

IDAHO CHILD FATALITY REVIEW

2020

In 2020, 196 children under the age of 18 died in Idaho. Cases were screened by a subcommittee and selected for full review when one or more of the following criteria were met:

- Death was due to an external cause
- Cause of death was undetermined
- Death was due to a cause with identified risk factors

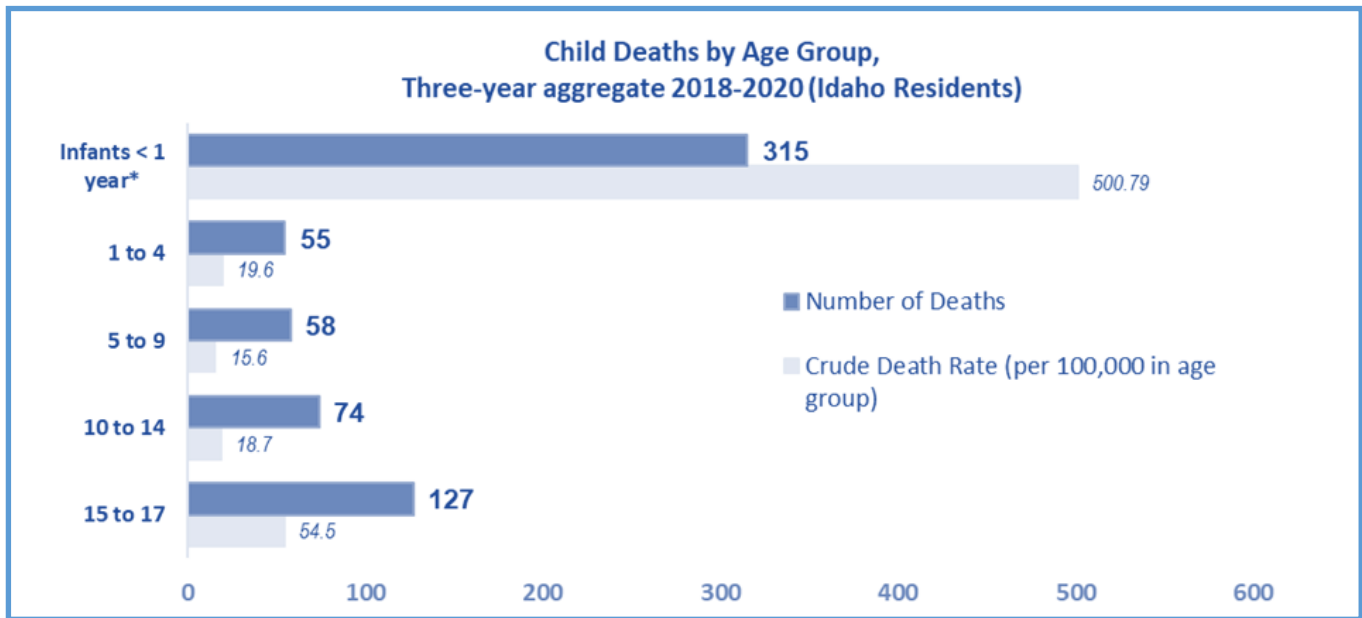
Of the 196 deaths, 112 were selected for detailed review by the Child Fatality Review (CFR) team. Deaths that were not selected for full CFR team review included most deaths due to congenital anomalies, malignancies, or other diagnosed medical conditions. Deaths were identified, and manner and cause of death were categorized using the Vital Records system. The team utilized information already gathered by coroners, law enforcement, medical providers, and state government agencies in their reviews.

Cause of Death	Total	Reviewed by CFR Team
Perinatal Conditions	44	3
Congenital Malformations	21	3
Unintentional Injuries (Accidents)	44	44
Infant Sleep Accidents	6	6
Suicide	21	21
Unexplained Infant Death*	13	13
Assault (Homicide)	7	7
Malignancies	4	0
Flu/Pneumonia	3	1
COVID-19	0	0
Non-ranking/All other causes**	33	14
Totals	196	112

*Includes Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) as well as “ill-defined” undetermined causes of infant death. **Includes “natural” manner deaths. e.g., heart and pulmonary disease, cerebral palsy, and medical diseases or infections not included in above categories.

For methodology and previous years’ complete reports of findings visit: www.idcartf.org





* Rate for infants under the age of 1 year is based on 100,000 live births

Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a comprehensive investigation. In 2020, there were six SUID deaths, seven ill-defined infant deaths and six infant deaths caused by accidents in the sleeping environment. Unsafe sleep environments (including thick bedding, cluttered beds and co-sleeping) and improper sleep position were commonly seen risk factors. Many of the deaths occurred in families with a history of CPS referrals for unsafe home environments or alleged neglect. Continued promotion of American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) safe sleep guidelines, scheduled immunizations, and breastfeeding is recommended. Additional investments in family support and mental health resources may prevent infant deaths.

2020 Idaho Child Deaths by Age Group

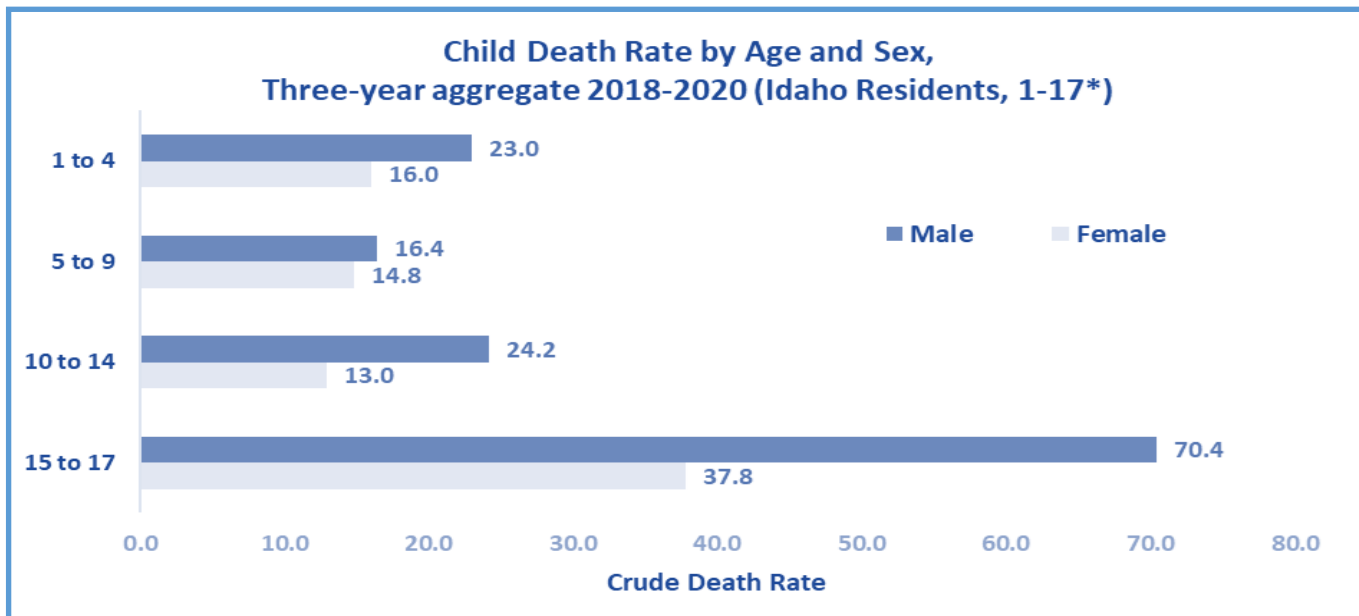
2020 Total Deaths	196	Percent Of Total Deaths
Deaths Under 1 year of age	92	46.9 %
Deaths 1-5 years of age	24	12.3%
Deaths 6-10 years of age	14	7.1%
Deaths 11-14 years of age	17	8.7%
Deaths 15-17 years of age	49	25.0%

Natural Manner Deaths

The CFR team reviewed six Non-ranking cause deaths, six Cardiovascular/Pulmonary deaths, three Perinatal Condition deaths, three Congenital Malformation deaths, two Undetermined Cause deaths, and one Flu/Pneumonia death for 2020 child deaths. Nearly all were related to low birthweight and/or prematurity or a child with chronic health conditions. Home births, parents/caregivers failure to seek proper medical treatment, and lack of appropriate immunizations were repeatedly identified as modifiable risk factors.

In reviewing *all* causes of death, there were two deaths to infants whose parents delayed or refused medical care based on religious or personal beliefs or failed to seek proper medical care. The team determined that these deaths might have been prevented with timely medical treatment, scheduled immunizations and/or prenatal care.

In 2020, three deaths were attributed to the influenza virus while there were no deaths attributed to COVID-19. Even so, proper hygiene and scheduled vaccinations (including an annual flu shot and COVID-19 boosters) can prevent the spread of infections which lead to severe illness and are especially important for medically vulnerable infants and children.



*Infants < 1 year were purposely excluded from this figure given their much higher crude death rates. Between 2018-2020 male infants died at a rate of 512.4 compared to a rate of 455.1 for female infants (rates based on 100,000 live births).

Intentional Injuries (Suicide and Homicide)

Idaho’s youth suicide rate increased in 2020 and is historically much higher than the national rate. There were 21 suicides that occurred in Idaho in 2020. Those who died were predominately male with ages ranging from 13 to 17 years old. The most common method was firearms, followed distantly by hanging or strangulation and intentional self harm by jumping or lying in front of moving objects. Access to weapons, past suicidal ideation/attempts, COVID-19 isolation, mental health history and relationship turmoil were the most commonly observed precursors to these suicides.

The team also reviewed seven child deaths that were conclusively ruled as homicides along with three other deaths of undetermined manner, which were investigated as possible homicides. The victims ranged in age from infants to teens. Causes included firearm shootings, assault by hanging, strangulation and suffocation, multiple blunt force injuries, malnutrition, and unspecified means. Young caregivers (caregivers under the age of 30), family history of substance abuse, mental health issues, low-income, single parenting, and parents with unrealistic expectations were the top risk factors observed. The large proportion of homicides involving a parent with a history of mental health concerns and/or substance use issues highlights the need for improved access to mental health resources, especially in rural communities. Interagency cooperation can help ensure that at-risk families have access to and receive the resources and treatments needed.

Suicide Deaths, Sex by Age Group
Idaho, 2020
(percent of total suicide deaths)

Age Group	Male	Female
13 or less years	3 (14.2%)	0
14-15 years	5 (23.8%)	3 (14.3%)
16-17 years	9 (42.9%)	1 (4.8%)
Total	17	4

Suicide Deaths by Sex and Mechanism
Idaho, 2020

Gender	Firearm	Hanging/ Asphyxiation	Jumped in front of moving object
Male	10	6	0
Female	2	2	1

**Number and Percentage of Deaths by Manner, Ages 0-17 years
Idaho, 2020**

Total Deaths	Natural	Accident	Suicide	Homicide	Undetermined
196	109	50	21	7	9
Percent of Total Deaths	55.6%	25.5%	10.7%	3.6%	4.6%

Unintentional Injuries (Accidents)

There were 44 accidental deaths to children aged 0-17 in 2020. Of these, 24 were motor vehicle accidents, with 18 traffic accidents, 3 non-traffic accidents, and 3 aircraft accident fatalities. Excess speed, impaired driving, rural roads, and inattentive driving were leading contributors to the cause of death. Improper or non-usage of safety devices (seat belts or proper child safety seats and helmets in all-terrain vehicle accidents) was a major modifiable risk factor in the motor vehicle accidents.

Other cause of accidental deaths included: drowning (5), exposure to uncontrolled fire (2), accidental poisoning (2), choking (2), falls (2) struck by falling object (1), contact with agricultural machinery (1), and all other accidental deaths (5).

Recommendations for preventing and responding to child deaths:

- Address the dangers posed by rural roads
- Expand access to mental health services
- Follow infant safe sleep practices
- Expand home visiting programs
- Recognize the warning signs of suicide
- Recognize the frontline position primary care physicians (PCPS) play in the current adolescent mental health crisis
- Offer CPR courses and first aid training in more languages
- Facilitate interagency cooperation
- Use seat belts, age-appropriate safety seats, and wear appropriate safety devices (helmets)
- Follow safe gun handling practices
- Conduct toxicology testing more frequently
- Provide service referrals to families and communities touched by child fatality
- Notify CPS when other children are in the home

Recent actions and collaborations:

- Advancing Child Health and Safety In Idaho
- Safe Sleep Message Campaign
- Additional Safe Sleep Initiatives
- Home Visiting Programs Receive American Rescue Plans
- Idaho Suicide Prevention Program (SPP) efforts
- Implementation of the Idaho Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE) Project
- Launch of 988, the New Suicide Crisis Lifeline
- Department of Education participation in CFR Team