# The Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Report
## 2019 Child Fatalities

# Protecting Our Future

## Data Brief

This report includes highlights of the overall 2019 data and noteworthy changes compared to 2018. Due to the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic has placed on the agencies that create this report, only a data brief has been prepared. The full set of data tables and figures can be found here: https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/departments/invest-in-children/child-fatality-review-board

## Overall Look at 2019

In 2019, there were 174 child deaths in Cuyahoga County; 11 less than in 2018. The decrease was due to seven fewer deaths to children 1- to 9 years old and four fewer children 10- to 17 years old. There was no change in the number of infant deaths from 2018 to 2019.

- Prematurity, sleep related and birth defects were the top three causes of child death. Prematurity had the largest increase in child deaths (+8), while birth defects had the biggest decrease (-11).
- The Cuyahoga County infant mortality rate (IMR) of 8.6 per 1,000 live births was higher than the preliminary state of Ohio rate of 6.9.
- The number of deaths in the accidental injury category was the second-highest in the last ten years. The majority of these deaths were due to suffocation from unsafe sleep and drowning.
- Four drowning deaths tied for the highest total in the last ten years.
- The number of cancer deaths (2) was tied for the lowest in the last ten years with six fewer than in 2018.
- Five motor vehicles deaths were the lowest in the last four years and three fewer than in 2018.

### Annual Number of Deaths by Age Group

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 1 Year** | 140 | 144 | 131 | 133 | 121 | 155 | 128 | 118 | 120 | 120 | **1,310** |
| **1 - 9 Years** | 16 | 23 | 30 | 31 | 18 | 25 | 15 | 31 | 33 | 26 | **248** |
| **10 - 17 Years** | 22 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 26 | 20 | 29 | 39 | 32 | 28 | **259** |
| **Total** | **178** | **187** | **182** | **186** | **165** | **200** | **172** | **188** | **185** | **174** | **1,817** |

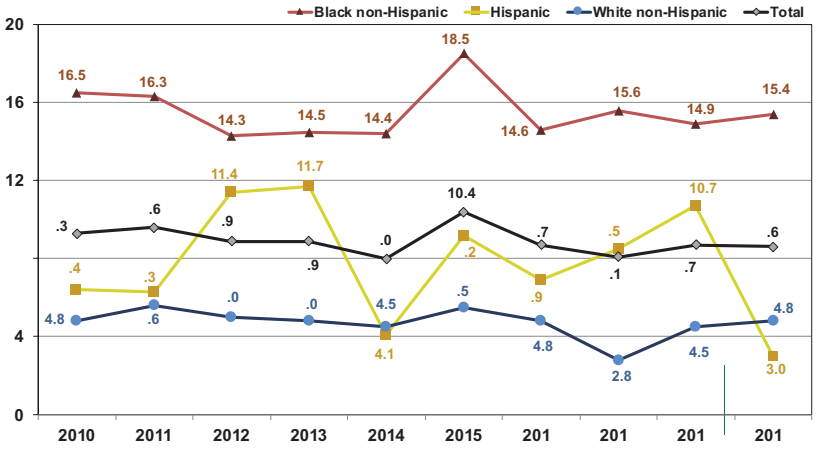
### CHILD FATALITY REVIEW

The purpose of the Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Review Board is to decrease the number of preventable child deaths. The Board reviews the causes and risk factors of deaths for all children less than 18 years old. Recommendations are made to protect the health and safety of all children in the community. Board membership includes representatives from child service, hospital and governmental agencies.

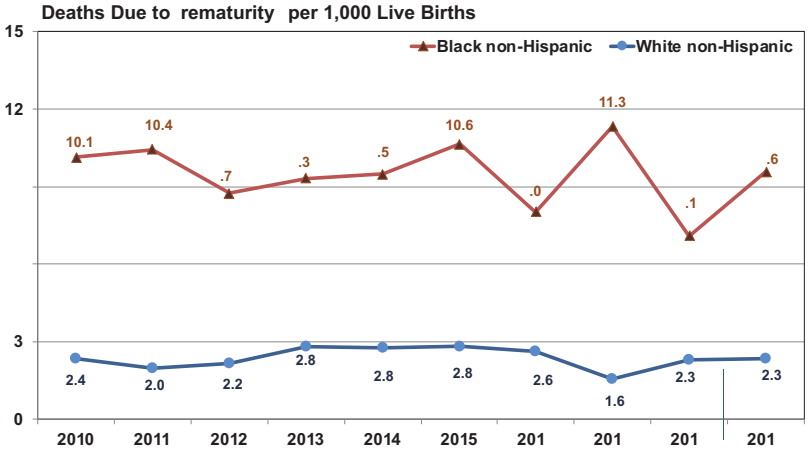
# Infant Mortality

Preventing infants from dying before their first birthday continues to be a challenge for Cuyahoga County. On average, an infant died every three days in 2019. The majority of the infants that passed away lived in the city of Cleveland, whose IMR is consistently among the worst in the nation.

## Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per 1,000 Live Births




## Rates of Infant Death Due to Prematurity by Race




### Infant Mortality

- There were 120 infant deaths, the same as in 2018.

### Racial Inequity

- The black non-Hispanic IMR of 15.4 was more than three times higher than the white non-Hispanic rate of 4.8. This ratio is essentially unchanged for the last 10 years.
- Prematurity and sleep related death rates for black non-Hispanic infants were more than four times the rates of the white non-Hispanic infants.

### Prematurity

- 70 infants died due to premature birth, the third-lowest number in the last ten years.
- Prematurity accounted for 58% of all infant deaths, the fourth-highest percentage in the last ten years.

### Sleep Related

- There were 24 sleep related infant deaths, the third-highest total in the last ten years.
- In the majority of sleep related deaths, there was low adherence to the ABCD safe sleep recommendations. Eight of the 24 had no crib or unknown crib availability.
- Five deaths occurred while the infant was under the care of someone other than a parent.

## 2019 Sleep Related (n=24) Demographics & Risk Factors

| Sleep Related Demographics | |
|---|---|
| **Neighborhood** | **Count** |
| Cleveland | 15 |
| First Ring Suburbs | 6 |
| Outer Ring Suburbs | 3 |
| **Infant's Race[a]** | **Count** |
| All Other Races | 1 |
| Black Non-Hispanic | 18 |
| Hispanic | 0 |
| White Non-Hispanic | 5 |

| Adherence to ABCDs of Safe Sleep[b] | | Count |
|---|---|---|
| A | Infant slept alone | 8 |
| B | Infant placed on back to sleep | 16 |
| C | Crib or bassinet used | 3 |
| D | Smoke free environment | 6 |

[a]One infant was of another race.

[b]ABCD's adherence data reflect self-reporting by caregivers, and is not always supported by medical examiner investigations.

# Injury Related Deaths

There were 27 unintentional injury deaths in 2019, which was the second-highest in the last ten years. Two-thirds of these deaths were due to accidental suffocation. Drowning accounted for 15% of these deaths. Both had a ten-year high in terms of the number of deaths. Sixteen of the 18 accidental suffocation deaths were sleep related. There were four child suicide deaths in 2019. Over the past ten years, 74% of suicide deaths occurred in the suburbs.

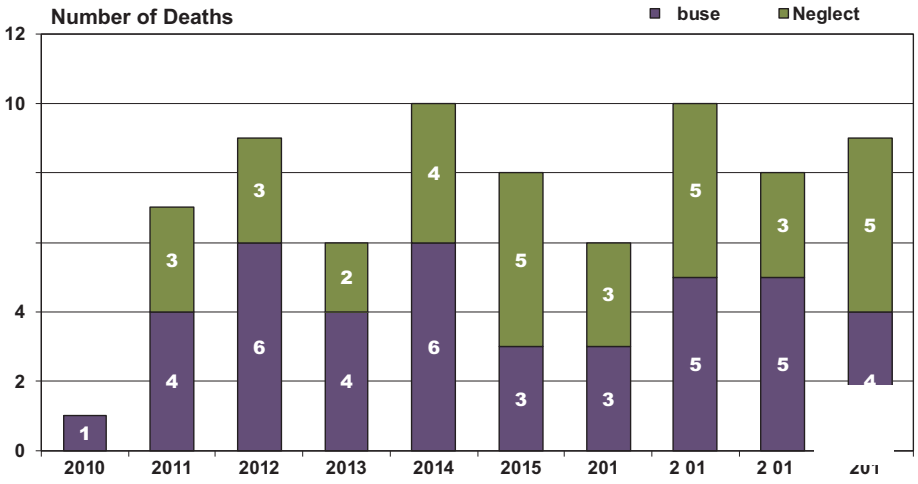
## 2019 Unintentional Injury Deaths [n=27]

| | |
|---|---|
| Accidental Suffocation | 18 |
| Drowning | 4 |
| Motor Vehicle Accident | 3 |
| Poisoning | 1 |
| Prematurity | 1 |

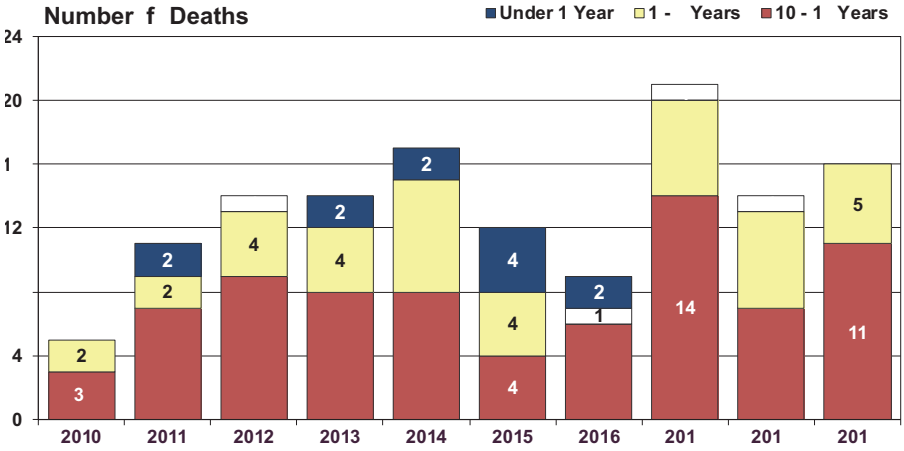
## 2010-2019 Suicide Deaths [n=38]

| Neighborhood | Total |
|---|---|
| Cleveland | 10 |
| First Ring Suburbs | 10 |
| Outer Ring Suburbs | 18 |

## Child Deaths Due to Abuse and Neglect




## Child Homicide Deaths by Age Group per Year




Includes all causes of death with a manner ruled as homicide. May not match cause of death total in Table 2.

### Injury Related Deaths

- 63% of deaths to children 1-to-17 years were injury related; the second-highest in the last 10 years.
- 82% of deaths to children 10-to-17 years were injury related; the highest in the last 10 years.

### Abuse and Neglect

- 74 children died due to abuse or neglect in the past ten years.
- Children ranged from 5 months to 10 years. Five were between 6 to 10 years of age.

### Homicide

- Homicide was the leading cause of death for children 1-to-17 years.
- 10 of the 16 deaths involved a firearm.

### Suicide

- 4 children died by suicide in 2019; tied for third-highest in the last ten years.
- The children were between 14 to 17 years of age.

# Medical Related Deaths

Asthma is a lung disease that can often be effectively managed with medications taken on a correct and consistent basis. From 2015-2019, 16 children died due to asthma-related complications including four deaths in 2019. Ten of the children were under ten years of age.

### 2015-2019 Asthma Related Deaths (n=16) Demographics and Risk Factors

| Demographics | Count |
|---|---|
| **Race** | |
| Black non-Hispanic | 14 |
| White non-Hispanic | 2 |
| **Sex** | |
| Female | 6 |
| Male | 10 |
| **Neighborhood** | |
| Cleveland | 10 |
| First Ring Suburbs | 6 |

| Risk Factors Noted During Case Review | Count |
|---|---|
| Poverty | 13 |
| Missed Doctor Appointments | 12 |
| Asthma Medication Noncompliance[a] | 11 |
| Suspected History of Abuse/Neglect or Domestic Violence in the Home | 9 |

[a]Asthma medication compliance information was missing for two cases.

# Recommendations

The Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Review Board makes recommendations to protect the health and safety of all children in the community. The recommendations are based on risk factors and circumstances found during the review process.

- Continue to identify and implement new strategies for reducing persistent racial inequities in infant mortality outcomes. Promote the strategies of First Year Cleveland and the Ohio Institute for Equity in Birth Outcomes, but also explore new approaches to address the urgent need to reduce infant deaths and eliminate racial inequities in Cuyahoga County.
- Partner with family serving agencies to provide safe sleep education to other infant caregivers, such as grandparents, relatives, and friends, with a focus on providing a safe sleep environment in any location.
- Ensure Cuyahoga County institutions that provide medical care, social services, or child protection have real-time, cross-system collaboration and information sharing to better serve and protect children who have experienced, or are at high risk for, serious or life-threatening injury or medical neglect.
- Reinforce among providers that multiple missed appointments for potentially life-threatening conditions (asthma, diabetes, acute mental health issues) are frequently noted in child fatality reviews. Providers observing such patterns are in a unique position to assess the situation for barriers to compliance and determine if reporting a suspicion of medical neglect is warranted.

**https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/departments/invest-in-children/child-fatality-review-board**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