

INFANT MORTALITY

Based on preliminary data, in 2009, 26,531 infants died before their first birthday, representing an infant mortality rate of 6.42 deaths per 1,000 live births. This represents a decrease of 2.6 percent from the preliminary estimate in 2008 (6.59 deaths per 1,000 live births). The leading causes of infant mortality were congenital malformations, followed by disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (data not shown). Although overall there were no changes in the ranking of leading causes of infant death, the infant mortality rate decreased for 2 of 10 leading causes of infant death between 2008 and 2009: maternal complications of pregnancy and unintentional injuries. The infant mortality rates associated with each of these causes declined by 7.5 and 8.5 percent, respectively.

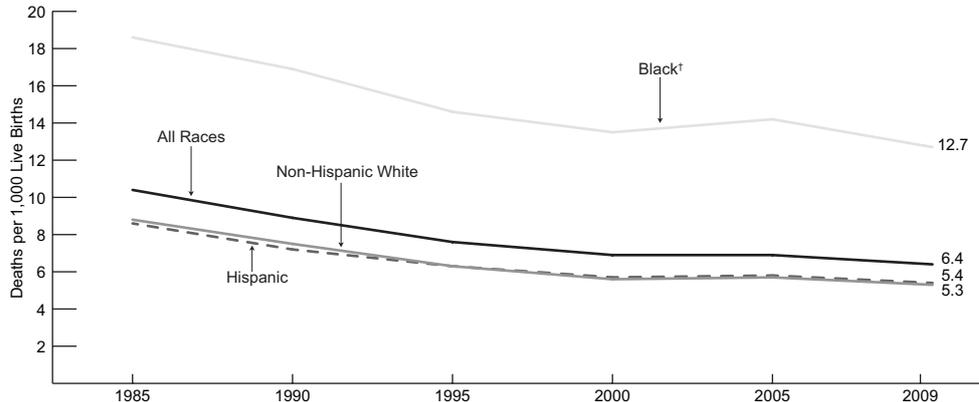
The infant mortality declined substantially during the 20th century resulting in a 93 percent decrease in the overall infant mortality rate between 1915 and 1998.¹ Some factors which contributed to this decline included economic growth, improved nutrition, and new sanitary measures, as well as advances in clinical medicine and access to care.² More recent declines in birth-weight-specific infant mortality rates in the latter part of the 20th century have been attributed, in part, to the approval of synthetic surfactants to reduce the severity of respiratory distress syn-

drome³ and the recommendation that infants be placed on their backs to sleep to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.⁴

In 2009, the mortality rate among infants born to Black women (including Hispanics) was 12.71 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 12.68 per 1,000 live births in 2008; this difference was not statistically significant. Despite the overall decrease in the infant mortality rate, in 2009 the rate for Blacks (including Hispanics) was still 2.4 times the rate among infants born to non-Hispanic White women (5.32 per 1,000 births). The 2009 rate for infants born to non-Hispanic white women reflects a 4.0 percent decrease since the previous year (5.54 infant deaths per 1,000 live births).

Infant Mortality Rates, * by Maternal Race/Ethnicity, 1985-2009**

Source (II.3): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Under 1 year of age. **Data for 2009 are preliminary. †Including Hispanics who identify themselves as Black.

The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and MCHB's Healthy Start program provide health and support services to pregnant women and infants with the goal of improving children's health outcomes and reducing infant and child mortality.

1 Guyer B, Freedman MA, Strobino DM, and Sondik EJ. *Annual summary of vital statistics: trends in the health of Americans during the 20th century*. Pediatrics. 2000;106:1307-17.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Advancements in public health, 1900-1999: healthier mothers and babies*. MMWR. 1999; 48:849-58.

3 Schoendorf KC and JL Kiely. *Birth weight and age-specific analysis of the 1990 US infant mortality drop: was it surfactant?* Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 1997;151:129-134

4 American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Infant Positioning and SIDS. *Positioning and SIDS*. Pediatrics. 1992;87:1120-6.