

## Low Birth Weight by Race/Ethnicity in Riverside County 2003-2013

### Introduction

Low birth weight is defined as a birth weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 lbs.). Over the last decade low birth weight deliveries in Riverside County have remained below state and national levels. However, when looking at race/ethnicity, we are able to identify differences in low birth weight rates.

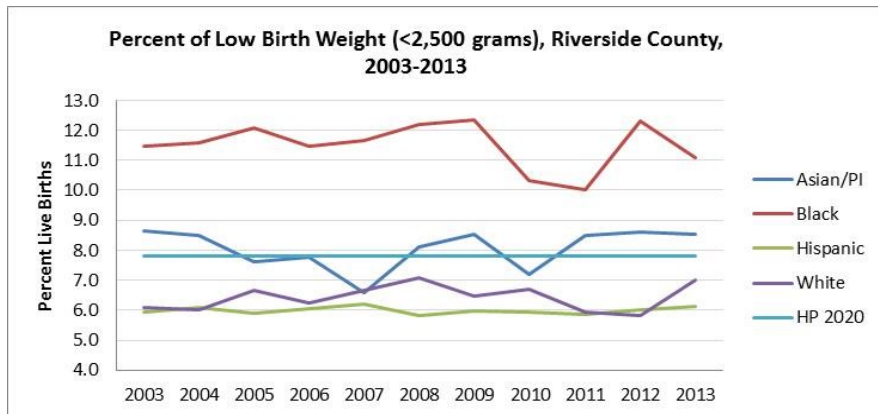
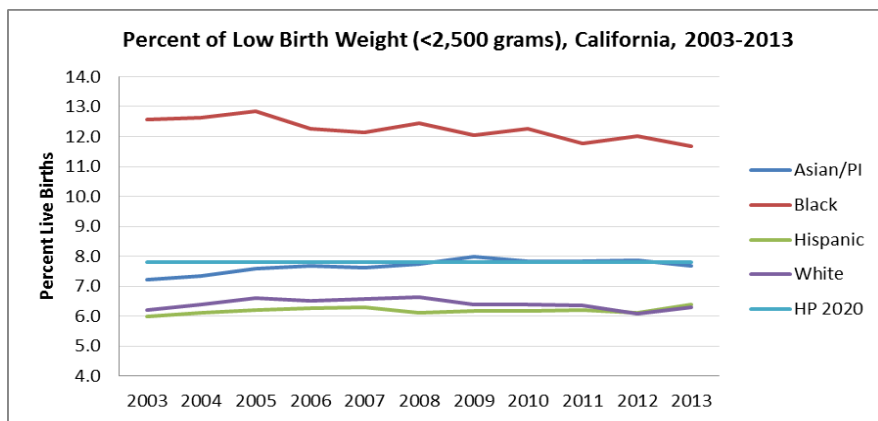
In this brief we will explore trends in low birth weight rates by race and ethnicity throughout Riverside County in comparison to California and the Healthy People 2020 goal.

A primary factor that may contribute to low birth weight is access to health care services and more specifically access to prenatal care. Prenatal care is important in ensuring the delivery of a healthy baby. Infants of mothers who do not seek prenatal care are more likely to have a low birth weight infant.

### Key Findings

- 6.5% of the estimated 34,000 live births in Riverside County annually are low birth weight deliveries.
- The Riverside County low birth weight rate is below the California rate of 6.8%.
- Black infants have the highest percentage of low birth weight deliveries in Riverside County (11.5%) and California (11.7%).
- Low birth weight is associated with higher infant mortality rates, prematurity complications and long-term chronic health conditions in adulthood.

### Low Birth Weight Deliveries



The overall percentage of low birth weight deliveries in Riverside County and California have remained similar and fairly consistent over the past decade. Since 2003, there has been a slight increase in low birth weight deliveries in Riverside County. Riverside County and the State of California have remained below the Healthy People 2020 objective of 7.8%.

The greatest disparity in low birth weight deliveries is among Blacks, both in Riverside County (11.5%) and California (11.7%). The difference in low birth weight percentages may be attributed to limited access to health care resources as well as social stressors such as discrimination and single-parent households. This gap can lead to inequities in future health outcomes for people of color.

In Riverside County, the highest percentage of low birth weight deliveries are among Blacks, at an average of 11.5%, followed by Asian/ Pacific Islanders at an average of 8.5%. Since 2003, on average, the percent of low birth weight deliveries is two thirds higher among Blacks when compared to the other race/ethnicities.

With the exception of Blacks and Asian/ Pacific Islanders, all subgroups in Riverside County experienced low birth weight deliveries below the Healthy People 2020 objective of no more than 7.8% of live births. Based on a three year moving average due to low population numbers, American Indians remain steadily below the Healthy People 2020 goal. Whites also have reduced rates for low birth weight deliveries in Riverside County (6.4%) and California (6.3%), remaining below HP 2020.

Hispanic low birth weight rates have remained at a constant low in comparison to all other race/ethnicities in Riverside County (6.0%) and California (6.4%). These rates have also remained well below the HP 2020 goal of 7.8%.

Poverty level is often associated with poor health outcomes and low birth weight rates. Two thirds of low birth weight deliveries among both Blacks and Hispanics in Riverside County are paid for with Medi-Cal and/or other government programs. This indicates similar poverty levels among the two groups with differing health outcomes. Hispanics have remained below all other race/ethnicities and the Healthy People 2020 goal where as Blacks have the highest rates. This indicates that poverty level may not be directly linked to low birth weight deliveries.

Low birth weight is correlated with higher infant mortality rates, prematurity health consequences, and may be associated with long-term chronic conditions in adulthood such as heart disease and diabetes. The data demonstrates the importance of public health programs and targeted interventions such as Black Infant Health (BIH) to reduce health inequities. The Riverside County BIH program works to improve overall birth outcomes among Blacks in Riverside County.

**From the desk of Hermia Parks, RN, PHN, MSN— Director of Public Health Nursing and Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health**

Low birth weight places infants at greater risk for poor health outcomes (including death) throughout their lives. Low weight births disproportionally occur among Blacks and low-income women, creating inequities in health outcomes starting at birth. To reduce the number of children born underweight in Riverside County, improving access to prenatal care and pregnancy education is a priority. There are public health programs dedicated to improve pregnancy and child health outcomes among these and other vulnerable populations. These programs provide women with current education regarding ways to achieve healthy pregnancies through health assessments and screenings, as well as helping families access necessary prenatal care and community resources. Reducing underweight births is a major step in achieving health equity. For more information visit: [www.rivcophn.org](http://www.rivcophn.org)

**Percent Low Birth Weight by Race/Ethnicity in California, 2003-2013**

	Asian/ PI	American Indian	Black	Hispanic	White
2003	7.2	7.0	12.6	6.0	6.2
2004	7.3	6.1	12.6	6.1	6.4
2005	7.6	6.6	12.8	6.2	6.6
2006	7.7	6.7	12.3	6.3	6.5
2007	7.6	7.6	12.1	6.3	6.6
2008	7.7	7.6	12.5	6.1	6.6
2009	8.0	6.5	12.1	6.2	6.4
2010	7.8	6.8	12.3	6.2	6.4
2011	7.8	6.3	11.8	6.2	6.4
2012	7.9	6.6	12.0	6.1	6.1
2013	7.7	7.0	11.7	6.4	6.3
Average	7.7	6.8	12.2	6.2	6.4

**Percent Low Birth Weight by Race/Ethnicity in Riverside County, 2003-2013**

	Asian/ PI	American Indian	Black	Hispanic	White
2003	8.7	5.8	11.5	5.9	6.1
2004	8.5	4.6	11.6	6.1	6.0
2005	7.6	6.3	12.1	5.9	6.7
2006	7.8	5.3	11.5	6.1	6.2
2007	6.6	6.3	11.7	6.2	6.6
2008	8.1	8.7	12.2	5.8	7.1
2009	8.5	4.7	12.3	6.0	6.5
2010	7.2	8.1	10.3	5.9	6.7
2011	8.5	7.9	10.0	5.9	5.9
2012	8.6	3.8	12.3	6.0	5.8
2013	8.5	5.8	11.1	6.1	7.0
Average	8.1	6.1	11.5	6.0	6.4

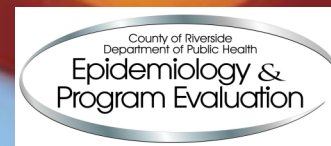
**Suggested Citation**

Wagaw S., *Low Birth Weight by Race Ethnicity in Riverside County*. Riverside: Riverside County Department of Public Health, Epidemiology and Program Evaluation, 2015.

**Acknowledgments: Wendy Hetherington, MPH; Rachaline Napier, MPH; Hermia Parks, RN, PHN, MSN; Stephanie Bryant, RN, PHN, MSN; Michael Osur, MBA; Sarah Mack, MPH; Aaron Gardner, MA.**

**References:**

- California Department of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Query System
- State of California, Department of Health Services, Birth Statistical Master File 2013



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