

Why Infant Deaths are Rising in 2023

Josie Cooper

The Alliance for Patient Access (allianceforpatientaccess.org), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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Nevertheless, [new data](#) from the CDC clearly illustrate the factors driving infant deaths – and give powerful clues about how to prevent them.

Infant Mortality Data:

Between 2021 and 2022, the United States saw a 3% climb in its infant mortality rate. That raises infant fatalities to 5.6 per 1,000 live births.

In a nation that welcomes 3.7 million babies each year, this means that more than 18,000 newborn lives were lost last year.

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Babies of color face a higher risk of death:

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Reversing the Trend:

The CDC cites two primary causes of infant mortality: maternal complications and bacterial meningitis. However, the “cause of death” alone paints an incomplete picture. The factors driving changes in infant survival, especially the disparities in maternal and infant health, are complex and multifaceted.

Consider that Black, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and Native American women are [far more likely](#) than white women to face fetal death, preterm births, stillbirths, and low-birthweight babies. These same groups have [higher rates](#) of pregnancies for which they receive no prenatal care and have higher incidences of maternal mortality.

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Better access to care could not only save infants but also reduce [pregnancy-related maternal death](#).

Reducing infant mortality, therefore, will require targeted policy interventions. Policymakers, healthcare professionals, and communities can unite around policy initiatives that bolster maternal and prenatal health services and education.

One example is the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2023, which aims to address the maternal health crisis in the United States. The legislation provides critical funding to address social determinants of health, enhance data collection processes, improve access to maternal mental health care, and promote maternal vaccinations to protect the health of moms and their babies.

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Disclosure: Josie Cooper is executive director of the Alliance for Patient Access. This article was also published at healthpolicytoday.org.

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