

## CO1.1. Infant mortality

### Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents information on infant mortality through three measures:

- The infant mortality rate, defined as the number of deaths of children aged less than one in a given year per 1000 live births.
- The neonatal mortality rate, defined as the number of deaths of children aged less than 28 days in a given year per 1000 live births.
- The post-neonatal mortality rate, defined as the number of deaths of children aged between 28 days and one year in a given year per 1000 live births.

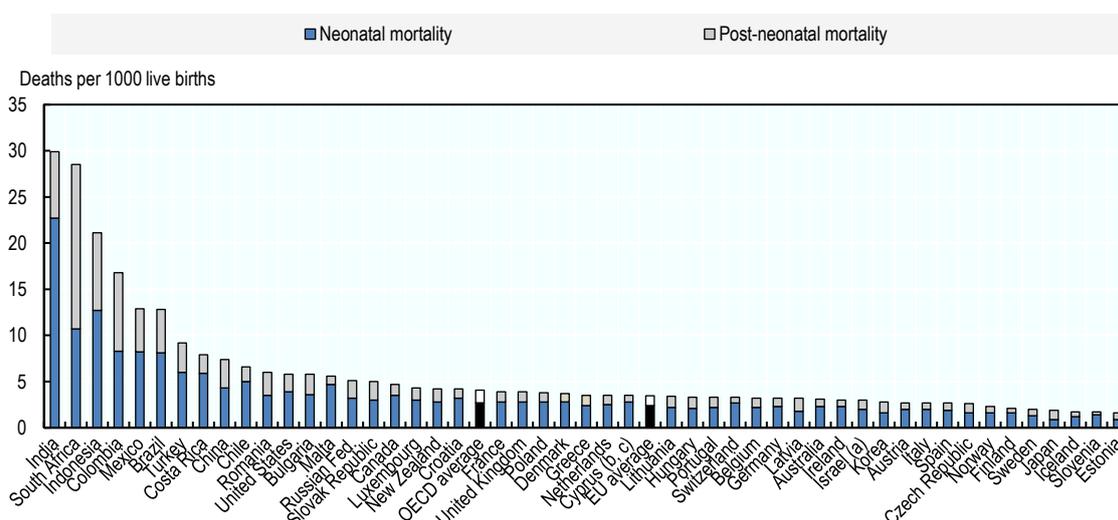
The infant mortality rate is equivalent to the sum of the neonatal and post-neonatal mortality rates. Data for most countries come from OECD Health Statistics, with data for non-OECD EU member states coming from Eurostat.

### Key findings

Infant mortality rates are generally very low across the OECD, but do vary slightly from country to country (Chart CO1.1.A). In most OECD countries infant mortality rates stand at somewhere between 2.5 and 5 deaths per 1000 live births, with the OECD average infant mortality rate at 4.1. Rates are lowest at fewer than 2.5 deaths per 1000 live births in Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden. They are highest in Colombia and Mexico at 16.8 and 12.9 deaths per 1000 live births, respectively.

**Chart CO1.1.A. Infant mortality, neonatal mortality, and post-neonatal infant mortality rates, 2018 or latest available**

Deaths per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight)



**Other relevant indicators:** Other relevant indicators: CO1.3 and CO1.4: Early childhood indicators: Low birth weight and child immunisation; CO1.5: Breastfeeding rates; CO1.6: Disease-based indicators: prevalence of diabetes and asthma among children; and, CO1.7: Obesity among children aged 10.

Note: Infant mortality is defined as deaths of children aged less than one year per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight). Neonatal mortality is defined as deaths of children aged less than 28 days old per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight). Post-neonatal mortality is defined as deaths of children aged between 28 days and one year of age per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight). Data for Cyprus refer to 2012, for the Russian Federation to 2013, for Belgium, Colombia, New Zealand to 2016, and for Costa Rica, France, Ireland, Italy and United States to 2017.

a. The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

b. Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue";

c. Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

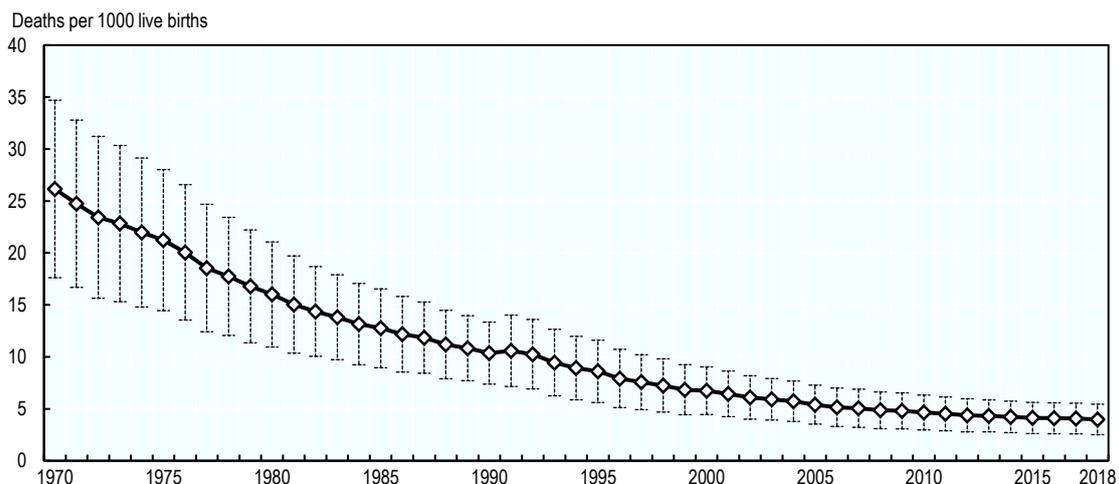
Source: OECD Health Statistics, <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/health-data.htm>; Eurostat Mortality Data, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

On average, around two-thirds of the deaths that occur during the first year of life are neonatal deaths – that is, deaths of children aged less than 28 days (Chart CO1.1.A). Congenital malformations, pre-maturity and other conditions arising during pregnancy are the principal factors contributing to neonatal mortality in OECD countries. For deaths beyond a month (post-neonatal mortality), there tends to be a greater range of causes – the most common being SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, more commonly known as "cot death"), birth defects, infections and accidents.

OECD countries have made considerable progress in reducing infant mortality over the past decades (Chart CO1.1.B). In 1970, the OECD-35 average infant mortality rate stood at 26 deaths per 1000 live births. With a few minor exceptions, it has decreased year-on-year ever since. By 1980, the OECD-35 average infant mortality rate had declined to 16 deaths per 1000 live births, and by 1990 it had fallen to 10. The OECD-35 average has levelled off slightly since the turn of the century – in 2018 it was, at 4.0 deaths per 1000 live births, only 2.8 points lower than in 2000 (6.7 deaths per 1000 live births). Nevertheless, this still represents a decrease of around 40% over the intervening eighteen years.

### Chart CO1.1.B. Trends in infant mortality rates, 1970-2018

OECD-35 unweighted average deaths per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight), with error bars set at 0.5 standard deviation



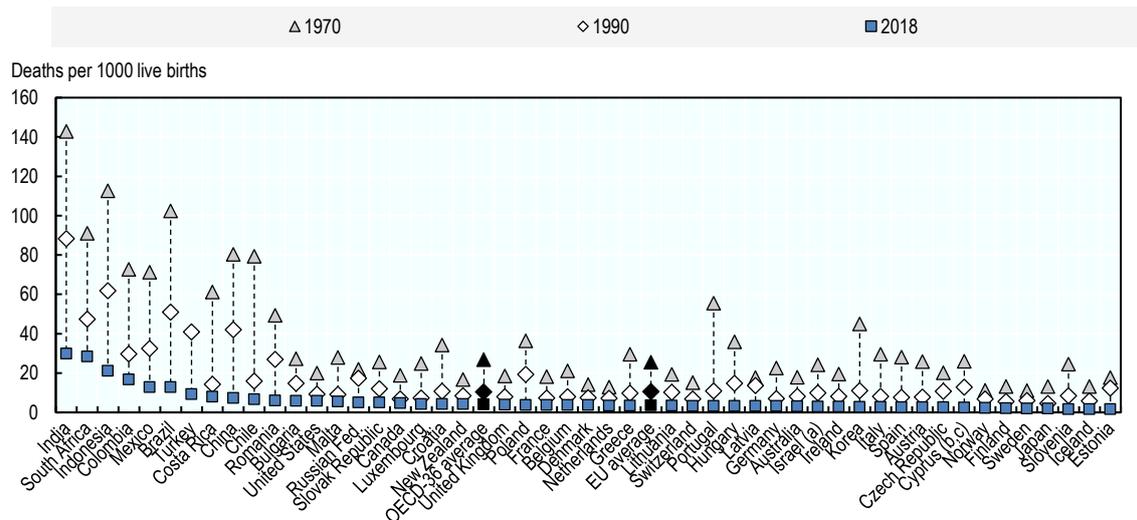
Note: Deaths of children aged less than one year per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight). Unweighted average for the 35 OECD countries with data available for the years since 1970. Korea and Turkey are excluded due to missing data.

Source: OECD Health Statistics, <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/health-data.htm>;

The largest reductions in infant mortality took place in the three Latin American OECD countries: Chile, Colombia, and Mexico (Chart CO1.1.C). In Colombia and Mexico, infant mortality rates have fallen by more than 50 points since the early 1970s; in Chile, they have decreased by more than 70 points since 1970. But, infant mortality rates have also fallen in all other OECD countries since 1970. In most, the bulk of the decrease occurred between 1970 and 1990 with any further progress made between 1990 and 2018 generally comparatively small, in absolute terms at least.

### Chart CO1.1.C. Infant mortality rates, 1970, 1990 and 2018 or latest available

Deaths per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight)



Note: Deaths of children aged less than one year per 1000 live births (no minimum threshold of gestation period or birthweight). For 1970, data for Mexico refer to 1971, for Russian Federation to 1980 and for South Africa to 1974. For 1990, data for Korea refer to mean of 1989 and 1991, and for Turkey to 1996. For 2018, data for Colombia and New Zealand to 2016, for Costa Rica and United State to 2017. The OECD-36 average excludes Turkey due to missing data.

- a. See note a to Chart CO1.1.A
- b. See note b to Chart CO1.1.A
- c. See note c to Chart CO1.1.A

Source: OECD Health Statistics, <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/health-data.htm>; Eurostat Mortality Data, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

### Comparability and data issues

Data on infant mortality come from *OECD Health Statistics* and *Eurostat*, both of which themselves use data from national statistical authorities. Despite efforts to ensure comparability of definitions and concepts across countries, it is possible that differences between countries in the treatment and registration of deaths of premature infants could influence cross-country variation in infant and neonatal mortality rates. For example, while in most countries all infants are included in birth and mortality statistics, others specify additional criteria based on some combination of gestational age, birth weight or survival. In Poland, for example, only infants with a birth weight of at least 500 grams are registered as live births. For more information on cross-national variations in the registration process, see [OECD Health Statistics](http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/health-data.htm).

#### Sources and further reading:

OECD Health Statistics: [www.oecd.org/health/healthdata](http://www.oecd.org/health/healthdata);

Eurostat mortality data: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

WHO Global Health Observatory: <https://apps.who.int/gho/data>