
Children and Family Health Services

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INTERPREGNANCY INTERVAL: INTERVAL SINCE LAST LIVE BIRTH, HAMILTON COUNTY

This issue of the Maternal and Child Health Report focuses on the time interval between consecutive births in 1992-1994 among Hamilton County women. The time interval between births is an important marker of health among women of childbearing age: shorter intervals are often associated with ineffective family planning and are related to some adverse pregnancy outcomes. We present data on the interval (in months) between singleton deliveries in 1992, 1993, and 1994 and the reported last live birth, by race of mother. The items 'Date of Last Birth' and 'Date of Birth' on the birth certificates were used to calculate the time intervals between births.

The National Center for Health Statistics reports the percent of second- and higher-order births born within 17 months of a last live birth, which is generally considered a short interpregnancy interval. In the United States in 1993, 12.5 percent of all second- and higher-order live births were born within 17 months of a previous live birth. In addition, 11.1 percent of all second- and higher-order births to white women and 18.4 percent of all second- and higher-order births to black women were born within 17 months.¹ These figures reflect declines from 1992; one explanation for this decline is that women are increasing the time interval between their births.

Figure 1 shows the percent of Hamilton County women who delivered singletons in 1992-1994 within 17 months of delivering their last live infant. For all races combined, the percent declined across the three years from 17.0 percent in 1992 to 14.1 percent in 1994. A similar decline is demonstrated across the three years for white women (12.0 to 10.9 percent) and black women (27.4 to 21.0 percent). Similar to the national data, data for Hamilton County shows that time intervals between consecutive births are increasing.

The importance of the time interval is underscored by the association between short intervals and adverse pregnancy outcomes, including low birthweight and preterm birth. A recent study of black and white women in military families (who had access to high quality health care at no cost) investigated the relationship between short interpregnancy interval and low birthweight and preterm delivery. Among black women, an interpregnancy interval (calculated in the study as the time interval between delivery and next conception) of less than nine months was associated with a significantly greater prevalence of preterm delivery and low birthweight. Among white women, intervals of less than three months were linked to a greater prevalence of prematurity and low birthweight.²

One possible explanation for the observed relationship between short interpregnancy interval and adverse pregnancy outcome is that in the preceding pregnancy various nutrients may have been depleted and not fully restored for the current pregnancy.³

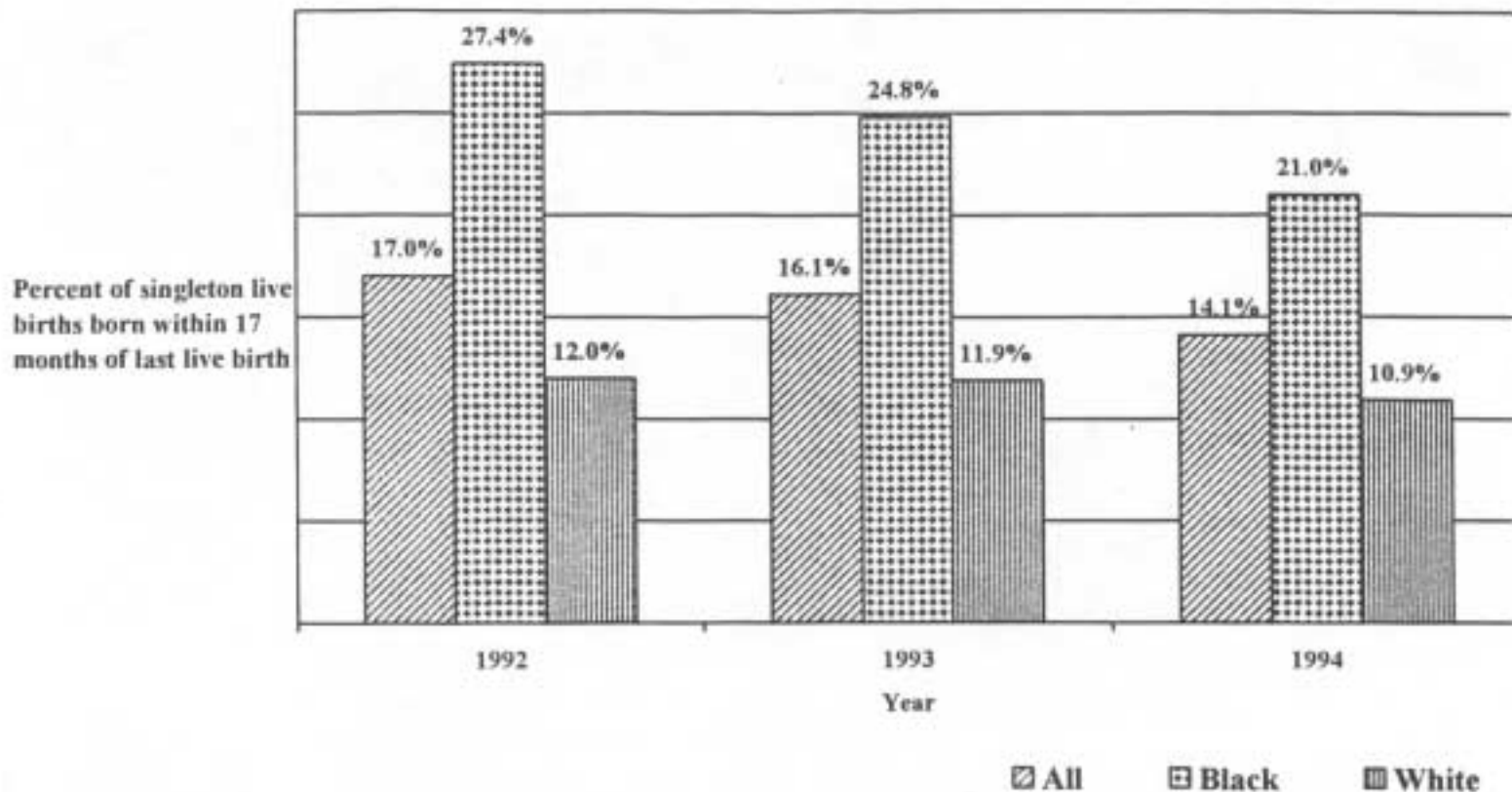
¹ Ventura, S.J. et al. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 44(3): 1995.

² Rawlings, J.S. et al. *New England J Medicine* 332(2):1995.

³ Winkvist, A. et al. *Am J Public Health* 82:1992.

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Figure 1. Interval since last live birth, by race of mother and year: Hamilton County*.



*Source of data: Ohio Department of Health data files, 1992-1994.