



North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
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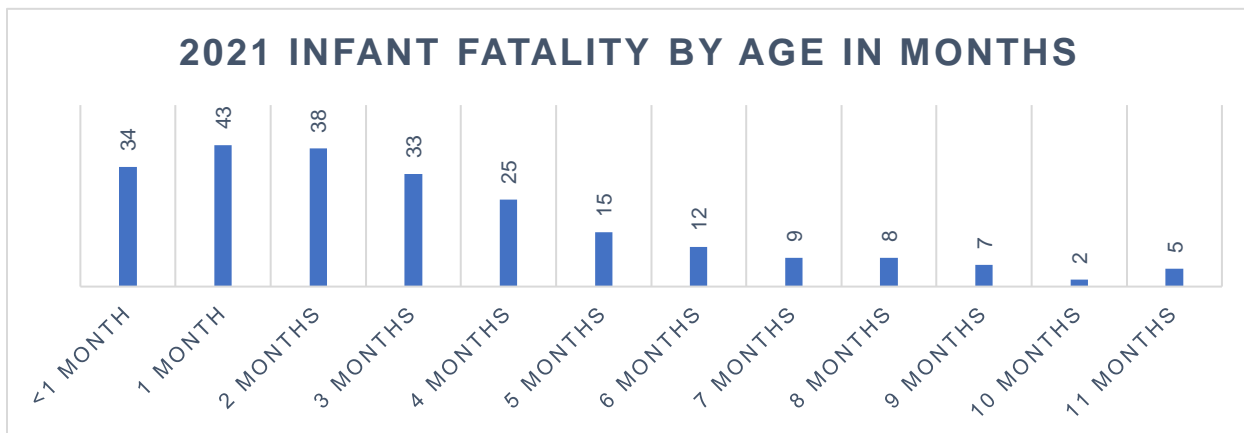
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
Spotlight on Infant Death Report
2021

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Updated as of June 27, 2023

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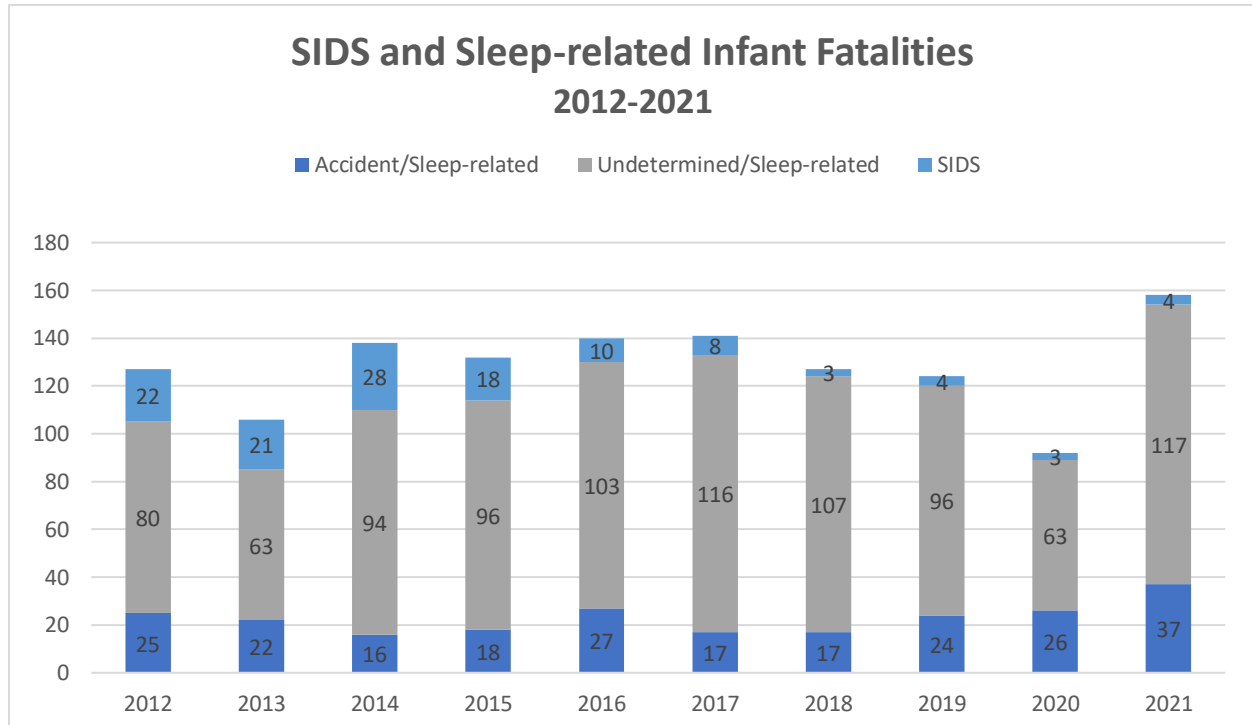
Infants are defined as children under one year of age. With a total of 245 infant deaths in North Carolina for 2021, the representation below provides a breakdown by manner and means of the 231 finalized infant death cases. Due to pending cases, numbers are subject to change. It is possible that the small number of cases not included have characteristics that differ from the majority summarized here. This report will be updated as information on non-finalized infant fatality cases becomes available.

Manner	Means	Number of Infants
Accident (49)	Animals	1
	Asphyxia	34
	Blunt	1
	Drowning	1
	Hanging	1
	Motor Vehicle	3
	Other	6
	Toxin	2
Homicide (4)	Abuse or Neglect	1
	Blunt	2
	Other	1
Natural (30)	Natural	26
	SIDS	4
Undetermined (144)	Exposure	1
	Toxin	1
	Unknown	139
	Other	3
Fetal deaths (Not included above in respective manners/means)		6
Pending		14



Infant Sleep-related Fatalities


Of the total number of finalized infant fatalities in 2021, circumstances in which the certifying pathologist expressed concern for the infant's sleep space or position as a risk factor in the fatality are noted below. Infants in a potentially compromising sleep space accounted for 67% of all finalized infant fatalities throughout the year with a total of 154 deaths. *Note: SIDS deaths are not included in the 154 total.*



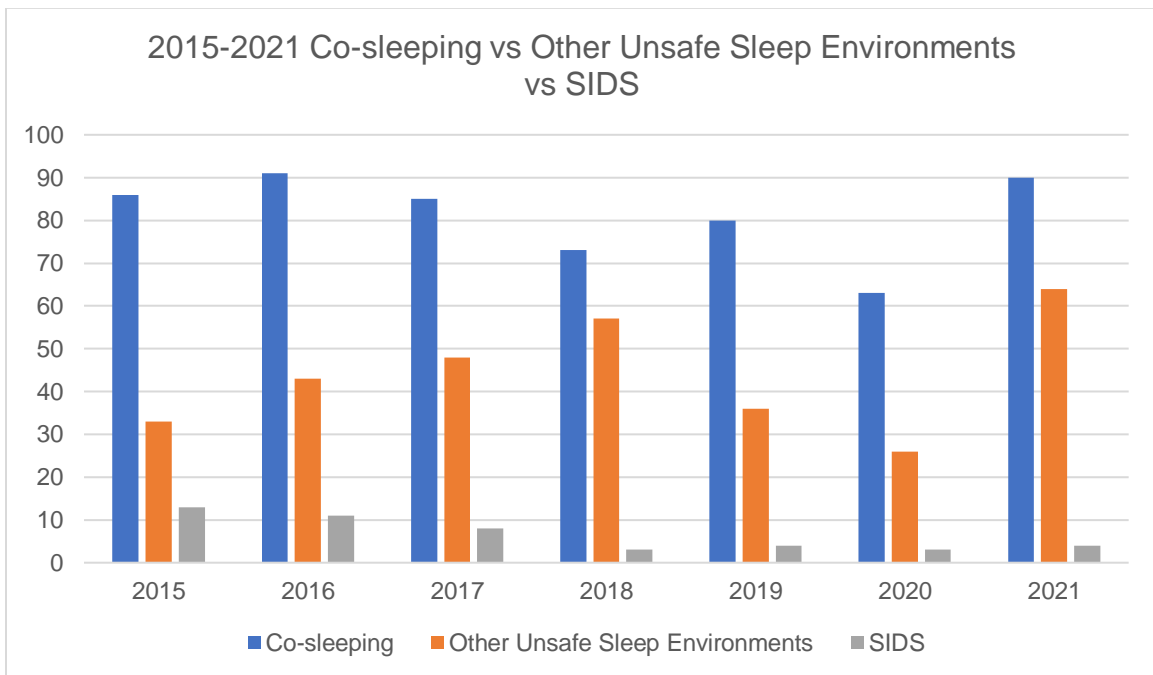
To further breakdown the potential sleep-related infant fatalities:

- Among the infant *accident/sleep-related* deaths, 23 of the 37 deaths were in a co-sleeping environment.
- Among the infant *accident/sleep-related* deaths, 14 of the 37 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, 67 of the 117 deaths were in a co-sleeping environment.
- Among the *undetermined/sleep-related* deaths, 50 of the 117 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.).

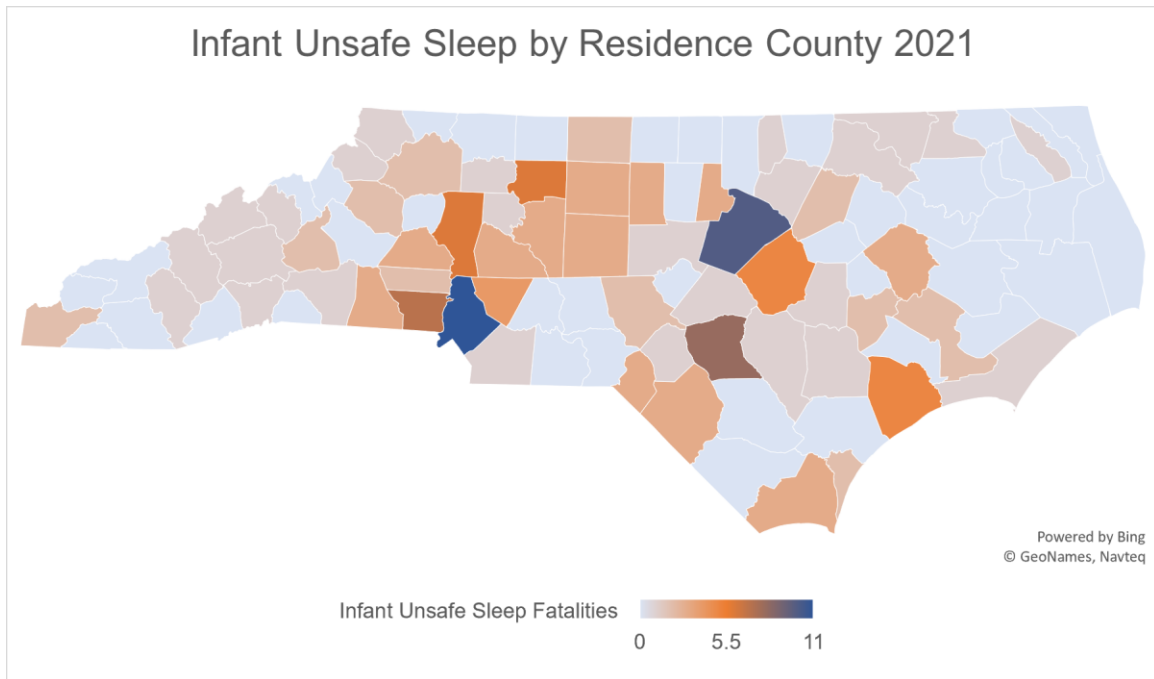
There were a total of 90 potential infant fatalities related to co-sleeping for 2021. There were a total of 64 potential infant fatalities related to other unsafe sleep environments for 2021.

Classification:	Accident/Sleep-related Deaths	Undetermined/Sleep-related Deaths
Co-sleeping at time of death	23	67
Other potential unsafe sleep environment related	14	50
Total potential unsafe sleep environment deaths	37	117
=	 154	

SIDS deaths are not considered under ‘unsafe sleep environment’ metrics, however, the bar graph below compares co-sleeping to other unsafe sleep environments and SIDS from 2015 to 2021.



The map below is a visual representation of the number of infants who have died in unsafe sleep environments per residence county for the year 2021. Not listed are counties with zero infant unsafe sleep-related fatalities and out-of-state resident deaths.



Number of Fatalities	Counties of Residence
1	Ashe, Bladen, Carteret, Chatham, Davie, Duplin, Franklin, Halifax, Harnett, Haywood, Henderson, Hertford, Hoke, Jackson, Madison, Northampton, Pasquotank, Rutherford, Sampson, Union, Vance, Watauga, Wayne, Yadkin, Yancey
2	Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Craven, Lenoir, Lincoln, McDowell, Moore, Nash, New Hanover, Rockingham, Wilkes
3	Alamance, Brunswick, Catawba, Cleveland, Davidson, Guilford, Pitt, Randolph, Robeson, Rowan, Scotland
4	Cabarrus, Durham
5	Johnston, Onslow
6	Forsyth, Iredell
8	Cumberland
9	Gaston
11	Mecklenburg
12	Wake