

PRETERM BIRTHS

DEFINITION: Number of and percentage of live births with gestation age less than 37 weeks.

SIGNIFICANCE

Infants who are born preterm face an increased risk of dying in the first year of life, as well as a host of health and developmental difficulties. Complications from preterm births include respiratory distress, gastroenterological, immunologic, central nervous, hearing, and vision problems. Research also shows that, over the longer term, preterm babies are at a higher risk of experiencing developmental delays, cognitive, motor, behavioral, social-emotional, health, and growth problems.¹

Preterm birth is the single leading cause of infant mortality in the United States.² Very preterm babies (<32 weeks of gestation) face the highest risk of dying in their first year, with an infant mortality rate of 183 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005. While late preterm infants (32-26 weeks of gestation) experience a much lower mortality rate relative to very preterm infants, the infant mortality rate for late preterm infants is three times as large as that of babies born at full term (37-41 weeks).³

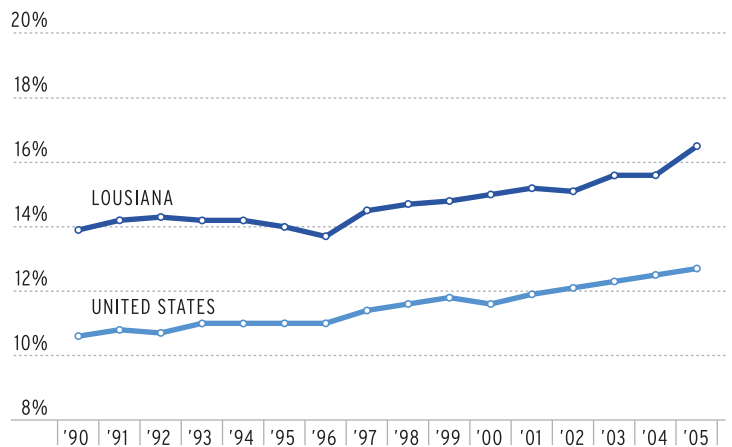
Since 1990, preterm births have been rising in both Louisiana and the nation as a whole. In 1990, 13.9% of all Louisiana births were preterm, while the same was true of 16.5% of all births in 2005. Louisiana's preterm birth rate was the third-highest in the nation in 2005. Only Alabama and Mississippi experienced higher preterm birth rates.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

A baby born to a black mother is 1.5 times as likely as a baby born to a white mother to be born preterm in Louisiana. On average, 17.3% of infants born to black mothers in Louisiana were born preterm in 2004-2006, compared to 11.2% of infants born to white women. The disparity is even greater in terms of very preterm infants. Louisiana infants born to black women are 2.6 times as likely as infants born to white women to be born very preterm. In 2004-2006, 3.9% of all births to black women were very preterm (before 32 weeks of gestation), while the same was true of 1.5% of births to white women.⁴

In terms of preterm births, three parishes—Jackson, Winn, and Iberville—had racial disparity ratios of 1.1, indicating a relatively low degree of racial disparity. These parishes were also among the five best-ranked parishes in terms of preterm births to black women, but were ranked among the middle

PERCENTAGE OF BABIES BORN PRETERM IN THE UNITED STATES AND LOUISIANA 1990-2005



parishes in terms of preterm births to white women. Both Plaquemines and Beauregard parishes had racial disparity ratios of 2 or more, indicating that a baby born to a black mother in those parishes was at least twice as likely as a baby born to a white mother to be born prematurely.

RATE CALCULATION

$100 * (\text{number of live births before 37 weeks of pregnancy between 2004-2006} \div \text{total number of live births between 2004-2006})$

$100 * (\text{number of live births to black women before 37 weeks of pregnancy between 2004-2006} \div \text{total number of live births to black women between 2004-2006})$

$100 * (\text{number of live births to white women before 37 weeks of pregnancy between 2004-2006} \div \text{total number of live births to white women between 2004-2006})$

CHART DATA SOURCE

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Preterm Births 1990—2005," KIDS COUNT Data Center, retrieved from www.kidscount.org/datacenter on 8/1/2009.

DATA SOURCE

Live births 2004-2006: Louisiana State Center for Health Statistics

DATA NOTE

Three years of data were aggregated, then averaged. Thus the numbers here reflect the average number of babies born preterm in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

¹ Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, Prevention*, eds. Richard E. Behrman and Adrienne Stith Butler (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 2007), 1.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Maternal and Infant Health Research: Preterm Birth," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008, retrieved from www.cdc.gov/ on 7/1/2009.

³ Marian F. MacDorman, Ph.D., and T.J. Mathews, M.S., "Recent Trends in Infant Mortality in the United States," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2008, retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/> on 7/1/2009.

⁴ Data received from Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health, Center for Preventive Health, Maternal and Child Health.

PRETERM BIRTHS (NUMBER AND PERCENT OF BIRTHS)

2004-06 AVERAGE

	TOTAL		BLACK		WHITE		RACIAL DISPARITY RATIO*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
LOUISIANA	8,522	13.6	4,296	17.3	4,050	11.2	1.5
Acadia	131	14.1	45	20.5	86	12.1	1.7
Allen	46	13.3	14	19.4	31	11.9	1.6
Ascension	173	11.2	54	14.0	118	10.4	1.4
Assumption	41	15.0	23	19.0	18	11.9	1.6
Avoyelles	85	14.0	36	16.0	47	12.7	1.3
Beauregard	53	11.1	11	20.5	40	9.9	2.1
Bienville	27	14.0	14	15.9	12	12.3	1.3
Bossier	246	14.8	87	20.3	153	12.9	1.6
Caddo	687	18.6	457	21.6	220	14.5	1.5
Calcasieu	342	12.5	125	15.2	212	11.4	1.3
Caldwell	16	12.0	3	LNE	13	11.7	n.a.
Cameron	9	11.5	<2	LNE	8	10.8	n.a.
Catahoula	21	15.8	8	LNE	13	14.9	n.a.
Claiborne	21	11.4	14	13.5	7	LNE	n.a.
Concordia	39	17.5	23	19.9	16	14.6	1.4
De Soto	73	19.4	39	22.3	34	17.2	1.3
East Baton Rouge	775	13.2	532	16.1	223	9.4	1.7
East Carroll	24	18.4	22	20.6	3	LNE	n.a.
East Feliciana	35	13.1	18	14.6	17	11.7	1.2
Evangeline	75	13.9	31	17.3	43	12.2	1.4
Franklin	45	15.0	23	17.5	21	13.1	1.3
Grant	30	11.9	5	LNE	25	11.5	n.a.
Iberia	144	12.6	78	16.0	62	10.0	1.6
Iberville	56	12.3	34	13.0	21	11.5	1.1
Jackson	25	12.5	8	13.3	17	12.3	1.1
Jefferson	681	11.9	302	15.0	337	10.3	1.5
Jefferson Davis	43	9.3	10	11.1	32	8.7	1.3
La Salle	17	9.7	5	LNE	12	8.1	n.a.
Lafayette	373	12.4	163	16.1	200	10.5	1.5
Lafourche	162	13.5	47	19.6	112	12.3	1.6
Lincoln	72	12.8	44	16.9	27	9.2	1.9
Livingston	183	10.7	14	15.9	168	10.4	1.5
Madison	25	16.4	20	18.6	4	LNE	n.a.
Morehouse	67	16.3	42	18.8	24	13.4	1.4
Natchitoches	80	13.7	46	15.0	33	12.3	1.2
Orleans	740	15.9	621	18.0	107	10.3	1.7
Ouachita	376	16.2	217	20.3	156	12.8	1.6
Plaquemines	36	10.3	14	17.1	20	8.4	2.0
Pointe Coupee	42	13.8	26	18.0	16	10.0	1.8
Rapides	260	13.5	133	17.6	123	10.8	1.6
Red River	23	15.8	17	22.1	6	LNE	n.a.
Richland	45	14.9	29	20.1	16	10.4	1.9
Sabine	49	14.8	14	17.6	31	14.1	1.2
St. Bernard	76	13.8	13	LNE	60	13.5	n.a.
St. Charles	90	13.1	36	15.2	51	11.8	1.3
St. Helena	12	11.0	9	12.8	3	LNE	n.a.
St. James	41	13.2	27	14.8	14	10.9	1.4
St. John the Baptist	97	13.4	63	15.5	33	11.0	1.4
St. Landry	200	14.4	116	16.6	83	12.0	1.4
St. Martin	89	11.9	44	14.1	44	10.3	1.4
St. Mary	105	13.6	45	14.9	57	12.8	1.2
St. Tammany	307	10.6	62	15.5	240	9.9	1.6
Tangipahoa	227	13.2	127	17.7	99	10.0	1.8
Tensas	16	21.1	11	20.1	5	LNE	n.a.
Terrebonne	259	15.4	77	21.6	166	14.1	1.5
Union	41	12.6	20	16.6	21	10.2	1.6
Vermilion	95	11.8	29	17.0	64	10.4	1.6
Vernon	114	12.4	26	16.1	82	11.5	1.4
Washington	89	14.3	43	18.6	46	11.8	1.6
Webster	71	13.9	32	17.6	38	11.9	1.5
West Baton Rouge	46	13.7	24	17.9	22	11.0	1.6
West Carroll	17	11.9	5	LNE	12	10.4	n.a.
West Feliciana	13	11.7	6	LNE	7	11.1	n.a.
Winn	25	12.2	9	12.9	15	11.9	1.1

*The racial disparity ratio was calculated by dividing the black rate by the white rate. The resulting number shows, for example, that the percentage of black babies born preterm was 1.5 times that of the whites in the 2004-2006 reporting period. A ratio of one would mean that the percentage of black babies born preterm was the same as the percentage of white babies born preterm. Larger numbers reflect a greater racial disparity.

n.a. Racial disparity ratios were not calculated for any parish in which there were fewer than 20 preterm births of either race in the 2004-2006 reporting period.

LNE [low number of events] is used because the rate or percent may be unreliable.