

Alabama infant mortality declining, according to data released by the AUM Center for Demographic Research

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – The state's infant mortality rate has slightly declined from 9.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008 to 8.7 in 2010, according to the 2012 Alabama Health Data Sheet released by Auburn Montgomery's Center for Demographic Research. The decline has been more substantial for whites – 7.6 to 6.6 per 1,000 – than minorities, which went down slightly from 13.4 to 13.0.

There are large racial disparities in infant mortality in Alabama. At the state level, infants born to black and other minority women are nearly 100 times more likely to die before their first birthday as compared to those born to white women. In counties such as Cullman, Covington and Escambia, the risk of dying before age 1 for an infant born to a minority woman is 500 times higher than that of an infant born to a white woman. Yet, in counties like Barbour, Greene and Marshall, infants born to minority women have a better chance of survival than those born to white women.

Other important findings include a continuous increase of out-of-wedlock births and declining marriage rates. No change was observed in the rate of divorce in the last two years. The percentage of children born outside of marriage continues to rise. In 2006, 36.8 percent of all Alabama children were born out-of-wedlock. Today, this figure has increased to 41.9 percent.

The marriage rate also slightly declined in Alabama, from 8.7 to 8.2 per 1,000 population between 2008 and 2010. During the same period, the divorce rate remained at 4.4 per 1,000. Researchers say the constant rate of divorce between 2008 and 2010 likely reflects the impact of the economic recession. Financial uncertainty is usually associated with lower divorce rates because people fear the risk of losing jobs and other monetary benefits, researchers say.

The 2012 Alabama Health Data Sheet contains valuable information on each of the 67 counties in comparison to the state of Alabama and U.S. Several health indicators are displayed including prenatal care, leading causes of death, rate of physicians per population, and the number of hospital beds. The AUM Center for Demographic Research regularly produces datasheets focusing on matters of health, population, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, children's statistics and education.

Download the full data sheet at www.demographics.aum.edu.

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