

Preterm Births

Definition

Preterm births is the number and percent of births before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Data in context

All newborn babies need to start life healthy to ensure future growth and development. The length of gestation is one of the most important predictors of a child's health and survival.¹ Preterm labor can happen to any pregnant woman; only about half of women who experience preterm labor fall into any known risk group.² Babies who are born preterm face a higher risk of needing hospitalization, having long-term health problems, and of dying than babies who are born during the 38- to 42-week period of gestation.³

The preterm birth rate continues to rise, increasing 2 percent in 2005 to 13 percent of all U.S. births.⁴ The growing number of multiple births has added to the increased rate of preterm births, although the rate for preterm births of single babies is also on the rise.⁵

The issue of preterm births is complex and has many related causes, such as maternal stress, neighborhood and environmental concerns, medical conditions, infertility treatments, and other biological factors.⁶ Women in disadvantaged communities are exposed to many of these issues that in combination can increase the chances of preterm birth.⁷

Nationally, American Indian, Hispanic, and White women have seen the greatest increases in preterm births between 2001 and 2003.⁸ Despite improvements in preterm birth rates in the 1990s among African-American women, they continue to face a higher risk than women of other races.⁹ Rates of preterm births in Kentucky were 12 percent among births to White women, higher for Black women at 16 percent, and lowest among Hispanic women at 9 percent.

Kentucky's rate of preterm births increased from 11 to 12 percent between 1999-2001 and 2004-2006. Estill and Hancock Counties showed the greatest decrease between the time periods, improving by 5 percentage points. Lawrence

County saw the largest increase over time and has the highest county rate at 24 percent.

Strengthening neighborhood protective factors, including environmental quality and community resources, can help address the problem of preterm births for all women, as well as reduce disparities among racial groups. Health insurance coverage also plays a critical role in women accessing early and regular prenatal care. During these visits the health care provider and patient can discuss ways to ensure a healthy pregnancy, such as addressing health problems, including high blood pressure and diabetes.¹⁰ Policymakers could improve outcomes for this indicator by extending Medicaid and SCHIP eligibility to reach currently uninsured pregnant women. Kentucky can also use the Maternal and Child Health Block Grants to provide services to uninsured mothers.¹¹

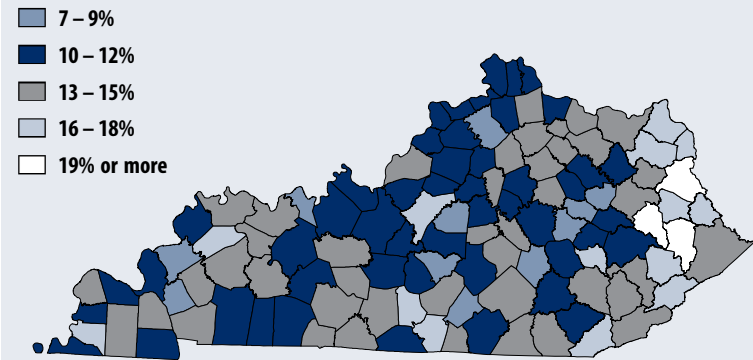
Proven solutions to reduce preterm births and specifically target disparities include:

- ▶ Addressing the impact of physically demanding workplaces to lessen the trauma to pregnant women;
- ▶ Employing poverty reduction strategies like the refundable earned income tax credit to allow low-income working families to keep more of their earnings and thus afford necessities like health insurance; and
- ▶ Implementing housing desegregation policies and addressing neighborhoods' proximity to environmental toxins that contribute to poor pregnancy outcomes.¹²

Data Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

Data Note: All data refer to totals over the 3-year periods of 1999–2001 and 2004–2006. Data are reported by mother's place of residence, not infant's place of birth. Data from 2006 are preliminary and exclude births to Kentucky mothers that occurred in Ohio. For cases where the information for this variable was missing, the case was excluded from the total number of live births.

Percent of Babies Born Preterm, 2004-2006



Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

Rate Calculation: (number of births with gestation under 37 weeks between 1999–2001 * 100) / (total number of live births between 1999–2001) - (number of births with gestation under 37 weeks between 2004–2006 * 100) / (total number of live births between 2004–2006)

- 1 Behrman, R., and Butler, A., eds. (2007). *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention*. Committee on Understanding Premature Birth and Assuring Healthy Outcomes. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- 2 March of Dimes (2006). *Pregnancy & Newborn: Preterm Labor*. Available at <http://www.marchofdimes.com>. Accessed August 2008.
- 3 Martin, J., Hamilton, B., Sutton, P., Ventura, S., Menacker, F., Kirmeyer, S., and Munson, M. (2007). "Births: Final Data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 56, no. 6. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov>. Accessed August 2008.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Behrman, R., and Butler, A., eds. (2007). *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention*. Committee on Understanding Premature Birth and Assuring Healthy Outcomes. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 March of Dimes (2007). *Quick Reference: Preterm Birth*. Available at <http://www.marchofdimes.com>. Accessed August 2008.
- 11 Behrman, R., and Butler, A., eds. (2007). *Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention*. Committee on Understanding Premature Birth and Assuring Healthy Outcomes. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- 12 Ibid.

Preterm births (number & percent of all live births)

	1999-2001		2004-2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Kentucky	18,194	11	20,928	12
Adair	60	10	95	15
Allen	69	10	88	13
Anderson	76	10	94	12
Ballard	26	9	33	13
Barren	85	6	244	15
Bath	47	10	47	10
Bell	113	10	181	16
Boone	381	9	468	10
Bourbon	78	11	112	15
Boyd	190	12	304	17
Boyle	110	12	128	13
Bracken	46	14	37	10
Breathitt	66	13	62	11
Breckinridge	56	8	81	11
Bullitt	221	10	281	12
Butler	56	12	51	10
Caldwell	24	6	59	14
Calloway	86	9	112	11
Campbell	356	10	330	10
Carlisle	15	7	18	10
Carroll	46	11	51	11
Carter	126	12	181	16
Casey	49	8	61	11
Christian	572	12	502	12
Clark	164	13	179	13
Clay	128	14	127	15
Clinton	38	10	48	13
Crittenden	13	4	30	9
Cumberland	17	7	38	16
Daviess	461	12	503	13
Edmonson	41	10	47	13
Elliott	34	14	31	13
Estill	83	14	51	9
Fayette	1,280	12	1,419	12
Fleming	53	10	79	14
Floyd	164	10	312	19
Franklin	189	10	205	11
Fulton	37	13	31	12
Gallatin	38	12	50	11
Garrard	67	13	71	13

	1999-2001		2004-2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Grant	123	11	139	11
Graves	152	10	183	13
Grayson	78	8	136	14
Green	27	7	46	12
Greenup	152	13	216	18
Hancock	52	14	31	9
Hardin	510	12	505	11
Harlan	136	11	160	13
Harrison	91	13	101	15
Hart	29	4	80	11
Henderson	223	13	241	13
Henry	76	12	68	11
Hickman	18	12	22	16
Hopkins	253	14	271	15
Jackson	45	8	59	11
Jefferson	3,457	12	3,752	13
Jessamine	153	9	237	12
Johnson	110	12	147	16
Kenton	705	10	681	10
Knott	84	15	93	17
Knox	140	10	171	11
LaRue	61	12	57	11
Laurel	265	11	253	11
Lawrence	82	14	152	24
Lee	24	10	24	10
Leslie	46	10	61	14
Letcher	120	14	154	16
Lewis	60	12	73	15
Lincoln	118	12	134	13
Livingston	36	12	33	11
Logan	111	10	117	11
Lyon	13	8	16	9
McCracken	262	10	307	12
McCreary	96	14	96	13
McLean	44	11	54	15
Madison	307	11	330	10
Magoffin	70	12	108	19
Marion	86	11	74	10
Marshall	101	11	136	14
Martin	78	14	83	17
Mason	75	11	90	13

	1999-2001		2004-2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Meade	88	10	82	11
Menifee	30	13	19	9
Mercer	93	11	87	11
Metcalfe	26	7	64	16
Monroe	28	6	53	12
Montgomery	126	12	123	11
Morgan	38	8	61	13
Muhlenberg	143	12	147	13
Nelson	180	11	278	16
Nicholas	45	15	43	15
Ohio	122	14	110	10
Oldham	161	10	189	12
Owen	38	10	34	9
Owsley	15	9	30	16
Pendleton	59	10	66	13
Perry	153	13	163	14
Pike	231	10	310	13
Powell	70	13	55	9
Pulaski	238	11	302	13
Robertson	4	*	9	14
Rockcastle	68	11	43	7
Rowan	80	10	82	11
Russell	65	11	55	9
Scott	134	9	268	14
Shelby	176	12	205	12
Simpson	76	11	78	13
Spencer	53	11	65	12
Taylor	86	10	81	9
Todd	52	10	62	11
Trigg	46	11	60	14
Trimble	22	7	36	11
Union	80	13	53	10
Warren	409	11	545	13
Washington	44	11	37	9
Wayne	87	12	89	12
Webster	78	14	89	16
Whitley	171	11	161	13
Wolfe	39	12	43	12
Woodford	110	12	119	14

* Rates were not calculated for counties with fewer than 6 occurrences.