

# Low Apgar scores tied to infant mortality across races

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Low Apgar scores are associated with infant mortality across racial

groups, but there is variance across groups, according to a study published online July 12 in *PLOS Medicine*.

Emma Gillette, M.P.H., from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, and colleagues used data from the U.S. National Vital Statistics System data (2016 to 2017) to identify 6.8 million singleton [infants](#) without [congenital abnormalities](#), born between 37 and 44 weeks to mothers aged older than 15 years. Associations between low Apgar score and mortality in infants across [racial groups](#) were evaluated.

The researchers found that 98.8 percent of infants had normal scores, 0.9 percent had intermediate scores, and 0.3 percent had low Apgar scores. Low-scoring infants had increased odds of [infant mortality](#) compared with infants with normal scores. This association varied by race, with adjusted odds ratios of 54.4 in non-Hispanic White, 70.02 in Hispanic, 23.3 in non-Hispanic Black, 100.4 in Asian, and 26.8 in non-Hispanic other infants.

"Low Apgar scores are associated with mortality across racial groups captured by U.S. records, but are worse at discriminating infants at risk of mortality for Black and non-Hispanic non-Asian infants than for White infants," the authors write. "Further work to understand which components of the score explain differential associations is needed for developing a scoring system that performs equally well across racial groups."

**More information:** Emma Gillette et al, Associations between low Apgar scores and mortality by race in the United States: A cohort study of 6,809,653 infants, *PLOS Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1004040](#)

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