

## INFANT DEATHS, FETAL DEATHS, ABORTIONS AND PREGNANCIES

### INFANT DEATHS

In 2004, there were 29 resident infant deaths for a rate of 4.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. This is the second lowest rate ever in Vermont ([Table A-1](#)). The rate is just below the *Healthy Vermonters 2010* goal of 4.5, and is lower than the 2004 U.S. white rate of 5.7. Comparisons are made to the U.S. white rate because all of the Vermont resident infant deaths were to whites in 2004. The Vermont infant mortality rate steadily declined from 24.0 in 1960 to 5.88 per 1,000 live births in 1991. The rate then fluctuated for most of the 1990s before again showing downward trend in recent years.

Nineteen (65.5 percent) of the infant deaths occurred during the neonatal period, that is before the infant became 28 days old ([Table D-6](#)). The neonatal death rate was 2.9 deaths per 1,000 live births ([Table D-5](#)), lower than the 2004 U.S. white neonatal death rate of 3.8. The Vermont neonatal death rate has decreased over the past four decades from 18.6 in 1960, to 14.4 in 1970, to 6.2 in 1980, to 3.6 in 1990 ([Table A-1](#)). The rate increased through the nineties to a high of 5.9 in 1998 before sharply dropping to 3.2 in 1999. After increasing to 3.8 in 2000, the rate decreased to 3.6 in 2001, and 2.8 in 2002 – the lowest rate ever in Vermont.

The leading causes of infant deaths ([Table D-9](#)) were birth defects (7), and maternal complications (4).

One of the most important risk factors in infant mortality is low birth weight ([Table D-7](#)). Of resident infants who died in 2004, 58.6 percent had a birth weight less than 2500 grams (5 pounds 8 ounces), while 6.4 percent of all resident births were low weight. The infant mortality rate for low weight births was 39.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Age of mother is also related to infant mortality ([Table D-5](#)). From 2002 to 2004, the infant mortality rate for mothers 15 through 19 years of age was 7.1, and for mothers age 20 through 24 the rate was 5.5. The 15-19 year old maternal age group also had the highest neonatal death rate at 4.9.

### FETAL DEATHS

Unlike births and deaths, reports of fetal deaths and abortions are not shared among states. Therefore, statistics concerning these events reflect occurrences in Vermont only and do not include Vermont resident fetal deaths and abortions that occurred in other states.

There were 22 resident fetal deaths in 2004 ([Table D-1](#)) for a rate of 3.3 per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths, up slightly from 3.2 per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths in 2003 ([Table D-5](#)). Of the fetal deaths in Vermont, 16 weighed less than 2500 grams ([Table D-7](#)). From 2002 to 2004, the fetal death rates were highest in the youngest and oldest age groups: 6.3 per 1,000 live births for women age 15 to 19, 4.7 for women age 35 to 39 and 3.3 for women age 40 to 44 ([Table D-5](#)).

## VERMONT ABORTIONS

There were 1734 abortions performed in Vermont in 2004, the third consecutive increase in number, after declining each year since 1989. Vermont residents accounted for 1500, or 86.5 percent. This represents a rate of 11.8 per 1,000 women age 15 to 44.

The abortion ratio is the number of resident abortions occurring in Vermont times 1,000, divided by the total resident live births. The abortion ratio for 2004 was 227.4 abortions per 1,000 live births, the highest ratio since 1998. The most recent U.S. white abortion ratio available was 165 per 1,000 live births, in 2003.

Women age 20 to 24 had the highest *age-specific* abortion rate, of 25.5 per 1,000 women, followed by women age 25 to 29 at 19.9. First trimester abortions accounted for 95.2 percent of all Vermont abortions and 68.3 percent of all Vermont abortions were for pregnancies of less than 9 weeks duration ([Table E-5](#)). See [Appendix B](#) for the method used to compute the number of weeks of gestation.

## VERMONT RESIDENT PREGNANCIES

The pregnancy rate is derived by adding live births, fetal deaths and abortions. The pregnancy rates presented in this report underestimate the actual number of pregnancies for two reasons. First, Vermont resident abortions and fetal deaths that occur out of state are not reported to us. Second, by statute, fetal deaths prior to 20 weeks gestation are not reportable. Since residents of some counties may be more likely to use out-of-state services, the extent of these underestimates may differ among counties.

In 2004, the pregnancy rate in Vermont was 63.8 pregnancies per 1,000 women age 15 to 44 ([Table F-1](#)), compared to 62.2 in 2003, 60.3 in 2002, and 84.2 in 1980. The pregnancy rate peaked at 127.6 in 1960 and dropped steadily until 1995, and has been fairly stable since then ([Table A-1](#)).

The 2004 teen pregnancy rate was 33.1 pregnancies per 1,000 women age 15 to 19 years ([Table F-1](#)). This is up from 31.5 in 2003, although in general the teen pregnancy rate has been decreasing since 1991. In 2004, the highest pregnancy rate was seen in women 25 to 29 years of age at 123.1, followed by the 30 to 34 age group at 105.4. The lowest rate was for women age 35 to 44 at 27.9.