



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras  
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8  
T: 076 695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme  
Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan Building,  
Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8  
T: 076 695 9991

7<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Deputy O'Reilly,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 14984/21**

**To ask the Minister for Health the number of premature births to date in 2021; the number in the previous ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Globally over 15 million infants are born too early, too small and too sick each year: that's one in 10 babies. Here in Ireland approximately 3,500 infants are born prematurely per annum which equates to an incidence rate of 0.5 in 10 babies. A premature birth is defined as baby born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed. There are sub-categories of preterm birth, based on gestational age:

- Extremely preterm (<28 weeks)
- Very preterm (28 to <32 weeks)
- Moderate to late preterm (32 to <37 weeks).

It is not feasible at this point to produce collated figures in relation to premature babies born in 2020 and 2021. Figures for 2020 are currently being finalised. 2021 figures will be available in 2022. Please see table 1 for a yearly breakdown of birth rates and premature birth rates in Ireland for the years 2010-2019. The table is inclusive of all premature births <37 weeks.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>BABIES</b>	<b>PREMATURE BABIES</b>	<b>% PREMATURE</b>
<b>2010</b>	72654	73925	3292	4.5
<b>2011</b>	71205	72566	3283	4.5
<b>2012</b>	68970	70223	3236	4.6
<b>2013</b>	66066	67370	3287	4.9
<b>2014</b>	65581	66862	3344	5.0
<b>2015</b>	64097	65360	3629	5.6
<b>2016</b>	62415	63665	3490	5.5
<b>2017</b>	60476	61644	3454	5.6
<b>2018</b>	59591	60744	3600	5.9
<b>2019</b>	57980	59084	3657	6.2

*Table 1*

I trust this clarifies the matter,

Yours sincerely,



**Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme**