

Infant Mortality in Baltimore City

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Purpose of Study

Infant mortality is defined as the death of an infant before his or her first birthday. In Baltimore City, 10.3 per 1000 infants do not make it to see their first birthday. This is almost double the state rate for infant mortality. This poster will discuss the causes, disparities, and efforts to reduce infant mortality in Maryland.

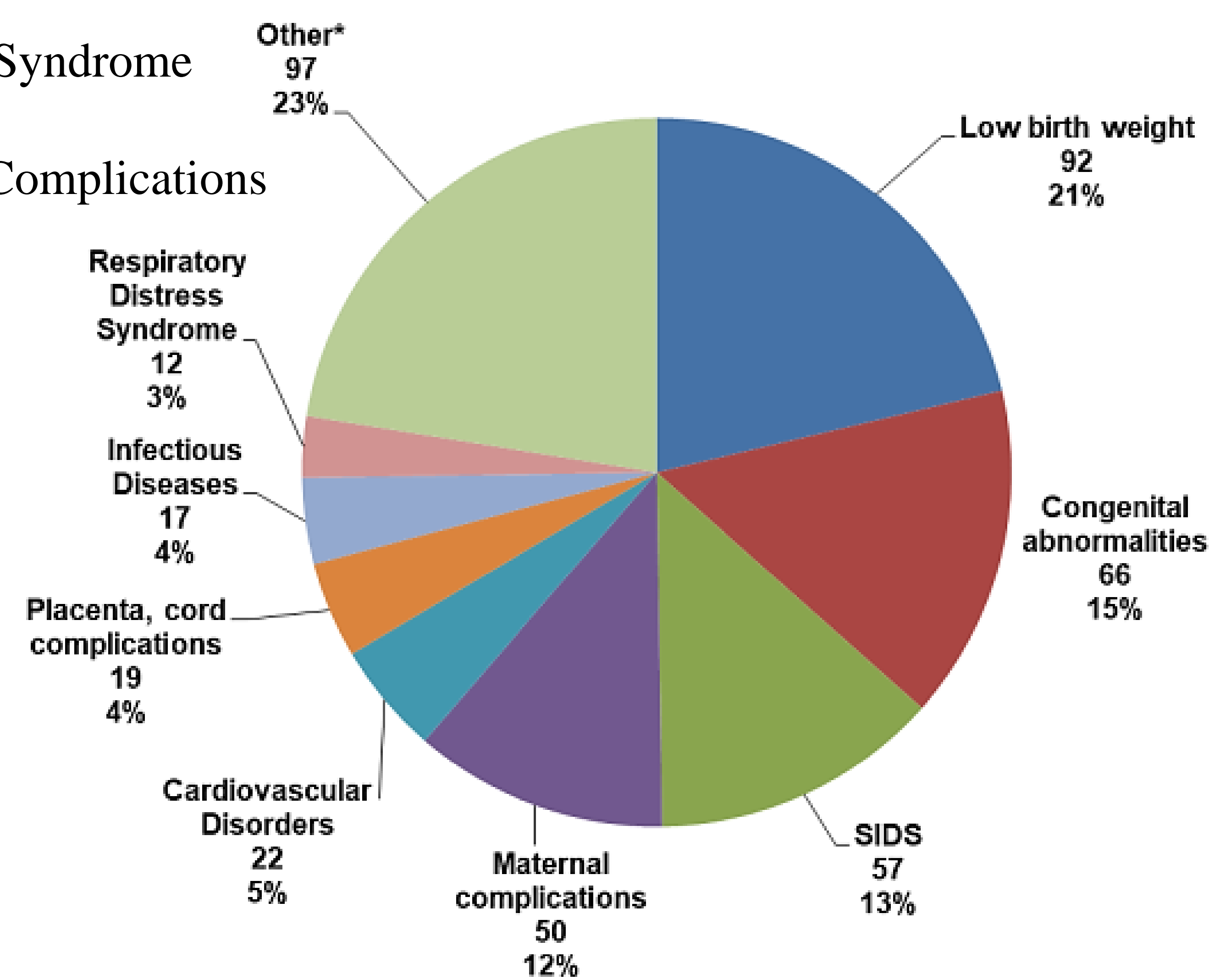
Background

In 2020, infants in Baltimore City had a mortality rate that was almost twice that for the State of Maryland. This is not surprising as African American infants are twice as likely to pass before their first birthday. In Baltimore City, the top causes of infant mortality are preterm birth and low birth weight and preterm birth which are both closely related to poverty and inadequate access to prenatal care. These are systemic issues that need to be addressed to improve outcomes for infants in Baltimore City.

In the United States, the leading causes of infant mortality are:

1. Birth Defects
2. Preterm Birth
3. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
4. Injurie (suffocation)
5. Maternal Pregnancy Complications

Figure B. Leading Causes of Infant Death, Maryland 2018



*Includes causes of death with <10 events

Successful Effort to Reducing Infant Mortality

In 2010, B'more for Healthy Babies (BHB) was started to improve outcomes for Baltimore infants. At the time, Baltimore City had an infant mortality rate of 13, which was one of the highest in the country.

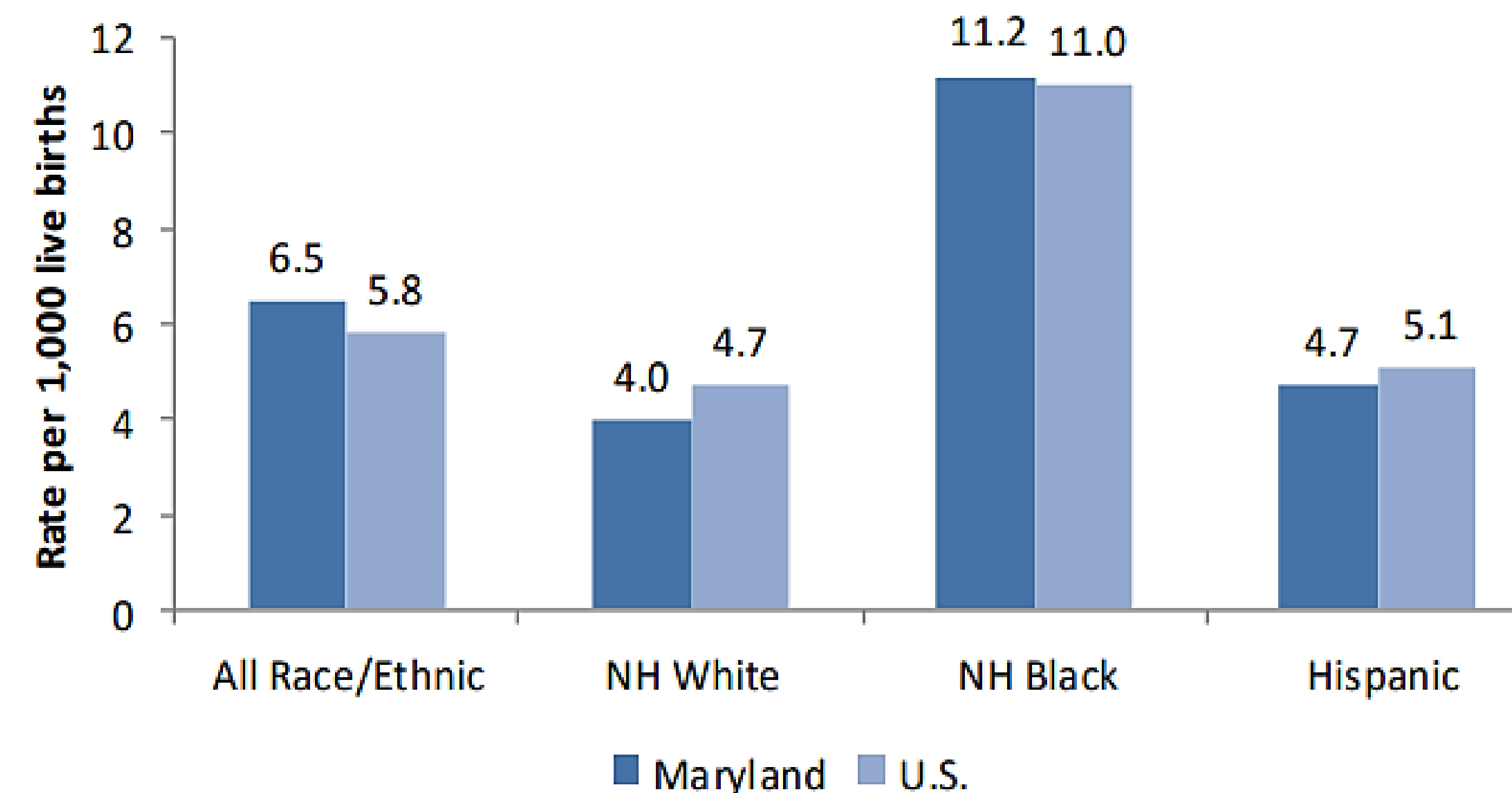
In 2018, BHB reported a:

1. 35% decrease in overall infant mortality
2. 64% decrease in the disparity between mortality in black and white babies
3. 49% decrease in teen pregnancies
4. 75% decrease in teen birth disparities between black and white mothers
5. 71% decrease in sleep related infant deaths

What Infant Mortality Data Tells Us About Overall Health

Infant mortality is an important factor in understanding a population's overall health because many factors that contribute to infant deaths also affect the health of everyone in a population. For example, access to medicine, trained healthcare providers, clean water, and food affect everyone's health, but can also have a dramatic effect on infant mortality rates.

Figure C. Infant Mortality Rates by Race/ethnicity, Maryland and the U.S., 2017



Addressing the Disparity

Infant mortality is generally associated with poverty, low maternal education, poor health-care access and lack of adequate prenatal care. However, studies have shown that affluence, high maternal education and health insurance do not necessarily protect African Americans from poor pregnancy outcomes or infant mortality.

Ways to improve infant outcomes include:

- Increasing awareness in health care providers and the general public about the disparities in infant mortality among African Americans
- Bias training in health facilities
- Case Management Programs to improve infant health before birth
- Increased education and support around infant sleep safety and breastfeeding

Conclusion

Infant mortality in Baltimore City is a complex issue influenced by a range of social, economic, and environmental factors. Addressing the root causes of health disparities and promoting health equity are important to reducing infant mortality rates. Interventions and policies aimed at improving access to prenatal care, promoting healthy environments, and engaging communities can help reduce infant mortality rates in Baltimore City and other communities facing similar challenges.

References

Data Was Obtained from:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institutes of Health
World Health Organization
Maryland Department of Health
Maryland Vital Statistics
Baltimore Health Department

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