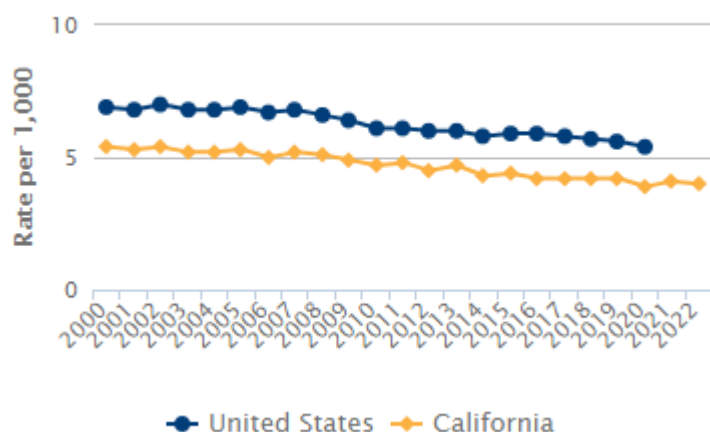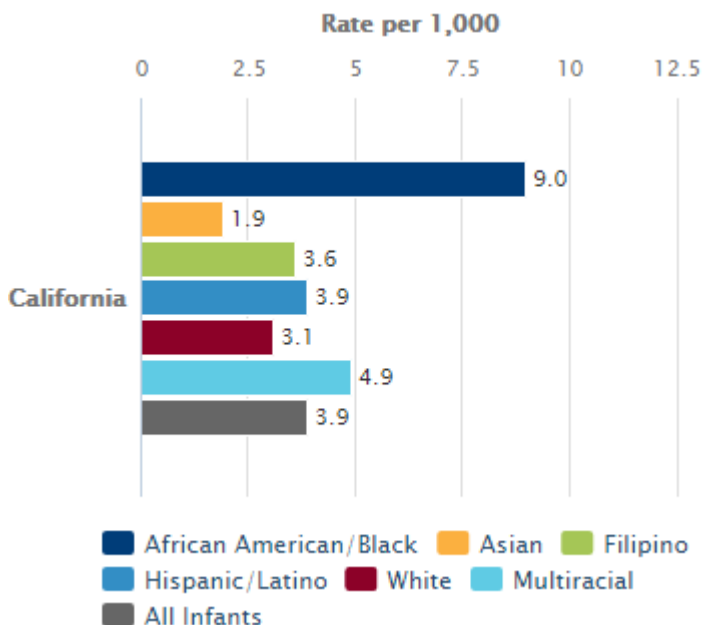# KidsData

Infant Mortality in California

Infant Mortality Rate

Definition: Number of deaths among children under age 1 per 1,000 live births (e.g., in 2022, the infant mortality rate in California was 4 infant deaths per 1,000 births).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Birth and Death Statistical Master Files & California Vital Data (Cal-ViDa) Query Tool; California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections; CDC WONDER Online Database, Linked Birth / Infant Death Records (Apr. 2023).

Infant Mortality Rate, by Mother's Race/Ethnicity: 2020

Definition: Number of deaths among children under age 1 per 1,000 live births, by mother's race/ethnicity (e.g., in 2020, the infant mortality rate among infants born to Hispanic/Latino mothers in California was 3.9 deaths per 1,000 births).
Data Source: CDC WONDER Online Database, Linked Birth / Infant Death Records (Apr. 2023).

What It Is

On kidsdata.org, overall infant mortality is measured at the county, state, and national level by the number of deaths among children under age 1, and the number of infant deaths per 1,000 births (the infant mortality rate). Numbers and rates by leading causes of infant death and by mother's race/ethnicity also are provided at the state and national level.

Why This Topic Is Important

Infant mortality is a key measure of a nation's health, reflecting socioeconomic conditions, maternal health, public health practices, and access to high-quality medical care, among other factors. Leading causes of infant mortality include birth defects, low birthweight or preterm birth, sudden infant death syndrome, unintentional injuries, and maternal pregnancy complications. Although the U.S. infant mortality rate has declined in recent decades, its progress has been slower and its rate remains higher than similar wealthy countries. The U.S. also has significant disparities in infant mortality by demographic group, with the highest rates experienced by African American/black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations, as well as those in rural areas, those with low incomes or education levels, and women under age 20 or over age 40. The mortality rate among infants born to African American/black mothers is particularly high—more than twice the rate for infants born to white mothers, both nationally and in California. Differences by race/ethnicity remain even after controlling for income and education, suggesting that systemic racism and discrimination play a critical role in disparate outcomes.

Reducing infant mortality requires wide-ranging approaches, from improving health care access, quality, coverage, and affordability, to addressing socioeconomic and behavioral risk factors. For example, efforts to improve behavioral and social determinants may include public education campaigns (e.g., focused on infant safe sleep practices and smoking cessation for women) as well as larger strategies to address poverty, structural racism, inequities in access to quality education and health care, and food and housing insecurity.
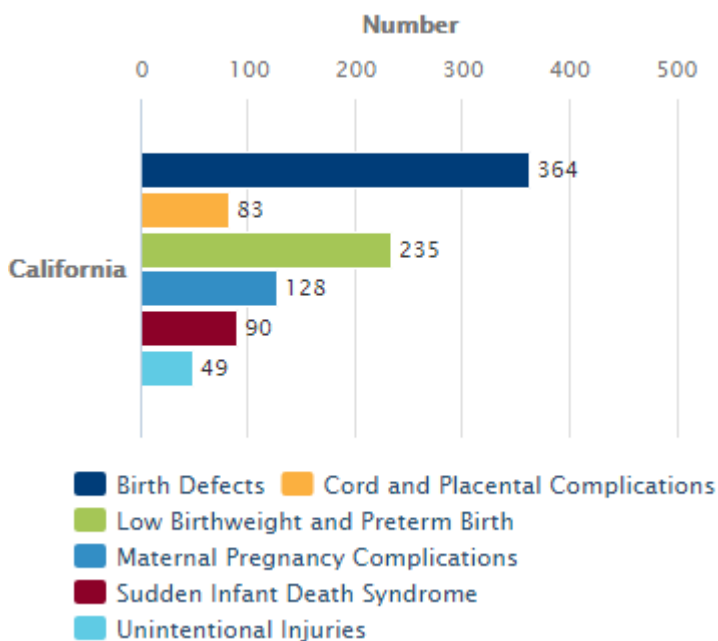
How Children Are Faring

In 2022, 1,675 California infants died before their first birthday—fewer than half the number of infant deaths in 1995. Over this period, the state's infant mortality rate fell by more than 35%, from 6.3 infant deaths per 1,000 births to

Infant Mortality Rate: 2022

Locations	Rate per 1,000
California	4.0
Alameda County	3.3
Contra Costa County	3.0
Fresno County	4.7
Kern County	5.6
Los Angeles County	3.8
Orange County	3.9
Riverside County	4.6
Sacramento County	5.0
San Bernardino County	4.2
San Diego County	3.7
Santa Clara County	3.1

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Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Birth and Death Statistical Master Files & California Vital Data (Cal-ViDa) Query Tool; California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections; CDC WONDER Online Database, Linked Birth / Infant Death Records (Apr. 2023).

Number of Infant Deaths, by Cause: 2020

Number

California
- Birth Defects: 364
- Cord and Placental Complications: 83
- Low Birthweight and Preterm Birth: 235
- Maternal Pregnancy Complications: 128
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome: 90
- Unintentional Injuries: 49

Legend:
- Birth Defects
- Cord and Placental Complications
- Low Birthweight and Preterm Birth
- Maternal Pregnancy Complications
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Unintentional Injuries

Definition: Number of deaths among children under age 1, by leading causes of infant death in California (e.g., in 2020, there were 364 deaths due to birth defects among California infants).
Data Source: CDC WONDER Online Database, Linked Birth / Infant Death Records (Apr. 2023).

4 deaths per 1,000 births. Overall infant mortality trends statewide generally parallel those of the nation but have remained consistently lower than U.S. rates across years with comparable figures.

At the local level, infant mortality rates often vary widely by year and by region. Among counties with data for 2022, figures ranged from fewer than 3 deaths per 1,000 births (Placer, San Francisco, San Mateo) to more than 6 per 1,000 (Madera, Monterey, Shasta).

Statewide and nationally, the leading causes of infant mortality in 2020 were birth defects (0.9 deaths per 1,000 California births) and disorders related to low birthweight or preterm birth (0.6 deaths per 1,000 California births).

U.S. infants born to African American/black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander mothers are much more likely to die before age 1 than their counterparts born to Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white mothers. In California, the infant mortality rate for African American/black mothers (9 infant deaths per 1,000 births) was more than double the rate for Hispanic/Latino mothers (3.9 per 1,000) and nearly three times the rate for white mothers (3.1 per 1,000) in 2020.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
https://santaclara.kidsdata.org/topic/54/infant-mortality/summary

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