

# Behind the Numbers



Go to pages 5, 6, and 11 for more discussion.

## HEALTHY PEOPLE

The FCFC's approach to achieving the desired community outcomes includes looking “behind the numbers” as part of our effort to move the community indicators in their desired directions (see pages 3-4). For the Healthy People outcome we have looked at Low Birth Weight (*2005 Report*), Access to Healthcare (*2006 Report*) and Obesity Prevention (*2007 Report*). In this 10th Anniversary Report we revisit and update some of these analyses, and we show how they contribute to ongoing community conversations.

### From the discussion of Low Birth Weight in the *2005 Report*:

Preterm delivery (before 37 weeks of gestation, at least three weeks before the “due date”) has been called “the principal cause of low birth weight in developed countries.”<sup>1</sup> Consistent with the rise in the low birth weight rate has been the steady increase in the percentage of babies born preterm in the United States. Fig. 1 shows that the rate in 2004 was 33% higher than the rate in 1981.<sup>2</sup>

### UPDATE:

Fig. 1 shows that the rate of preterm birth in the U.S. has continued to rise, and in 2006 (the most recent data available now) it was more than 36% higher than it was in 1981.<sup>3</sup> The Low Birth Weight Registry (see pgs. 5-7), launched after the *2005 Report* was published, will help us examine this and many other factors contributing to low birth weight.

### From the discussion of Obesity Prevention in the *2007 Report*:

For children and adolescents, the term “overweight” refers to a BMI (body-mass index) at or above the gender and age-specific 95th percentile points on growth charts prepared by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)... and is typically used for assessing trends for children and youth rather than obesity. Obese is generally not defined for children and adolescents. At risk for overweight is a term used for children and adolescents and refers to a

BMI at or above the gender- and age-specific 85th percentile on the CDC charts but below the 95th percentile.

### UPDATE:

Recently, an expert committee recommended using the same cut points for children and adolescents but changing the terminology by replacing “overweight” with “obese” and “at risk of overweight” with “overweight.” (The committee also added an additional cut point—BMI at or above the 99th percentile—to define “severe obesity.”)<sup>4</sup> Using these new definitions, a 2007 survey of U.S. high school students revealed that 13.0% are obese and 15.8% are overweight.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the definition, it is clear that the County-Wide Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative (see pgs. 5-7) is quite timely.

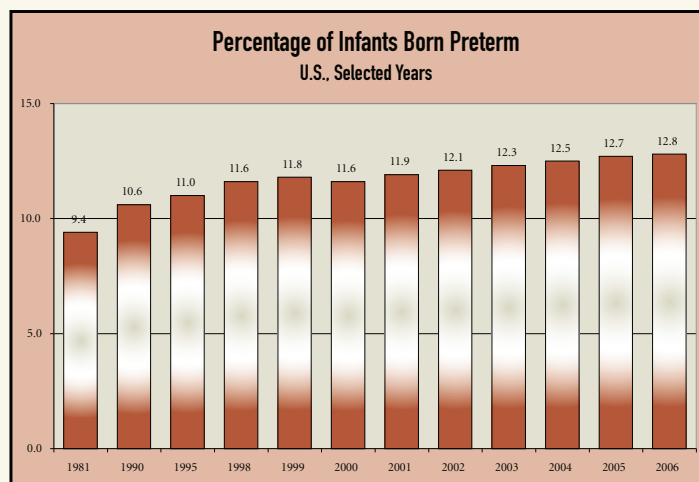


Figure 1. The percentage of infants born preterm has been rising steadily in the United States, with the drop in 2000 being the only decrease since 1992 (not shown).

<sup>1</sup> Nigel S. Paneth, “The Problem of Low Birth Weight,” Low Birth Weight, from *The Future of Children*, a publication of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, vol. 5, no. 1 - Spring 1995.

<sup>2</sup> National Vital Statistics Reports; multiple issues. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Sutton PD, Ventura SJ, et al. Births: Final data for 2006. National vital statistics reports; vol 57 no 7. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2009.

<sup>4</sup> F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America, 2008. Trust for America’s Health. August 2008. Report available at [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance - United States, 2007.” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 57, no. SS-4 (2008): 1-136.