

PRETERM BIRTH

Babies born preterm, before 37 completed weeks of gestation, are at increased risk of immediate and long-term complications, as well as mortality. Complications that can occur during the newborn period include respiratory distress, jaundice, anemia, and infection, while long-term complications can include learning and behavioral problems, cerebral palsy, lung problems, and vision and hearing loss. Although the risk of complications is greatest among those babies who are born the earliest, even those babies born “late preterm” (34 to 36 weeks’ ges-

tation) are more likely than full-term babies to experience these types of problems.¹

According to preliminary data, 12.2 percent of infants were born preterm in 2009. Overall, 8.7 percent of babies were born at 34 to 36 weeks’ gestation, 1.6 percent were born at 32-33 weeks, and 2.0 percent were “very preterm” (less than 32 weeks). The preterm birth rate increased more than 20 percent from 1990 to 2006, but has declined in the three years since (data not shown).

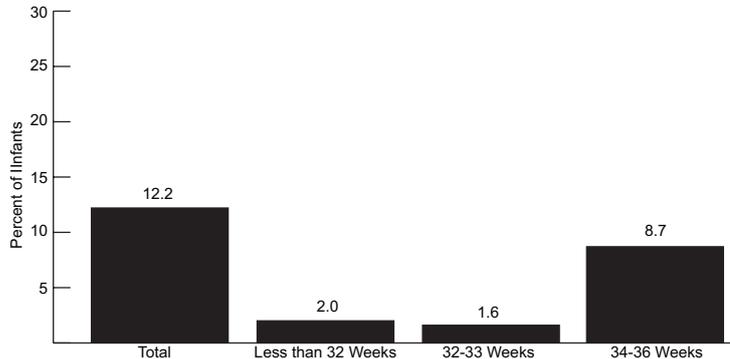
The preterm birth rate varies by race/ethnicity. In 2009, 17.5 percent of babies born to

non-Hispanic Black women were born preterm, compared to 10.8 percent of babies born to Asian/Pacific Islander women. Among babies born to non-Hispanic White women, 10.9 percent were born preterm, while the same was true of 12.0 percent of babies born to Hispanic women and 13.5 percent of babies born to American Indian/Alaska native women.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Reproductive Health. Prematurity. November 2009. Available online: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/PrematureBirth/>. Accessed March 2011.

Preterm Birth Among Infants, by Completed Weeks of Gestation, 2009*

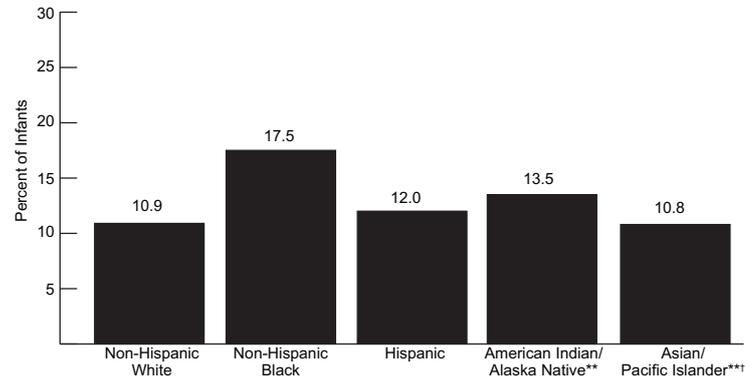
Source (II.1): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Data for 2009 are preliminary

Preterm Birth Among Infants, by Maternal Race/Ethnicity, 2009*

Source (II.1): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Data for 2009 are preliminary. **Includes Hispanics. †Separate data for Asians and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders not available.