Premature births (before 37 weeks) often result in low birth weight babies (less than 2,500g, 5.8 pounds). These babies can suffer from serious medical conditions because their bodies have not fully developed. Sometimes these problems are too severe, and the baby is unable to survive. These conditions can also lead to developmental delays and learning disabilities as the baby matures.

Black women are twice as likely to have a low birth weight baby compared to White women. Women who smoke during pregnancy are nearly twice as likely to have a low birth weight baby compared to women who do not smoke. The percent of babies born prematurely has not changed since 2013. Black women are more likely to have a preterm birth compared to White women.