Summary of Results:

Infant Mortality is defined as the death of an infant within the first year of life. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is measured by the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. It is a strong predictor of health and well-being and is a reflection of the overall health of a community.

Similar to the state and national trend, Fresno County continues to observe decreases in the number of births within the last several years. The trend is observed both in the overall number of births as well as among race/ethnicity groups.

In 2016, 15,131 babies were born in Fresno County. Of those, 78 babies died within the first year of life, resulting in an infant mortality rate (IMR) of 5.2. This rate ranked among the highest in California where the IMR was 4.4 (CDC, Stats of the State of California). Although Fresno County appears to have achieved Healthy People 2020’s objective to bring the infant mortality rate to below 6.0, the rates among some ethnicities remain high. Also, whether this downward trend in infant mortality will continue remains to be seen as the rates for the previous three years were above the target.

Infant mortality affects races/ethnicities in different ways as reflected in Table 1. Although Blacks accounted for only 5.3% of Fresno County’s total births, they accounted for 11.5% of total infant deaths.

Compared to California, Fresno County had higher IMR across the three major race/ethnicity groups (Figure 1).

Table 1. Births, Infant Deaths and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per 1,000 Live Births, County of Fresno, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>AIAN(^1)</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>HwPi(^2)</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births</td>
<td>3,059</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1,844</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>9,121</td>
<td>15,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Deaths</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMR</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births and Trend by Race/Ethnicity, County of Fresno vs California, 2012-2016

Figure 2. Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births by Census Tract, 2012—2016

\(^1\)AIAN: American Indian/Alaska Native  \(^2\)HwPi: Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
A full-term pregnancy usually lasts about 40 weeks. Births occurring at less than 37 weeks gestation, more than 3 weeks before the due date, are considered preterm. Preterm births often result in babies being born too small with complications that can last a lifetime. Also, babies being born too early often have the increased risk of dying within the first year of life.

The preterm birth rate is calculated by taking the number of preterm births divided by the total number of live births within the same period, multiplied by 100.

While prematurity used to be a major cause of infant deaths, improved technology and medical care have increased the survivability of preterm babies.

The overall preterm birth rate in Fresno County in 2016 was 9.3%. Within the last several years, the County, as a whole, has consistently met or surpassed the Healthy People 2020’s objective to bring the preterm birth rate to below 11.4%. However, disparity still exists among locations in the County (Figure 4) and among race/ethnic groups, with some rates above the 2020 goal (Table 3).

Among major ethnic groups, Blacks had the highest rate (13.3) and Whites, the lowest (7.7). The rate among American Indians/Alaska Natives appeared high (22.7), but the rate may not be comparatively reliable due to the small number of births within the group.