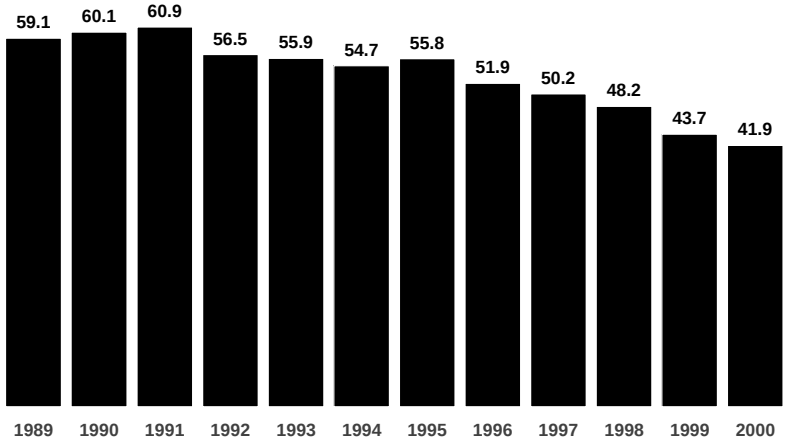
The largest numbers of infant deaths occurred in the most populated counties, with Shelby County experiencing 200 deaths in the year 2000. Davidson County was second with 90 deaths, and Hamilton County third with 50 deaths. While the numbers of infant deaths are higher in the urban areas because of the larger population, the highest rates of infant mortality occur in rural counties. Carroll County led the state with an infant mortality rate of 25.1, followed by Monroe County with a rate of 19.3, Hardeman County with a rate of 19.2, and Lauderdale County with a rate of 19 (TDH, 2002).

Of the infants who died in Tennessee in 2000, "a total of 341 died from complications due to prematurity. Overall, prematurity was the manner of death for…31.17 percent of all childhood deaths in 2000." The gestational age of the infant made a significant difference, since "142 of these deaths occurred in infants with a gestational age of 22 weeks or younger at birth" and 151 deaths occurred in infants with a gestational age of 23-37 weeks at birth. The age of the mother also had an impact, since "childhood fatalities among infants born at 22 weeks of gestation or earlier were most frequent among women who were 22-25 and 31-40 years old. Childhood fatalities among infants born between 23-37 weeks gestation or earlier were most frequent among women who were 18-21 years old" (TDOH, 2002).

Tennessee Teen Pregnancy Rate Per 1,000 Females Ages 15-17



Source: Tennessee Department of Health. Office of Health Statistics and Information 2002.

Other causes of infant death include 200 fatalities due to illness or other conditions, 89 deaths that were reported as attributable to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and four deaths due to "lack of care" (TDOH, 2002).

Teen Pregnancy and Birth

The U.S. birth rate for teens ages 15-19 declined by 21.9 percent to 48.5 births per 1,000 teen girls in 2000, after reaching its highest point in two decades, 62.1 births per 1,000 teen girls ages 15-19, in 1991 (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002).

According to The Alan Guttmacher Institute:

- 13 percent of all U.S. births are to teens.
- The fathers of babies born to teenage mothers are likely to be older than the women: About one in five infants born to unmarried minors are fathered by men five or more years older than the mother.
- 78 percent of births to teens occur outside of marriage.
- Teens now account for 31 percent of all nonmarital births, down from 50 percent in 1970.
- One fourth of teen mothers have a second child within two years of their first birth (Guttmacher, 1999).

In Tennessee the birth rate for adolescents declined from 1991 to a 10 year low in 2000 (Tennessee Department of Health, 2000). Teens ages 15 to 17 in