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Indicators of the Metroscape: Low and Very Low Birthweight Babies

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Low and Very Low Birthweight Babies

by Liza Morehead

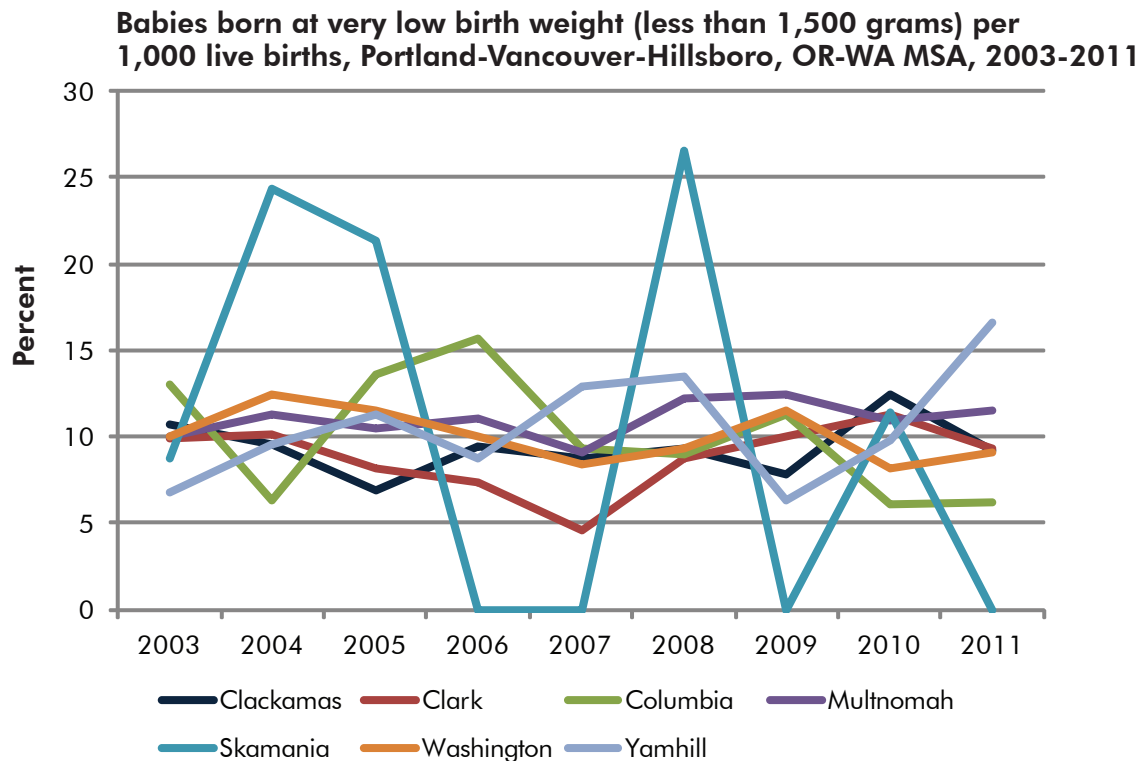
Babies born at low (1,500 – 2,499 grams) and very low birth rates (less than 1,500 grams) face increased risk of infection, impaired development, developmental delays, and infant death as compared to babies born at a normal weight. Low and very low birth weight is associated with fetal and perinatal mortality and morbidity. And, they are more likely to suffer from long term disabilities, including cerebral palsy and blindness.

Low birth weights can be influenced by a number of factors, including maternal and fetal health. Women who use tobacco, illegal and some prescription drugs, have poor nutrition, or consume alcohol while pregnant are at increased risk of giving birth to low weight babies. Chronic conditions including diabetes, heart defects, and

kidney disease can also increase a woman's risk of giving birth to a low weight baby.

Across the region, the rate of low birth weight babies has declined during the last decade. Multnomah saw the largest decline, 25.6%, from 65.4 per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 48.6 per 1,000 live births in 2011. Of the seven counties in the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA, two saw an increase in the rate of low birth weight babies. Between 2003 and 2011, the rate of low birth weight babies in Clark County (14.9%) and Skamania County (74.9%).

The rate of very low birth weight babies is also decreasing. Rates of very low birth weight babies decreased in Clackamas County (14%), Clark County (6%), Washington County (9%), Skamania County (100%) and Columbia County (52%).



Sources: Centers for Disease Control. Birthweight and gestation.; Oregon Health Authority, Vital Statistics. Oregon Birth Data.