



Celebrating More First Birthdays

2023 Hamilton County
Maternal and Infant
Health Report





When our community comes together, real change is possible.

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Making Historic Strides Together

From Our Executive Director

As Executive Director of Cradle Cincinnati, I have the honor of celebrating you. Together, we just pushed Black infant mortality into the single digits for the first time in Hamilton County.

Our overall infant mortality rate decreased from 8.7 to 5.5.*
The Black infant mortality rate decreased from 13.7 to 9.0*

This year is a heartfelt acknowledgment of the “We.” It’s a celebration of what happens when diverse groups of people support each other and apply persistent and innovative approaches to solving our shared challenge: infant mortality. It’s rejoicing in the power of letting those most impacted by the problem lead their solutions: amplifying voices, listening, and

funding to test and learn what strategies are most effective.

Let’s keep going! While we revel in this progress, we see that the disparity still exists. Our preterm birth-related infant deaths are steadily decreasing, but we still have work to do on sleep-related infant deaths. Based on our current success we know we can do better.

The truth is, the smaller the numbers, the harder the work. This win means that we have to keep going even harder. Thank you for your support, hard work, and dedication to this vital effort. Let’s come back next year with even better results.

Dr. Meredith Smith
Executive Director, Cradle Cincinnati

“The truth is, the smaller the numbers, the harder the work. We’re going to continue to focus on innovation.”

* 2022 vs. 2023 infant mortality rates



Infant Mortality Rate

has decreased from 8.7 (2022) to 5.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023

8.7 2022



5.5 2023

Black Infant Mortality Rate

has decreased from 13.7 (2022) to 9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023

13.7 2022



9.0 2023

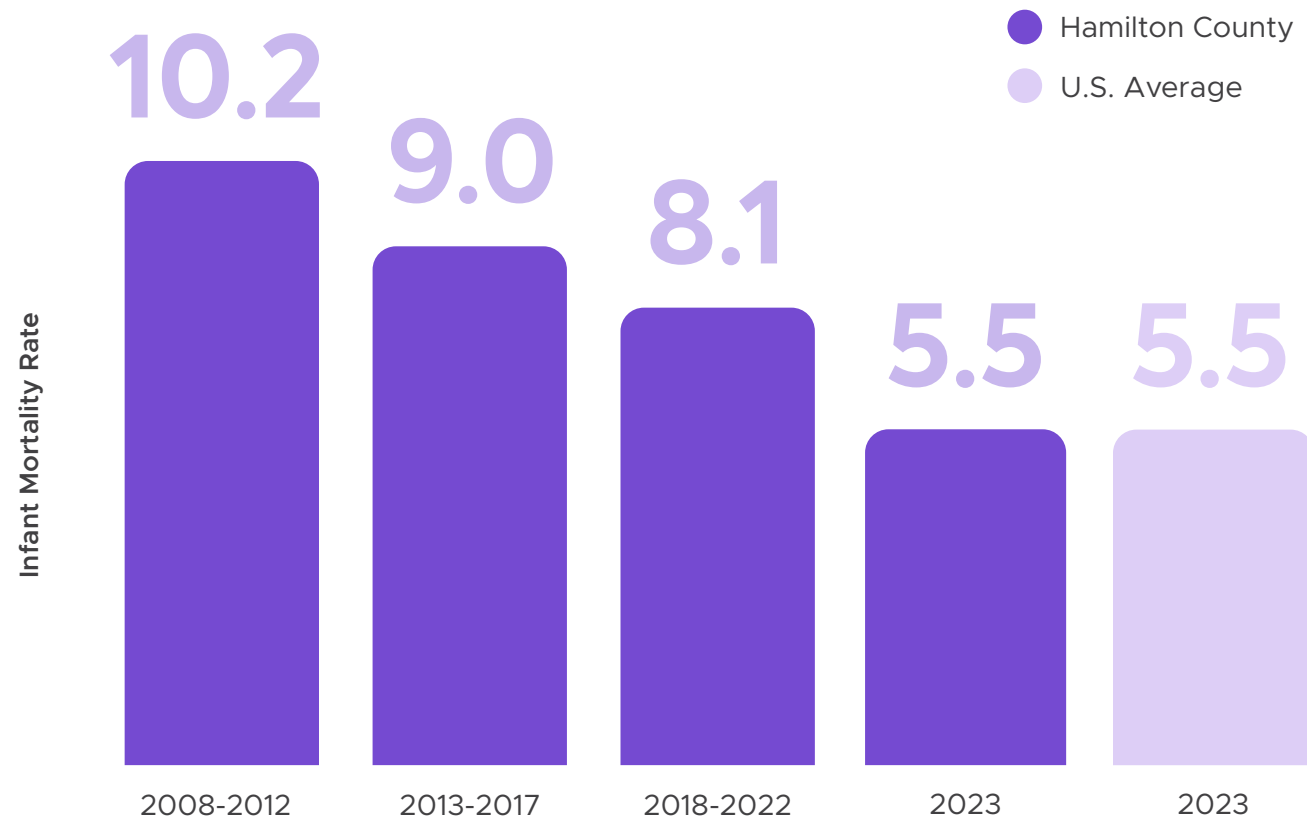
The infant mortality rate in Hamilton County is now on par with the national average.*

In 2013, Hamilton County set an aspirational goal of achieving an infant mortality rate on par with the national average.

At that time, Hamilton County families were 70% more likely to experience an infant loss than the nation as a whole.

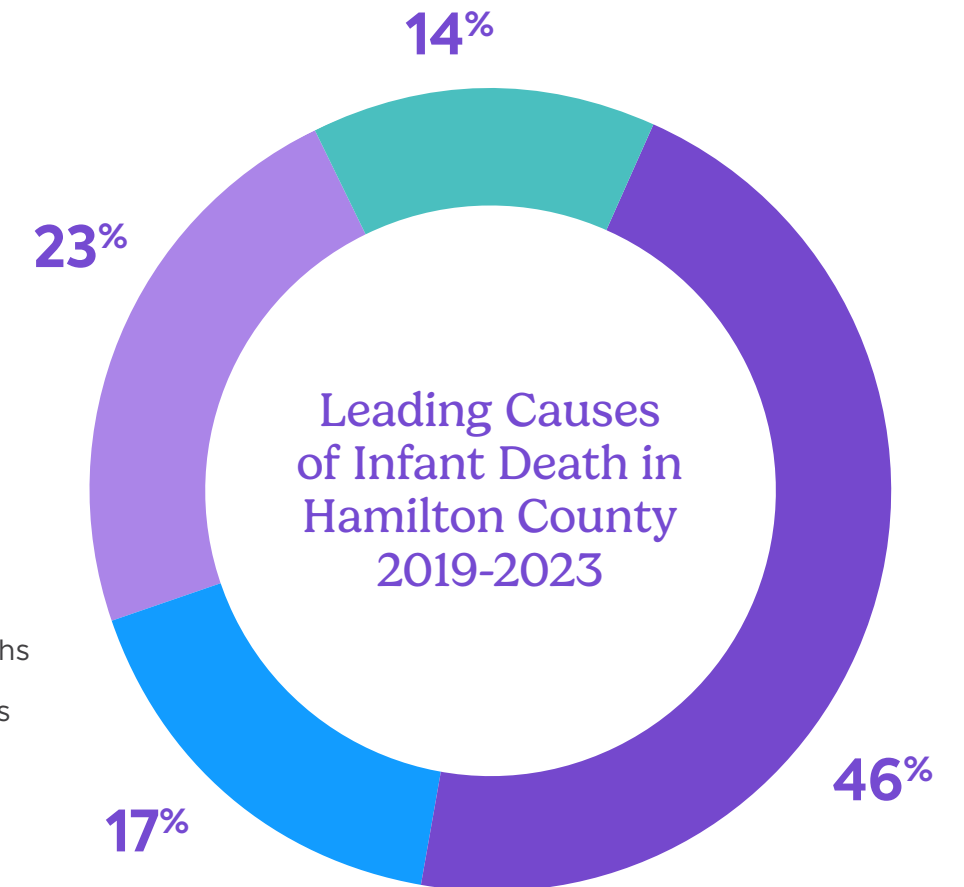
We're pleased to announce the infant mortality rate is on par with the national average – a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together around a common goal.

We are motivated by our county's progress. But there is much more work to be done to ensure every baby born in Hamilton County lives to see their first birthday.



Source: Hamilton County Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

* United States Infant Mortality Average 5.5 (2023)



- Preterm Birth-Related Deaths
- Birth Defect-Related Deaths
- Sleep-Related Deaths
- Other Deaths

Preterm Birth-Related Deaths	Complementary medical and community based interventions support the decline in Black infant death.
Sleep-Related Infant Deaths	Sleep-related infant deaths continue to be a stubborn problem. The data calls for innovative interventions.
Birth Defect-Related Deaths	Birth defect data remains consistent with national averages and shows no racial disparities.
Other Deaths	Includes homicides, infections, accidents and other causes.



RACIAL EQUITY

We center Black women by listening to them and co-creating solutions to make systems change together.

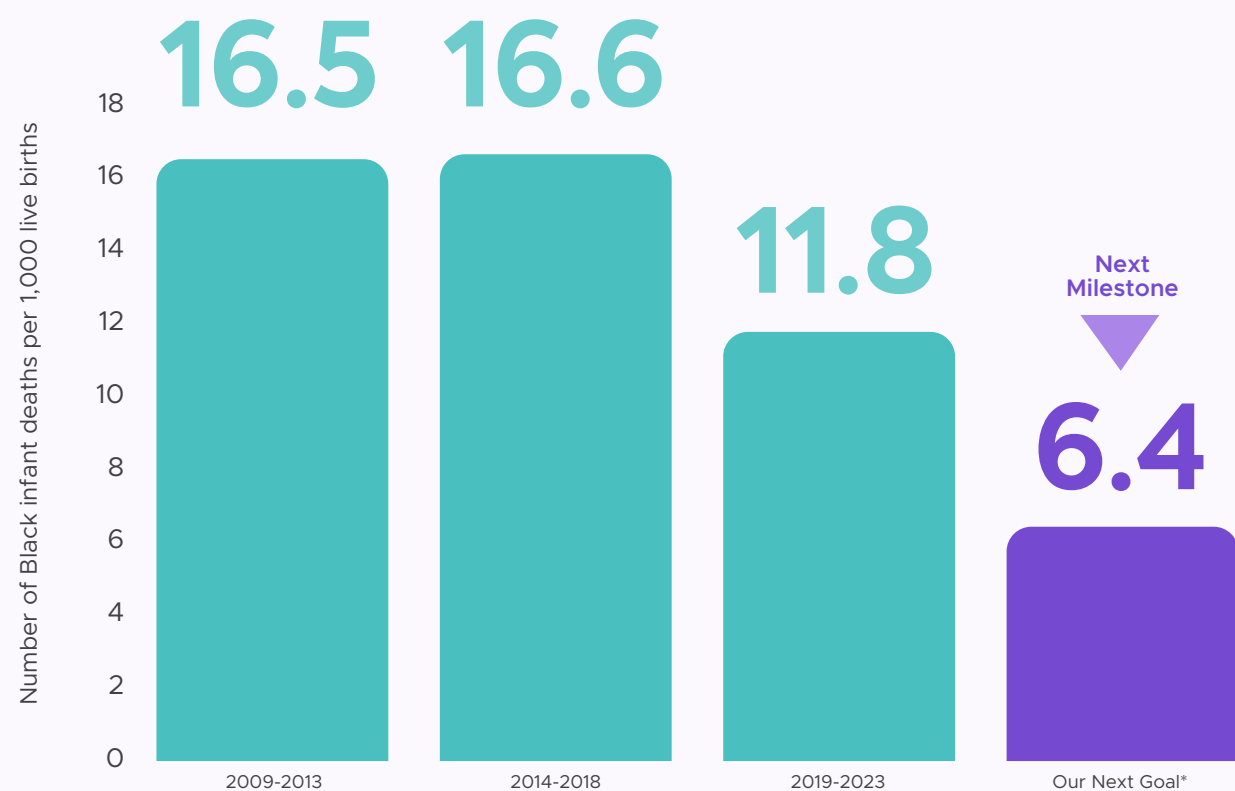
Making History: Hamilton County reached a single digit Black Infant Mortality rate of 9.0 for the first time on record.

The decrease in Black infant mortality is a major contributor to the overall decrease in Hamilton County infant mortality. When we came together as a community to decrease infant mortality in 2013, the standard narrative focused on socioeconomic factors. However, our scrutiny of infant mortality data revealed social determinants of health did not explain Black infant mortality. Instead, the data pointed to racial discrimination as the key driver.

We changed the direction of our work toward identification of the structural factors driving the racial disparity of infant mortality in our community. Now our work to amplify the voices of Black women in clinical settings and collaborating with our regional maternal health providers are showing meaningful signs of improvement.

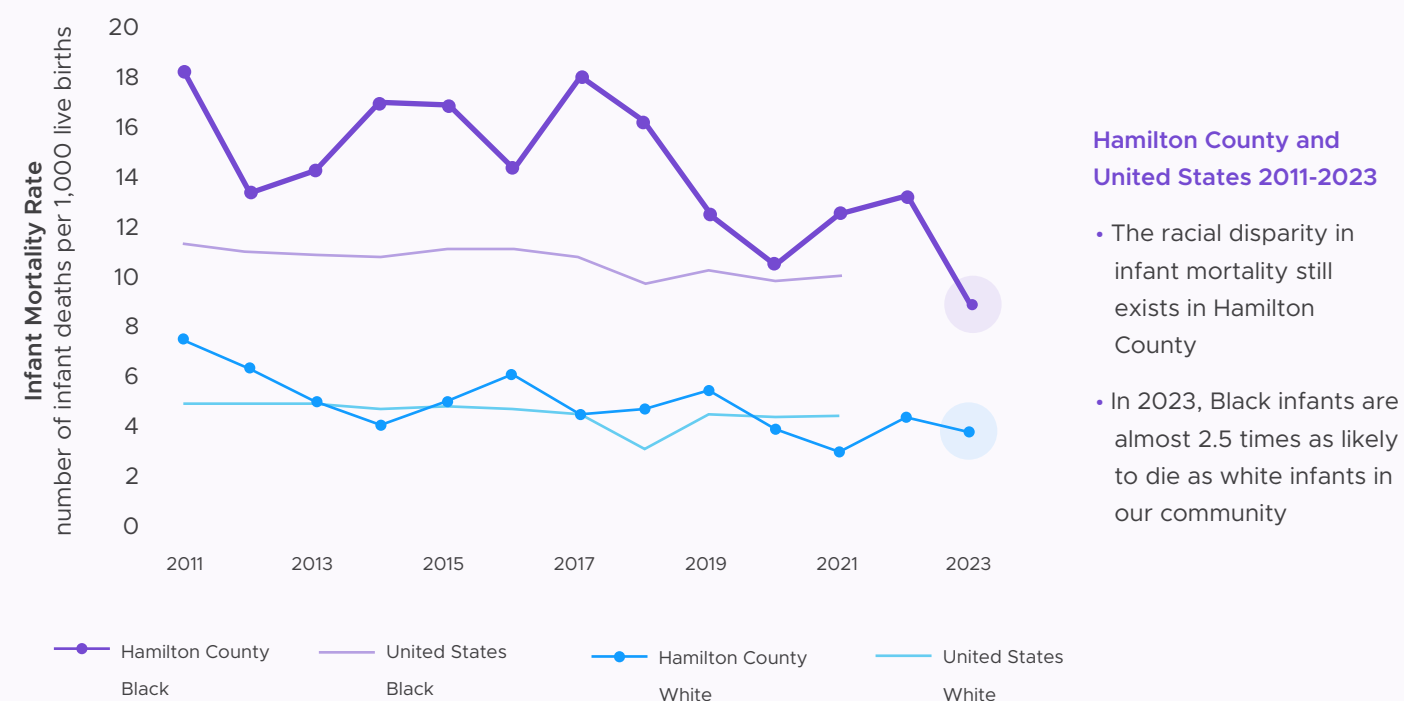
While the national Black infant mortality rate has been on a slow decline, we've seen a much faster rate of change in Hamilton County. We are dedicated to continue that leadership so that we can sustain and grow this accelerated improvement.

Black Infant Mortality Rate



*Visit our strategic plan at cradlecincinnati.org to learn more

Black Infant Mortality



Hamilton County and United States 2011-2023

- The racial disparity in infant mortality still exists in Hamilton County
- In 2023, Black infants are almost 2.5 times as likely to die as white infants in our community



SAFE SLEEP

Black families continue to be more likely to experience a sleep-related loss than families of other races or ethnicities.

Let's Talk About Sleep

Creating safe spaces for truths to be shared

Sleep-related infant deaths remain a stubborn problem. Practicing safe sleep consistently can be difficult and exists at the crossroads of cultural beliefs and parental exhaustion.

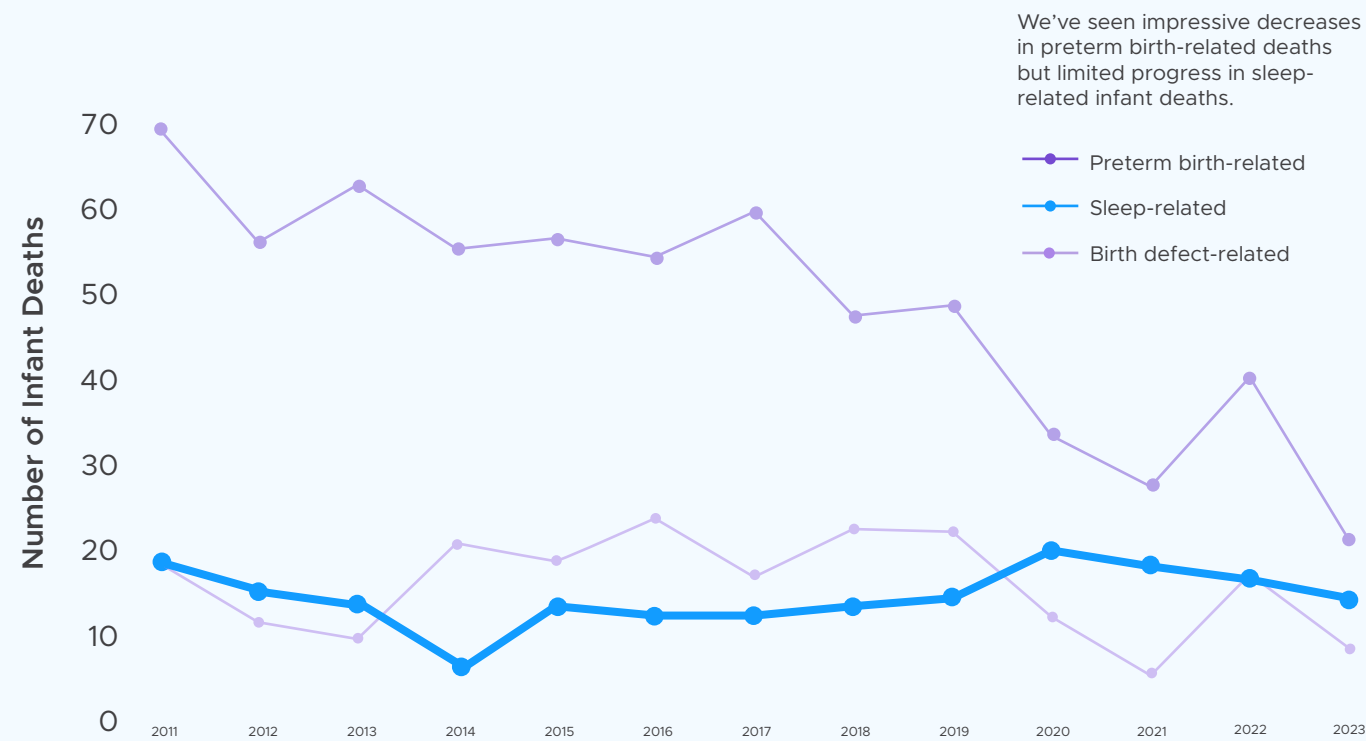
Our community research team is committed to understanding and addressing this issue. The six Queens Village board members* who make up the team have been trained as experts in creating safe spaces for truths to be shared. Last summer, they hosted safe sleep listening circles where Black moms discussed challenges to safe sleep and how families can be further supported with their safe sleep goals.

* Lauren Brassfield, Brandi Colvin, Mia Crockett, Shamika Karikara, Kiera Paddy, Dr. Fran Kazimierczuk

These listening circles are one of several ways in which we continue to listen to the community about safe sleep in order to guide our work.

Join the conversation

Cradle Cincinnati is drafting a more detailed five-year safe sleep strategic plan for Hamilton County. If you would like to be involved by providing input or helping with implementation, please complete this survey at bit.ly/hcsafesleepplan.



Our community research team found familiar themes around the hard reality of parenthood. These centered around:

- Postpartum Depression
- Anxiety & Stress
- Lack of Support
- Exhaustion
- Financial Struggles

Innovation in Action

As we work toward our goal of zero infant deaths, this is how our community is thinking, acting and innovating in new ways.



Black Birth Workers Support Black Mamas

The positive impact doulas have on the birthing experience is extensive and includes fewer negative childbirth experiences, shorter labor time and better communication between pregnant people and their healthcare providers. However, access to doulas has been financially out of reach for most families, and the birth workers who have the talent and passion are not earning enough to support themselves.

Cradle Cincinnati Connections and Queens Village have been working collectively to solve both issues and have made significant strides with the following initiatives:

Providing Access to Free Doula Care

This program offers a year of free doula care to Black birthing people in our community, with funding

provided by CareSource, HRSA and bi3 Fund. Comprehensive doula services are provided by community doula agencies including BlaQ Birth Circle, Cherished Hearts and Me & She Doulas.

Building Doula Business Capacity

The demand for doulas is so high that there is a real need to support them in building their businesses. Our pilot program, co-developed with the NOIR Collective and funded by bi3 Fund, addresses this by equipping doulas with the tools they need to thrive. Over the past four months, we've been empowering them to navigate complex areas like grant and insurance applications, optimizing their business systems and conquering the intricacies of Medicaid reimbursement.

“The doula business program is essential in our community because it directly supports the sustainability of doula practices, helping both new and established doulas sustain their businesses while doing what we love most: supporting the community. It also helps remove barriers so that women can more easily access doula support.”

Sesheta Tafari, Me & She Doulas

Moms and Healthcare Leaders Unite for Maternal Health Equity

Three years ago, Black women in Queens Village expressed that they would value increased visibility into how hospitals are addressing racial inequities in birth outcomes.

In response, Cradle Cincinnati, Queens Village, The Health Collaborative, local birthing hospitals and Black mothers came together to design and implement Mama Certified, a collaborative impact approach to addressing these concerns.

Mama Certified is a first-of-its-kind program in which birthing hospitals agreed to publicly share data and partner with Black women to improve the hospital birthing experience.

Together, we are working in partnership with hospitals to maintain accountability and trust with Black birthing families while also celebrating their progress in improving the birthing experience.

“We know that Black mothers experience poorer maternal and infant health outcomes than their white counterparts, and we want to be a part of bridging that gap and changing that narrative.”

Gina Hemenway, Mercy Health

 **Mama Certified**
Equity Centered Maternal Care [Learn more at mamacertified.org](https://mamacertified.org)



Mama Certified is powered by bi3 Fund and supported by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation and CareSource .

Advocacy in Action

Collaboration is key to continuing to ensure system change remains a statewide priority.

In 2023, a statewide collaboration between CelebrateOne, Cradle Cincinnati, First Year Cleveland, Groundwork Ohio, the Ohio Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality and Capitol Partners resulted in the creation of Infant Vitality Advocacy Day, an event focused on advocating for budget and policy priorities

to support better maternal and infant health outcomes.

A key part of Infant Vitality Advocacy Day was creating opportunities for lawmakers and regional health advocates to meet in person.

Thank you to the following legislators for championing moms and babies in Ohio:

- Senator Michele Reynolds
- Senator Catherine Ingram
- Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson

- Representative Andrea White
- Representative Latyna M. Humphrey

Stay tuned for our second Infant Vitality Advocacy Day, coming this September. Visit cradlecincinnati.org to stay up-to-date and to get involved.



Supporting Data

Green = better compared to 2018-2022. Red = worse compared to 2018-2022. All numbers are percentages unless otherwise indicated. To read definitions of each indicator, download our data dictionary at [cradlecincinnati.org](https://www.cradlecincinnati.org).

INFANT HEALTH

	Hamilton County 2018-2022	Hamilton County 2023	Hamilton County, White 2023	Hamilton County, Black 2023	Hamilton County, Hispanic 2023	Hamilton County, Asian 2023
Breastfeeding Rates (upon hospital discharge)	75.9	77.5	80.5	71.2	77.4	85.4
Multiple Births (twins, triplets, etc.) (among women who had live births)	3.8	3.8	4.1	4.3	1.4	3.5
Birth Defect/Congenital Anomaly Rates	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.0
Birth Defect/Congenital Anomaly Deaths (deaths per 1,000 live births)	1.6 (2018-2022)	0.9	0.4	1.6	1.6	--
Sleep-Related Infant Deaths (deaths per 1,000 live births)	1.7 (2018-2022)	1.5	0.6	3.8	--	--
Reported consistently placing infant on his or her back for sleep (among women who had live births)	87.9 (2021)	86.9 (2022)	93 (2022)	76.1 (2022)	87.5 (2022)	--
Reported always placing a baby in crib for sleep (among women who had live births)	94.2 (2021)	94.2 (2022)	97.5 (2022)	88.7 (2022)	93.6 (2022)	--
Reported receiving paid leave from employer after baby was born (among women who had live births)	46.4 (2021)	45.3 (2022)	53.8 (2022)	31.1 (2022)	--	--

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Pre-Pregnancy Body Mass Index (among women who had live births)						
Underweight (BMI < 18.5)	2.9	2.6	2.3	3.6	1.9	2.9
Obese (BMI ≥ 30)	28.3	30.1	26.9	40.5	22.7	12
Sexually Transmitted Infection (among women who had live births)						
Syphilis	0.5	0.6	0.3	1.4	0.6	0.3
Gonorrhea	1.3	1.1	0.3	3	0.2	0.3
Chlamydia	4.4	4.7	1.1	9.2	8.2	3.8
Unintentional Pregnancy (among women who had live births)	47.7 (2021)	42.3 (2022)	27.7	69.6 (2022)	37.4 (2022)	--
Inadequately Spaced Pregnancy (among non-first time moms who had live births)						
<6 month Interpregnancy Interval	5.8	5.5	4.6	7.3	4.8	5.6
<12 month Interpregnancy Interval	18.6	18.5	18.4	20.1	16	12.9
<18 month Interpregnancy Interval	33.9	33.9	38.4	31.3	24	28.7
Postpartum Depression (among women who had live births)	7.8 (2021)	8.2 (2022)	6.6 (2022)	9.5 (2022)	--	--

See Data Dictionary at [cradlecincinnati.org](https://www.cradlecincinnati.org) for confidence intervals for these proportions

PREGNANCY HEALTH

	Hamilton County 2018-2022	Hamilton County 2023	Hamilton County, White 2023	Hamilton County, Black 2023	Hamilton County, Hispanic 2023	Hamilton County, Asian 2023
Preterm Birth Rate						
<37 Weeks (total preterm births)	10.9	11	9.7	14.1	9.7	9.3
<28 Weeks (extreme preterm births)	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.3
<23 Weeks (periviable births)	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0
Prenatal Care (among women who had live births)						
Accessed Care in the 1st Trimester	67.6	68.3	76.8	64.9	43.7	66.2
Accessed Care in the 3rd Trimester	4.0	5.2	2.5	5.4	14.9	7
No Prenatal Care	2.3	2.0	1.4	2.4	2.5	2.3
Maternal Cigarette Smoking (during 2nd or 3rd trimester)	6.6	4.0	5.0	3.9	0.4	0.3
Drug Exposure During Pregnancy (Among regional women who had live births)						
Drug Exposure During Pregnancy	7.1	10.5	--	--	--	--
Opioid Exposure During Pregnancy	2.3	2.2	--	--	--	--
Previous Preterm Birth (among women with previous births)	7.8	7.7	6.0	11.2	6.1	6.4
Chronic Illness During Pregnancy (among women who had live births)						
Gestational Diabetes	10.7	11.1	10.7	10.9	10.6	23.3
Hypertension	17.6	19.9	18.8	26.2	12.3	12
Stillbirth rate (per 1,000 births)	6.5	7.8	--	--	--	--
Stress (among women who had live births)						
Reported having someone to talk to about problems during pregnancy	82.5 (2021)	82.7 (2022)	90.7 (2022)	75.7 (2022)	59.4 (2022)	--

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Housing						
Renters	41.5 (2018-2022)	39.8 (2022)	--	--	--	--
Vacancy Rate	9.3 (2018-2022)	6.8 (2022)	--	--	--	--
Reported difficulty paying rent before pregnancy (among women who had live births)	14.9 (2021)	16.2 (2022)	11.3 (2022)	24.9 (2022)	--	--
Transportation (among all adults)						
Reported no vehicle availability in household	11 (2018-2022)	10.9 (2022)	--	--	--	--

Thank you to the funders who make Cradle Cincinnati possible.

bi3 Fund	FrontStream Workplace Philanthropy	Paramount Advantage
Buckeye Health Plan	The Greater Cincinnati Foundation	Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati
CareSource	Hamilton County	TriHealth
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center	Interact for Health	UC Health
The de Caval Family SIDS Foundation/eat. play. give.	Robert N. Kirch	United Healthcare
Crane Fund for Widows and Children	Mercy Health	United Way of Greater Cincinnati
Crowley's Inc.	Molina Healthcare	U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration
Day of Pentecost Celebration Foundation	Ohio Department of Health	Lothar F. Witt
Deskey	Ohio Department of Medicaid	
	Procter & Gamble	

Mission

Cradle Cincinnati is a network of community members and organizations working across sectors to measurably improve Hamilton County, Ohio's infant mortality rate and to eliminate racial inequities in the health of moms and babies. We aim to do this by transforming systems, supporting families and amplifying Black women's voices while empowering their ideas and actions.

Vision

Every child born in Hamilton County lives to see his or her first birthday.

Philosophy

No single organization can tackle the issue of infant mortality. We need partners throughout Hamilton County to come together under a common goal — helping our babies live to their first birthday — and common objectives. We embrace a model of collective impact.





This report was developed by the Cradle Cincinnati team in partnership with Cincinnati Health Department and Hamilton County Public Health. It was produced by our partners at Deskey Branding. Photography by Knack Photo + Video

Contributors include Lauren Everett, Jessica Seeberger, Melissa Burroughs, Meredith Smith and Dominique Walker.

**Learn more
about our work at**

cradlecincinnati.org
blackwomenforthewin.com

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