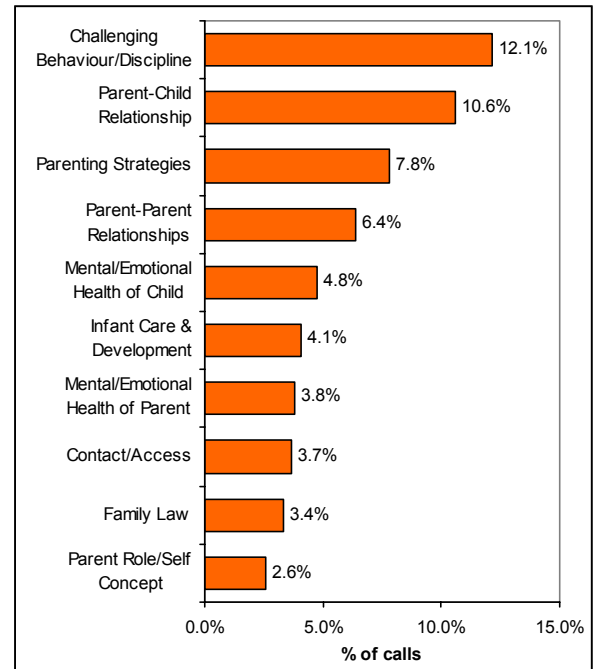
- Females make 86% of calls and males 14%.
- The average age of callers is 39 years, with over half of callers aged between 30 and 49 years.
- Most callers hear about Parentline from other agencies/services or from the phone book.
- Callers are equally as likely to phone about a male child (51%) than a female child (49%).
- Callers have concerns about children aged between 0 and 45 years, averaging 10 years.
- The majority of callers (71%) have one or two children in their care.
- Forty-three percent have called before.
- Most callers (77%) are a custodial parent/carer.
- Nearly half the callers are from a single parent family (45%).



Updated: February 2005

MAIN PROBLEMS OF CALLERS

During 2004, Parentline counsellors responded to 12,544 calls from parents and care givers in Queensland or the Northern Territory. The graph below lists the ten most common issues concerning callers to Parentline, as a percentage of all calls in 2004.



As in previous years, about one third of all calls either concerned challenging behaviour/discipline (12%), parent-child relationships (11%) or parenting strategies (8%). For the most part, the profile of main problem types has remained consistent since the service began in Queensland in August 1997 (see attached table).

The types of problems about which callers contact Parentline differ by the gender of the caller and the age of the child of concern (see page 2).

In all, counsellors responded to 1,507 calls about **challenging behaviours or discipline**, 41% described ongoing behaviour or discipline problems while 22% reported intermittent problems. A further 21% were experiencing significant distress due to severe problem behaviour while 9% were not coping and in need of support or referral. The remaining callers were seeking information.

Of the 1,313 calls concerning **parent-child relationships**, over one-third related to occasional or ongoing communication problems while 32% were about conflicts causing major concerns. A further 24% of callers were severely distressed with the situation. The remaining callers were seeking information.

Nearly one thousand calls related to **parenting strategies** or specific parenting techniques (970 calls). These calls commonly related to parents who were managing but seeking new strategies (38%) or parents seeking information (20%). A further 18% were unsure about their own parenting strategies. However, one quarter (24%) were experiencing major difficulties or severe distress.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of calls concerning **relationships between parents or partners** involved significant relationship difficulties, relationship breakdown, separation or divorce. Other issues included conflict over children or parenting strategies (13%), concern about the effects of relationship problems on families (9%) or awareness of relationship problems (5%).

Accounting for just under 5% of calls, concerns about a **child's mental or emotional health** encompass a wide range of issues including grief, loneliness, eating disorders, schizophrenia and depression. Forty percent of parents were concerned about their child's ongoing mental or emotional problems, while 23% were concerned about a recent change in their child's behaviour. A further 17% of callers were experiencing difficulties coping with a mentally/emotionally ill child. Three percent were severely distressed about the situation.

Infant care and development concerns related to feeding, sleeping, crying, toileting, growing and milestones in the first five years of life. Over one-third of these calls were from parents making an enquiry (38%) or seeking new strategies (38%). Other common themes included parents seeking support or reporting that tiredness was affecting their parenting. Females were twice as likely as males to call about the care and development of infants.

The **mental or emotional health of a parent** was a concern for just under 4% of callers to Parentline. Forty-three percent of these clients were coping with their own mental or emotional health issue but were in need of extra support or strategies. However, 39% reported that their mental or emotional health issue was interfering with their parenting or they were in need of urgent intervention or referral.

LOCATION OF CALLS

More than 60% of all calls to Parentline from Queensland were made by people living in South East Queensland. Similarly, 62% of calls from the Northern Territory were from Darwin or its satellite city of Palmerston. The remaining calls were received from regions throughout the two States, as listed below.

QUEENSLAND	
Brisbane	48%
Gold Coast Region	9%
Sunshine Coast Region	9%
Toowoomba Region	7%
North Coast Region	6%
Ipswich Region	5%
Townsville Region	6%
Cairns Region	4%
Rockhampton Region	4%
Mackay Region	3%
Mt Isa Region	<1%
NORTHERN TERRITORY	
Darwin	60%
Palmerston	2%
Alice Springs Region	8%
Katherine Region	28%
Other NT	2%

GENDER DIFFERENCES

There are differences in the issues that concern male and female callers. The table below shows the main concerns for each gender in rank order. Males (fathers) were more likely to seek help about their parent to parent relationships, contact and access issues or family law concerns.

MALES	FEMALES
Parent-Parent Relationships	Challenging Behaviour/Discipline
Challenging Behaviour/Discipline	Parent-Child Relationship
Parent-Child Relationship	Parenting Strategies
Contact/Access	Parent-Parent Relationships
Family Law	Child Mental/Emotional Health
Parenting Strategies	Infant Care and Development

AGE OF CHILD DIFFERENCES

The issues about which callers contact Parentline also differ according to the age of the child of concern. The table below shows the top three concerns, in rank order, by age of child. Not surprisingly, virtually all calls about infant care are from parents with children aged less than 5 years (97%). Whereas, parents increasingly seek help about how best to relate to older children. However, behavioural concerns remain prominent regardless of the age of the child. In 2004, one in ten parents of adult children contacted Parentline about drug or alcohol use by their child.

0-4 YRS	5-9 YRS	10-14 YRS	15-18 YRS	ADULT
Infant care/development	Challenging Behaviour/Discipline	Challenging Behaviour/Discipline	Parent-Child Relationships	Parent-Child Relationships
Parenting Strategies	Parent-Parent Relationships	Parent-Child Relationships	Challenging Behaviour/Discipline	Child Mental/Emotional Health
Challenging Behaviour/Discipline	Parenting Strategies	Parenting Strategies	Runaway/Leaving Home	Child Drug/Alcohol Use

OUTCOME OF CALLS

Most calls to Parentline (57%) do not need to be referred elsewhere. However, due to the nature of some calls, counsellors are supported by an extensive database of support services, allowing them to quickly identify relevant services within the caller's local community. During 2004, 3,865 callers (31%) were referred to other support services, mostly face-to-face counselling. Legal services, community and mental health services, statutory services (such as child protection agencies), alcohol & drug information services, parenting support groups and parent effectiveness training groups were other services commonly referred to.

A further 11% of callers were referred to their doctor, mental health worker or other non-specific sources of support. In 2% of calls, counsellors intended offering a referral but were unable to because either no appropriate service was available or the caller finished the call before a referral could be given.

Fifteen percent of callers who contacted Parentline made an agreement to reconnect with their counsellor again on a specific date and time.

For more information

www.parentline.com.au

© This information may be re-used, copied or distributed as long as it is sourced to Parentline and is not used out of context. For up to date information, current events and what's on the drawing board, visit our website.

QUEENSLAND OFFICE:
 PO Box 376, Red Hill, Qld, 4059
 Ph (07) 3369 1588 Fax (07) 3367 1266
 Email parentline@kidshelp.com.au
 Telephone counselling line: 1300 30 1300



