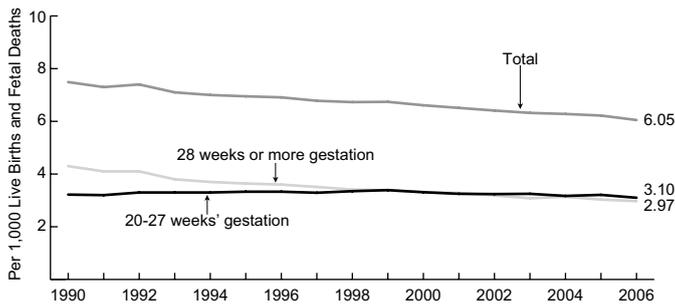


FETAL MORTALITY

Fetal mortality is defined as the death of a fetus prior to birth, regardless of gestational age. Based on survey data, more than a million fetal losses are estimated to occur annually in the United States, most of which are early fetal losses, also called miscarriages.²¹ Only fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks' gestation—often called stillbirths—are generally reported by states in the National Vital Statistics System. In 2006, the latest year for which national data have been reported, there were 25,972 fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks' gestation, for a rate of 6.05 fetal deaths per 1,000 live births plus fetal deaths. The number of fetal deaths is similar to the number of infant deaths (28,509 in 2006).²²

Fetal Mortality Rates,* 1990–2006

Source (1.9): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Fetal deaths with stated or presumed period of gestation of 20 weeks or more; cases of unknown gestational age are proportionally assigned according to the known gestational age distribution; rates do not sum to the total due to slight differences in the denominator.

Similar to trends for infant mortality, fetal mortality rates have generally declined over time. Since 1990, fetal mortality rates at 20 weeks or more have fallen by nearly 20 percent from 7.49 to 6.05 per 1,000 in 2006. Most of this decline is attributed to reductions in fetal mortality at 28 weeks or more, which declined from 4.30 to 2.97 per 1,000 between 1990 and 2006.

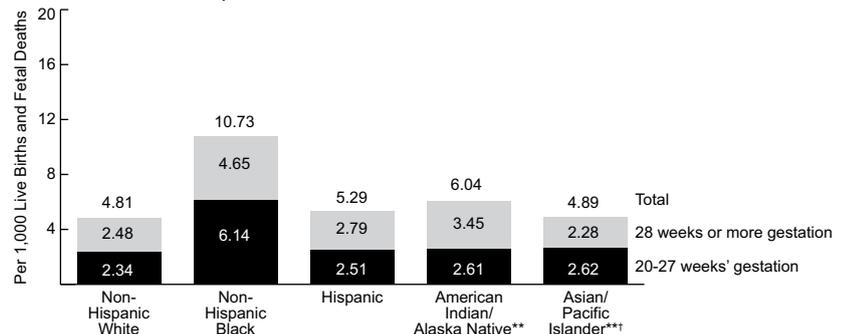
As with infant mortality, there are large differences in fetal mortality by race and ethnicity. In 2006, fetal mortality rates at 20+ weeks were more than twice as high among non-Hispanic Black women as for non-Hispanic White women (10.73 versus 4.81 per 1,000). The majority of this disparity (64 percent) was due to higher

non-Hispanic Black fetal mortality rates at 20–27 weeks' gestation. Relative to non-Hispanic Whites, fetal mortality rates were also higher for non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic women (6.04 and 5.29 per 1,000, respectively).

Causes of fetal death include preterm labor, birth defects, infection, placental problems, such as abruption or inadequate blood flow, and chronic conditions, such as hypertension and diabetes.^{23,24} Avoiding smoking and substance use, maintaining a healthy weight, and preventing and managing chronic conditions prior to and during pregnancy through preconception and prenatal care, may help to reduce risk of stillbirth.²⁴

Fetal Mortality Rates,* by Maternal Race/Ethnicity, 2006

Source (1.9): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



*Fetal deaths with stated or presumed period of gestation of 20 weeks or more; cases of unknown gestational age are proportionally assigned according to the known gestational age distribution; rates do not sum to the total due to slight differences in the denominator. **Includes Hispanics. †Separate data for Asians and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders not available.