



2008 Premature Birth Report Card

United States
Preterm Birth Rate: 12.7%
Grade: D*

The United States' preterm birth rate is more than 60% higher than the Healthy People 2010 objective of 7.6% and increased by more than 15% between 1995 and 2005. Disparities exist among population subgroups. While research continues on the causes of preterm birth, some contributing factors and prevention opportunities can be addressed. Three of these are below.

Selected Contributing Factors	Rate (%)	Comments
Uninsured Women	20.1%	About 1 in 5 women of childbearing age has no health insurance coverage. Health care access before and during pregnancy can help identify and manage conditions that contribute to premature birth.
Women Smoking	21.2%	About 1 in 5 women of childbearing age is a smoker. Smoking cessation programs can reduce the risk of premature birth.
Late Preterm Births	9.1%	About 1 in 11 live births is late preterm (34-36 weeks gestation). The rise in late preterm births has been linked to rising rates of early induction of labor and c-sections.

March of Dimes Call for Action

1. We urge the federal government to increase support for prematurity-related research and data collection as recommended by the Institute of Medicine and the Surgeon General's Conference on the Prevention of Preterm Birth, to: (a) identify the causes of premature birth; (b) test strategies for prevention; (c) improve the care, treatment and outcomes of preterm infants; and (d) better define and track the problem of premature birth.
2. We urge federal and state policymakers to expand access to health coverage for women of childbearing age and to support smoking cessation programs as part of maternity care.
3. We call on hospitals and health care professionals to voluntarily assess c-sections and inductions which occur prior to 39 weeks gestation to ensure consistency with professional guidelines.
4. We call on the business community to create workplaces that support maternal and infant health.
5. We invite all concerned citizens to sign the 2008 "Petition for Premies" at marchofdimes.com/petition and learn how you can help.

* Grade based solely on preterm birth rate, not on rates of contributing factors.