



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Just-Released Birth Data Shows South Jersey Baby Boom, Decrease in Teen Pregnancies & Decrease in C-Sections**

**Pennsauken Township, New Jersey** – Newly-released data from the [Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative](#) reflects a bump in South Jersey births, a decrease in births to teenagers and a decrease in Cesarean births (C-Sections), among other findings.

### **Baby Boom**

The birth [data](#), collected and comprehensively analyzed by the Cooperative, New Jersey's state-licensed maternal and child health consortium for Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem Counties, reflects a **4.1% increase in births**, mostly during the second and third quarters of 2021. With that increase factored in, there was a total of 18,491 South Jersey births in 2021, the largest one-year increase in 30 years.

"Based on the data we have assembled and studied, South Jersey enjoyed what appears to be a baby boom in 2021. This is not unique to South Jersey, as this trend is consistent with statewide births for the same period," said **Helen Hannigan, Executive Director of Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative**.

### **Birth Certificate Data**

New Jersey's 2021 birth data was generated from two different electronic birth certificate programs. In the summer of 2021, the state phased out the *Vital Information Platform* (VIP) and introduced the [Vital Events Registration and Information](#) (VERI) system, one of the most comprehensive birthing data systems in the country.

"Many people don't realize a birth certificate is much more than a document with a newborn's name, date of birth and place of birth. Birth certificates are actually embedded with a robust

data set which includes information about every New Jersey birthing individual's prenatal care and postnatal care, as well as critical health information about the baby," added **Hannigan**. "This information helps us drive important program initiatives in the communities we serve. We're able to share this information with our hospitals and providers, which they can utilize to better shape patient experiences and birthing outcomes. In transitioning from the VIP to VERI systems, we worked aggressively with medical records systems to ensure the accuracy in the collection and organization of data so we have the most precise representation of South Jersey birth statistics. All that information is linked to every New Jersey birth certificate."

### **Births to Teenagers**

The number of births to South Jersey teenagers under age 16 continued to decrease in 2021, with teen births representing **0.6%** of all South Jersey births for the year. The majority of births to South Jersey teenagers in 2021 was to 18 and 19-year-olds.

"While we continue to be encouraged by the sustained decline in births to teens over the last decade in South Jersey, it still remains an area of concern for us, as teens who are giving birth are starting their families earlier in life and in turn, have fewer opportunities for educational and career development, which has a long-term impact on the birthing individual's life," said **Hannigan**. "We also know the decrease in births to teens is not necessarily a change in overall teen behavior. We still have sexual activity among teenagers. Another area of concern in 2021 – fewer screenings among teens for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), presumably driven by the separation of teens from access to screenings at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in lower rates of reporting. We hope and expect that with the resumption of routines, there will be higher rates of screenings and reporting."

### **Equal Access to Care**

In 2021, more than 80% of white, non-Hispanic birthing individuals in South Jersey had access to prenatal care in their first trimesters, which is above the national goal, while fewer than 65% of Black birthing individuals had access to prenatal care.

"One of the core missions of the Cooperative is our work to ensure equal access to prenatal care for individuals across South Jersey. Black birthing people in New Jersey are seven times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications compared to their white counterparts. For that reason, we closely examine race and ethnicity when analyzing these data sets," said **Hannigan**. "We know that when individuals don't have early access to prenatal care, issues like high blood pressure, one of the contributing factors of preterm births, can go unchecked. This can adversely affect pregnant individuals and their babies. Many of these conditions can and need to be identified early, addressed and controlled. That's why it's critical for us to continue to identify impediments to early access to care, including but not limited to institutional racism and biases among providers."

### ***C-Sections***

Rates of Cesarean births (C-Sections) decreased across South Jersey in 2021 (30.5% of all South Jersey births in 2021) and have continued that decline more rapidly than statewide rates (32.5% of all New Jersey births in 2021) since 2014.

“We know that with C-sections, there is an increased health risk for the birthing individual and baby. We recommend there be no intervention for a C-section before 39-weeks unless it’s medically indicated,” said **Hannigan**. “We also encourage our hospital partners, medical practices and families consider vaginal births after C-sections for the births of additional babies. We also continue to emphasize that it is strongly recommended that birthing persons *not* have more than three C-sections.”

### ***Breastfeeding***

Breastfeeding rates in South Jersey continued to climb in 2021, a reflection of the Cooperative’s longstanding commitment to breastfeeding education in the community. However, disparities remain. While 74.1% of non-Hispanic, white birthing individuals and 70.6% of Hispanic birthing individuals breastfed their newborns, 64% of Black birthing individuals reported breastfeeding.

“The Cooperative has been especially devoted to breastfeeding education and awareness, as well as promoting lactation support services in our communities. While we’re delighted to see a significant increase in the breastfeeding rates among all groups during the hospital stays, there is still work to be done,” said **Hannigan**. “We see there is a correlation between educational attainment and the choice to breastfeed. So, the higher the level of education across all groups, the more likely the individual is to breastfeed. Another component of our breastfeeding initiatives is working to ensure long-term lactation support in the workplace so that employers provide safe and appropriate places for birthing individuals to express milk, as required by law.”

### ***Key Takeaway***

Now in its fortieth year of service to the community, the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative remains the most-respected source of birth data gathering and analysis for the region, closely monitoring birth trends.

“The 2021 birth data for South Jersey tells us very clearly that early access to care for pregnant individuals has vastly improved from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. We should be proud of this shared accomplishment. The Cooperative remains steadfast in its pledge to serve all communities to ensure the best possible birth outcomes,” said **Hannigan**. “Now, in partnership with the Cooperative’s data team, I look forward to bringing these findings into our communities and sharing it with our hospitals and other care providers. The Cooperative is committed to healthy pregnancies, healthy babies, healthy families and healthy communities - every day!”

### **Link to Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative’s 2021 Birthing Data:**

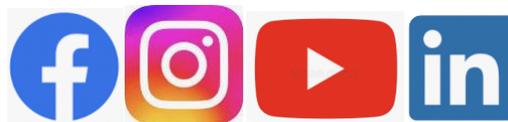
⇒ Click [here](#) to access the **Achievement Report**, the Cooperative’s full birth data report

## Broadcast-Quality Links to Video Clips of Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative's Executive Director on 2021 Birthing Data:

⇒ Click [here](#) for video interviews with:

- **Helen Hannigan, MGA, Executive Director, Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative**

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The Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative, established in 1982, is a private, non-profit coalition of healthcare professionals and consumers licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health as the maternal and child health consortium serving South Jersey. We educate and engage our community to improve the health of pregnant individuals, infants, children and families across Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem Counties in South Jersey.

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