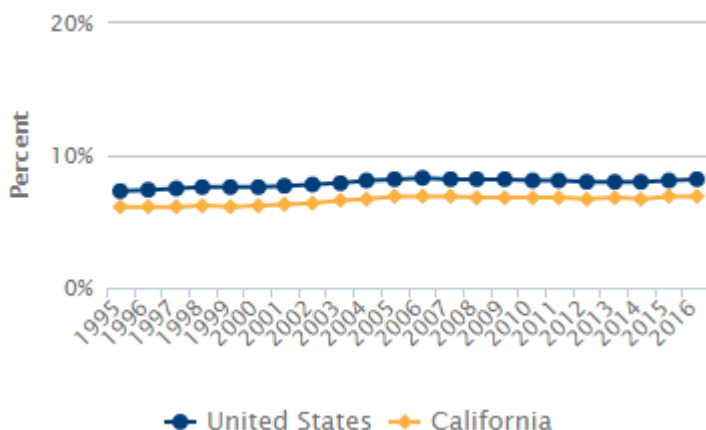


Low Birthweight and Preterm Births in California

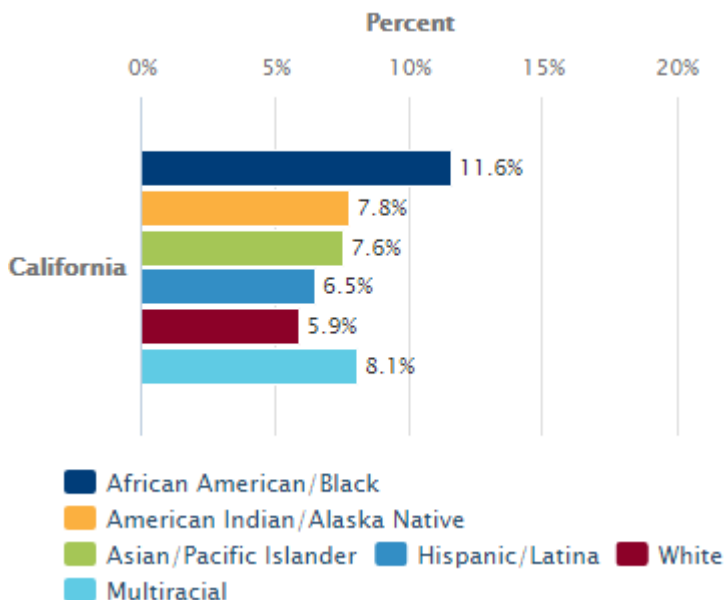
Percentage of Infants Born at Low Birthweight



Definition: Percentage of infants born weighing less than 2,500 grams (approximately 5 lbs, 8 oz). (E.g., in 2016, 6.9% of infants born to California women were born at low birthweight.)

Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master Files; CDC WONDER, [Natality Public-Use Data](#) (Feb. 2019).

Percentage Infants Born at Low Birthweight, by Mother's Race/Ethnicity: 2016



Definition: Percentage of infants born weighing less than 2,500 grams (approximately 5 lbs, 8 oz), by mother's race/ethnicity (e.g., in 2016, 6.5% of infants born to California Hispanic/Latina women were born at low birthweight).

Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master Files; CDC WONDER, [Natality Public-Use Data](#) (Feb. 2019).

Percentage of Infants Born Preterm: 2016

What It Is

Kidsdata.org offers the following measures of low birthweight and preterm birth:

- The number and percentage of infants born at low birthweight (weighing less than 2,500 grams or approximately 5 lbs, 8 oz) overall, by mother's age, and by mother's race/ethnicity
- The number and percentage of infants born at very low birthweight (weighing less than 1,500 grams or approximately 3 lbs, 5 oz)
- The number and percentage of infants born preterm (before 37 weeks of gestation), calculated either by last menstrual period (LMP) or obstetric estimate (OE)

Why This Topic Is Important

Preterm birth and low birthweight are among the leading causes of infant death in the U.S., and they account for billions of dollars spent annually on health care and other services. Babies born prematurely (before 37 completed weeks of gestation) face increased risks of wide-ranging health complications and long-term disabilities, including but not limited to developmental delays, cerebral palsy, heart disease, and respiratory, vision, and hearing problems. These risks drop significantly as gestational age increases. Health care professionals recommend waiting until 39 to 40 weeks of gestation for delivery, if possible, as critical infant growth and development occur in the final weeks of pregnancy.

While many preterm babies are born too small, this is not always the case. For example, some infants are born prematurely but at a normal weight, and some are born full-term but at a low weight. Infants with a low birthweight (less than 5.5 lbs) have increased risks of numerous chronic health and developmental problems. Babies with a very low birthweight (less than 3.3 lbs) face even greater risks of adverse health outcomes.

Decades of research have shown large inequities in birth outcomes by race/ethnicity, even after controlling for income, with rates of preterm birth, low birthweight, and infant mortality consistently higher for the African American/black population than other groups. Many other factors also increase the risk of premature birth and low birthweight, such as low socioeconomic status, inadequate prenatal care, short intervals between pregnancies, maternal smoking or substance use issues, and

Locations	Percent
California	8.6%
Alameda County	8.4%
Contra Costa County	9.1%
Fresno County	9.2%
Kern County	9.4%
Los Angeles County	8.9%
Orange County	8.0%
Riverside County	8.5%
Sacramento County	8.5%
San Bernardino County	9.3%
San Diego County	8.5%
Santa Clara County	8.1%

Definition: Percentage of infants born prior to 37 weeks of gestation, based on obstetric estimate of gestational age (e.g., in 2016, 8.6% of infants born to California women were born preterm).

Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master Files; CDC WONDER, [Natality Public-Use Data](#) (Feb. 2019).

women who: have had previous pregnancy complications; are carrying more than one baby; have certain uterine or cervical abnormalities; are age 40+ or under age 17; or have other health or mental health problems.

How Children Are Faring

The percentage of California infants born at low birthweight rose steadily from 6.1% in 1999 to 6.9% in 2005 and has remained fairly stable through 2016. Statewide, the number of infants born at very low birthweight was 5,445 in 2016 and accounted for 1.1% of all births, similar to percentages going back to 1995.

In 2016 and previous years, low birthweight varied across local areas and demographic groups. Among counties with data in 2016, percentages ranged from 5.2% to 7.9% for infants born at low birthweight and from 0.6% to 2% for infants born at very low birthweight. Statewide, women ages 45 and older consistently have the highest percentage of low birthweight babies (18.2% in 2016) when compared with younger mothers, as do African American/black women (11.6% in 2016) in comparison with other racial/ethnic groups.

Based on obstetric estimates (OE) estimates of gestational age, 8.6% of California infants were born preterm in 2016, down from 9.1% in 2008. Across counties with data, percentages of infants born preterm birth ranged from 6.2% to 10.6% in 2016.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:

<https://kidsdata.org/topic/56/low-birthweight-and-preterm-births/summary>



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