

BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS

In 2009, the number of resident live births in Nebraska decreased for only the second time in the last 15 years. A total of 26,931 live births were recorded among Nebraska women in 2009, compared to the 2008 tally of 26,992. The 2009 number translates into a crude birth rate of 15.0 live births per 1,000 population.

Although resident live births in Nebraska declined slightly from 2008 to 2009, the overall trend in recent years has been in the opposite direction. In fact, since 1994, the number of live births among Nebraska residents has increased by more than 15%, while the birth rate has also increased. This trend is largely the result of a surge in the number of live births within the state's Hispanic population. Comparison of 1994 and 2009 data show that live births among Hispanic women rose from 1,378 to 4,264, a 210% increase, while live births among non-Hispanic women rose from 21,753 to 22,667, a 4% increase. This trend is most likely the result of Nebraska's expanding Hispanic population, which has tripled in size since 1990.

Among Nebraska women giving birth to their first child, the average age has hardly changed during the present decade, increasing slightly from 24.5 years in 2000 to 24.8 years in 2009, after much larger increases were recorded during the 1970s and 1980s, and into the mid-1990s. Among Nebraska women giving birth to their second and third children, recent changes in average age are even smaller. For women bearing their second child, the average age at birth was 27.7 years in 2009, compared to 27.6 years in 2000, while for women bearing their third child, the average age was 29.3 years in 2009, the same figure recorded in 2000.

Although Nebraska women today are having children later than earlier generations, the majority of all births still occur among women in their twenties, although their share is diminishing. In 2009, women 20-29 accounted for 56.7% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 33.1% for women 30-39, 8.3% for teenaged women, and 1.9% for women 40 and older. Thirty years ago, in 1979, women 20-29 accounted for 70.1% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 17.7% for women 30-39, 11.6% for teenaged women, and 0.6% for women 40 and older.

Nebraska's 2009 live births included 460 sets of twins, 15 sets of triplets, and 1 set of quadruplets. Nebraska has experienced increasing numbers of multiple births in recent years. By comparison, Nebraska recorded 266 sets of twins and 3 sets of triplets in 1979, just 30 years ago.

Nebraska's 2009 live births included 1,923 low birth weight babies, i.e., babies that weighed less than 2500 grams (about 5 ½ pounds) at birth. This figure translates into a low birth weight rate of 71.4 per 1,000 live births, which is a slight increase from the 2008 figure of 70.7. Long-term trends show that Nebraska's annual low birth weight rate has increased steadily since falling to an all-time low of 52.8 in 1990. Low weight birth rates in Nebraska declined throughout the 1970s and 1980s, before reversing direction in the 1990s and during the present decade.

Among the low birth weight babies born to Nebraska women in 2009, 318 were of very low weight, i.e., they weighed less than 1500 grams (about 3.3 pounds) at birth. This figure translates into a

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very low birth weight rate of 11.8 per 1,000 live births, a decrease from the 2008 figure of 12.1. For many years, Nebraska's annual very low birth weight rate showed no consistent trend in any direction, but between 1986 and 1996, it rose by about 50%, and has changed little since.

In 2009, birth certificate data showed that prenatal care began during the first trimester of pregnancy for 72.0% of all Nebraska live births, a slight decrease from the 2008 figure of 72.1%. The 2009 figure increases to 73.9% when births with missing data are excluded. 2005 also marked the first year that Nebraska used the Kotelchuck Index as an indicator of the adequacy of prenatal care. This statistic combines information from the birth certificate concerning when prenatal care began and the number of prenatal visits from when prenatal care began to delivery. Using this measure, 14.7% of Nebraska's 2009 live births occurred among women who did not receive adequate prenatal care, compared to 14.6% in 2008.

The number of live births that occurred among unmarried Nebraska women increased in 2009, continuing a long-standing trend. A total of 9,283 live births were recorded in Nebraska among unmarried women in 2009, up from the 9,140 recorded in 2008. The 2009 figure represents 34.5% of the state's total number of resident live births, and this proportion is the highest ever recorded in Nebraska history. Thirty years ago, in 1979, teenaged mothers accounted for close to half (43.5%) of all births to unmarried women in Nebraska, but by 2009, this proportion had fallen to only one in five (21.4%).

A total of 1,158 birth defects were diagnosed among 722 children born to Nebraska women in 2009. The latter figure translates into a rate of 26.7 cases per 1,000 resident live births and stillborns, and is an increase from the 2008 rate of 23.9. Defects of the circulatory system were the most frequently diagnosed conditions in Nebraska in 2009, accounting for 396 (34.2%) of all defects reported. Musculoskeletal conditions were the second most frequently reported defects among Nebraska children in 2009, with 178 diagnoses, followed by genitourinary system defects, with 149 diagnoses. Nebraska's 2009 data also show that birth defects were reported over four times more often among low birth weight (less than 2500 grams) babies than among babies of normal weight, and that they were more likely to be diagnosed among males and children born to women 40 years of age and older.