

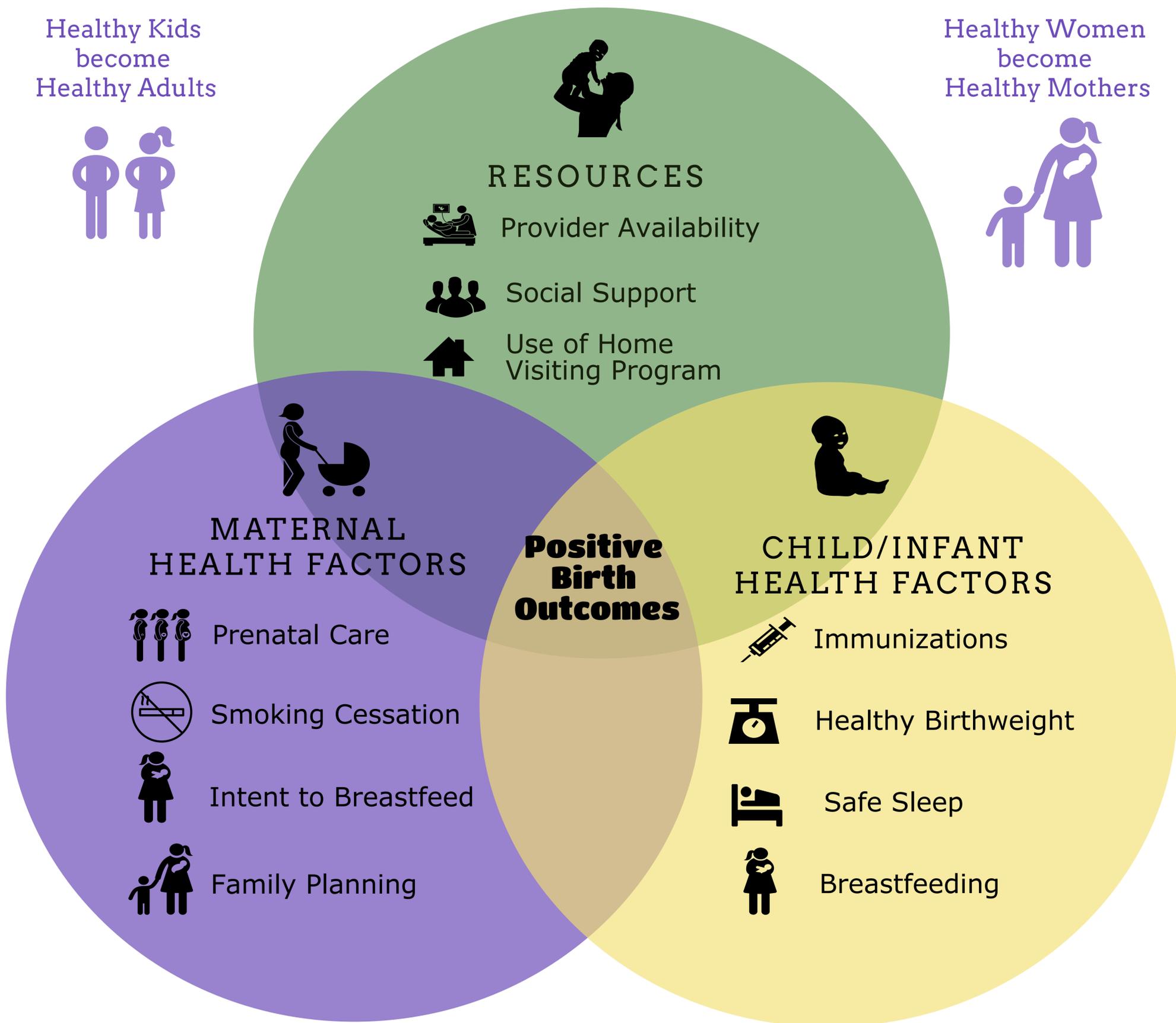
Health Equity Brief

Maternal and Child Health in Allegheny County



Issue 1, May 2018

How Can We Achieve Positive Birth/Child Outcomes?

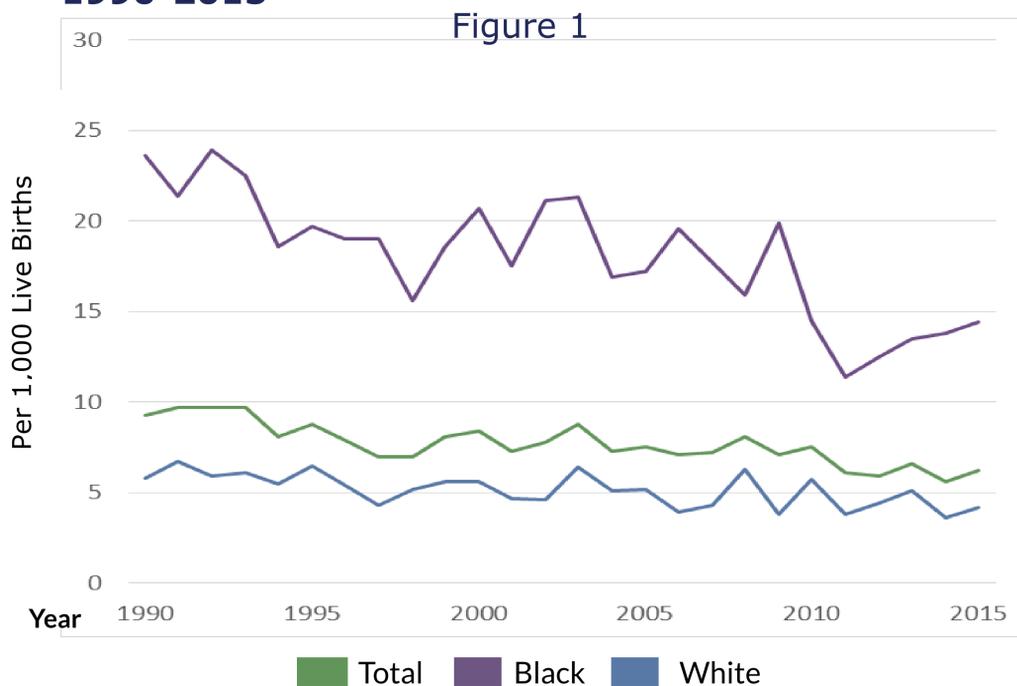


What Influences Maternal and Child Health?

Maternal health factors, such as seeking prenatal care, engaging in positive behaviors (e.g., healthy diet, not smoking, and intending to breastfeed) and seeking outside resources like family planning services can enable moms to plan for a healthy birth. After the baby is born, positive behaviors such as breastfeeding, practicing safe sleep habits, and getting regular check-ups and immunizations with the pediatrician can improve infant/child health outcomes.

Maternal Health Factors

Infant Mortality in Allegheny County, by Race, 1990-2015

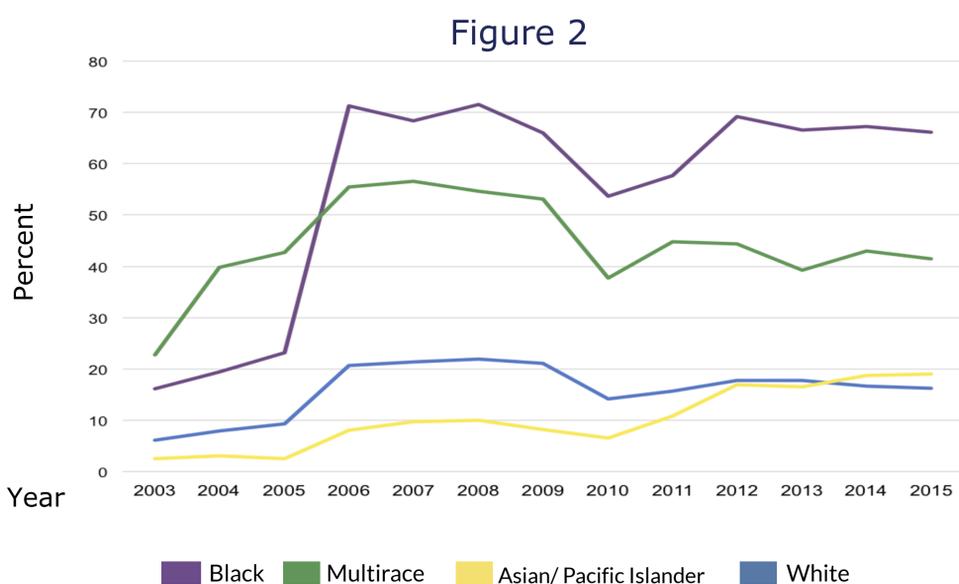


The infant mortality rate is much higher among Black infants, compared to White infants (Figure 1).

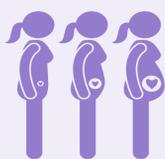
Resources are available to help counter this infant mortality problem. Access to these resources are influenced by social determinants of health, including neighborhood and social factors, and economic stability. Health equity aims to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

Among mothers in Allegheny County who received Medicaid insurance (Figure 2), a higher percentage of births were among Black mothers compared to White and Asian mothers.

Percent Births to Mothers on Medicaid, by Race, in Allegheny County, 2003-2015



Resources and Actions



Prenatal Care:

Early prenatal care should be initiated in the first trimester of pregnancy to detect and intervene on potential health problems. Data show that 76% of White mothers initiated prenatal care in the first trimester, compared to only 54% of Black mothers. Fortunately, overall, >95% of pregnant mothers have received some prenatal care.



Smoking Cessation:

Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of poor birth outcomes. In Allegheny County, 15% of mothers reported smoking at least one cigarette during pregnancy. Nearly 19% of Black mothers reported smoking before and/or after pregnancy, compared to 15% of White mothers. *Reference: The infant mortality birth cohort study: <http://www.achd.net/biostats/pubs/pdf/2011-2015-Infant-Mortality-Report.pdf>*



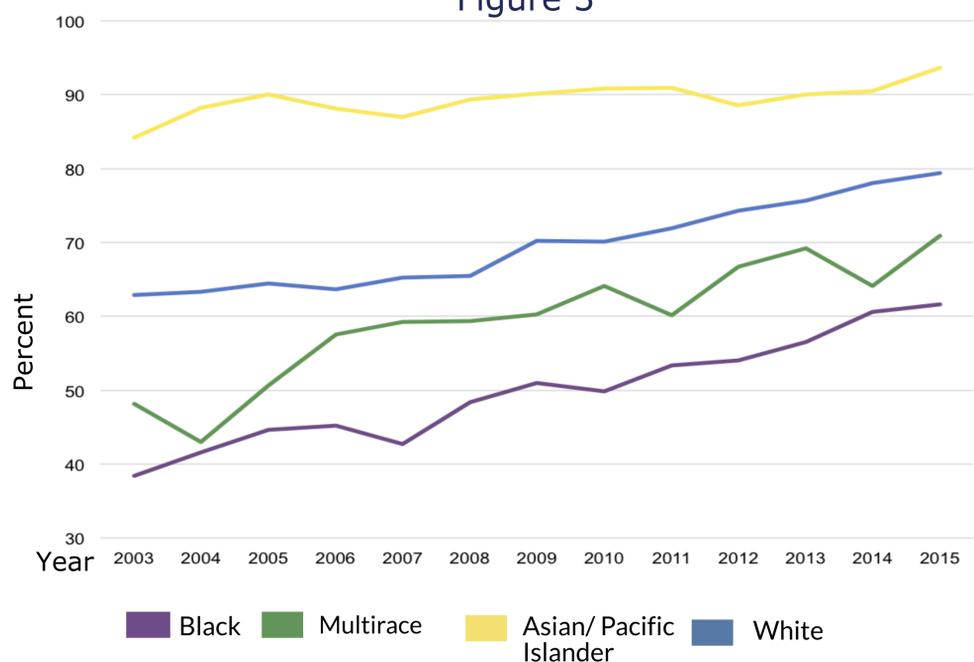
Social Support:

Mothers can find social support through family and friends, and through home visiting programs available in Allegheny County: <http://www.achd.net/hvn/>. Home visiting helps clients, navigate services and address challenges. Home visiting is associated with positive outcomes for children and families.

Intent to Breastfeed

Percent Who Intend to Breastfeed by Race in Allegheny County, 2003-2015

Figure 3

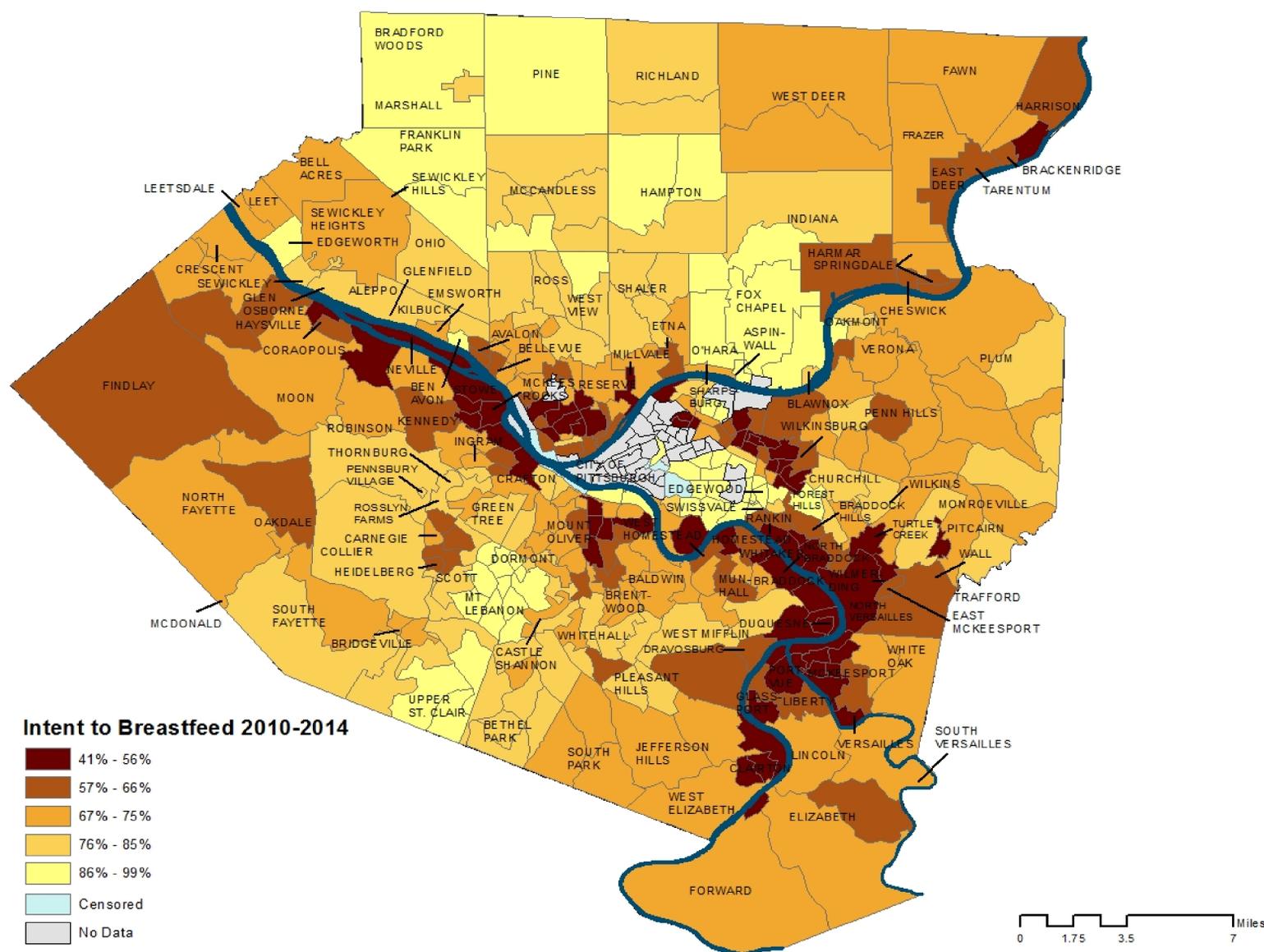


Breastfeeding has many known health benefits for mothers, infants, and children. Many women intend to breastfeed their infant when it is born. In fact, intention to breastfeed has increased over time for all women in Allegheny County (Figure 3).

Despite this increase, disparities still exist. Asian/Pacific Islander women have the highest rates of intention -- by 2015, over 90% intended to breastfeed. Following Asian/Pacific Islander women, White women have higher rates of intention to breastfeed, compared to Multirace and Black women. Furthermore, women living in suburban areas had higher rates than in the City of Pittsburgh (Figure 4).

Geographic Differences in Intent to Breastfeed in Allegheny County

Figure 4



Breastfeeding Rates*

Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health show that in Allegheny County, in 2014, 77% of mothers breastfed their infants. By race/ethnicity, the data were similar to trends for intent to breastfeed with Asian/Pacific Islander women having the highest rates of breastfeeding (90%) and Black women the lowest (71%). Breastfeeding throughout the first year of life is a challenge for many women, and duration data show that, in Pennsylvania, the percentage of mothers who ever breastfed (73%) drops to 48% at 6 months and 32% at 12 months.

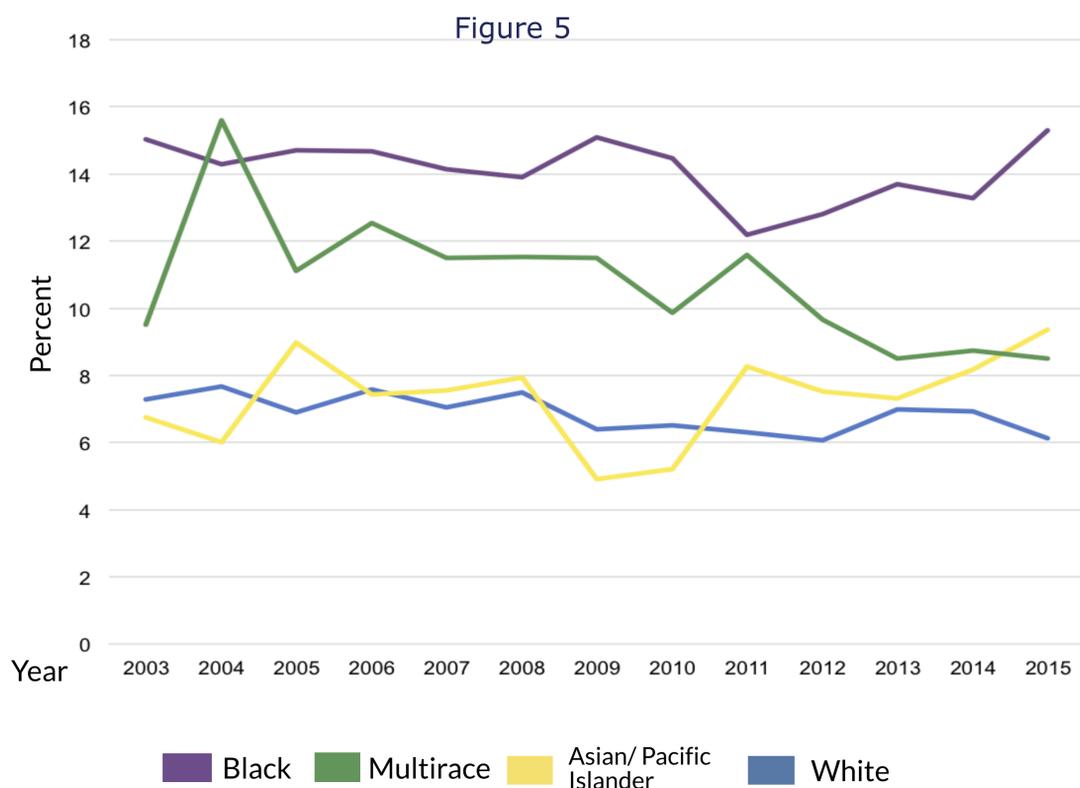
*Reference PA Department of Health- Division of Health Informatics-Family Health

Infant Health Factors



Birthweight

Percent Low Birthweight Births, by Race, in Allegheny County, 2003-2015

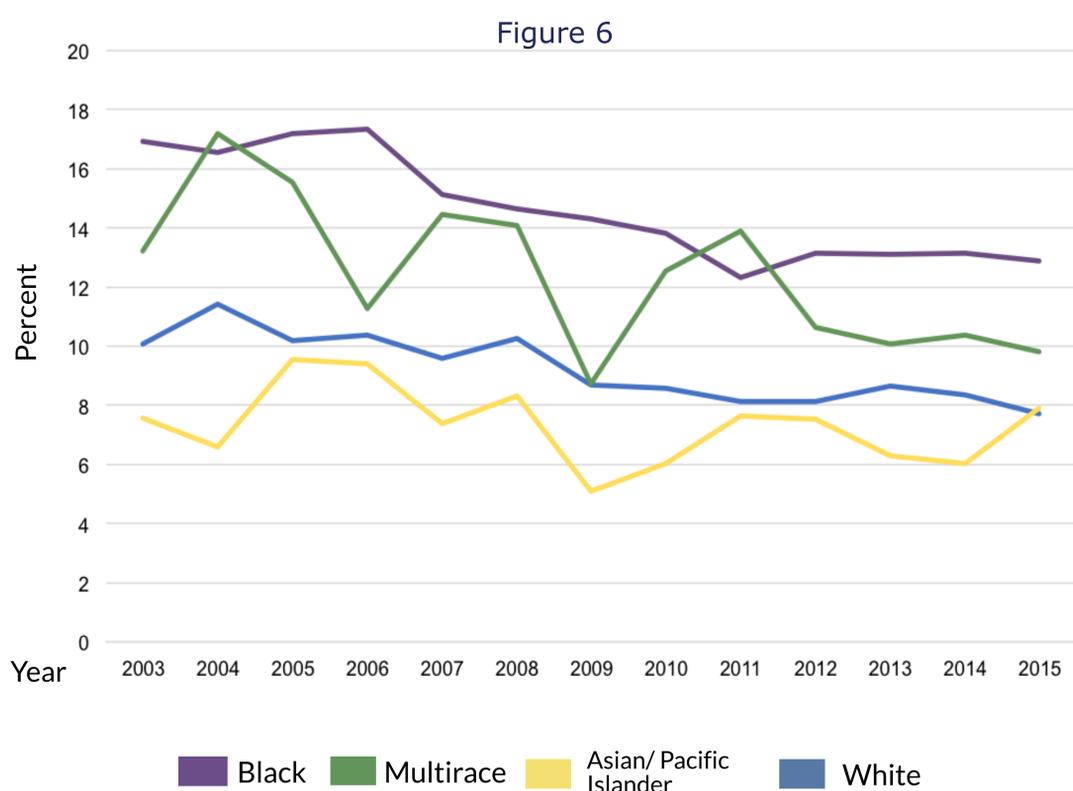


Birthweight is a powerful predictor of infant health and risk of premature death. Low birthweight is defined as an infant born between 1,500 to 2,499 grams, compared to normal weight infants born at 2,500 grams or greater. A higher percentage of Black infants are born with low birthweight, compared to White and Asian/Pacific Islander infants (Figure 5).



Preterm Birth

Percent Preterm Births, by Race, Allegheny County, 2003-2015



Preterm birth is defined as an infant born at <37 weeks of gestation. It is another poor birth outcome that can influence an infant's health. Preterm infants are often born with low birthweight. Preterm birth is also higher among Black infants (Figure 6). Areas of Allegheny County most affected by Preterm births are communities in:

East Pittsburgh (e.g., Wilkinsburg and Hazelwood)

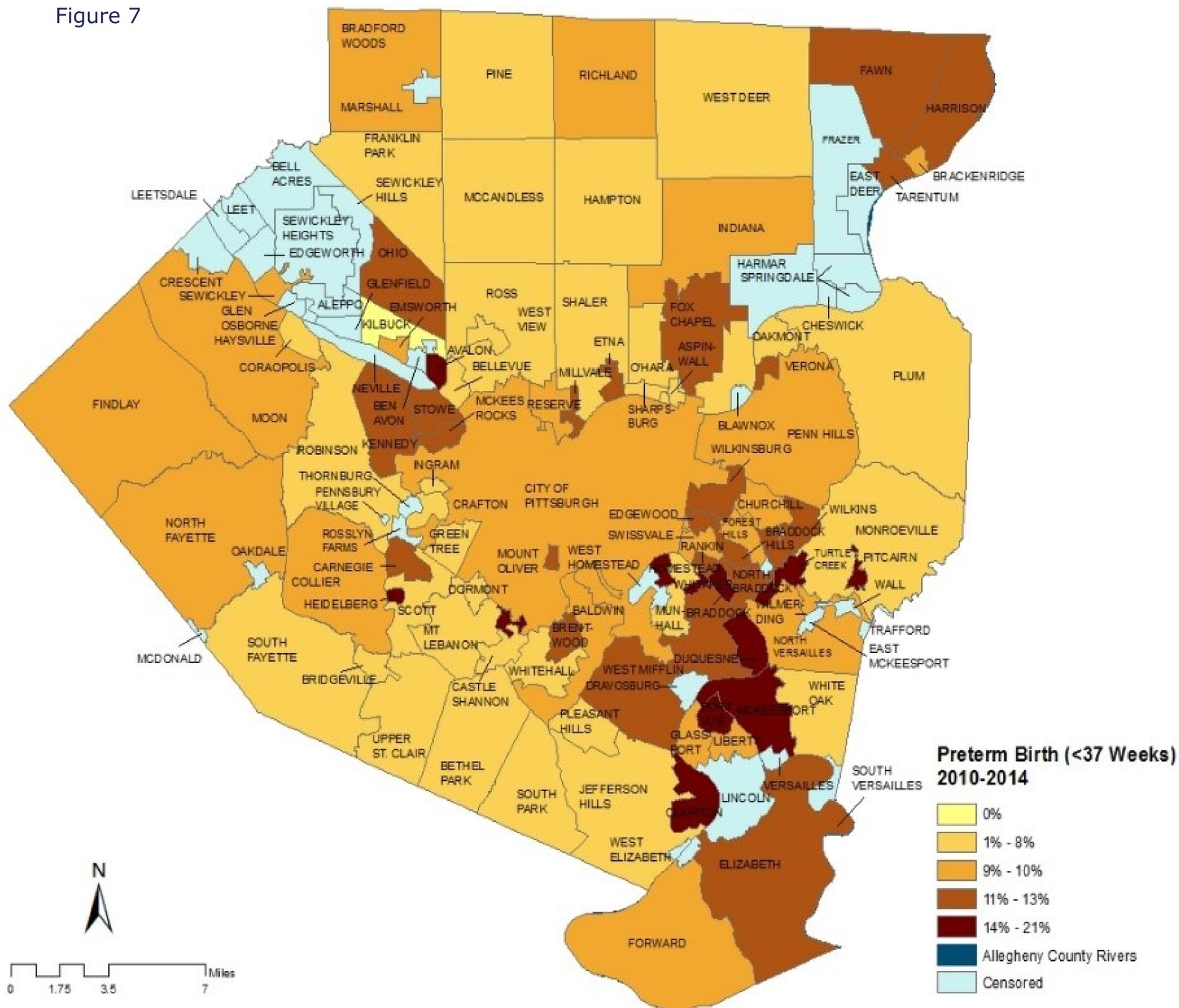
The Mon Valley (e.g., Braddock, Duquesne, and McKeesport)

A few communities in the West of Allegheny County (e.g., McKees Rocks) (Figure 7).

Reference: The infant mortality birth cohort study: <http://www.achd.net/biostats/pubs/pdf/2011-2015-Infant-Mortality-Report.pdf>

Geographic Differences in Preterm Births in Allegheny County, 2010-2014

Figure 7



Reference: Data for Figures 1-7 are provided by the Allegheny County Health Department, Office of Epidemiology and Biostatistics through a cooperative agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Health which requires the following disclaimer: "These data were supplied by the State Health Data Center, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Health specifically disclaims responsibility for any analyses, interpretations or conclusions."

Infant Health Factors (continued)



Safe Sleep

Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) is more common among Black infants in Allegheny County (2011-2015), with rates of 2.3 per 1,000 births among Blacks, compared to 0.7 per 1,000 births among Whites. Fortunately, safe sleep practices, such as placing the infant on his/her back to sleep in a crib without anything like blankets, pillows, stuffed animals or other soft items can prevent SUID.

For more safe sleep practices see: <https://www.safesleepacademy.org/parents/abcs-of-safe-sleep>



Immunizations

Keeping up-to-date on recommended immunizations is an important component of a child's health. Be sure to get your child all recommended immunizations by age 2. For ACHD's Immunization Clinic, visit:

<http://www.achd.net/infectd/clinic.html>

Takeaways



Disparities

In Allegheny County, there are marked disparities in infant mortality and infant health factors for Black infants, compared to White infants.



Prevention

Positive birth and infant health outcomes can be achieved by preventive practices, such as seeking prenatal care, engaging in healthy behaviors, and mobilizing resources (such as social support and home visiting programs).



Health

Healthy women become healthy mothers. There are many ways that mothers and families can help their infants to have positive birth outcomes and a healthy birth year.

What is Allegheny County Doing to Close the Gaps?



The Plan for a Healthy Allegheny (PHA), developed by a working group of professional and community members in the county, outlines strategies which attempt to address maternal child health discussed in this brief.

Goal: Reduce morbidity and mortality by improving the health and quality of life of women, infants, children and caretakers, as well as their families, especially in vulnerable communities.

4.2.1-6 Increase the proportion of mothers with intent to breastfeed when leaving the hospital and reduce disparity between White and Black populations.

4.3.1-9 Reduce the proportion of preterm, low birth weight, and very low birthweight births.

4.4.1-5 Reduce the overall infant mortality rate and the disparity in rates between White and Black populations.

4.5.1-3 Link actions existing systems for families with children aged pregnancy to eight years to address unmet needs in children's health.



Action Items

- Attend regular health check-ups, choose healthier food options, increase your physical activity, avoid tobacco use, and limit or avoid alcohol use.
- Plan for your pregnancy so you can be sure your body is ready. Take folic acid. Make a birth plan. Attend prenatal appointments regularly.
- Follow your child's well-child appointment schedule. Protect infants and children with immunizations.
- Keep baby in a safe sleep space at all times. Avoid laying your baby on their tummy to sleep. To learn more, visit the Cribs for Kid's Safe Sleep Academy at: <https://www.safesleepacademy.org/>
- Give your baby the healthy foods they need to grow and develop. Breast milk provides the most nutrients for baby. Enroll in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program to receive supplemental nutritious items for you and your baby. Call (412) 350-5801 to enroll.
- Learn about, and use the home visiting resources available for women and children 0-6 years in Allegheny County.
- Call the Allegheny Link at 1-866-730-2368. Allegheny County Breastfeeding Helpline at (412) 687-2263
- Conduct health impact assessments to analyze the impacts of public decisions on maternal and child health. (www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm)

Resources & More Information

PHA Dashboard



<http://www.achd.net/aci/index.html>

Healthy Pregnancy



<https://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/>

Healthy Children



<https://www.healthychildren.org/>

Contact Us



412-687-2243 (ACHD)
www.achd.net