Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

National Variation in Black Immigrant Preterm Births and the Role of County-Level Social Factors

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Preterm birth rates among Black individuals continue to be inequitably high in the USA. Black immigrants appear to have a preterm birth advantage over US-born counterparts. This national cross-sectional study of singleton non-Hispanic Black individuals in the USA from 2011 to 2018 aimed to investigate if the Black immigrant preterm birth advantage varied geographically and how this advantage associated with county-level social drivers of health. Generalized linear mixed models explored the odds of preterm birth (< 37 weeks) by birthing person's nativity, defined as US- versus foreign-born. In county-level analyses, five measures were explored as possible sources of structural risk for or resilience against preterm birth: percent of residents in poverty, percent uninsured, percent with more than a high school education, percent foreign-born, and racial polarization. County-level immigrant advantage among foreign-born compared to US-born Black individuals was defined by a disparity rate ratio (RR); RR < 1 indicated a county-level immigrant preterm birth advantage. Linear regression models at the level of counties quantified associations between county-level factors and disparity RRs. Among 4,072,326 non-Hispanic Black birthing individuals, immigrants had 24% lower adjusted odds of preterm birth compared to US-born Black individuals (aOR 0.77, 95% CI 0.76-0.78). In county-level analyses, the immigrant advantage varied across counties; disparity RRs ranged from 0.13 to 2.82. County-level lack of health insurance and education greater than high school were both associated with immigrant preterm birth advantage. Future research should explore policies within counties that impact risk of preterm birth for both US-born and immigrant Black individuals.

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