

per 1000 live births ([Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014](#)).

From a worldwide perspective, however, the United States lags behind other nations in reducing infant mortality. In 2013 the United States ranked last among 29 nations recording 40,000 births or more. Japan, Finland, and Norway have the three lowest rates, with the United States ranked last behind Hungary and the Slovak Republic ([Osterman, Kochanek, MacDorman, et al., 2015](#)).

Birth weight is considered the major determinant of neonatal death in technologically developed countries. The relatively high incidence of LBW (<2500 g [5.5 pounds]) in the United States is considered a key factor in its higher neonatal mortality rate when compared with other countries. Access to and the use of high-quality prenatal care are promising preventive strategies to decrease early delivery and infant mortality.

As [Table 1-2](#) demonstrates, many of the leading causes of death during infancy continue to occur during the perinatal period. The first four causes—congenital anomalies, disorders relating to short gestation and unspecified LBW, sudden infant death syndrome, and newborn affected by maternal complications of pregnancy—accounted for about half (52%) of all deaths of infants younger than 1 year old ([Osterman, Kochanek, MacDorman, et al., 2015](#)). Many birth defects are associated with LBW, and reducing the incidence of LBW will help prevent congenital anomalies. Infant mortality resulting from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection decreased significantly during the 1990s.

TABLE 1-2

Infant Mortality Rate and Percentage of Total Deaths for 10 Leading Causes of Infant Death in 2013 (Rate per 1000 Live Births)

Rank	Cause of Death (Based on International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision)	Percent	Rate
	All races, all causes	100.00%	596.1
1	Congenital anomalies	20.3	121
2	Disorders relating to short gestation and unspecified low birth weight	17.9	106.9
3	Newborn affected by maternal complication of pregnancy	6.7	39.7
4	Sudden infant death syndrome	6.1	40.6
5	Accidents (unintentional injuries)	4.9	29.4
6	Newborn affected by complications of placenta, cord, and membranes	4.1	24.2
7	Bacterial sepsis of newborn	2.5	14.7
8	Respiratory distress of newborn	2.2	13.3