

A) Birth Outcomes

High Maternal Mortality

The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of the developed countries at 29.6 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, and this rate is rising. Louisiana far surpasses this national average at 72.0 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Across the country, black women are 2-4 times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to die from pregnancy-related causes. Of the 50 states, Louisiana ranks last in maternal mortality rates. ¹

High Prevalence of Preterm Birth

Preterm birth is the leading cause of infant mortality increasing the earlier the baby is born. Preterm babies are at a greater risk for cognitive and behavioral deficits later in life. There are many risk factors contributing to preterm birth including maternal emotional stress, lacking or late prenatal care, and smoking and substance abuse during pregnancy. Black women, mothers under 18, mothers over 35, and low-income mothers are more likely to experience a preterm birth. In Louisiana, 12.7% of live births are preterm compared to 9.9% nationally. ¹

High Prevalence of Low Birthweight

Low birthweight infants are at an increased risk of infant mortality as well as poor health outcomes. A common cause of low birthweight is preterm birth. Many of the women who are at risk to experience a preterm birth are also at risk for an infant with low birthweight. Additional factors include chronic health conditions, sexually transmitted infections, insufficient weight gain during pregnancy, and low educational attainment. Louisiana ranks 49th in the country at 10.7% of babies born at low birthweight compared to the national average of 8.3%. ¹

High Prevalence of Infant Mortality

Infant mortality is the number of children that die before the age of 1 per 1,000 live births. The United States has a higher infant mortality rate than other developed countries at 5.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. This is primarily due to socioeconomic inequality with the most striking disparity between infants born to black women compared to white women. In Louisiana, the infant mortality rate is even higher at 7.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, ranking 46th in the country. ¹

1. America's Health Rankings 2019 Annual Report, https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality_a/state/LA