



North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Spotlight on Infant Death Report
2022

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Updated as of February 23, 2024

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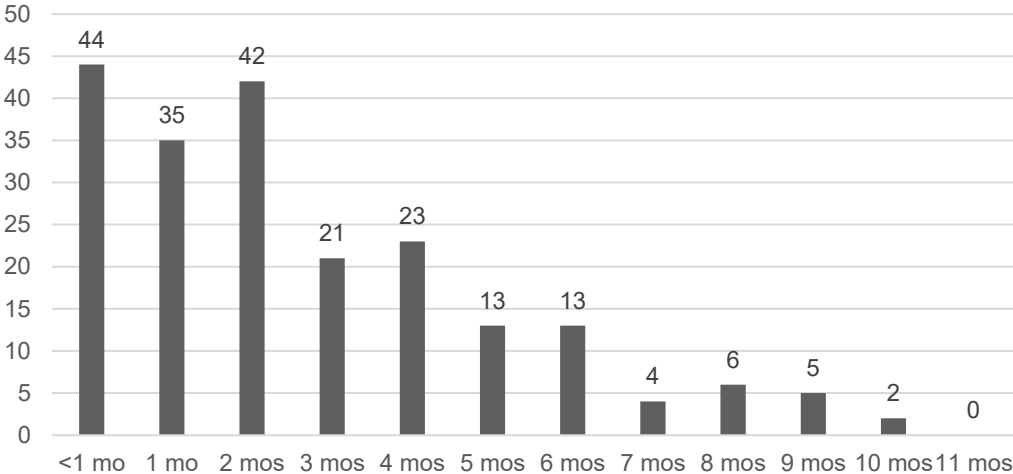
Infants, defined as children under one year of age, accounted for a total of 227 deaths in North Carolina in 2022. The breakdown below provides information on the manner and means of the 207 finalized cases at the time of this report. Due to pending cases, numbers are subject to change. Updates to this report will be made as additional information becomes available. It is important to note that this report focuses exclusively on North Carolina residents and fatalities within the North Carolina Medical Examiner (ME) System.

Manner	Means	Number of Infants
Accident (44)	Asphyxia	25
	Blunt	3
	Environmental	3
	Fire/Burns	2
	Hanging	1
	Medical Treatment	1
	Motor Vehicle	4
	Other	2
	Poisoning/Toxin	2
Homicide (14)	Abuse or Neglect	1
	Asphyxia	1
	Blunt	7
	Gun	2
	Other	1
	Poisoning/Toxin	1
	Sharp	1
Natural (35)	Natural	26
	SIDS	9
Undetermined (115)	Abuse or Neglect	1
	Medical Treatment	1
	Natural	1
	Unknown	108
	Other	4
Pending		18

The graph below depicts infant fatalities across varying age milestones, highlighting the vulnerability of North Carolina's newborns. The curve of infant mortality illustrates the importance of prioritizing familial assistance and resources to parents and caregivers navigating the challenges of infant care. From providing continued education on safe

sleep practices to accessible healthcare resources, bolstering support around families is a cornerstone in the effort to safeguard the well-being of the most vulnerable.

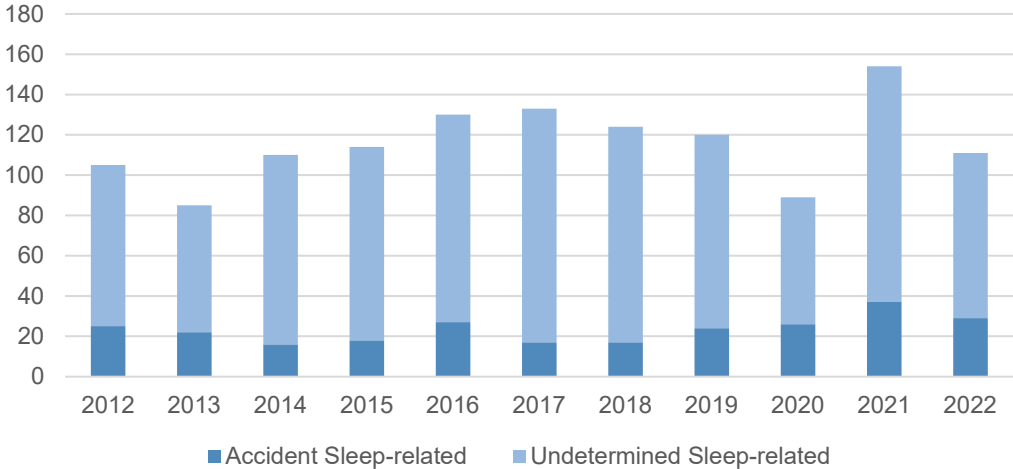
2022 Infant Fatality by Age in Months



Infant Sleep-related Fatalities

Among the finalized infant fatalities within Medical Examiner (ME) System Jurisdiction, instances where the certifying pathologist was concerned with the infant’s sleep environment and/or position as potential contributing risk factors to the fatality are detailed below. Infants in potentially compromising sleep spaces accounted for 53.6% of the 207 finalized infant fatalities during the year, totaling 111 deaths. Of those 111 sleep-related deaths, 29 were classified as accidental manner of death, while 82 were classified as undetermined manner of death. Please note the total number (9) of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) cases are excluded from the final counts below as they are not considered sleep-related deaths.

2012-2022 Sleep-related Infant Fatalities



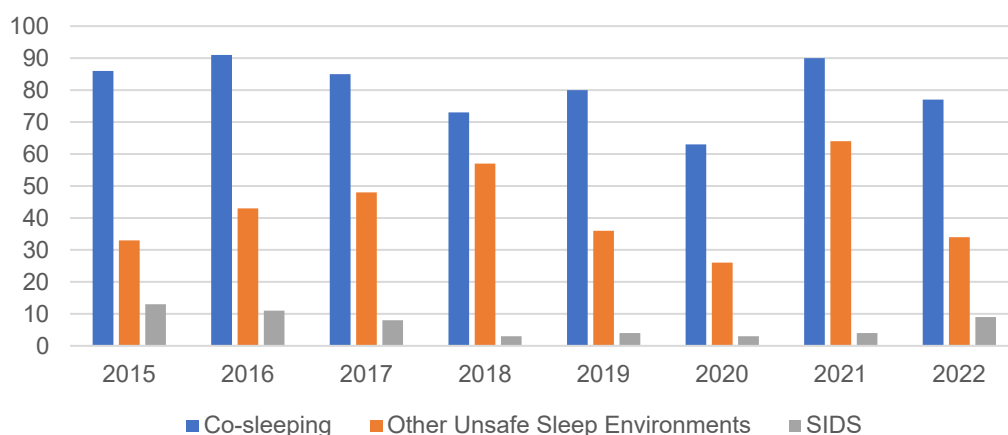
To further break down the potential sleep-related infant fatalities:

- Among the infant *accident/sleep-related* deaths, 21 of the 29 deaths were in a co-sleeping environment.
- Among the infant *accident/sleep-related* deaths, 8 of the 29 deaths were in other unsafe sleep environments such as extra items in the crib or an unsafe sleep location (in a car seat, on an adult sleep surface, etc.).
- Among the *undetermined/sleep-related* deaths, 56 of the 82 deaths were in a co-sleeping environment.
- Among the *undetermined/sleep-related* deaths, 26 of the 82 deaths were in other unsafe sleep environments such as extra items in the crib or an unsafe sleep location (in a car seat, on an adult sleep surface, etc.).

Classification	Accident	Undetermined	Total
Co-sleeping	21	56	= 77 Co-sleeping deaths
Unsafe Physical Sleep Environment	8	26	= 34 Unsafe Physical Sleep Environment deaths
Total	29	82	111

SIDS deaths are not included in the metrics for unsafe sleep environments. However, the bar graph below illustrates a comparison between co-sleeping, other unsafe physical sleep environments, and SIDS from 2015 to 2022.

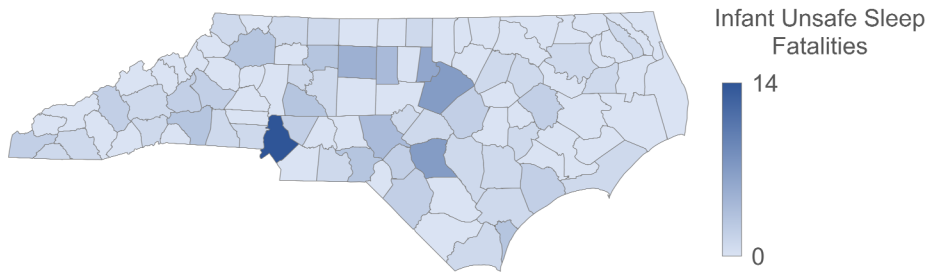
2015-2022 Co-sleeping vs Other Unsafe Sleep Environments vs SIDS



The map below illustrates the number of infant fatalities due to unsafe sleep environments per county of residence for 2022. Please note, the corresponding table

excludes counties with no recorded infant deaths related to unsafe sleep and deaths of out-of-state residents.

2022 Sleep-related Infant Fatalities by Residence County



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*Number
of Sleep-
related
Infant
Fatalities*

2022 Sleep-related Infant Fatalities by Residence County

1	Anson, Ashe, Bertie, Brunswick, Carteret, Clay, Cleveland, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Edgecombe, Gaston, Harnett, Henderson, Lee, Lenoir, Macon, Nash, Pasquotank, Pender, Person, Sampson, Stokes, Surry, Washington
2	Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Cherokee, Haywood, Hoke, Johnston, McDowell, Onslow, Pitt, Robeson
3	Forsyth, New Hanover, Richmond, Rowan, Rutherford, Wilkes
4	Alamance, Moore
5	Guilford
6	Durham
7	Cumberland, Wake
14	Mecklenburg