

BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS

In 2012, the number of resident live births in Nebraska increased after three consecutive years of decline. A total of 25,939 live births were recorded among Nebraska women in 2012, compared to the 2011 tally of 25,722. Nebraska's 2012 live birth count translates into a rate of 14.0 live births per 1,000 population.

By birth order, the largest proportion of Nebraska's live births in 2012 was first-borns, accounting for 9,514 (36.7%) of all resident live births. Second-born children accounted for 8,077 (31.1%) of the state's live births in 2012, and third-born children accounted for another 4,586 (17.7%). Excluding the 298 live births whose birth order is unknown, the state's remaining 3,464 (13.4%) live births in 2012 were fourth-born and higher-order births. These percentages have changed little during the past 25 years: in 1987, first-borns accounted for 37.2% of Nebraska resident live births, followed by second-borns (33.4%), third-borns (19.0%), and fourth-born and higher-order births (10.3%).

Among Nebraska women who gave birth to their first child in 2012, the average age was 25.4 years. The average age among women giving birth to their first child has been increasing steadily for several decades; 25 years ago, in 1987, the average for Nebraska women giving birth to their first child was 24.0 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 2012, compared to 26.6 years in 1987, while for women bearing their third child, the average age was 29.8 years in 2012, compared to 28.5 years in 1987.

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 2012, women 20-29 accounted for 54.7% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 36.5% for women 30-39, 6.5% for teenaged women, and 2.3% for women 40 and older. Twenty-five years ago, in 1987, women 20-29 accounted for 64.0% of all Nebraska live births, compared to 26.3% for women 30-39, 8.9% for teenaged women, and 0.8% for women 40 and older.

Nebraska's 2012 live births included 438 sets of twins and 8 sets of triplets. Also, 2012 marked the second consecutive year during which the birth of at least one set of quadruplets did not occur in Nebraska, which has not happened since 1989-1990. Twenty-five years ago, in 1987, Nebraska recorded 281 sets of twins and 5 sets of triplets.

Nebraska's 2012 live births included 1,736 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 66.9 per 1,000 live births, which is an increase from the 2011 figure of 66.4. The 2012 low birth weight rate is still well above the state's all-time low rate of 52.8, which was recorded in 1990.

BIRTH HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Among the low birth weight babies born to Nebraska women in 2012, 296 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 11.4 per 1,000 live births, an increase from the 2011 figure of 11.0.

The Nebraska birth certificate was substantially revised in 2005, adding data that had never been gathered before and altering the way that some existing data are collected. As a result, some birth 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 improves their accuracy but also increases the amount of missing information. In 2012, birth certificate data showed that prenatal care began during the first trimester of pregnancy for 73.8% of all Nebraska live births, a decrease from the 2011 figure of 74.1%. The 2012 figure increases to 74.7% when births with missing data are excluded. Beginning with 2005 data, 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, 14.2% of Nebraska's 2012 live births occurred among women who did not receive adequate prenatal care, compared to 14.0% in 2011.

The number and rate of live births that occurred among unmarried Nebraska women increased in 2012, after two straight years of decreases. A total of 8,634 live births were recorded in Nebraska among unmarried women in 2012, up from the 8,546 recorded in 2011. The 2012 figure represents 33.3% of the state's total number of resident live births. Twenty-five years ago, in 1987, births to unmarried women accounted for 16.8% of Nebraska's live birth total.

A total of 2,285 birth defects were diagnosed among 1,213 children born to Nebraska women in 2012. The latter figure translates into a rate of 46.5 cases per 1,000 resident live births and stillborns. However, these data include only those defects diagnosed and reported through July 2, 2013; 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 2012 will increase substantially. In comparison, the birth defect rate among babies born in Nebraska during the previous four years (2008-2011) was 58.7. Defects of the circulatory system were the most frequently diagnosed conditions in Nebraska in 2012, accounting for 801 (35.1%) of all birth defects reported. Conditions affecting the musculoskeletal system were the second most frequently reported defects among Nebraska children in 2012, with 433 diagnoses, followed by genitourinary system defects, with 250 diagnoses. Nebraska's 2012 data also show that birth defects were reported in 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.