

About the Data – Fetal Mortality

Indicator Description

Fetal mortality is defined as the number of fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks of gestation per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks of gestation.

Data Sources

California Department of Public Health, Fetal Death Statistical Master File, 2007–2021: Compiled from information on fetal death certificates, including demographic information related to the fetus and parents, as well as medical data related to the pregnancy.

California Department of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master File, 2000–2017: Compiled from information on birth certificates, including demographic information related to the infant and parents, as well as medical data related to the birth.

California Department of Public Health, Comprehensive Master Birth File, 2018–2021: Compiled from information on birth certificates, including demographic information related to the infant and parents, as well as medical data related to the birth. Beginning in 2018, the California Comprehensive Master Birth File replaced the Birth Statistical Master File.

National Comparisons

Gregory ECW, Valenzuela CP, Hoyert DL. [Fetal Mortality: United States, 2021](#). National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 72 no 8. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023.

Healthy People 2030: National 10-year plan addressing public health priorities, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Available from: [Healthy People 2030: Reduce fetal deaths](#)

Data Analysis

The fetal mortality rate shown in these dashboards is the number of fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks of gestation per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths, stratified by selected maternal and fetal characteristics. The distribution, or percent, of the selected causes of fetal death is the number of fetal deaths by stated cause among all fetal deaths. Rates are presented to the second decimal point to better identify smaller changes and differences. The 95% confidence interval presented in the tooltips indicates there is a 95% chance that the range contains the true prevalence or rate in the population. Rates or percentages with wide confidence intervals

should be interpreted with caution. The state dashboard uses single year data; the county dashboard uses three-year aggregated data.

Numerators include fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks of gestation to California resident mothers/parents giving birth. Fetal deaths with not-stated gestational age are presumed to be 20 or more weeks of gestation. Denominators include fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks of gestation and live births to California resident mothers/parents giving birth.

Additional notes: The term stillbirth can be used in place of fetal death. Statistics on fetal death exclude data for induced terminations of pregnancy (abortions). Deaths prior to 20 weeks of gestation are termed miscarriages.

See Category and Subcategory Definitions below for additional inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Data Suppression

For fetal mortality, the numerator, rate, and confidence interval are not shown when the numerator is less than 10.

For the distribution of selected causes of fetal death, the numerator, denominator, rate, and confidence interval are not shown when the numerator or denominator is less than 10.

Category and Subcategory Definitions

Age: Age of mother/parent giving birth at time of delivery. Excludes records with unknown age.

Period of Gestation: Age of fetus at time of death. Early fetal mortality is the number of fetal deaths at 20–27 weeks of gestation per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths at 20–27 weeks of gestation. Late fetal mortality is the number of fetal deaths at 28 weeks of gestation or more per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths at 28 weeks of gestation or more. Fetal deaths with not-stated gestational age are allocated to the early fetal death and late fetal death categories according to the proportion of fetal deaths with stated gestational age that fall into each category (proportional distribution) (Gregory ECW, Valenzuela CP, Hoyert DL. [Fetal Mortality: United States, 2021](#). National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 72 no 8. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023.).

Birthweight: Weight of the fetus at time of delivery, reported in grams. Excludes records with birthweight less than 1 gram or greater than 8165 grams and records with unknown birthweight.

Geography: State or county of maternal residence at time of delivery.

Gestational age: Obstetric estimate of gestation at time of delivery, in completed weeks. Birth records with unknown gestational age or greater than 47 weeks gestational age are excluded from the denominator. Not-stated (unknown) gestational age for fetal deaths is not shown on the dashboard but is available in the downloadable data table.

Cause of fetal death: The selected causes of fetal death are defined based on International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD–10) coding provided in the National Center for Health Statistics’ List of 124 Selected Causes of Fetal Death (Gregory ECW, Valenzuela CP, Hoyert DL. [Fetal Mortality: United States, 2021](#). National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 72 no 8. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023.). The following causes are shown in this dashboard: Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (congenital malformations) (ICD-10 Q00-Q99); Fetus affected by maternal conditions that may be unrelated to present pregnancy (maternal conditions unrelated to pregnancy) (ICD-10 P00); Fetus affected by maternal complications of pregnancy (maternal complications) (ICD-10 P01); Fetus affected by complications of placenta, cord and membranes (placental, cord and membrane complications) (ICD-10 P02); and Fetal death of unspecified cause (unspecified cause) (ICD-10 P95). Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Data for the cause of death field was not available on the 2012 Fetal Death Statistical Master File.

Plurality: Single-gestation fetal deaths, twins or triplets and higher-order fetal deaths.

Race/ethnicity: Hispanic includes all persons of Hispanic origin of any race, including Other and Unknown race. Multi-Race includes those of non-Hispanic origin who reported more than one race. The remaining groups are of non-Hispanic origin who reported a single race: American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN), Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Pacific Islander), White, Other or Unknown. Other and Unknown race are not shown on the dashboards but are available in the downloadable data table.

Sex: Sex of fetus is defined as either male or female. Excludes records with unknown and nonbinary sex.

Suggested Citation

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go.cdph.ca.gov/Fetal-Mortality-Dashboard