

## BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS

In 2010, the number of resident live births in Nebraska decreased for the second year in a row. A total of 25,916 live births were recorded among Nebraska women in 2010, compared to the 2009 tally of 26,931. Until 2010, Nebraska had not recorded fewer than 26,000 live births in any year since 2003, and the change in the number of resident live births from 2009 to 2010 is the state's largest single-year decline since 1985-1986. Nebraska's 2010 live birth count translates into a rate of 14.2 live births per 1,000 population.

Among Nebraska women giving birth to their first child, the average age has increased during the present decade, from 24.5 years in 2000 to 24.9 years in 2010. Thirty years ago, in 1980, the average age for Nebraska women giving birth to their first child was 23.3 years. Among Nebraska women giving birth to their second and third children, the average age has also increased during this decade. For women bearing their second child, the average age at birth was 27.7 years in 2010, compared to 27.6 years in 2000, while for women bearing their third child, the average age was 29.6 years in 2010, compared to 29.3 years in 2000. The same figures recorded in Nebraska thirty years ago are 25.9 years for women giving birth to their second child and 28.4 years for women giving birth to their third child.

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 has diminished. In 2010, women 20-29 accounted for 57.2% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 33.2% for women 30-39, 7.6% for teenaged women, and almost 2.0% for women 40 and older. Thirty years ago, in 1980, women 20-29 accounted for 69.1% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 20.4% for women 30-39, 9.9% for teenaged women, and 0.6% for women 40 and older.

Nebraska's 2010 live births included 405 sets of twins, 16 sets of triplets, and 1 set of quadruplets. Nebraska has experienced increasing numbers of multiple births in recent years. By comparison, Nebraska recorded 298 sets of twins and 3 sets of triplets in 1980, just 30 years ago.

Nebraska's 2010 live births included 1,843 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 71.1 per 1,000 live births, which is a slight decrease from the 2009 figure of 71.4. 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 2010, 333 were of very low weight, i.e., they weighed less than 1500 grams (about 3.3 pounds) at birth. This figure translates into a very low birth weight rate of 12.8 per 1,000 live births, an increase from the 2009 figure of 11.8. 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.

### **BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)**

The Nebraska birth certificate was substantially revised in 2005, adding data that have never been gathered before and altering the way that some existing data are collected. As a result, some data are not comparable to data collected in years prior to 2005. One such variable affected in this way is the trimester when prenatal care began. These data are now based on the actual calendar date when prenatal care began, which should improve their accuracy, but this has also increased the amount of missing information. In 2010, birth certificate data showed that prenatal care began during the first trimester of pregnancy for 73.2% of all Nebraska live births, an increase from the 2009 figure of 72.0%. The 2010 figure increases to 75.0% 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, 14.1% of Nebraska's 2010 live births occurred among women who did not receive adequate prenatal care, compared to 14.7% in 2009.

The number and rate of live births that occurred among unmarried Nebraska women decreased in 2010, a rare event in recent decades. A total of 8,702 live births were recorded in Nebraska among unmarried women in 2010, down from the 9,283 recorded in 2009. The 2010 figure represents 33.6% of the state's total number of resident live births. Thirty years ago, in 1980, births to unmarried women accounted for 11.6% of Nebraska's live birth total.

A total of 1,281 birth defects were diagnosed among 917 children born to Nebraska women in 2010. The latter figure translates into a rate of 35.2 cases per 1,000 resident live births and stillborns, and is an increase from the 2009 rate of 26.7. Musculoskeletal defects were the most frequently diagnosed conditions in Nebraska in 2010, accounting for 331 (25.8%) of all defects reported. Conditions affecting the circulatory system were the second most frequently reported defects among Nebraska children in 2010, with 240 diagnoses, followed by genitourinary system defects, with 160 diagnoses. Nebraska's 2010 data also show that birth defects were reported over three 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.