

Births - Low Birth Weight and Prenatal Care

Why It Is Important

Low birth weight is defined as the percentage of infants born below 2,500 grams or 5.5 pounds. In contrast, the average newborn weighs about 7 pounds. The most common reason for low birth weight is premature birth, though the mother's age, ethnicity, health and whether or not it is a multiple birth can also affect the baby's birth weight. Infants born at low birth weight are at greater risk for complications including infections, breathing problems, neurological problems and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).¹¹ Other studies have shown that low birth weight babies are also at a higher risk for developmental handicaps, such as learning disabilities and attention deficits, than babies with normal birth weights. Low birth weight babies also demonstrate higher rates of sub-average IQ (< 85) than their normal birth weight peers.¹²

Further, prenatal care is comprehensive medical care provided for the mother and fetus, which includes screening and treatment for medical conditions as well as identification and interventions for behavioral risk factors associated with poor birth outcomes. Women who receive adequate prenatal care are more likely to have better birth outcomes, such as full term and normal weight babies.¹³ Prenatal care can provide health risk assessments for the mother and fetus, early intervention for medical conditions and education to encourage healthy habits during pregnancy, such as the avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and substance use. Adequate prenatal care is measured by the percentage of women who receive prenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancy. According to a study by The National Public Health and Hospital Institute, financial barriers including cost of care were often reasons women did not get adequate prenatal care.¹⁴

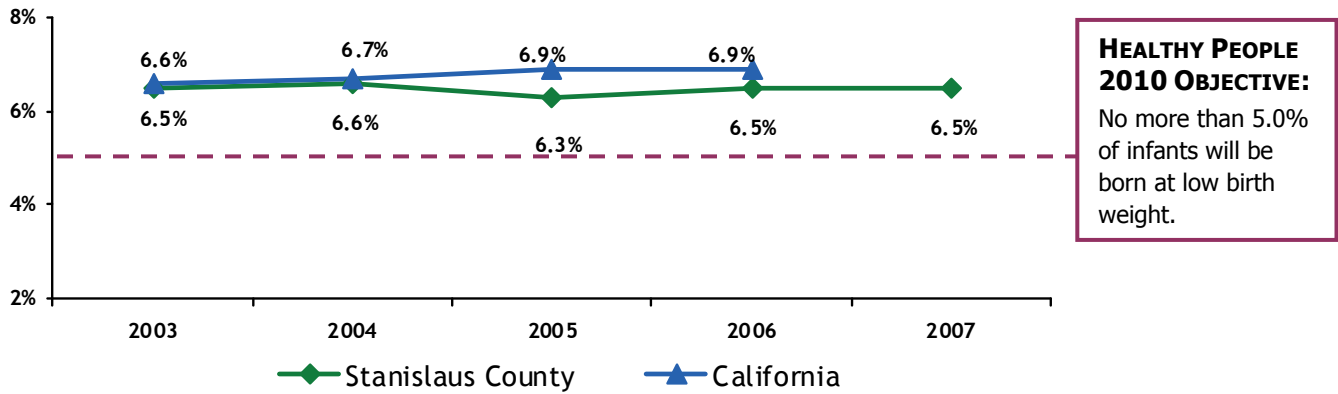
¹¹ Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, *High-Risk Newborn: Low Birthweight*, 2005, retrieved February 28, 2005 from <http://www.lpch.org/DiseaseHealthInfo/HealthLibrary/hrnewborn/lbw.html>.

¹² Kessenich, Maureen, The Triplet Connection, *Developmental Outcomes of Premature, Low Birth Weight and Medically Fragile Infants*, 2003, retrieved April 15, 2005 from <http://www.tripletconnection.org/medical/premie.html>.

¹³ Kids in Common, Cross-Systems Evaluations County of Santa Clara, Public Health Department Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System and Applied Survey Research, *Santa Clara County Children's Report: Key Indicators of Well-being*, 2005.

¹⁴ The National Public Health and Hospital Institute, *Barriers to Prenatal Care Study: A Survey of Women Who Deliver at Public Hospitals*, 2003.

Figure 61: Percentage of All Live Births Born at Low Birth Weight (<2,500 grams up to 5.5 pounds)



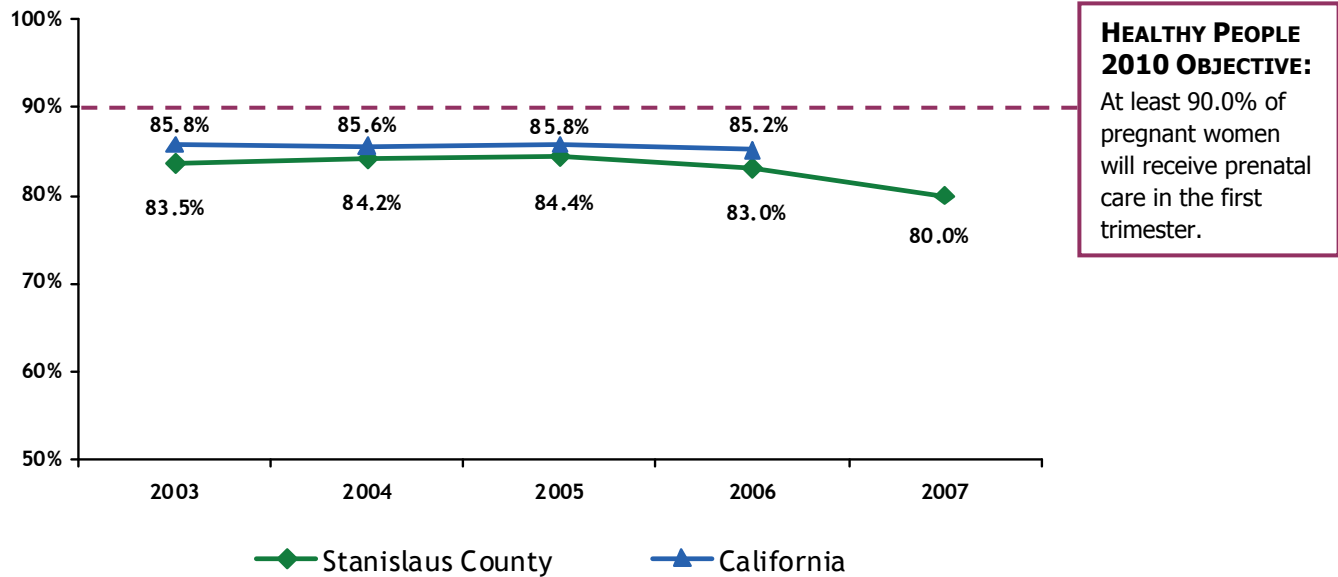
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 OBJECTIVE:
No more than 5.0% of infants will be born at low birth weight.

Source: State of California, Department of Public Health, Birth Records, 2003-2006, 2008. Health Services Agency, Public Health, 2007, 2008.

Stanislaus County 2003 N: 8,022; 2004 N: 8,061; 2005 N: 8,445; 2006 N: 8,728; 2007 N: 8,799.

California 2003 N: 540,827; 2004 N: 544,685; 2005 N: 548,700; 2006 N: 562,157; 2007 N: N/A.

Figure 62: Percentage of All Live Births with Prenatal Care in the First Trimester



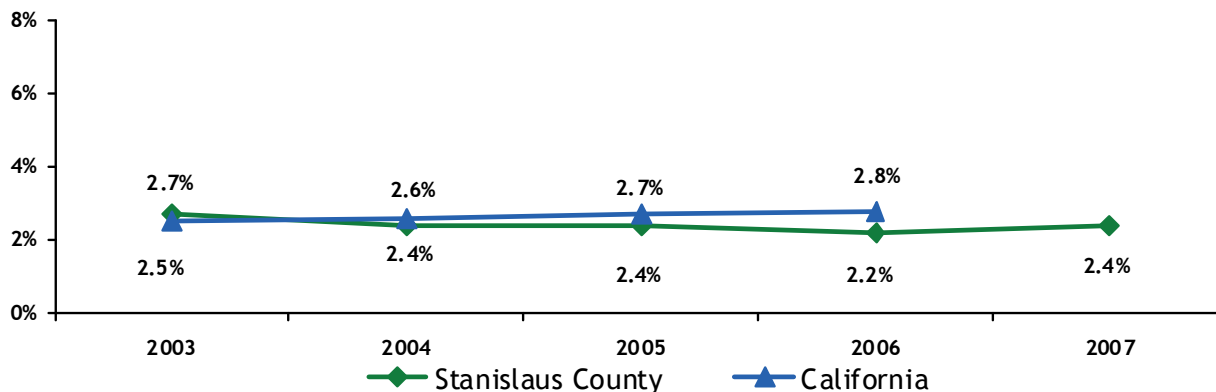
HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 OBJECTIVE:
At least 90.0% of pregnant women will receive prenatal care in the first trimester.

Source: State of California, Department of Public Health, Birth Records, 2003-2006, 2008. Health Services Agency, Public Health, 2007, 2008.

Stanislaus County 2003 N: 8,022; 2004 N: 8,061; 2005 N: 8,445; 2006 N: 8,728; 2007 N: 8,559.

California 2003 N: 540,827; 2004 N: 544,685; 2005 N: 548,700; 2006 N: 562,157; 2007 N: N/A.

Figure 63: Percentage of All Live Births with Late* or No Prenatal Care



Source: State of California, Department of Public Health, Birth Records, 2003-2006, 2008. Health Services Agency, Public Health, 2007, 2008.

Stanislaus County 2003 N: 8,022; 2004 N: 8,061; 2005 N: 8,445; 2006 N: 8,728; 2007 N: 8,559.

California 2003 N: 540,827; 2004 N: 544,685; 2005 N: 548,700; 2006 N: 562,157; 2007 N: N/A.

* Late prenatal care is care beginning in the third trimester.

Data Summary

Between 2003 and 2006, the percentage of all live births born at low birth weight in Stanislaus County was slightly lower than that of California. In 2007, almost 7% of all live births in Stanislaus County were born at low birth weight. Between 2003 and 2007, neither Stanislaus County nor California met the Healthy People 2010 Objective that no more than 5% of infants will be born at low birth weight.

The Healthy People 2010 Objective is that 90% of all pregnant women will receive prenatal care in the first trimester. Between 2003 and 2006, neither California nor Stanislaus County reached this goal. In 2007, 80% of all live births in Stanislaus County received prenatal care in the first trimester, down from 84% in 2005. In 2004, 2005, and 2006, the percentage of all live births with late or no prenatal care was slightly lower in Stanislaus County than in California. In 2007, about 2% of all live births in Stanislaus County received late or no prenatal care.