

Health Disparities Among African American Infants in Los Angeles County

Background on Infant Mortality in Los Angeles County

Since the 1960s, the infant mortality rate, the rate at which babies less than one year of age die, has steadily decreased in the United States from 26.0 to 5.4 deaths per 1000 live births in 2007. The current U.S. infant mortality rate is about 40 percent higher than the Healthy People 2010 national goal.

Los Angeles County has seen a significant decrease in the number of infant deaths and the rate of infant mortality among all racial and ethnic groups as well. Advances in neonatal medicine, declining rates of maternal smoking, and better prenatal care

contribute to healthier mothers and babies.

Despite this good news, African American babies are still two to three times as likely to die in infancy as any other racial/ethnic group. The disparity exist at both the national and local level.

The infant mortality rate for African Americans in Los Angeles County is about twice as high as the overall county rate (Figure 1). The Infant mortality rate for African Americans is three times the Asian/Pacific Islanders and twice that of White babies.

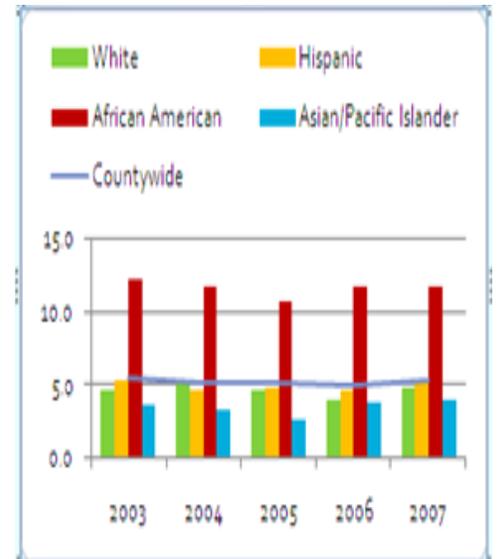


Figure 1. Infant Mortality by Race/Ethnicity, Los Angeles County 2003-2007

Source: California Department of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, OHIR Vital Statistics Section, 2003-2007



LOS ANGELES COUNTY SERVICE PLANNING AREAS

In 2007, Los Angeles County African American babies comprised 8% of all births but more than 16% of all infant deaths.

Geographic disparities exist in infant mortality as well. The highest infant mortality is seen in Service Planning Areas (SPA) 1 (Antelope Valley) and 6 (South).

Reducing racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality is a significant priority for Los Angeles County.



How are Los Angeles County Public Health and Community Partners working together to solve these problems?

Los Angeles County Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality

Formed in Fall 2008, twenty community-based, faith-based, grassroots and State and local health care organizations that serve the African American community in Los Angeles County have come together to increase capacity at the community, State, and local levels to address the impact of racism on birth outcomes and infant mortality.

Black Infant Health Program

The Los Angeles County Black Infant Health Program is the only program specifically targeted to address these enduring disparities of adverse birth outcomes in the African American community of Los Angeles County. The program provides support services to African American women who are pregnant and new mothers.

Fetal Infant Mortality Review

The program conducts a population-based survey of mothers who have recently suffered a fetal or infant loss to answer questions about their lives before, during, and after pregnancy. The survey aims to collect quality data on topics related to pregnancy, fetal loss, and infant death.

Our website:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/index.htm>

Adverse Birth Outcomes: Low Birth Weight and Preterm Births

Preterm births (birth at less than 37 completed weeks of gestation) and low birth weight are key risk factors for infant death.

A baby born at less than 2,500 grams, or 5 lbs. 6 oz., is considered low birth weight babies (LBW) and a baby born at less than 1,500 grams, or 3 lbs. 5 oz., is considered very low birth weight (VLBW).

As of 2007, African American moms in Los Angeles are about 40% more likely to have a preterm birth and about 70% more likely to have a low birth weight baby than other mothers.

Almost 13% of African American babies were LBW, and 3% of those were VLBW.

Preterm Births and Low Birth Weight by Mother's Race/Ethnicity in Los Angeles County: 2007

Mother's Race/Ethnicity	Preterm Birth (Less than 37 Weeks)		Very Low Birth Weight (Less than 1500 grams)		Low Birth Weight (Between 1500 and 2500 grams)		Normal Birth Weight (More than 2500 grams)		Infant Mortality* Deaths per 1,000 Live Births	
	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total
White	11.19	2,702	1.16	279	6.16	1,487	92.69	22,377	4.8	123
Hispanic	11.89	10,837	1.11	1,016	5.37	4,897	93.51	85,239	5.1	487
African American	16.74	1,771	2.78	294	9.57	1,013	87.65	9,274	11.7	133
Asian/Pacific Islander	10.16	1,745	1	171	6.72	1,154	92.29	15,850	3.8	67
Native American	16.29	36	1.81	4	7.24	16	90.95	201	N/C	0
Other/Unknown	14.15	116	2.07	17	7.8	64	90.12	739	N/C	2
Total	11.94	17,207	1.24	1,781	5.99	8,631	92.77	133,680	5.3	812

Total Live Births 162,111

In 2007, more than 1 in 6 African American babies were born preterm.

Almost 3% of all African American babies were born very low birth weight and an additional 1 in 10 were born with low birth weight.

Asian/Pacific Islander had the lowest level of very low birth weight. Hispanics had the lowest level of low birth weight babies.



Preterm Births and Low birth Weight by Service Planning Area in Los Angeles County: 2007

Service Planning Area (SPA)	Preterm Birth (Less than 37 Weeks)		Very Low Birth Weight (Less than 1500 grams)		Low Birth Weight (Between 1500 and 2500 grams)		Normal Birth Weight (More than 2500 grams)		Infant Mortality* Deaths per 1,000 Live Births	
	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total	(%)	Total
1 - Antelope Valley	12.74	774	1.63	99	6.27	381	92.1	5,597	8.6	55
7 - East	11.61	2,385	1.19	244	5.51	1,132	93.3	19,175	4.9	104
4 - Metro	11.32	1,796	1.13	180	5.51	874	93.35	14,807	4.6	76
2 - San Fernando	12.1	3,425	1.14	324	6.18	1,750	92.67	26,228	4.6	135
3 - San Gabriel	11.23	2,714	1.15	279	5.86	1,416	92.99	22,483	5.5	142
6 - South	13.45	2,883	1.42	304	6.47	1,387	92.11	19,740	6.7	150
8 - South Bay	12.01	2,572	1.34	287	6.05	1,296	92.61	19,829	5.7	126
5 - West	10.48	658	1.02	64	6.29	395	92.69	5,821	2.6	18
Total**	11.94	17,207	1.24	1,781	5.99	8,631	92.77	133,680	5.3	812

Total Live Births 162,111

SPAs 1 and 6 have the highest rate of low birth weight (between 1500 and 2500 grams) and very low birth weight (less than 1500 grams) babies in Los Angeles County. Also occurring in African American babies.

SPA 6 has the highest rate of preterm births (less than 37 weeks) and occurring primarily among African Americans.

SPA 5 (West) has the lowest preterm, very low birth weight, and infant mortality.

ACE Healthcare Disparities

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has taken an unprecedented lead on the West Coast to address these disparities in infant mortality and birth outcomes. We have followed the “ACE” (**Address, Convene, and Educate**) Institute of Medicine Recommendations and developed our “ACE” approach in addressing healthcare disparities.

In order to **Address** disparities, the Department of Public Health has convened more than 20 community-based, faith-based, grassroots and State and local health care organizations that serve the African American

community in the **Los Angeles County Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality**.

A major objective of the collaborative is to increase capacity at the community, State, and local levels to **Address** the impact of racism on birth outcomes and infant mortality.

The collaborative has **Convened** to share resources and best practices relating to infant mortality and undoing racism. **Education** sessions will be provided for healthcare providers on Health Care Disparities as well.

ACE Healthcare Disparities

- ◆ Address
- ◆ Convene
- ◆ Educate

Los Angeles County Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality

Vision Statement:

To eliminate racial inequities contributing to infant mortality in Los Angeles County urban areas based on a life course perspective.

Mission Statement:

To increase capacity at the community, State, and local levels to address the impact of racism on birth outcomes and infant health in urban areas of Los Angeles County.

Racial and ethnic health care disparities are recognized as a major medical and public health problem.

The **Los Angeles County Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality** has been created to address the racial and ethnic care disparities.

What Can You Do To Decrease Infant Mortality and Poor Birth Outcomes?

- ◆ Plan your pregnancy
- ◆ Get Early Prenatal Care
- ◆ Use Safe Sleeping Practices for Infants
 - * Back To Sleep
 - * No bed sharing

Los Angeles County Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality Core Members

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
California Department of Public Health
Black Infant Health Program
March of Dimes
Shields for Families
South Los Angeles Health Projects
University of Southern California
Healthy African American Families
Antelope Valley Black Infant Health Program