

## Infant Mortality

Each year nearly four hundred babies born in Oklahoma (389 average annual) do not live to see their first birthday.

On the average at least one Oklahoma infant dies every day.

The rate of Oklahoma infants who die in their first year of life worsened slightly during the most recent three years (1996 - 1998) when compared to the three-year period just one year earlier (1995 - 1997). Oklahoma infant death rates worsened from 8.0 to 8.1 deaths per 1,000 live births, with comparable rates also worsening in less than half (35 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties.

Despite the recent slight increase, infant death rates have declined substantially over the past dozen years. Today, proportionately fewer Oklahoma babies (8.1 per 1,000 live births) die in their first year of life than did in the mid-1980's (10.5 per 1,000 live births), with such rates also improving in the large majority (55 of 77) of Oklahoma counties during the same period.

The rate of infant death in the majority of Oklahoma counties (43 of 77) was better than the average county rate (8.0 per 1,000 live births).

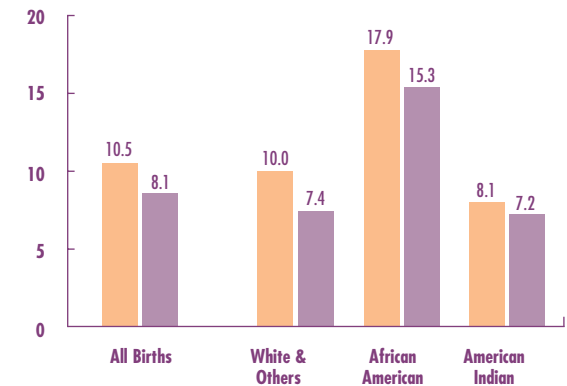
During this most recent period, the highest and worst infant death rate (32.3 per 1,000 live births) is found in Roger Mills County; the lowest and best (0.0 per 1,000 live births) is found in six Oklahoma counties (Major, Grant, Cimarron, Ellis, Washita and Greer).

Infant death rates have improved for all races since the mid-1980's. However, the most recent death rate for African American infants (15.3 per 1,000 African American births) remains more than twice as high as the comparable rate for White infants (7.4 per 1,000 White births). The lowest death rate is recorded for American Indian infants (7.2 per 1,000 American Indian births).

Ranking in the bottom half of all the states, Oklahoma's rate of infant death is only fair relative to other parts of the country. Even so, Oklahoma's rank among the fifty states improved from 39th to 30th during the most recent year (1997) in which states were compared.

## Impact on early childhood and Oklahoma's future

- » *Infant death typically results directly from inadequate early care.* Causes of death include poverty, inadequate living conditions, abuse, neglect, preventable injuries, accidents and infections.
- » *The infant mortality rate is an indicator of a community's overall quality of life.* The rate reflects the effectiveness of educational, economic, social and health care measures.



### Infant Deaths

Three-year Rate per 1000 Births, By Race, Oklahoma, 1984-86 & 1996-98

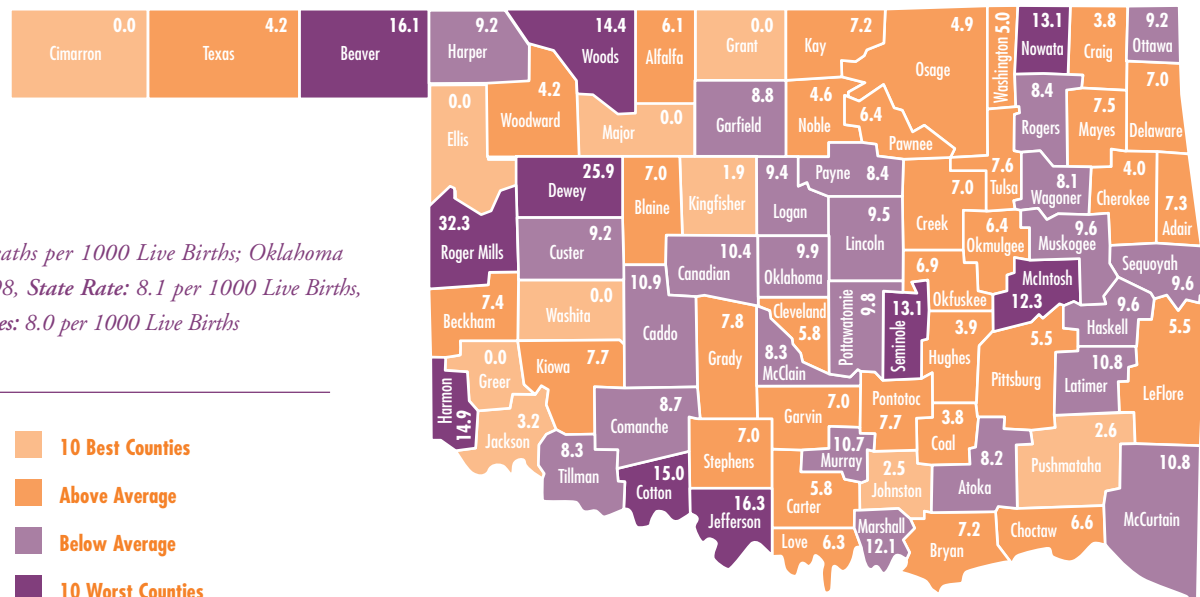
1984-86  
1996-98

» *Reducing the number of infant deaths requires a focus on early childhood care.* Lowering infant mortality rates requires providing education on topics such as ways to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), ensuring adequate nutrition, reducing teen births, providing appropriate health care, reducing poverty, lowering child abuse rates, changing behavior during pregnancy to reduce smoking, drinking and drug use, and providing a greater number of expectant mothers with adequate prenatal care.

### Infant Mortality

*Three-Year Rate of Deaths per 1000 Live Births; Oklahoma & Counties: 1996-1998, State Rate: 8.1 per 1000 Live Births, Average of County Rates: 8.0 per 1000 Live Births*

Nearly forty-four percent (169 per year or 43.4%) of the infant deaths occurred in one of the state's two large metropolitan counties (Oklahoma or Tulsa County) which together account for about forty percent (40.3%) of Oklahoma's births and are populated with just under forty percent (38.2%) of Oklahoma's infants.



- 10 Best Counties
- Above Average
- Below Average
- 10 Worst Counties