

United States' premature birth rate continues to decline

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The March of Dimes Report Card compares each state's [preterm birth](#) rate with the goal set by the March of Dimes of lowering the rate to 9.6 percent of all [live births](#) by 2020. The report tracks states' progress towards lowering their preterm birth rates and assesses contributory factors.

According to the report, the U.S. preterm [birth rate](#) dropped for the fifth consecutive year in 2011, to 11.7 percent, with declines seen in every racial and ethnic group. The largest declines in [premature birth](#) occurred among babies born at 34 to 36 weeks of pregnancy. Vermont, Oregon,

New Hampshire, and Maine met the 9.6 percent preterm birth rate goal and consequently earned an "A" on their Report Cards. As a whole, the United States earned a "C" on the Report Card, and 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico saw improvements in their preterm birth rates in 2012. The improved rates are likely due to an increase in successful programs and interventions. The March of Dimes estimates potential savings of about \$3 billion in health care and costs to society from the reduction in premature births.

"These results demonstrate that many premature births can be prevented with the right policies and bold leadership," Jennifer L. Howse, Ph.D., president of the March of Dimes, said in a statement. "Our national progress in reducing premature births over the past five years shows that when [infant health](#) becomes a priority, babies benefit."

More information: [More Information](#)

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