



The Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Report 2020 Child Fatalities

Protecting Our Future

Executive Summary

This report includes highlights of the overall 2020 data and noteworthy changes compared to 2019. For a copy of the full report: <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/departments/invest-in-children/child-fatality-review-board>

Overall Look at 2020

In 2020, there were 151 child deaths in Cuyahoga County; 23 less than in 2019 and the lowest total in the county's history. The decrease was due to 20 fewer infant deaths and six fewer deaths to children 1- to 9 years old. Child deaths to 10- to 17 year olds increased by three in 2020.



- Prematurity, sleep related and homicide were the top three causes of child death. Prematurity had the largest decrease in child deaths (-22), while perinatal complications had the biggest increase (+7).
- The Cuyahoga County infant mortality rate (IMR) of 7.6 per 1,000 live births was the lowest in the county's history.
- Deaths due to prematurity and birth defects had the lowest number in the last 10 years.
- Infant unsafe sleep deaths were the third-highest in the last 10 years.
- 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, motor vehicle accidents and drowning.
- Three motor vehicles deaths were the lowest in the last five years and two fewer than in 2019.
- Ten deaths due to physical abuse or neglect tied for the highest in the last ten years

Annual Number of Deaths by Age Group

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Under 1 Year	144	131	133	121	155	128	118	120	120	100	1,270
1 - 9 Years	23	30	31	18	25	15	31	33	26	20	252
10 - 17 Years	20	21	22	26	20	29	39	32	28	31	268
Total	187	182	186	165	200	172	188	185	174	151	1,790

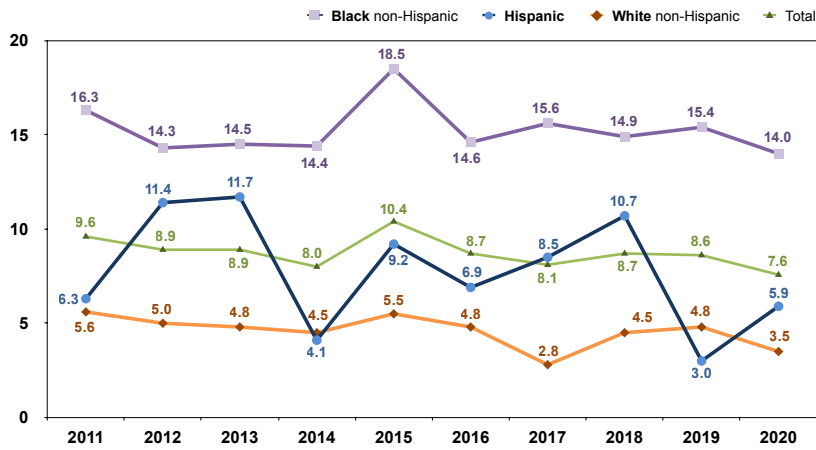
CHILD FATALITY REVIEW

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.

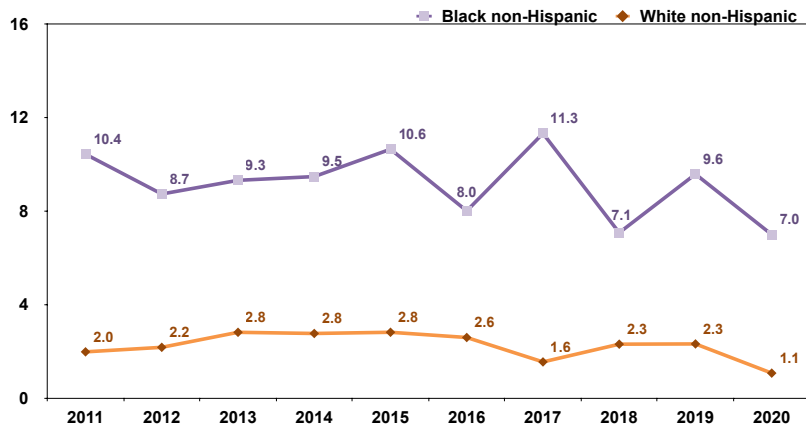
Infant Mortality

The fewest number of annual infant deaths in the county's history resulted in the lowest IMR (7.6 per 1,000 live births) in 2020. 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



Note: After this report was nearly finalized for publication, an extra infant death was filed with the state. That death is noted here, bringing the total number for 2020 to 101 and the county-wide IMR remains at 7.6.

Infant Mortality

- There were 100 infant deaths, 20 fewer than in 2019 and the fewest in the county's history.

Racial Inequity

- The Black non-Hispanic IMR of 14.0 was four times higher than the White non-Hispanic rate of 3.5.
- Prematurity death rate for Black non-Hispanic infants was six times higher than the rate of the White non-Hispanic infants.

Prematurity

- 47 infants died due to premature birth, the lowest number in the county's history.
- Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanic rates were the lowest in the last 10 years.

Sleep Related

- There were 23 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. Eleven of the 23 had no crib or unknown crib availability.
- Five deaths occurred while the infant and parent were visiting and not sleeping at home.

2020 Sleep Related (n=23) Demographics & Risk Factors

Sleep Related Demographics	
Neighborhood	Count
Cleveland	19
First Ring Suburbs	3
Outer Ring Suburbs	1
Infant's Race	Count
Black non-Hispanic	18
Hispanic	0
White non-Hispanic	5

Adherence to ABCDs of Safe Sleep ^a		Count
A	Infant slept alone	10
B	Infant placed on back to sleep ^b	15
C	Crib or bassinet used ^b	5
D	Smoke free environment	5

^aABCD's adherence data reflect self-reporting by caregivers, and is not always supported by medical examiner investigations.

^bFour deaths had unknown sleep position and location information.

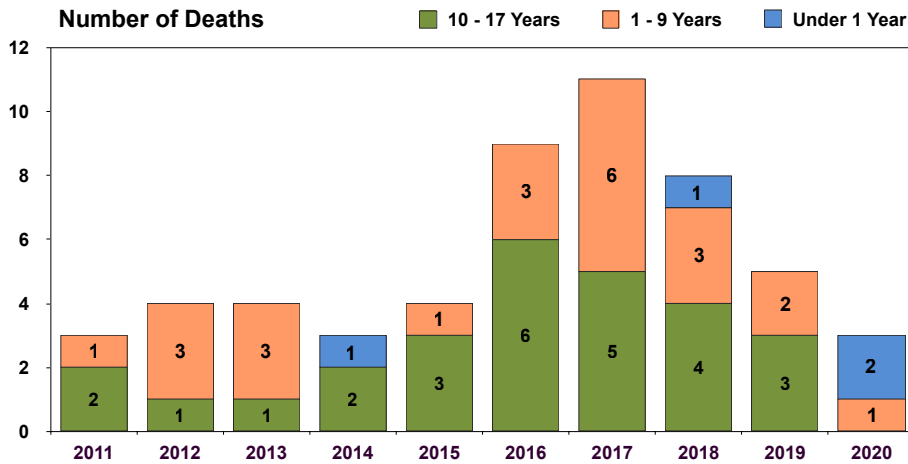
Injury Related Deaths

There were 28 unintentional injury deaths in 2020, which was the second-highest in the last ten years. Nearly 60% of these deaths were due to accidental suffocation. Drowning and motor vehicle accidents accounted for 21% of these deaths. Fourteen of the 16 accidental suffocation deaths were sleep related. Three motor vehicle deaths tied for the lowest in the last ten years. Gun related homicides (13) tied for the highest in the last ten years.

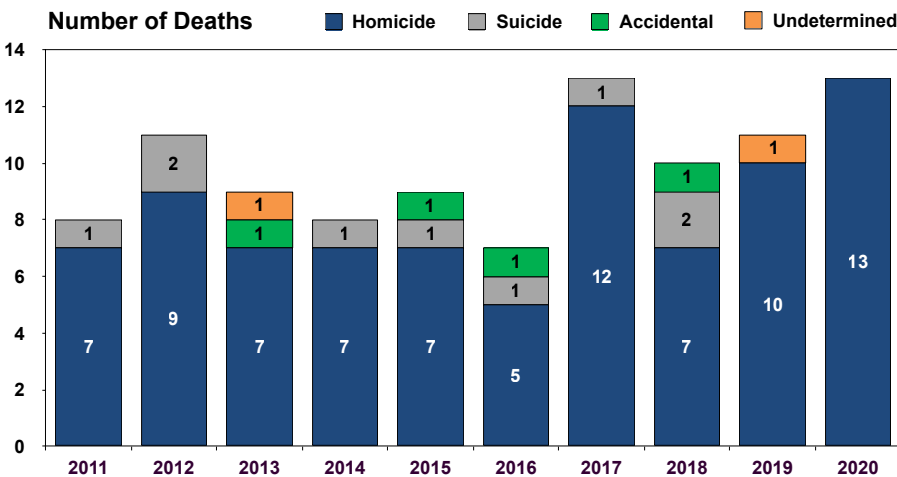
2020 Unintentional Injury Deaths [n=28]

Cause of Death	Count	Cause of Death	Count
Accidental Suffocation	16	Poisoning	2
Drowning	3	Fall	1
Motor Vehicle Accident	3	Prematurity	1
Blunt Trauma	2		

Motor Vehicle Deaths by Age Group per Year



Total Firearm Deaths by Manner per Year



Injury Related Deaths

- 69% of deaths to children 1-to-17 years were injury related; the highest in the last 10 years.
- 71% of deaths to children 10-to-17 years were injury related; the highest in the last 10 years.

Abuse and Neglect

- 10 children died due to abuse or neglect.
- Children ranged from 2 weeks to 15 years. Six were 2 years of age or younger.

Homicide

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

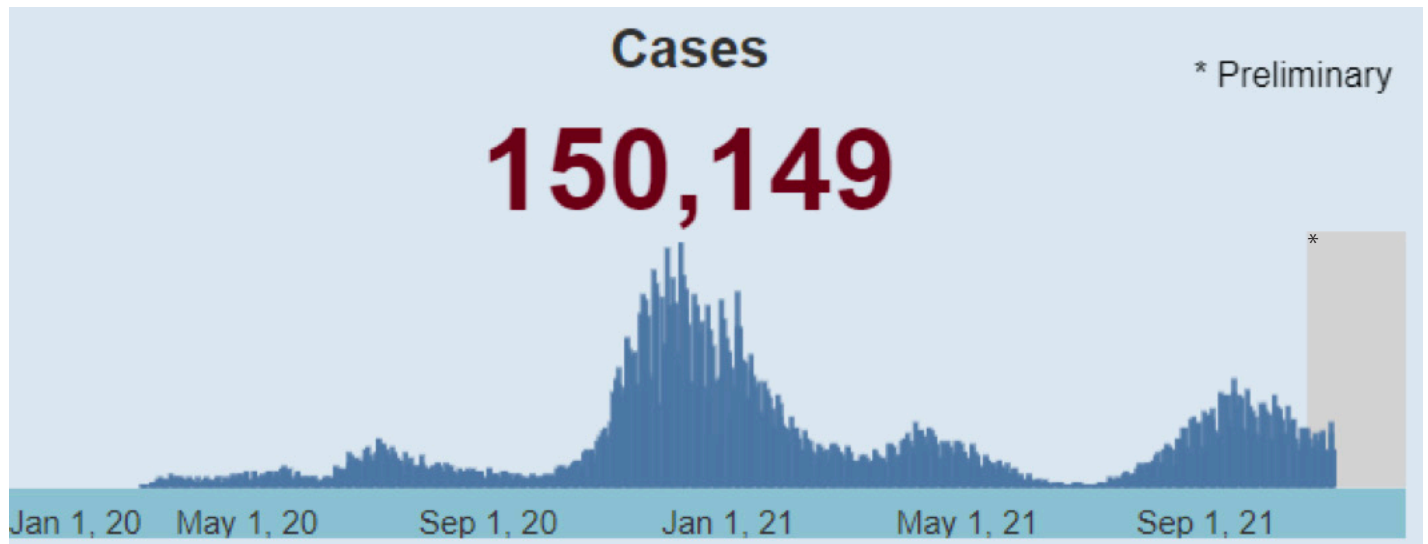
Suicide

- 4 children died by suicide in 2020; tied for third-highest in the last ten years.
- The children were between 13 to 16 years of age.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

While no children died in Cuyahoga County in 2020 as a direct result of COVID-19, the pandemic had a tremendously profound impact on all citizens and daily life in the county. The case review process did reveal a few child deaths where it was the opinion of the review board that the disruption of services and postponement of medical care for other serious issues were likely contributing factors. The diagram below illustrates the COVID-19 cases from the beginning of the pandemic to the creation of this document in November 2021.

Cuyahoga County COVID-19 Epi Curve



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.

- Reinforce the importance of a medical home, immunizations, care coordination, keeping appointments for children with chronic illnesses, and assess for barriers to compliance with the treatment plan.
- Advocate for community-based safe haven centers for teens, to provide supervised activities and programs after school and on weekends.
- Strengthen the Cuyahoga County child protection system to ensure that institutions providing medical care or social services 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.
- Support mental health and social service programs that address the multiple needs of children and families during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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