



## Trends in Birth Outcomes Multnomah County

Data source:  
Oregon Health Authority

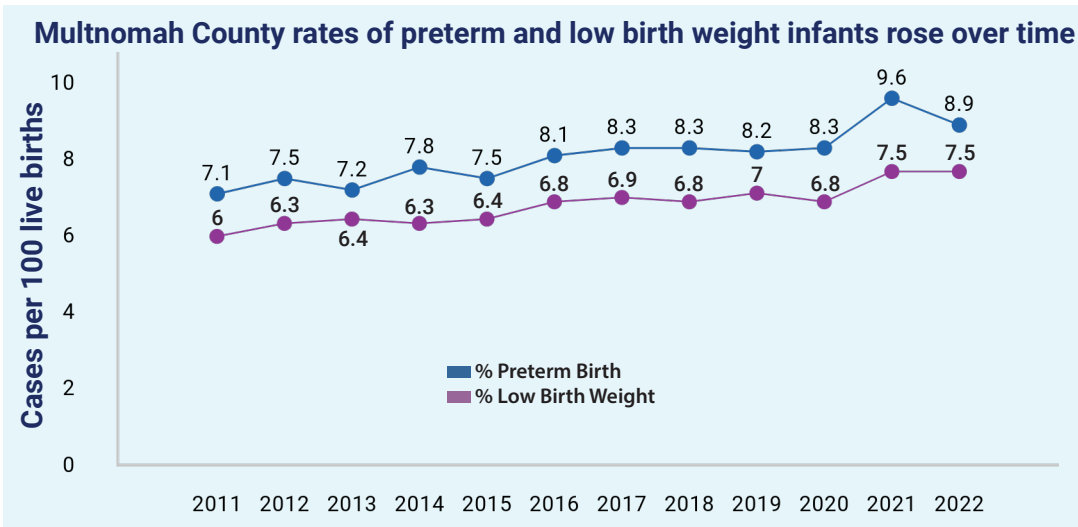
### Why are birth outcomes important?

Thousands of healthy babies are born each year in Multnomah County. Although most pregnant people deliver a healthy infant, data on birth outcomes, including infant mortality, preterm birth, and birth weight, can help us understand infant health across Multnomah County to inform public health planning. Although some of these numbers may seem small, the importance of any infant death in our county cannot be understated.

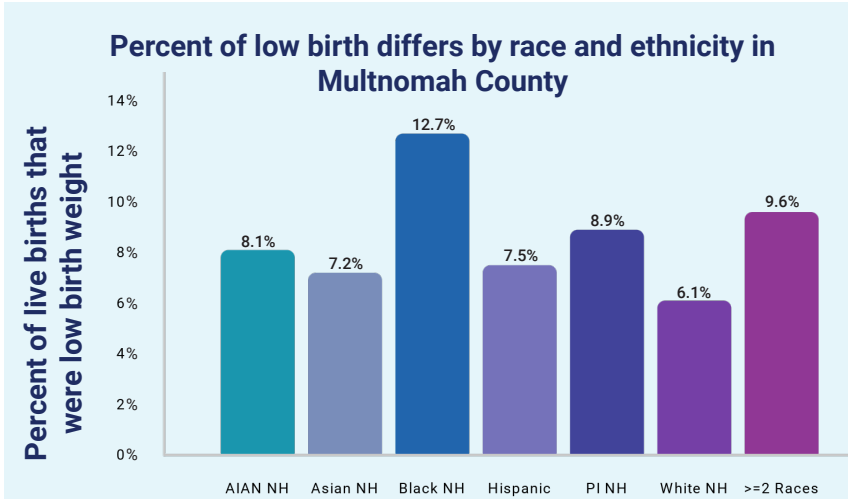
### Preterm Births and Low Birth Weight

Babies that are born too soon (preterm) or too small (low birth weight) can have a higher risk of developmental delays and health problems.

In 2021, there was an increase in preterm births in Multnomah County, rising to 9.6% of all births. Low birth weight has risen slightly over time across the county.



In 2020–22, the proportion of infants born with low birth weight varied across races and ethnicities. These differences in birth outcomes are due to racism, intergenerational trauma, and oppression. These social and structural factors are the root causes of economic, housing, and food insecurity, and lack of access to quality health care, all of which influence maternal wellbeing and birth outcomes.



**Note:** Data for years 2020-2022.

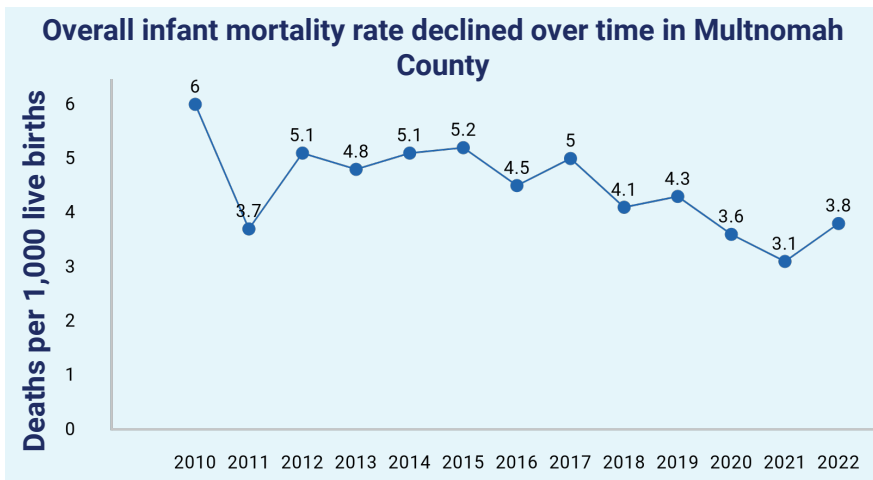
\*Low Birth Weight is defined as less than 5lbs. 8oz. at birth. Preterm is defined as being born before 37 weeks gestation.



Contact **Community Epidemiology Services** at [CES@multco.us](mailto:CES@multco.us)

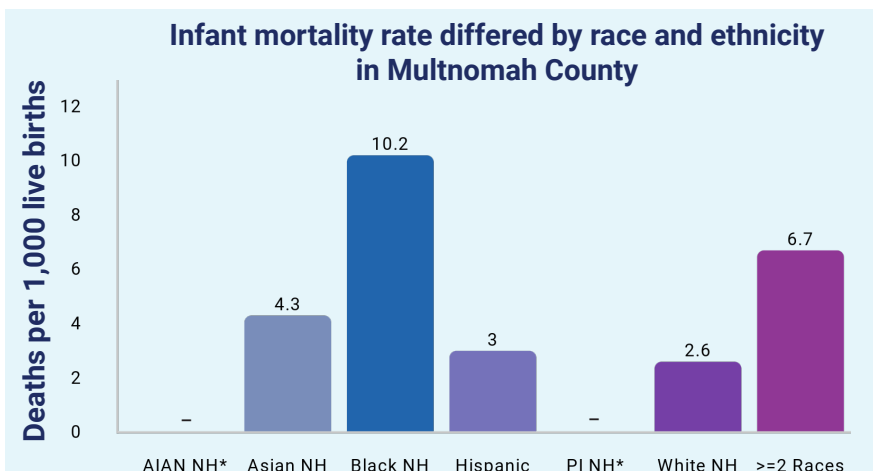
## Infant Mortality

Infant mortality is defined as the death of an infant before their first birthday. This is a rare, tragic event. In Multnomah County, infant mortality rates have been declining overall from 6.0 per 1,000 births in 2010 to 3.8 per 1,000 in 2022 (the most recent data available). In comparison, the United States reported a rate of 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022.



## Infant Mortality Rate by Race/Ethnicity

Despite the overall declines in infant mortality, inequities resulting from racism, intergenerational trauma, and oppression continue to exist. In 2018-2022, non-Hispanic Black infants had an infant mortality rate of 10.2 per 1,000 births, almost 40% of which were post-neonatal (after 28 days old). Multiracial babies also faced a high rate at 6.7 per 1,000 births. This emphasizes the need for urgent interventions to address these inequities.



**Note:** Data for years 2018-2022. AIAN and PI had 5 or fewer events. Rates based on  $\leq 5$  events are unreliable and not reported.

## Multnomah County birth outcomes data show positive trends, but also highlight long-standing inequities.

Multnomah County has seen a decline in the overall infant mortality rate over the past 10 years, and the rate in 2022 was lower than the national rate. However, rates of preterm birth and low birth weight have been rising steadily in Multnomah County since 2011. Additionally, significant inequities persist, with non-Hispanic Black families experiencing higher infant mortality and low birth weight than other communities. Nationally, the leading causes of neonatal deaths (birth to 27 days) among all races are low birth weight and birth defects. The leading causes of post neonatal deaths (28 days to 1 year) include Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, birth defects and unintentional injury.

Continued community-specific preconception, prenatal, and postnatal supports are central to addressing these inequities. Eliminating inequities in birth outcomes also requires addressing upstream economic, housing, and food insecurity that families of color disproportionately experience in Multnomah County. For more information on Multnomah County services for pregnancy and parenting support, visit [multco.us/services/pregnancy-and-parenting-support](https://multco.us/services/pregnancy-and-parenting-support).