

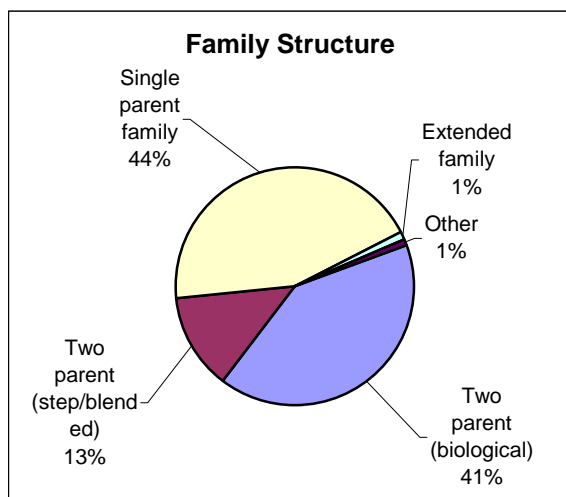
Parentline is a confidential telephone counselling service providing professional counselling and support for parents and care givers in Queensland. Parentline is a joint initiative of BoysTown Family Care and the Queensland Department of Families.

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. Counsellors respond to about 60% of the 1,800 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

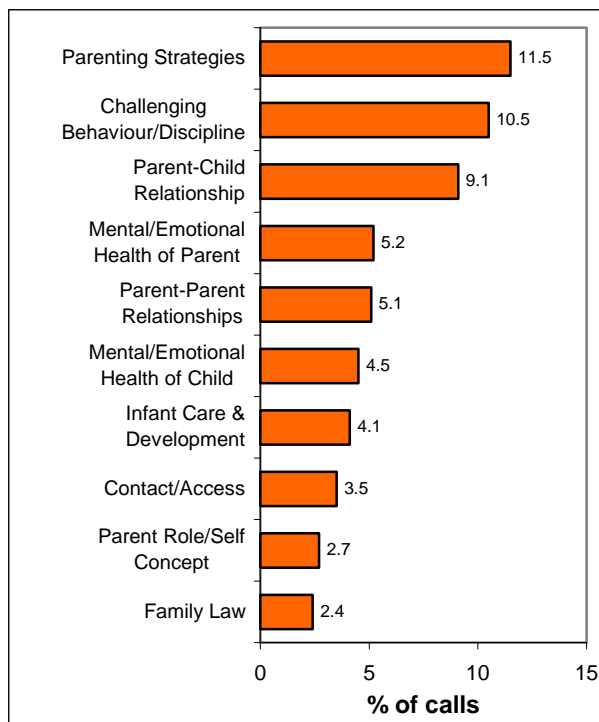
- Females make 89% of calls and males 11%.
- The average age of callers is 38 years, with over three-quarters of callers aged between 30 and 49 years.
- Most callers hear about Parentline from other agencies/services or from the phone book.
- Callers are slightly more likely to phone about a male child (53%) than a female child (47%).
- 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-five percent have called before.
- The majority of callers (78%) are a custodial parent/carer.
- The majority of callers are either from a single parent family (44%) or a family with two biological parents (41%).



Updated: January 2004

MAIN PROBLEMS OF CALLERS

During 2003, Parentline counsellors responded to 13,005 calls from parents and family members in Queensland - a 9% increase on the previous year. The graph below shows the ten most common issues concerning callers to Parentline, represented as a percentage of all calls.



The profile of main problem types for Qld parents and care givers has, for the most part, remained consistent since the service began in 1996. During 2003, calls about parenting strategies doubled while there was small decreases in calls about challenging behaviour/discipline, infant care & development, ADD/ADHD, violent behaviour of a child, children's illegal behaviour and employment or financial concerns (see attached table).

Counsellors responded to 1,532 calls relating to **parenting strategies** or specific parenting techniques. These calls commonly related to parents who were managing but seeking new strategies (35%) or parents seeking information (37%). A further 12% were unsure about their own parenting strategies while 16% were experiencing major difficulties or severe distress.

Of the 1,392 callers who phoned about **challenging behaviours or discipline**, 38% described ongoing behaviour or discipline problems while 28% reported intermittent problems. A further 19% were experiencing significant distress due to severe problem behaviour while 7% were not coping and in need of support or referral. The remaining callers were seeking information.

Over one-third of calls concerning **parent-child relationships** related to occasional or ongoing communication problems while 31% were about conflicts causing major concerns. A further 25% of callers were severely distressed with the situation. The remaining callers were seeking information.

The **mental or emotional health of a parent** was a concern for just over 5% of callers to Parentline. Almost half (45%) of these clients were coping with their own mental or emotional health issue but were in need of extra support or strategies. However, another 40% reported that their mental or emotional health issue was interfering with their parenting or they were in need of urgent intervention or referral.

The majority (68%) 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 (15%), concern about the effects of relationship problems on families (9%) or awareness of relationship problems (8%).

Accounting for over 4% 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 25% were concerned about a recent change in their child's behaviour. A further 18% of callers were experiencing difficulties coping with a mentally/emotionally ill child.

Infant care and development concerns related to feeding, sleeping, crying, toileting, growing and milestones in the first five years of life. A large proportion of these calls were from parents making an enquiry (30%) or seeking new strategies (39%). Other common themes included parents seeking support or reporting that tiredness was affecting their parenting.

Contact and access issues were the seventh most common concern but the most frequent reason males called Parentline. Most of these callers had ongoing concerns about arrangements for contact with children, including difficulty agreeing on or maintaining contact arrangements.

SECONDARY PROBLEMS

In addition to the main concern of callers, Parentline counsellors are able to record other significant issues for clients. While 33% of clients had a significant secondary concern, these problems do not follow the same pattern as the primary problems.

Parenting strategies (13%) was the most common secondary problem. In addition to their main problem, these callers discussed parenting strategies and disciplinary techniques.

Parent's mental and emotional health concerns were the next most common secondary concern (10.6%).

Parenting role and self-concept was the ninth most common problem but the third most common secondary concern (9.4%). In addition to their main reason for calling, these callers were experiencing concerns related to the pressures of parenting, uncertainty about their adequacy as a parent, confusion about their parenting role, juggling of competing demands, self care or loss of self to parenting.

Issues related to **relationships between parents** (9.1%) and **parent-child relationships** (7.9%) were the next most common secondary problems for Parentline clients.

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 contact and access issues or family law concerns.

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

OUTCOME OF CALLS

Parentline counsellors are supported by an extensive database of support services, allowing counsellors to quickly identify relevant services within the caller's local community. During 2003, 4,062 callers (30%) 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 8% of callers were referred to their doctor, mental health worker or other non-specific sources of support. In 3% 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. For the remaining 59% of callers, the nature of their issue did not require a referral.

One in ten callers who contacted Parentline made an agreement to reconnect with their counsellor again on a specific date and time.

LOCATION OF CALLS

Nearly half of all calls to Parentline were made by people living in the Brisbane metropolitan region. The remaining 54% were made from regions throughout Queensland ranging from the Gold Coast to far north Queensland.

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Brisbane | 45.6% |
| Gold Coast Region | 9.0% |
| Sunshine Coast Region | 8.2% |
| Toowoomba Region | 7.2% |
| North Coast Region | 6.9% |
| Ipswich Region | 6.4% |
| Townsville Region | 4.6% |
| Cairns Region | 4.3% |
| Rockhampton Region | 3.8% |
| Mackay Region | 3.6% |
| Mt Isa Region | 0.5% |

For more information

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