

Inequalities in Infant Mortality in Canada



ABOUT
3.7 out of 1,000

babies born in Canada will not live past their first birthday. Loss of an infant can have psychological impacts on parents and caregivers.

Leading causes of infant deaths:

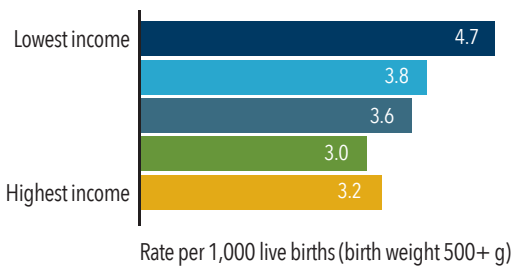
- Immaturity (not fully grown)
- Structural or functional birth defects
- Severe lack of oxygen
- Infection
- Sudden infant death syndrome

Risk factors and conditions of infant death include:

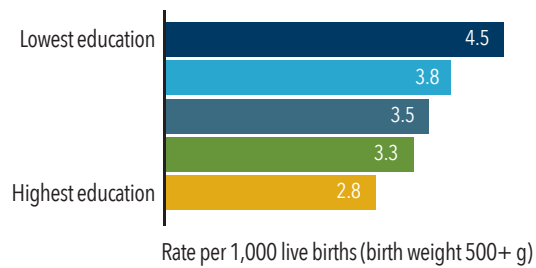
- Low maternal education
- Inadequate housing
- Poverty
- Lack of access to health care
- Food insecurity
- Unemployment

While the infant mortality rate in Canada has improved over the past few decades, this improvement is not equally distributed. Infant mortality is strongly associated with socioeconomic status in Canada.

Infant Mortality Rate by Income*



Infant Mortality Rate by Education*



Canadians living in the most materially deprived areas have rates of infant mortality

1.6x HIGHER

than the rates of those living in the least deprived areas.**

Areas where more Indigenous peoples live have a higher infant mortality rate:



Inequities experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations are a direct result of colonial policies and practices that included massive forced relocation, loss of lands, creation of the reserve system, banning of Indigenous languages and cultural practices, and creation of the residential school system. Unaddressed intergenerational trauma adds to the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous peoples.

Many infant deaths are preventable. Addressing inequalities in education, income, and material deprivation may improve conditions that influence the health of both the mother-to-be and the infant.

* Data excludes Ontario due to data availability. Income quintiles and education quintiles are area-based measures.

** Material deprivation (among those aged 15 years and older) is defined by: high % of people with no high school diploma; low employment/population ratio; and low average income.

Source: Canadian Birth Database – Canadian Mortality Database linked database (2008–2011)

For more data on health inequalities in Canada, visit: www.health-infobase.canada.ca/health-inequalities

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