

Mortality rate highest for Detroit youth—tops in U.S.

DETROIT (AP) - The mortality rate is higher among Detroit children than among any of the nation's 15 largest cities.

The death rate also is 68 percent above the national average. Between 1999 and 2001, the most recent years for which data is available, 1,032 children under 18 perished, a study by The Detroit News of federal health records found.

And although many of the deaths could not be prevented, an unusually high number were lost to fires, homicides and conditions indicative of impoverished communities.

"We're losing our kids," said Sharon Peters, president and CEO of Michigan's Chil-

dren, a Lansing-based advocacy group. "It's unacceptable. And it's a distinction Detroit can ill afford to have."

Although recent figures are not available, examples of violent deaths among Detroit's children are commonplace. Just Wednesday, four children and their mother were buried after being beaten to death with a pipe last week.

Between 1999 and 2001, 80 children in Detroit died in homicides, records show.

And Detroit's overall murder rate has leapt 50 percent over last year during the first three months, going from 68 to 102.

Homicides account for about 8 percent of Detroit children's deaths. Its homicide rate among children was

the second-highest for the major cities, behind Chicago for the three years studied.

But much more common causes of death are health problems often associated with poverty.

Detroit's infant mortality rate — the portion of children who don't survive their first year of life — is double the state average, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health. For every 1,000 babies born to Detroit mothers in 2002, 16 died.

The most frequent cause of death among Detroit's kids between 1999 and 2001 was extremely low birth weight, often less than 2.2 pounds. At least 178 babies died that way, according to records from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

All told, 434 deaths or 42 percent of the total were linked to conditions such as respiratory problems or infections that take hold during the first months of a child's life. Experts say that while such conditions sometimes

cannot be prevented, in other cases they are directly tied to poverty, drug use or other factors that hamper new parents' abilities to care for their kids.

Dr. Theodore Jones, who works with high-risk pregnancies at Hutzel Women's Hospital in Detroit, said the drug use among pregnant women is a serious concern.

And he said poverty among Detroit families makes them less likely to get proper treatment and care. About a third of Detroit chil-

dren live in poverty, the highest rate among the 15 cities.

Records also show that fires, car crashes, suicide and other accidents kill an unusually high number of children.

Among the 15 biggest cities, Detroit's death rate from fires ranks highest - 54 died between 1999 and 2002. The city ranks third for the portion of children killed in car crashes and from suicide and second in other types of accidents, such as drownings, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention records show.

Relations

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relations will always be a problem in the U.S."

According to Census Bureau projections, Whites, now about 69 percent of the population, will drop to 50.1 percent by 2050. More than a quarter of those surveyed said that will be a good thing. Fifty-six percent said it will not matter, and 13 percent said it will be a bad thing.

Tyrone Miller, a 47-year-old Black man from the Bronx, suggested that behavior has changed, but some attitudes have not. "Minorities are pulling the American economy, so if you really want to make money and get ahead, it's not profitable to be racist," said Miller, a security manager. "But that doesn't mean you'll be invited to that person's home."

Among other findings:

-73 percent of Americans approve of interracial marriage.

In a 1958 Gallup poll, when the question was posed only to Whites, just 4 percent supported mixed marriages.

-21 percent of Whites said they have been a victim of reverse discrimination.

-56 percent of Whites, 38 percent of Hispanics and 21 percent of Blacks said all or most of the civil rights movement's goals had been achieved.

The telephone survey of 2,002 people, conducted between Nov. 11 and Dec. 14, had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

EOB

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"Packing up Head Start and taking it back to Washington is not an option, never has been and never will be," he said. "But what we do have is a responsibility to many of you who are taxpayers and you're funding this program as you are funding many other programs that are being offered through EOB. We must be able to ensure that we are able to document that services are being provided consistent with federal regulations and guidelines, state regulations and guidelines, and EOB policies and procedures."

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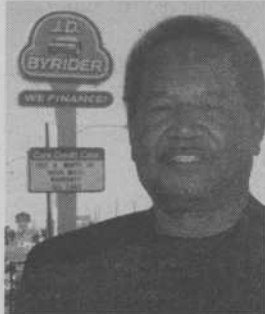
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