This is a tragic topic. The death of any person is difficult for the immediate survivors but the death of a child strikes us particularly hard. There seems little rhyme or reason for a young child’s death.

The national average is 7.4 infant deaths per 1000 live births. In international terms this is very low compared to countries in the low-income areas of the world. Most states are quite close to the national mean, but there is a pattern that emerges. States to the north and west tend to have lower infant death rates than those south and east. Megalopolis is an area slightly below this national figure.

The maps identify areas by their percent variation from the national mean. The urban areas of Washington DC, Baltimore and Philadelphia are regions of concentrated poverty as well as affluence, and have higher than national rates at 13.2 deaths per 1000 (79% above the national mean [NM]), 14 deaths per 1000 (89.8% above NM) and 13.2 deaths per 1000 (79% above NM) respectively. Then there is almost random scatter through the region; Tolland CT at 12.8 deaths per 1000 (73.6% above NM), Caroline MD at 16.4 deaths per 1000 (122.4% above NM) and Culpepper VA at 18.4 deaths per 1000 (149.6% above NM) all are higher than the national average but only a small absolute number of deaths are involved, respectively 18, 6 and 8.

In many counties the absolute figures are so small that percentage variations are misleading. Small annual changes in number of deaths shows up as substantial percentage variations. Kent MD and Clark VA had no infant deaths recorded in 1997; Talbot MD, Nantucket MA and Wyoming PA had 1 and Bristol RI, King George VA, Warren VA and Manassas Park VA had only 2. In tragic comparison, Philadelphia in 1997 saw 291 infants deaths.

Data Source: Geospatial & Statistical Data Center, University of Virginia Library, retrieved from: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/