

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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New Report Spotlights Gaps in Birth Conditions, Health Status for Nation's Infants

Latest Online Report Tracks U.S. Birth Information Across States and in 50 Largest Cities

BALTIMORE – Progress toward improving birth conditions has stalled with large gaps remaining for babies born to women of color, according to a report released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The online report, *The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends*, found at www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/rightstart.jsp, now includes data collected in 2005 – adding to the birth information the Casey Foundation has tracked annually since 1990. After years of improvement, the percent of total births to teens has stalled, while the prevalence of births to unmarried women, babies born at low birthweight and preterm births have continued their steady increase. Positive notes include the continuing decline in the percent of teen births to girls who are already mothers and large decreases in the prevalence of late or no prenatal care and smoking during pregnancy.

The new data also shows that for nearly all birth outcomes measured, babies born to White non-Hispanic mothers fare better than babies born to Hispanic mothers and Black non-Hispanic mothers. One exception is the percent of births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy. White, non-Hispanic mothers who gave birth in 2005 were more likely to have smoked during pregnancy than mothers of the other races included in the study. In 2005, 13.9% of babies born to White, non-Hispanic mothers were born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy compared to 8.5% of Black, non-Hispanic mothers, and 2.9% of Hispanic mothers. In addition, babies born to Hispanic mothers were slightly less likely than babies born to white, non-Hispanic mothers to be of low birthweight (6.9% v. 7.3%).

Outcomes for babies also differed dramatically among cities and states:

- The percent of births to teens ranged from less than 6% in New Hampshire to nearly 16% in New Mexico and from less than 4% in San Francisco to 19% in Memphis.
- The percent of births to unmarried women ranged from 18% in Utah to 51% in New Mexico and from 24% in San Francisco to 73% in Detroit.
- In Vermont, 9% of babies are born preterm compared to 19% in Mississippi. Among the fifty largest cities, 9% of babies born in Oakland are born preterm compared to 20% of babies born in Detroit.

The conditions under which infants are born can have lifelong effects on the child's development and readiness for school. Specifically, low-birthweight and preterm infants are at increased risk for developmental delays that can affect their chances of being left behind in school. The measures tracked in *The Right Start* are intended to provide policymakers, child advocates, and others with data that reflect conditions prior to birth, a newborn's health status at birth, and maternal characteristics that are associated with a child's educational and social outcomes. Based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics, the report ranks every state and the 50 largest cities on eight measures: births to teens; births to teens who were already mothers; births to unmarried women; births to mothers with less than 12 years of education; births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care; births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy; birth weights at less than 5.5 pounds; and preterm births (less than 37 weeks of gestation).

The report is available at www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/rightstart.jsp. The online format allows viewers to create custom reports such as state and city profiles, line graphs showing trends over time, color-coded U.S. maps, and ranking tables, all generated from *The Right Start* database. *The Right Start* is a joint project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT initiative and Child Trends, a research organization located in Washington, DC.

To request an interview, please contact Tiffany Thomas Smith at media@aecf.org, or call 410.223.2980.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization, whose primary mission is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

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