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Trauma and Pregnancy: Katrina and 9/11

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In August 2006, *USA Today* reported that New Orleans' birthrate increased by 39%, nine months after Hurricane Katrina. The data, which came from Louisiana Hospital Association and the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans, reported births from May 2005 to May 2006, but have no final data for birthrates in June and July. According to *USA Today* one of the major factors contributing to the increase in births was because some residents could not locate their physicians, and therefore, were unable to refill birth control prescriptions. But Gail Gibson, nursing administrator for women and children's services at the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans told *USA Today* that some couples engaged in sex because they had nothing to do. Not only can prejudice blind some healthcare workers to an obvious consequence when contraception is not accessible, it can also physically affect babies before they are even born.

Another study was conducted to see if anti-Arab attitudes after 9/11 were responsible for the increase in premature and low birth-weight babies birthed by women of Arab ancestry in the United States, following the 9/11 attacks, reported the *Washington Post* in March 2006. Epidemiologist Diane S. Lauderdale of the University of Chicago accumulated birth records from 2000 to 2002 in California. Lauderdale chose California because hate crimes had reportedly tripled after the terrorist attacks because of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim attitudes. More than 15,000 women with Arab last names were identified for the study. Lauderdale discovered that 34% of them whose babies were born six months after 9/11 were more likely to have low birth-weight babies. The study also showed that 50% of the babies would more than likely be born prematurely. While there were no changes in the rate of babies born prematurely or low birth weights to other women, other studies show that black women with a high level of stress due to discrimination produced a substantial amount of certain hormones, which are harmful to developing fetuses, the *Post* reported.