

Comparing Globally Helps Locally

Using International Comparisons for Advocacy and Education

Rebecca Russell, MSPH
Research Analyst

March of Dimes, Perinatal Data Center

National Conference on Health Statistics
August 18, 2010

March of Dimes Mission

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality.

We carry out this mission through:

- research;
- community services;
- education;
- advocacy.

Advocacy

March of Dimes public affairs focus on national and state public health policy and programs that affect women of childbearing age, infants and children.

Priorities:

1. Access to health care for women of childbearing age, infants and children
2. Research and policies to prevent prematurity, birth defects and infant mortality
3. Prevention and treatment programs to improve maternal, infant and child health
4. Institutional concerns for tax-exempt organizations.

Global Programs

Building on its extensive experience in care and prevention of birth defects and prematurity through education, community intervention and advocacy in the United States, the March of Dimes is working to improve the health of mothers and babies worldwide.

Strategies:

- Strengthening birth defects and prematurity surveillance.
- Enhancing professional education and research.
- Expanding capacity for community action.
- Increasing public awareness.

Collaborations and partnerships are critical to our global health strategy.

March of Dimes National Prematurity Campaign, 2003-2020



March of Dimes

Prematurity Campaign (Phase I: 2003-2008)

GOALS

1. Raise public awareness of prematurity
2. Decrease the rate of prematurity in the U.S.

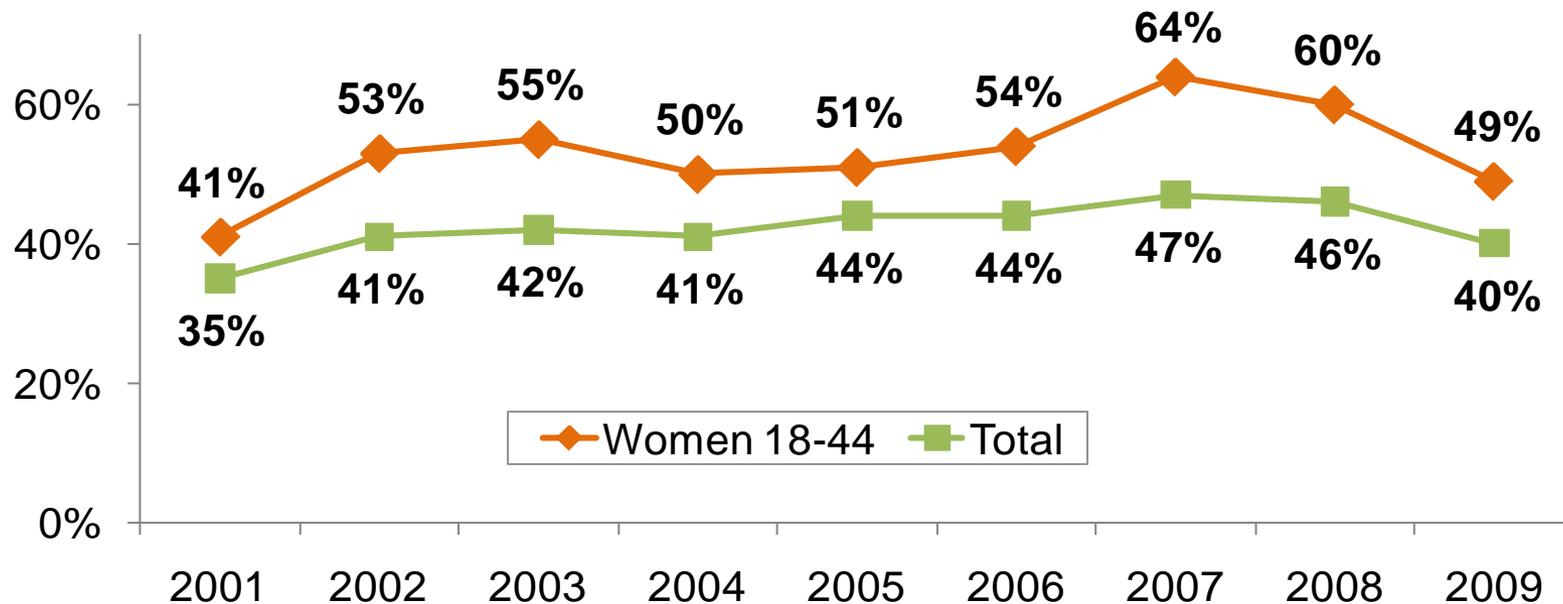
AIMS:

- Generate concern and action
- Educate women about risk reduction
- Provide affected families with support
- Assist MDs and RNs
- Encourage research investment
- Expand access to health coverage

Campaign Goal 1:

Raise public awareness of the problem of prematurity

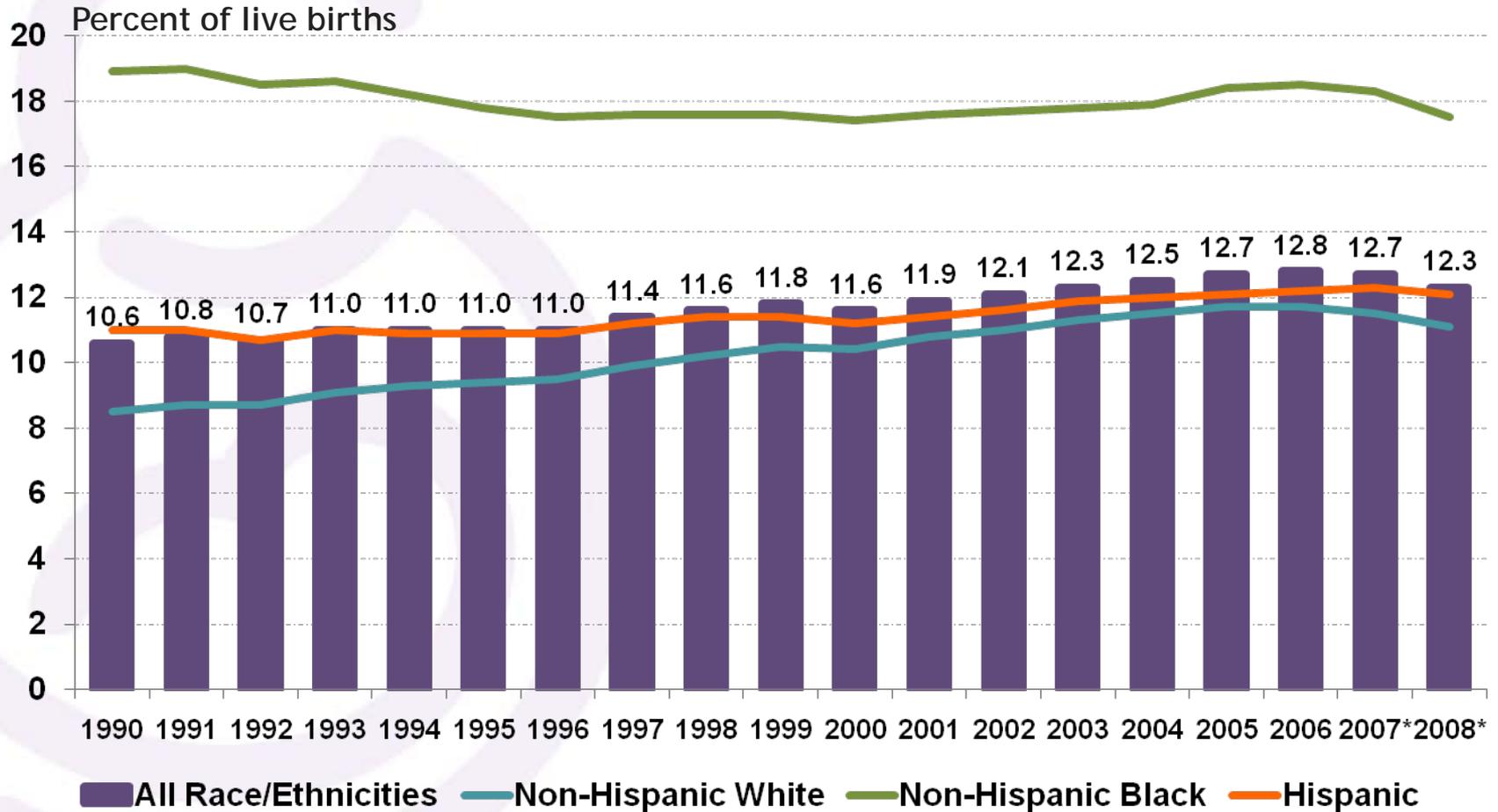
Percent saying premature birth is a very or extremely serious problem:



Source: March of Dimes National Brand Study, Gallup Inc, 2010.

Preterm Birth

by Maternal Race/Ethnicity, United States, 1990-2008



*Preliminary data

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data, 2007-2008 preliminary data

Prepared by March of Dimes Perinatal Data Center, 2010

Prematurity Campaign

March of Dimes National Board Resolution

RESOLVED, To declare “**Prematurity Prevention**” a **global Campaign** and **extend the Campaign to 2020**; to retain the goals of 15% reduction in rate and increased awareness for the United States; to set global targets by 2010; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, To **assume a more outspoken public stance** on Issues directly related to prematurity prevention; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, To **focus on three critical investment opportunities** and intervention targets with a three year horizon:

- **Accelerate research**
- **Expand Direct service to NICU affected families**
- **Develop Community Intervention Programs**

- **Adopted March 28, 2008**

Benefits of Using International Statistics

- **Advocacy**
 - Importance of issue
 - Highlight need
- **Create Awareness**
 - Domestic
 - International

Promotion of NCHS Report: PeriStats website



International Comparisons - Infant Mortality Rates¹: 2006

International Infant Mortality		
Rank ²	Country	Rate
1	Hong Kong	1.8
2	Japan	2.6
2	Singapore	2.6
4	Finland	2.8
4	Sweden	2.8
6	Norway	3.2
7	Czech Republic	3.3
7	Portugal	3.3
9	Austria	3.6
10	Greece	3.7
10	Ireland	3.7
12	Denmark	3.8
12	France	3.8
12	Germany	3.8
12	Spain	3.8
16	Israel	4.3
17	Netherland	4.4
17	Switzerland	4.4
19	Scotland	4.5

International Infant Mortality		
Rank ²	Country	Rate
20	Australia	4.7
21	England and Wales	5.0
22	Northern Ireland	5.1
23	New Zealand	5.2
24	Cuba	5.3
25	Hungary	5.7
26	Poland	6.0
27	Slovakia	6.6
28	United States	6.7
29	Chile	7.6
30	Costa Rica	9.6
31	Russian Federation	10.2
32	Romania	13.9

- In 2006, the United States infant mortality rate (6.7 per 1,000 live births) ranked 28th among selected countries.

- The United States infant mortality rate was more than 3 times as high as the infant mortality rate in Hong Kong (1.8 per 1,000 live births), the country with the lowest reported rate in 2006.

Footnote: Some of the variation in infant mortality rates (IMRs) is due to differences among countries in distinguishing between fetal and infant deaths.



MOD Response to NCHS Report

Promotion of report through:

- PeriStats website
- Media coverage
 - Press release
 - Interviews
 - High volume of media placements mentioning NCHS report and MOD

NCHS Data Brief ■ No. 23 ■ November 2009

Behind International Rankings of Infant Mortality: How the United States Compares with Europe

Marian F. MacDorman, Ph.D., and T.J. Mathews, M.S.

Key findings

Data from the United States' Linked Birth/Infant Death Data Set and the European Perinatal Health Report

- Infant mortality rates for preterm (less than 37 weeks of gestation) infants are lower in the United States than in most European countries; however, infant mortality rates for infants born at 37 weeks of gestation or more are higher in the United States than in most European countries.
- One in 8 births in the United States were born preterm, compared with 1 in 18 births in Ireland and Finland.
- If the United States had Sweden's distribution of births by gestational age, nearly 8,000 infant deaths would be averted each year and the U.S. infant mortality rate would be one-third lower.
- The main cause of the United States' high infant mortality rate when compared with Europe is the very high percentage of preterm births in the United States.

Infant mortality is an important indicator of the health of a nation, and the recent stagnation (since 2000) in the U.S. infant mortality rate has generated concern among researchers and policy makers. The percentage of preterm births in the United States has risen 36% since 1984 (1). In this report we compare infant mortality rates between the United States and Europe. We also compare two factors that determine the infant mortality rate—gestational age-specific infant mortality rates and the percentage of preterm births. U.S. data are from the Linked Birth/Infant Death Data Set (2,3), and European data for 2004 are from the recently published *European Perinatal Health Report* (4). We also examine requirements for reporting a live birth among countries to assess the possible effect of reporting differences on infant mortality data.

Keywords: infant mortality • international comparisons • preterm birth • gestational age-specific infant mortality rates

In 2005, the United States ranked 30th in infant mortality.

Figure 1. Infant mortality rates, selected countries, 2005

Country	Rate per 1,000 live births
Singapore	2.1
Sweden	2.4
Hong Kong	2.4
Japan	2.8
Ireland	3.1
Norway	3.4
Czech Republic	3.4
Portugal	3.5
Belgium	3.5
France	3.5
Germany	3.5
Ireland	3.5
Spain	3.5
Switzerland	3.5
Austria	3.5
Denmark	3.5
Iceland	3.5
Italy	3.5
Netherlands	3.5
England and Wales	3.5
Australia	3.5
New Zealand	3.5
Scotland	3.5
Canada	3.5
Hungary	3.5
Chile	3.5
Northern Ireland	3.5
United States	6.9
Slovakia	6.9

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE®

Promotion of NCHS Report: March of Dimes Press Release

The screenshot shows the March of Dimes website with the following elements:

- Header:** "march of dimes" logo, "View All Chapters | Find Your Local Chapter" with a search box for "enter zip code".
- Navigation:** "search" box, "PROFESSIONALS & RESEARCHERS", "PREGNANCY & NEWBORN", "HOW YOU CAN HELP", "ABOUT US".
- Left Sidebar:** "Our Mission", "History of Success", "News Desk" (highlighted), "National Ambassadors", "Careers", "Annual Report 2009", "Advocacy", "Newsletter Archive", "March of Dimes Heroes", "View All", "RELATED WEBSITES" (En Español, March for Babies, Prematurity Campaign).
- Main Content:** "ABOUT US" header, "NEWS DESK" sub-header, "Drop In Early Births Would Mean Fewer Infant Deaths" article title, author contact info (Todd P. Dezen, Elizabeth Lynch), and the article text: "March of Dimes Calls for Research to Prevent Preterm Birth".
- Right Sidebar:** "DONATE" button, "SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER" button, "Articles for parents, news, personal stories, and more!", "SUBSCRIBE >" button.

“March of Dimes Calls for Research to Prevent Preterm Birth”

Interpretation of Rankings: News Articles

Dr. Alan Fleishman, medical director at the March of Dimes, said the finding “is an indictment of the way we delivery health care in the United States, and it’s a reiteration of prematurity as the No. 1 public health problem in America.”

“The quality of neonatal intensive care is superb,” [Dr. Fleishman] said. “We know how to rescue babies who are born very tiny, but what we don’t do well is prevent prematurity. Reasons for this, he said, include a lack of universal access to health care for women of childbearing age or pregnant women of any age. “That’s a tremendous difference with our European friends,” Fleishman said.”

“The suggestion that we would decrease the number of deaths by 33 percent if our gestational age distribution was similar to Sweden is a dramatic way of pointing out this is really serious,” Fleishman said.

NCHS Linked Birth/Infant Death Report

“What remains concerning is when you compare the rate of infant mortality in the United States to the 32 other industrialized countries, we still rank very low. It’s very disquieting for the rates of infant mortality in our country to still be as high as they are.”

*--Jennifer L. Howse,
President, March of Dimes*



Bloomberg Businessweek
Available on the iPad | Home | Finance | Technology | In

EXECUTIVE HEALTH April 30, 2010, 16:00 EST text s

U.S. Infant Deaths on the Decline

But the U.S. still fares worse than many other countries, CDC experts say

By Steven Reinberg
HealthDay Reporter



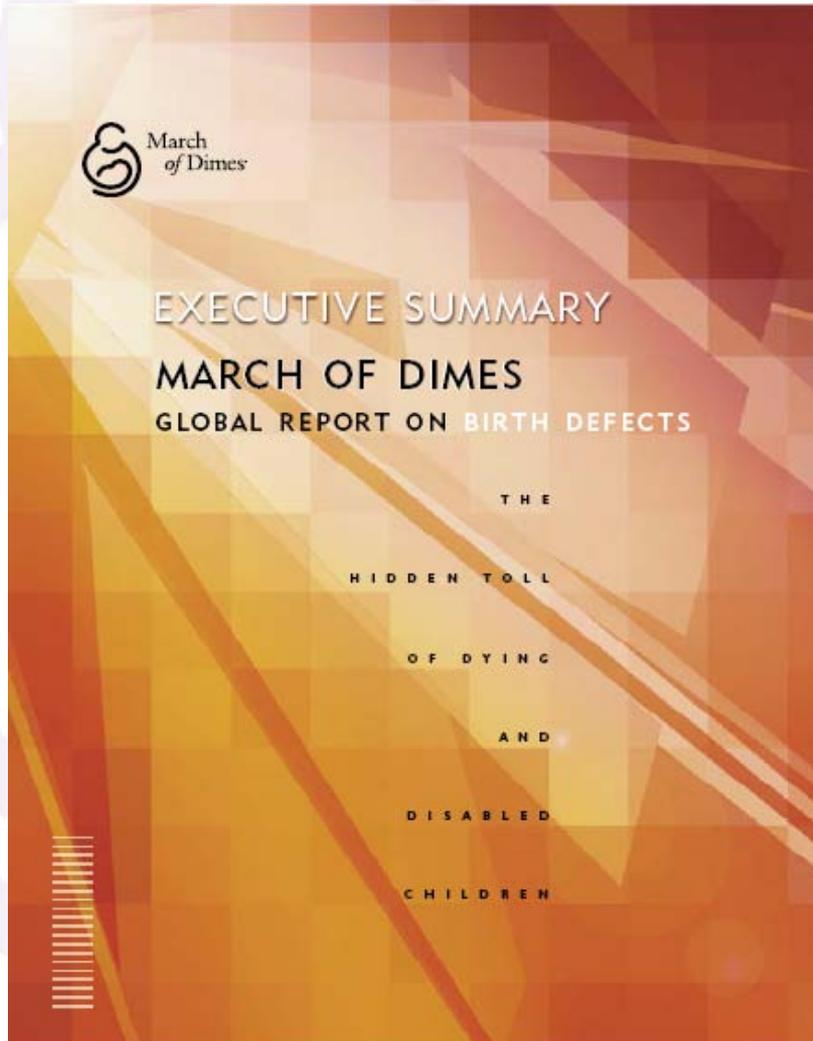
FRIDAY, April 30 (HealthDay News) -- In 2006, the latest year for which figures are available, about seven infants died for every 1,000 born in the United States, a 3 percent drop from 2005 and the lowest infant death rate since 1995, U.S. health officials announced Friday.

Although the drop in infant mortality was significant, the United States still ranks near the bottom of 32 other industrialized countries when it comes to infant deaths, according to a new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics.

LIFESTYLE
[Housing Markets That Strongest by 2014](#)
[America's Strongest H Markets in 2014](#)
[The Electric Car Might Perfect Second Ride](#)
[Weight Gain Eroding Ar Quality of Life](#)
[Junk Debt 'Bubblelicio Approach Par: Credit M](#)

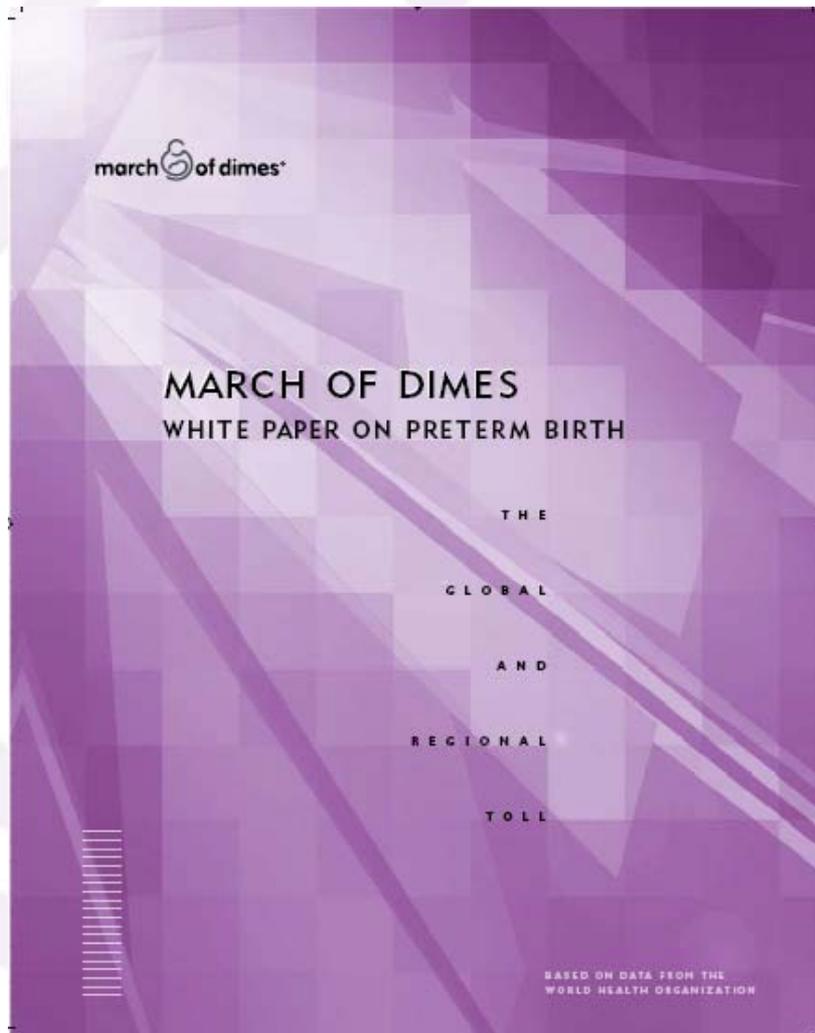
STORY TOOLS

Global Report on Birth Defects



- Purpose: to document the global toll of birth defects and provide feasible, cost-effective recommendations to reduce this toll.
- Provided modeled estimates of country-level birth defects prevalence rates for almost 200 countries
- Involved an extensive media campaign that resulted in worldwide dissemination raising awareness of issue.
- Helped lead to an April 2010 WHO Resolution on Birth Defects

Global Report on Prematurity



- Purpose: to document the global and regional toll of preterm birth.
- Used data from the *WHO systematic review on maternal mortality and morbidity: The global burden of preterm birth, 2009*.
- Presented at the 4th International Conference on Birth Defects and Disabilities in the Developing World, New Delhi, 2009.
- Showed an estimated 13 million babies worldwide were born preterm in 2005.

Global Report on Prematurity-- Limitations

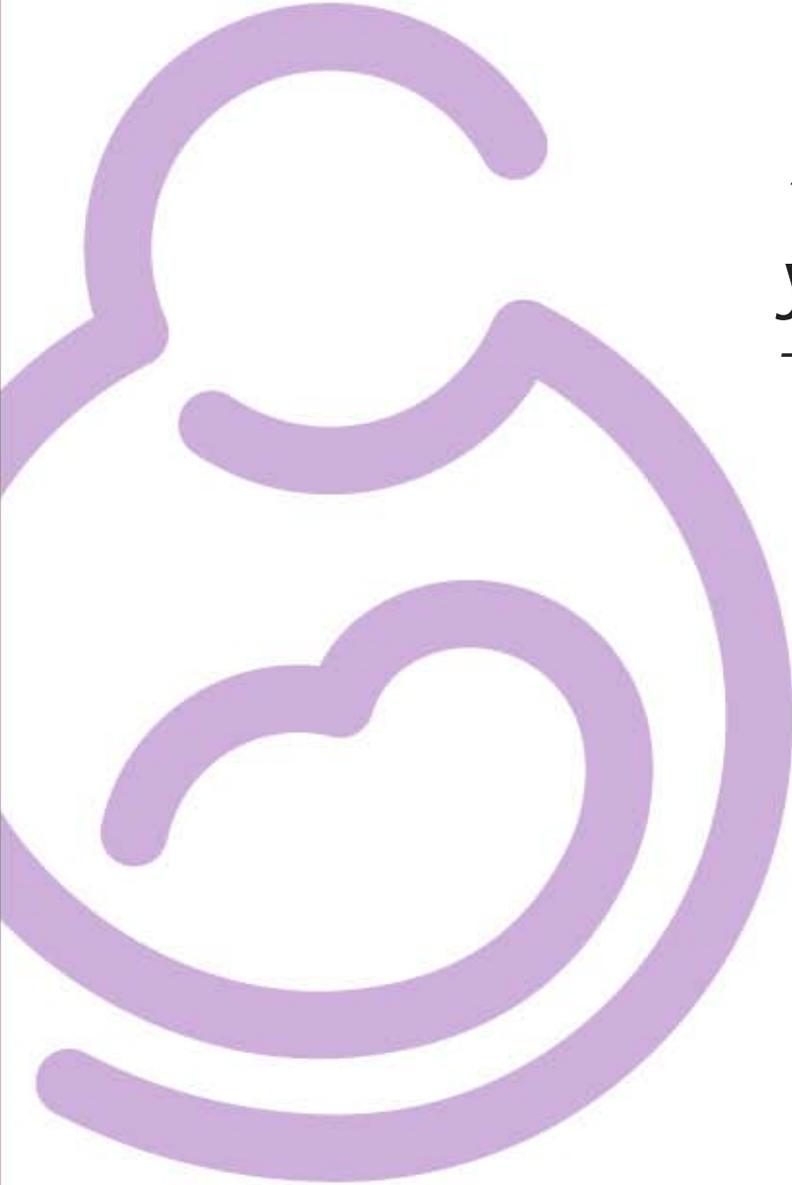
- Data on the number of preterm births and related deaths are limited
- Necessary to improve data on extent of the problem
- No internationally accepted classification of preterm births
- Need for more country and regional data on the prevalence of acute and long-term health problems caused by preterm birth.

Future Directions

- **Quantify the problem – Need for country-specific preterm birth data**
 - March of Dimes/WHO Preterm Birth Global Report
- **Increase international awareness of preterm birth through global partnerships**

Campaign Alliances:

 - European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI) of Germany
 - Little Big Souls (LBS) of Africa



***“You must be the change
you want to see in the world.”***
- Mahatma Gandhi

