

# INFANT MORTALITY

## PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

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### OVERVIEW<sup>1,2,5</sup>

The health and wellness of mothers and their infants play a vital role in the health outcomes of generations to follow. Infant mortality refers to the death of an infant before their first birthday. The infant mortality rate (IMR) is the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. This rate is a very important indicator of the overall health of a population.

The leading causes of infant mortality are:

- Birth defects
- Preterm birth and low birth weight
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Injuries
- Maternal pregnancy complications

### SAFE SLEEP<sup>1</sup>

Every year in the United States, there are approximately 3,500 sleep-related infant deaths.

Best practices:

- Place the baby on his/her back for every sleep time
- Use a firm surface (mattress in a safe approved crib)
- Keep blankets, pillows, toys, etc. out of the sleeping area
- Have babies share your room, not your bed

### LOW BIRTH WEIGHT<sup>1,6</sup>

This is a term used to describe a child who is born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams). Some babies with a low birth weight are healthy, however, this can potentially lead to serious health issues including infections, breathing problems, and bleeding in the brain, amongst others.

Risk factors include:

- Preterm labor
- Chronic health conditions
- Alcohol use, smoking, and use of prescription pain meds
- Exposure to lead and air pollution

#### Low Birth Weight in Harford County

Of 2,575 Total Births, 175 births were classified as LBW

**White** - 5.7%      **Black** - 10.3%

**Hispanic** - 7.9%      **Asian** - 7.5%

(% classified as LBW for each race of total births)

## MATERNAL CHILD DATA AND SERVICES<sup>4</sup>

### Harford County Data

Live Births, 2020: 2,575

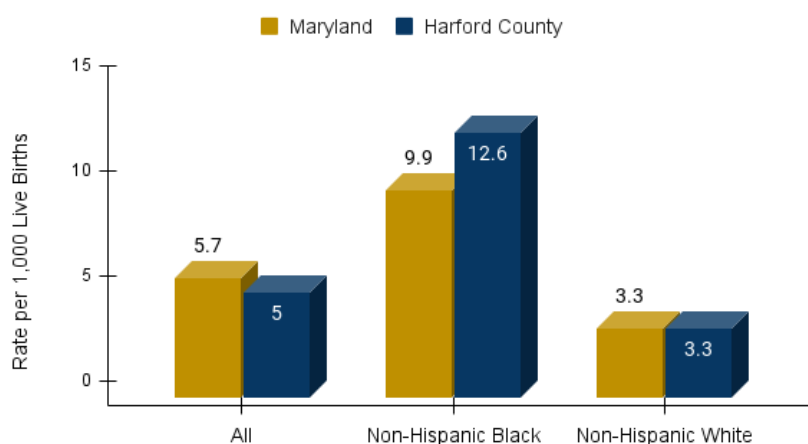
Infant Deaths 2021: 13

Healthy Families clients served FY22: 270

### SPOTLIGHT: INFANT MORTALITY AND HEALTH DISPARITIES<sup>2,6</sup>

Inequities and disparities have been seen in maternal and child health. The Maryland Vital Statistics Report identifies families of color are disproportionately impacted by sleep-related sudden unexpected infant death (SUID). In Maryland, the SUID rate among non-Hispanic Black infants was over two times greater than the rate among Non-Hispanic White infants. The SUID rate among non-Hispanic Black infants was more than five times greater than the rate among Hispanic infants. 57% of all 264 SUID cases from 2015-2019 in Maryland were Non-Hispanic Black infants compared to 33% non-Hispanic White, 6% Hispanic, and 4% other races.

### Infant Mortality Rates in Harford County and Maryland, 2020



### PREVENTION<sup>1,3</sup>

The mother can help reduce the risk of infant mortality herself beginning before and during pregnancy. This includes maintaining a healthy weight, getting proper nutrition, managing chronic conditions, and seeking help with substance use.

Once she becomes pregnant, she should receive early and regular prenatal care. This, along with following safe sleep methods as mentioned earlier can reduce the risk of infant deaths in Harford County and Maryland.

#### Sources:

1. CDC, Infant Mortality <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/infantmortality.htm>
2. SUID Data Maryland 2015-2019. [https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Documents/CFR/SUID%20data%20infigrap hic\\_Final.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Documents/CFR/SUID%20data%20infigrap hic_Final.pdf)
3. March of Dimes, Low Birth Weight. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/birth/low-birthweight>
4. Harford County Program Data
5. CRISP Reporting Services
6. Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Report 2020