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Large differences in infant mortality by ethnic group

There are large differences in the infant mortality rates of ethnic groups in England and Wales, according to new statistics published for the first time today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The new data reveal that, for babies born in 2005, infant mortality in both the Pakistani and Caribbean groups was twice that of the White British group.

The figures show that Asian and Black ethnic groups accounted for over 11 per cent of live births in England and Wales in 2005, and 17 per cent of infant deaths.

Babies in the Pakistani and Caribbean groups had particularly high infant mortality rates, 9.6 and 9.8 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively. This was double the rate in the White British group of 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births.

These new statistics have been compiled from linking birth and infant death registration records with NHS Numbers for Babies records which include information on ethnic group.

Other key findings include:

- Mortality in the Pakistani group was high throughout the first year of life. Mortality in the Caribbean group was especially high in the first month of life.
- Half of all infant deaths in the Pakistani group were due to congenital anomalies, compared with only a quarter of deaths in the White British group.

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- In the Caribbean group 67 per cent of the infant deaths were due to conditions arising from low birthweight and babies being born early. Only 44 per cent of the deaths in the White British group were due to these conditions.

More detailed data can be found at:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/ethgpIMRfirstrelease.xls

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The data used in this release are from a linkage of routine birth and death registration records for all live births that occurred in England and Wales in 2005 with NHS Numbers for Babies (NN4B) records. Stillbirths are not included in these figures.
2. NN4B data are provided to ONS by the Central Issuing System that issues NHS Numbers to babies born in England, Wales and the Isle of Man.
3. Detailed analysis on the quality of the NN4B data for 2005 is available in: Moser K, Hilder L. *Assessing quality of NHS Numbers for Babies data and providing gestational age statistics*, **Health Statistics Quarterly 2008**; 37:15-23
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/HSQ37.pdf
4. The NN4B record requests information on the 'ethnic category (baby) as defined by the mother' using specified categories which match those used in the 2001 Census. This release focuses on the larger and more clearly defined categories, that is, three Asian or Asian British groups (Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani), two Black or Black British groups (African, Caribbean), White British, White Other (including White Irish) and 'All other ethnic groups', which includes Chinese, Other Asian, Other Black, Other, and all Mixed groups. Although the NN4B data specification asks for the babies' ethnic group as defined by the mother it is unclear whether in practice this is what is actually recorded by the health professional notifying the birth. It is possible that the mothers' ethnic group is recorded rather than the babies' and that the health professional decides what to record rather than asking the mother. The quality of the ethnic group information is assessed in an article due for publication in *Health Statistics Quarterly* in August 2008. This will also look into risk factors for infant mortality by ethnic group.
5. As information on ethnic group comes from NN4B data it was not available for the 873 live birth registrations which have not linked to an

NN4B record. In addition ethnic group was not stated for 10.8 per cent of live births in England and Wales in 2005.

6. Infant mortality data by mother's country of birth are available in:
Office for National Statistics, Report: Infant and perinatal mortality by social and biological factors, 2006, Health Statistics Quarterly 2007;
36:84-88.
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/HSQ36.pdf
7. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
8. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2008.