

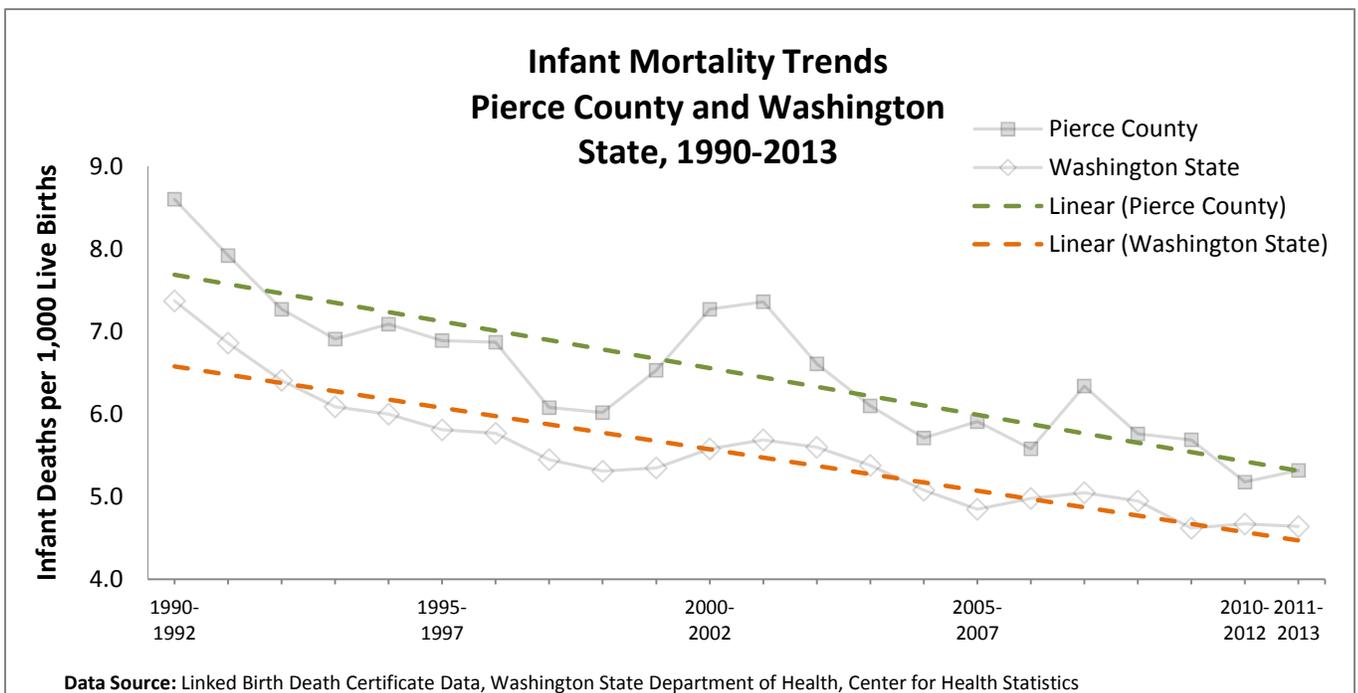
## Infant Mortality in Pierce County

### What is Infant Mortality?

- Infant mortality refers to the death of an infant before his/her first birthday.
- The infant mortality rate is an estimate of the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. This rate is an indicator used to measure a community's well-being. It can be used to measure trends in child and maternal health, the quality and availability of medical care, public health practices and the economy overall.
- The national Healthy People 2020<sup>i</sup> objective is to reduce the infant mortality rate to no more than 6.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- In Washington state, the leading causes of infant death in 2013 included infants born with a serious birth defect (24.1 percent), born too small or too early (13.1 percent), or were victims of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (12.3 percent).

### How is Pierce County doing?

- In order to get a more accurate picture of trends over time, we report infant death in three-year averages. In 2011 to 2013, there were 33,640 live births in Pierce County and 179 infant deaths. This equates to an infant death rate of 5.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. In Washington state, the infant death rate was 4.6 per 1,000 live births.
- Both Pierce County and Washington state meet the national Healthy People 2020 objective of 6.0 infant deaths per 1,000.
- Both Pierce County and Washington state have seen a decline in the infant mortality rate over the past 20 years, as has the national rate.



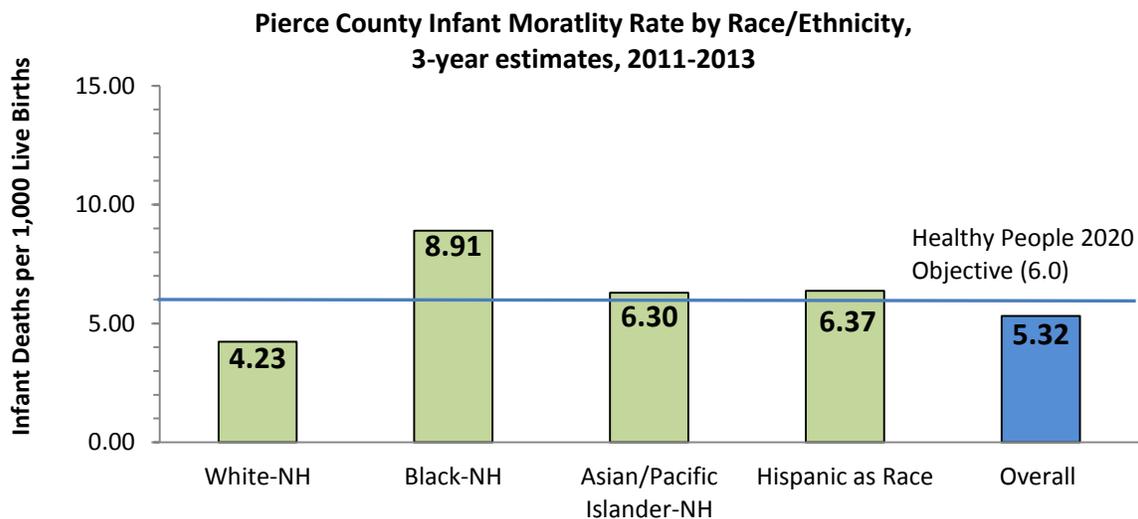
## Unacceptable Disparities

- Despite improvements in infant mortality over time, there is a substantial difference in how infant mortality impacts different races. Black infants have the highest mortality rate, twice as high as the White infant mortality rate. The White infant mortality rate for Pierce County was 4.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, a risk of dying equivalent to approximately one infant death for every 236 White births. The Black infant mortality rate for Pierce County was 8.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, a risk of dying equivalent to approximately one infant death for every 112 Black births.
- The Black infant mortality rate does not achieve the Healthy People 2020 target of 6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- This difference in the mortality rate for Black infants compared to White infants is also at the national level. Eliminating the disparity is a goal at the national, state and local levels.
- Over the decade between 2003 and 2013, the infant mortality rate in Pierce County dropped 34 percent for White infants but remained constant for Blacks and all other race/ethnic groups.

**Pierce County Infant Mortality by Race/Ethnicity, 3-Year Counts, 2011-13**

Race/Ethnicity of Mother	# deaths	Total Births
Black-NH	26	2,917
Hispanic as a Race	28	4,398
Asian/Pacific Islander-NH	20	3,174
White-NH	95	22,482
American Indian/Alaskan Native <sup>ii</sup> -NH	5	555
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>33,640</b>

**Data Source:** Linked Birth Death Certificate Data, WA State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics  
NH=Non-Hispanic



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The death certificate for each infant is linked to his or her birth certificate, when available, by the Washington State Department of Health's Center for Health Statistics. The purpose of the linkage is to use the many additional variables available from the birth certificate to conduct more detailed analyses of infant mortality patterns. Birth certificates of children born out of state who die in Washington state as well as death certificates of children born in Washington state who die out of state are obtained through voluntary cooperative agreements with other states' vital records offices.

### Methodology

**Time Trends:** In this report we used three-year averages to examine time trends. This method involves grouping years of data sequentially to create overlapping time periods. The effect of this method is to smooth out yearly fluctuations in the data due to small numbers by making the rates more stable, and to provide meaningful measures. To test for significance of trends, Joinpoint Regression models were used.

<sup>i</sup> Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2020 is a set of science-based, measurable disease prevention and health promotion objectives to be achieved by 2020. Individuals, groups and organizations are encouraged to use Healthy People 2020 to monitor community health improvement over time. More information on Healthy People 2020 health measures can be found at <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020>.

<sup>ii</sup> Native American/Alaskan Indian rate not calculated or presented in bar graph because number of deaths was fewer than 10 and therefore too small to provide statistically relevant data.