



SIDS Deaths By Race And Ethnicity 1995–2001

**National Sudden
Infant Death
Syndrome/
Infant Death
Resource Center**

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history (Willinger et al., 1991).

“Infant mortality is the most sensitive index we possess of social welfare.”

—Julia Lathrop, M.D.

First Director, Federal Children’s Bureau, 1913

After the first month of life, SIDS is the leading cause of death among all racial and ethnic groups, representing nearly one-third of all deaths in babies between 1 month and 1 year of age.

Since the Back to Sleep Campaign was first launched in 1994, the rate of SIDS deaths has decreased dramatically. However, there are still significant differences in the SIDS rates among racial and ethnic minorities. SIDS rates are highest for African Americans and American Indians and lowest for Asians and Hispanics. As shown in Table 1, in 2001, the rate of SIDS among African Americans was more than twice that of Whites, and more than three times greater among American Indians than Whites. Further reductions in the number of SIDS deaths, particularly among African Americans and American Indians, will greatly lower the overall infant mortality rate.



**Table 1: SIDS Mortality Rate by Race and Hispanic Origin of Mother
1995–2001 * Linked Files
(Rates per 100,000 Live Births in Specified Group)**

	1995 ¹	1996 ²	1997 ³	1998 ⁴	1999 ⁵	2000 ⁶	2001 ⁷	Percent Change
Race	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	
All races**	87.2	78.5	77.2	71.7	66.8	62.1	55.5	-36.3
White	72.3	64.3	64.8	59.5	55.6	51.8	45.6	-36.9
Black	166.6	153.8	143.2	137.9	129.9	122.1	113.5	-31.9
American Indian***	206.6	203.3	155.6	151.5	146.9	120.0	145.7	-29.5
Asian & Pacific Islander	49.9	44.0	51.2	39.4	31.0	29.4	18.5	-62.9
Total Hispanic+	47.7	48.5	46.5	37.4	37.2	34.3	27.1	-43.2
Mexican	Not Available	Not Available	46.9	38.0	33.3	31.8	23.2	-50.5
Puerto Rican	Not Available	Not Available	59.5	41.8	66.5	63.7	76.4	-28.4
Central & South American	Not Available	Not Available	40.0	20.4	+	26.5	++	++

Notes:

* Last year with complete and final data.

** Includes races other than Blacks and Whites.

*** Includes Aleuts and Eskimos.

+ Includes Cuban and other and unknown Hispanic.

++ Figure does not meet standard of reliability or precision; based on fewer than 20 deaths in the numerator.

The linked birth/death data set is from birth and infant death certificates registered in all States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. Race is based on birth certificate data. Race and Hispanic origin of mother are reported as separate items on the birth certificates and, therefore, a mother of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

^{1, 2, 3} MacDorman and Atkinson, 1998a, 1998b, 1999.

⁴ Mathews, Curtin, and MacDorman, 2000.

⁵ Mathews, MacDorman, and Menacker, 2002.

⁶ Mathews, Menacker, and MacDorman, 2002.

⁷ Mathews, Menacker, and MacDorman, 2003.

Reducing the Risk Even More

For African Americans, “tummy” sleeping is a significant risk factor for SIDS (Hauck et al., 2003). To promote back sleeping in this community, the Back to Sleep Campaign partners joined with the National Black Child Development Institute and other historically Black organizations to develop materials for a new initiative to reduce SIDS in African-American communities.

Many local SIDS/infant death and fetal and infant mortality review programs that serve minority populations have also developed special SIDS risk reduction materials. Check with your local health department to learn about these programs in your community.

Information on SIDS Risk Reduction in Minority Communities

National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Infant Death Resource Center (NSIDRC)
2070 Chain Bridge Road
Suite 450
Vienna, VA 22182
Phone: (866) 866-7437; (703) 821-8955
Fax: (703) 821-2098
E-mail: sids@circlesolutions.com
www.sidscenter.org

National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC)
SIDS/ID Component
Georgetown University Child Development Center
3307 M Street NW
Suite 401
Washington, DC 20007-3935
Phone: (800) 788-2066; (202) 687-5387
Fax: (202) 687-8899
E-mail: cultural@gunet.georgetown.edu
www.dml.georgetown.edu/depts/pediatrics/gucdc/cultural.html

Partners in the Back to Sleep Campaign Outreach to Underserved Populations

- *Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority*
- *Chi Eta Phi Sorority*
- *Chicago Department of Public Health*
- *Congress of National Black Churches*
- *District of Columbia Department of Public Health*
- *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*
- *National Black Child Health Development Institute*
- *National Coalition of 100 Black Women*
- *National Medical Association*
- *National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters*
- *Pampers Parenting Institute*
- *Zeta Phi Beta Sorority*

The Back to Sleep Campaign is sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the SIDS Alliance, and the Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs.

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Information on the Back to Sleep Campaign
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Back to Sleep Campaign
31 Center Drive, Room 2A32
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Public Information: (301) 496-5133
Fax: (301) 496-7101
www.nichd.nih.gov

To order campaign materials, call toll-free:
(800) 505-CRIB (2742)

To order single copies of materials for African Americans, phone: Toll-free: (800) 370-2943

These materials also may be ordered online.

To request multiple copies of the new Resource Kit for Reducing the Risk of SIDS in African-American Communities, phone: Toll-free: (800) 505-CRIB (2742)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics
Metro IV Building
3311 Toledo Road
Hyattsville, MD 20782
Phone: (301) 458-4636
www.cdc.gov/nchs

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