

Differences in US infant mortality rates among black and white babies

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A new research letter published by *JAMA Pediatrics* examined trends in overall and cause-specific infant mortality rates between non-Hispanic black and white infants because infant mortality is an important indicator of population health.

Corinne A. Riddell, Ph.D., of McGill University, Montreal, Canada, and coauthors analyzed data from the U.S. National Vital Statistics System from 2005 to 2015. The infant mortality rate was calculated as the number of deaths divided by the number of births. Rates for the top four causes of death also were calculated.

The authors report:

- The [infant mortality rate](#) for black [infants](#) decreased from 14.3 to 11.6 per 1,000 births from 2005 to 2012, then plateaued and then increased from 11.4 to 11.7 per 1,000 births from 2014 to 2015.
- Among white infants, the mortality rate decreased from 5.7 to 4.8 per 1,000 births from 2005 to 2015.
- Between 2005 and 2011, deaths from short gestation/low birthweight decreased for black infants but have plateaued in recent years.
- For the other leading causes of death ([congenital malformations](#), sudden infant death syndrome and maternal complications), the rates among black and white infants decreased from 2005 to 2015, although deaths rates related to both sudden infant death syndrome and congenital malformations increased for black

infants in the last year of data available for the study from 2014 to 2015.

- Progress also has stalled with respect to all other causes of infant death in recent years and, in the last year of data available for the study from 2014 to 2015, there was an increase in [mortality rates](#) for black infants compared with white infants.
- No single cause of death appears solely responsible for the recent increase in black infant mortality.

"The sustained progress in reducing infant mortality among black infants since 2005 has stalled in the past few years. This has led to increases in the absolute inequality in infant [mortality](#) between black and white infants during the past three years. Interventions to further reduce the rate of preterm birth among black infants appear the most promising option for reducing black [infant mortality](#) and the absolute inequality between black and white infants," the authors conclude.

More information: *JAMA Pediatrics* (2017). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.1365](#)

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