

# Shift toward shorter gestational age seen from 2014 to 2022

February 1 2024, by Elana Gotkine

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From 2014 to 2022, there was a shift toward shorter gestational age, according to the Jan. 31 [National Vital Statistics Reports](#), a publication from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Joyce A. Martin, M.P.H., and Michelle J.K. Osterman, from the National Center for Health Statistics in Hyattsville, Maryland, used data from all birth certificates for [singleton births](#) registered in the United States from 2014 to 2022 to examine the changes in the distribution of singleton births by [gestational age](#).

Gestational age was categorized as early [preterm](#) (less than 34 weeks), late preterm (34 to 36 weeks), total preterm (less than 37 weeks), early-term (37 to 38 weeks), full-term (39 to 40 weeks), and late- and postterm (41 weeks and later).

The researchers found that despite some fluctuations in most gestational age categories during the pandemic (2020 to 2022), there was a shift toward shorter gestational ages in trends from 2014 to 2022.

Increases of 12 and 20 percent were seen in preterm and early-term birth rates, respectively, while declines of six and 28 percent were seen in full-term and late- and postterm births, respectively. Across [maternal age](#) and [race](#) and Hispanic-origin groups, shifts for each gestational age category were similar. By single week of gestation at term, the largest change was for 37 weeks, which had a 42 percent increase.

"This report demonstrates a shift from 2014 through 2022 across gestational age categories, with the largest changes occurring among early-term births—particularly those delivered at 37 weeks—and among late- and postterm births," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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