

# Perinatal health risks increase in people with disabilities, finds study

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People reporting disabilities are more likely to have smoked during

pregnancy and have an increased risk for preterm birth and low birthweight, according to a study published online Sept. 21 in *Health Affairs*.

Willi Horner-Johnson, Ph.D., from Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, and colleagues analyzed data from the National Survey of Family Growth for 2011 to 2019 and compared characteristics for respondents with and without disability.

Of the respondents who had given birth, 19.5 percent reported a disability, which is higher than estimates reported in U.S. studies using diagnosis codes. The researchers found that respondents with disabilities were more likely to have smoked during pregnancy (19.0 versus 8.9 percent). Respondents with disabilities had an increased risk for [preterm birth](#) and [low birthweight](#) (risk ratios, 1.24 and 1.29, respectively) compared with those without disabilities.

"Our findings suggest that tracking of disparities associated with disability, as mandated by the Affordable Care Act, would be greatly facilitated by collecting self-reported disability data in clinical settings," the authors write. "Without these data, methods of identifying people with [disabilities](#) in the U.S. through [patient records](#) have substantial limitations and yield incomplete and potentially unrepresentative results."

**More information:** Willi Horner-Johnson et al, Perinatal Health Risks And Outcomes Among US Women With Self-Reported Disability, 2011–19, *Health Affairs* (2022). [DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00497](https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00497)

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