

BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS

In 2011, the number of resident live births in Nebraska decreased for the third year in a row. A total of 25,722 live births were recorded among Nebraska women in 2011, compared to the 2010 tally of 25,916. The 2011 figure is the lowest number of live births in Nebraska in any single year since 2003. Nebraska's 2011 live birth count translates into a rate of 14.0 live births per 1,000 population.

Among Nebraska women giving birth to their first child, the average age has increased during the past decade, from 24.5 years in 2000 to 25.2 years in 2011. Twenty-five years ago, in 1986, the average for Nebraska women giving birth to their first child was 23.8 years. Among Nebraska women giving birth to their second and third children, the average age has also increased. For women bearing their second child, the average age at birth was 28.0 years in 2011, compared to 27.6 years in 2000, while for women bearing their third child, the average age was 29.7 years in 2011, compared to 29.3 years in 2000. The same figures recorded in Nebraska 25 years ago are 26.4 years for women giving birth to their second child and 28.3 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 2011, women 20-29 accounted for 56.0% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 35.2% for women 30-39, 6.8% for teenaged women, and 2.1% for women 40 and older. Twenty-five years ago, in 1986, women 20-29 accounted for 65.5% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 25.1% for women 30-39, 8.9% for teenaged women, and 0.6% for women 40 and older.

Nebraska's 2011 live births included 392 sets of twins and 13 sets of triplets. 2011 marked the first year since 1992 that the birth of at least one set of quadruplets did not occur in Nebraska. Twenty-five years ago, in 1986, Nebraska recorded 292 sets of twins and three sets of triplets.

Nebraska's 2011 live births included 1,707 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 66.4 per 1,000 live births, which is a decrease from the 2010 figure of 71.1. The 2011 low birth weight rate is the lowest recorded in Nebraska during any single year since 1998. However, the 2011 low birth weight rate is still well above the state's all-time low rate of 52.8, which was recorded in 1990.

Among the low birth weight babies born to Nebraska women in 2011, 284 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 11.0 per 1,000 live births, a decrease from the 2010 figure of 12.8. The 2011 very low birth weight rate is the lowest recorded in Nebraska during any single year since 1995.

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 2011, birth certificate data showed that prenatal care began during the first trimester of pregnancy for 74.1% of all Nebraska live births, an increase from the 2010 figure of 73.2%. The 2011 figure increases to 75.1% 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, 14.0% of Nebraska's 2011 live births occurred among women who did not receive adequate prenatal care, compared to 14.1% in 2010.

The number and rate of live births that occurred among unmarried Nebraska women decreased for the second straight year in 2011, a rare event in recent decades. A total of 8,546 live births were recorded in Nebraska among unmarried women in 2011, down from the 8,702 recorded in 2010. The 2011 figure represents 33.2% of the state's total number of resident live births. Twenty-five years ago, in 1986, births to unmarried women accounted for 15.5% of Nebraska's live birth total.

A total of 2,117 birth defects were diagnosed among 1,140 children born to Nebraska women in 2011. The latter figure translates into a rate of 44.1 cases per 1,000 resident live births and stillborns. However, these data include only those defects diagnosed and reported through June 11, 2012; as additional cases are diagnosed and reported to the state birth defects registry, the number and rate of birth defects diagnosed among babies born in Nebraska during 2011 will increase substantially. In comparison, the birth defect rate among babies born in Nebraska during the previous four years (2007-2010) was 59.8. Defects of the circulatory system were the most frequently diagnosed conditions in Nebraska in 2011, accounting for 655 (30.9%) of all birth defects reported. Conditions affecting the musculoskeletal system were the second most frequently reported defects among Nebraska children in 2011, with 355 diagnoses, followed by genitourinary system defects, with 308 diagnoses. Nebraska's 2011 data also show that birth defects were reported in almost one of every five very low birth weight (less than 1500 grams) babies, and that they were more likely to be diagnosed among males and children born to women 40 years of age and older.