Background

Last reauthorized in 2018 and expiring in 2023, the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act represents the federal government’s commitment to preventing preterm birth and its consequences, the leading contributor to infant death.

Preterm birth, along with low birth weight babies, make up the second leading cause of infant deaths after birth defects.

The health consequences of preterm birth include developmental delays, chronic respiratory programs, and vision and hearing impairment. Having a preterm baby impacts families emotionally and financially.

Preterm-related causes account for 35.8% of infant deaths in the U.S. and the annual societal economic cost (medical, education, and lost productivity) is an estimated $25.2B.

Rather than having one cause, preterm birth seems to be triggered by multiple, interacting biologic and environmental factors. We do know that a history of preterm birth, multiple gestations, and certain uterine and/or cervical problems are the strongest risk factors for preterm birth.

10.5%  In 2021, there were 383,082 preterm births, representing 10.5% of live births.
Facts on preterm birth

U.S. preterm birth grade:  
D+

U.S. preterm birth rate:  
10.5%

Aggregate 2019-2021 preterm birth rates are shown for each of the five bridged racial and ethnic groups. The racial/ethnic group with the highest rate is compared to the combined rate for all other racial/ethnic groups.