

Low Birth Weight Infants

African American mothers are almost twice as likely to have babies who are underweight.



There are approximately 851 low birth weight babies each year.

From 2000 to 2002, there was an average of 13,220 live births per year in Contra Costa County; of these, 6.4% were low birth weight.

Table 26. Low Birth Weight, percent and number by race/ethnicity, Contra Costa, 2000-2002

	Percent	(Number)
African American	*11.5%	(446)
Asian/Pacific Islander	*7.8%	(416)
White	5.9%	(1,034)
Latino	5.1%	(586)
Contra Costa	6.4%	(2,552)

***** Indicates that the percentage of low birth weight is significantly higher in these groups compared to Contra Costa as a whole.

African Americans have the highest levels of low birth weight (11.5%).

In general, rates of low birth weight were lowest among Hispanic/Latinos (5.1%), then Whites (5.9%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (7.8%).

Asian/Pacific Islanders have shown increasing rates over the years, significantly higher than the county average (6.4%), Whites and Hispanic/Latinos.

The greatest numbers of low birth weight infants were White (1034), followed by Latino (586).

At least six communities have rates of low birth weight infants that are too high

The following communities have statistically higher rates of low birth weight compared to the Healthy People 2010 objective for low birth weight of 5%: Richmond (7.7%), Pittsburg (7.4%), San Pablo (7.1%), Martinez (6.7%), Antioch (5.8%), and Concord (5.8%). The rate of low birth weight in Contra Costa (6.4%) was also significantly higher than the 2010 objective of 5%. It is important to note that only Richmond showed a statistically greater rate than the county average.

Communities with the greatest number of low birth weight babies: Richmond (394), Concord (311), Antioch (268), and Pittsburg (240) for the 3-year period 2000-2002.

Table 27. Low Birth Weight, percent and number, Selected communities, Contra Costa, 2000-2002

	Percent	(Number)
Richmond	*7.7%	(394)
Pittsburg	7.4%	(240)
San Pablo	7.1%	(170)
Martinez	6.7%	(99)
Pinole	6.4%	(39)
Oakley	6.2%	(74)
Walnut Creek	6.0%	(136)
Concord	5.8%	(311)
Antioch	5.8%	(268)
Bay Point	5.7%	(65)
Brentwood	4.6%	(72)
Contra Costa	6.2%	(2,552)

* Indicates that the percentage of low birth weight is significantly higher in these communities compared to Contra Costa as a whole.

The race of low birth weight infants differs by community

The number of low birth weight births was by far highest among African Americans in Richmond, with 206 low birth weight babies born from 2000-2002 representing 46% of Contra Costa County's African American low birth weight babies.

African American mothers in Martinez, Pittsburg, Richmond and San Pablo had significantly higher rates than the County average. (Although Brentwood had the second highest rate, it was not statistically greater than the County average because of the small number of both low birth weight babies in this community.)

The rate of low birth weight births among

Whites was highest in San Pablo and Richmond (although neither showed statistically significant differences when compared to the County average). Greatest numbers were in Concord, Antioch and Walnut Creek.

The rate of low birth weight births among **Hispanic/Latinos** was highest in Pinole and Oakley (although neither showed statistically significant differences when compared to the County average). Greatest numbers were in Richmond, Concord and Antioch.

The rate of low birth weight births among **Asian/Pacific Islanders** was highest in Martinez and Walnut Creek (although only Walnut Creek showed a statistically significant difference when compared to the County average). Greatest numbers were in Concord, Walnut Creek, followed by Richmond and San Pablo - both tying for third.

What is low birth weight?

Infants weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 lbs 8 oz) are considered low birth weight. A healthy weight provides the baby's body with the strength it needs for survival. Levels of low birth weight are defined as the percentage of total births in a given population that are low birth weight.

Low birth weight infants are at high risk of illness, death and lasting health problems. For example, low birth weight babies need more intensive hospital care for problems such as respiratory illness or immaturity, which are often associated with infant death.


How to calculate the percentage and number of low birth weight infants

Percentages describe the proportion of low birth weight babies within a particular race/ethnic group, community or county.

The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of low birth weight infants that occur within a specific race/ethnic group, community or county by the total number of births in the county, then multiplying by 100.

Multi-racial or other categories were not included in this analysis due to small numbers.

The numbers show the actual number of low birth weight births over a three-year period.



Babies are more likely to be underweight if the mother:

- has high blood pressure or experiences lots of stress
- is older or very young
- had a short time period between pregnancies, or if the baby is born too early
- is pregnant with twins or triplets, or has had small infants before
- has not gained enough weight or was underweight before she became pregnant
- smokes or uses other substances that inhibit the baby's growth

Confidence intervals are available
 You may download and view all detailed tables with 95% confidence intervals, at http://cchealth.org/health_data/hospital_council/

Data Sources

In the analysis above, local data about low birth weight is derived from our Contra Costa County's Automated Vital Statistics System or AVSS, using information from birth certificates.

Statistics prepared by Contra Costa Health Services' Community Health Assessment, Planning & Evaluation Group: 7/04. Any analyses, interpretations or conclusions of the data, unless specified, have been reached by the author and are not from the CA Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics or the local AVSS registrar.

For more information see Maternal, Child & Adolescent Health in Contra Costa County: 1991-1999 at <http://www.cchealth.org/fmch> or call Contra Costa's Community Health Assessment, Planning & Evaluation (CHAPE) Group at (925) 313-6171.