Low Birth Weight in Washtenaw County
2008-2013

7.8% of all babies in Washtenaw County were born with low birth weight.

What is low birth weight and why is it important?
Low birth weight (LBW) is when a baby is born weighing less than 2500 grams or 5.5 lbs.

There are about 3800 babies born in Washtenaw County each year. Nearly 300 babies, about 7.8%, are born with LBW in Washtenaw County each year. In Michigan overall, about 8.4% of births are. Low birth weight is often a indicator that other disparities exist within a population. Despite best efforts, progress in reducing LBW rate has been slow.

Low birth weight puts a baby at increased risk of health concerns in infancy and later in life.

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<td>• NICU</td>
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What are risks associated with low birth weight?

- Having plural births (twins or more) significantly increases the likelihood of low birth weight.
- African American mothers have the highest rates of low birth weight.
  - It is a goal in Washtenaw County to reduce LBW in African American infants to 3% by 2020.
- Babies born to young mothers, especially teens, are more likely to have LBW.
- Poverty and low education levels are also risks for LBW babies.
- Smoking during pregnancy nearly doubles the risk of having a low birth weight baby.
- Having the baby prematurely, earlier than 37 weeks, is also a large risk of LBW.

Low Birthweight Rate
Washtenaw County 2008-2014

Rate of Low Birth Weight
Singleton and Plural Pregnancies
Washtenaw County 2008-2013

Data Source: MDHHS Vital Records
Low Birth Weight is an indicator of disparities

Chronic stress may put mothers at higher risk of having a low birth weight baby.

- Single mothers have higher rates of babies with low birth weight.
- Rates of LBW in babies decrease as mothers achieve higher levels of education.
  - Mothers without any college education are twice as likely as mothers with at least one college degree to have a baby with low birth weight.

**Good News:** In Washtenaw County, the number of women who gave birth when they were between 14 and 18 years old decreased from 1.7% of births in 2008 to 0.8% of births in 2013.

### Low Birth Weight by Age of Mother
Washtenaw County 2008-2013, Singleton only

- 11.7% for 14-18 yrs
- 7.9% for 18-24 yrs
- 4.7% for 25-34 yrs
- 6.3% for 35-39 yrs
- 5.9% for Greater than 40 yrs

### Low Birth Weight by Marital Status
Washtenaw County 2008-2013, Singleton births*

- Divorced/widowed/never married: 10.4%
- Married: 6.8%

### Low Birth Weight by Education of Mother
Washtenaw County 2008-2013, Singleton births*

- High school graduate or less: 8.5%
- Some college: 6.1%
- Bachelors degree or higher: 4.2%

Younger mothers have the highest risk of low birth weight.

- Moms who are 25 to 35 years old have the lowest risk of having LBW babies.
- After 35 years, risk of low birth weight increases again, though it doesn’t reach levels observed for moms who are less than 25 years.

Mothers living in poverty are more likely to have a low birth weight baby.

- Medicaid coverage is used as proxy for poverty.

*Having a plural birth (twins or more) significantly increases the likelihood of LBW. Analysis was done in singleton births only.
African American moms have higher rates of low birth weight infants

Babies born to African American moms are more than twice as likely to have LBW than babies born to Caucasian moms.

- This risk remains regardless of disparities in poverty, education or age.
- It is a goal in Washtenaw County to reduce LBW in African American infants to 3% by 2020.
- There is moderate risk of LBW for babies in some Asian subpopulations, including Asian Indian and Filipino (not shown).

Smoking increases risk of low birth weight infants

Pregnant women who smoke are nearly twice as likely to have a low birth weight baby than women who don’t smoke.

- Smoking may limit the baby’s growth in pregnancy.
- Smoking also increases the risk for premature birth and other negative outcomes
- For more information maternal smoking in Washtenaw County, please visit the Infant Mortality page on ewashtenaw.org.

Babies born too early are more likely to have low birth weight

Many babies who are born prematurely (<37 weeks gestation) are also born with low birth weight. The risk factors for both prematurity and low birth weight are similar.

- 42% of babies born prematurely were also born with low birth weight.
- Only 2% of babies who were born full term were born with low birth weight.