

Risk of death found to be higher for non-white children in England

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Twelve percent of infant deaths in England could be avoided if all infants in England had the same risk of death as white infants, a new University of Bristol-led study shows. Such a change, which equates to

more than 200 deaths per year, would bring England—which currently has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe—in line with other EU nations.

The study, published in the *JAMA Network Open*, draws on data from Bristol's National Child Mortality Database (NCMD), a unique source of data on all children who die in England before their 18th birthday.

The analysis builds on previous work from the same group to spotlight the outcomes of children with different ethnicities. It shows that infants of non-white ethnicities are at greater risk than their white counterparts, and this was not explained by where they lived in England, or how wealthy their families are.

Almost half of the additional risk for non-white infants was found to be due to preterm birth, which is much more common in families of Asian or Black ethnicity. The authors have stressed the need for urgent work to tackle this issue and identify next steps for reducing the rate of [preterm birth](#) in these communities.

Karen Luyt, Director of the National Child Mortality Database and Professor of Neonatal Medicine at the University of Bristol, said, "England has one of the highest [infant mortality](#) rates in Europe, and there is an urgent need to identify and tackle the factors that are holding us back.

"This latest analysis of our unique dataset highlights specific groups at greater risk, and gives a clear indication of where efforts might be focused to drive down infant mortality in the future."

The publication follows the NCMD's earlier publication of their full [data release for 2023](#), which found that since 2021 death rates for children of Black or Asian backgrounds have increased while those for [white](#)

[children](#) remained relatively stable.

More information: Karen Luyt, et al. Ethnicity, Deprivation and Infant Mortality in England, 2019-2022, *JAMA Network Open* (2024).
[DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.55403](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.55403)

Provided by University of Bristol

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