
News, Events and Alerts

News Releases

MSDH Declares Public Health Emergency on Infant Mortality

August 21, 2025



Jackson, Miss. — The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) today declared a public health emergency in response to rising infant mortality rates across the state.

Mississippi's 2024 data shows the overall infant mortality rate has increased to 9.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is the highest in more than a decade. In Mississippi, 3,527 babies have died before the age of 1 since 2014.

"Too many Mississippi families are losing their babies before their first birthday," said State Health Officer Dr. Dan Edney. "This is deeply personal to me — not just as a physician, but as a father and grandfather. Every single infant loss represents a family devastated, a community impacted and a future cut short. We cannot and will not accept these numbers as our reality. Declaring this a public health emergency is more than a policy decision; it is an urgent commitment to save lives. Mississippi has

the knowledge, the resources and the resilience to change this story. It will take all of us — policymakers, healthcare providers, communities and families — working together to give every child the chance to live, thrive and celebrate their first birthday.”

Infant deaths include those occurring within the first year of life. The leading causes in Mississippi include congenital malformations, preterm birth, low birth weight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

“Improving maternal health is the best way to reduce infant mortality,” Dr. Edney added. “That means better access to prenatal and postpartum care, stronger community support and more resources for moms and babies. Healthy women of childbearing age are more likely to have healthy pregnancies, which in turn lead to healthier babies.”

Since infant mortality is a multi-dimensional issue, MSDH is leveraging clinical leadership to coordinate intra-agency resources to develop a united system to address this public health emergency, while seeking to reinvigorate interventions that will enable children to see their second birthday.

MSDH urges other clinical champions to join in the effort to reduce infant mortality across Mississippi. In direct response to this emergency, a multi-pronged strategy includes:

- Activating an OB (Obstetrics) System of Care, which standardizes and regionalizes maternal and infant care, improves transfer systems designating levels of care and expedites transfers to appropriate facilities.
- Eliminating “OB deserts” by increasing prenatal care opportunities utilizing targeted county health departments.
- Expanding community health worker programs to connect mothers and babies with care and resources

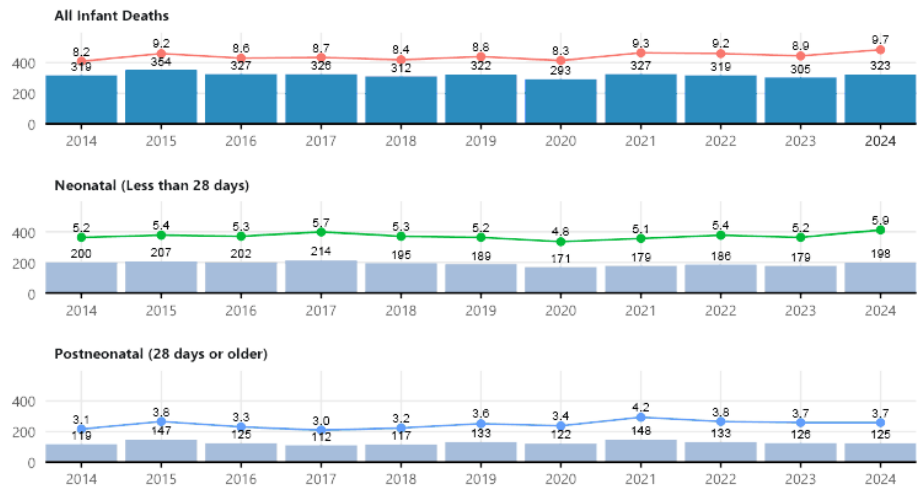
where they live.

- Strengthening Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies, a care management and home visiting program that supports expectant moms and infants at risk, providing safer birthing experiences and healthier infant development.
- Partnering with hospitals and medical providers to address gaps in maternal care and to reinforce the importance of early prenatal visits.
- Educating families on safe sleep practices to reduce preventable infant deaths.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will publish national and Mississippi infant mortality data later this year, MSDH recognized the urgency of this crisis and could not wait to take action. The emergency declaration allows MSDH to mobilize resources more quickly and work with partners across Mississippi to reverse these devastating trends.

Infant Mortality Rates and Counts Mississippi, 2014-2024

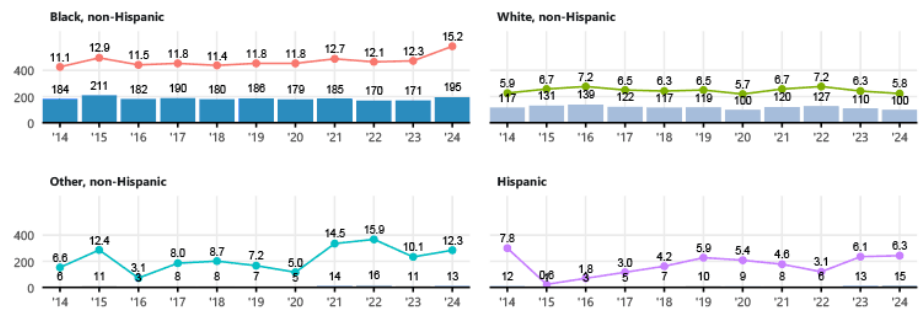
Rates (per 1,000 live births) shown on chart line; year total counts shown above bar



NOTE: Final count may be incomplete and are subject to change

Infant Mortality Rates and Counts by Race Mississippi, 2014-2024

Rates (per 1,000 live births) shown on chart line; year total counts shown above bar



NOTE: Case counts may be incomplete and are subject to change; Shaded region more likely to be incomplete.



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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