

Metadata – Infant mortality

Description	Number of infant deaths (day 0-364) after a live birth in a specific year, expressed per 1000 live births occurring in the same year.
Rationale	The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is one of the ECHI indicators (1). It is a basic indicator for population health and quality of health care services; it is highly correlated to the country's level of development. The infant mortality rate reflects the longer-term consequences of perinatal events such as low birthweight, prematurity or congenital anomalies. With the development of neonatal care, babies at high-risk may survive longer and die later in their first year of life. Above this, the infant mortality also comprises the deaths in the post-neonatal period; those include accidents and infections, sudden infant death syndrome and lack of the essentials of life (adequate food, water, maternal care), and are more highly correlated with social factors and are thus preventable. This indicator can thus serve as a measure of the quality of medical care, preventive services and policies aiming at the reduction of health inequalities (2).
Primary Data source	Infant deaths certificates are sent to the national registry (with the medical part of it treated by the regions and afterward pooled by Statbel). Births certificates are electronically registered and sent to the national registry.
Indicator source	National and international organizations compute the IMR. Depending on the data availability and the calculation, some minor differences can exist in the rates values and in the last available year. For national and regional rates, we used the values provided by Statbel. Overall IMR are available on Statbel website: https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/mortalite-et-esperance-de-vie/mortalite-foeto-infantile#figures Eurostat collects and publishes values of the overall IMR for the EU countries. The Eurostat data are presented on the EU Heidi tool (3) and by OECD in Health at a Glance reports (4).
Periodicity	Yearly
Calculation, technical definitions and limitations	The overall IMR is the number of infant death (0-364 days) in a year divided by the number of live births in the same year. Infants deaths from mothers with legal residency in Belgium or legal status of asylum seekers are included. Since 2010, infant deaths occurring abroad from mothers with their legal residency in Belgium are also included.
International comparability	a. Availability: Yes, the overall infant mortality rates are published by Eurostat, OECD, and WHO. b. Comparability: The comparability of the infant mortality rate is weakened by differences in practices between countries. Rules and attitudes in case of extreme prematurity and extremely low birth weight can differ according to cultural factors, psychological factors and consequences in administration. This bias influence particularly the early component of the infant mortality, the neonatal mortality. Most countries had no lower gestational age or birthweight limit for registration of live births in 2015. Only very few countries specify limits based on gestational age (usually 22 weeks) or weight (usually 500g) for life births registration; this allowed Euro-Peristat to realize a comparison based on a 22 weeks threshold.

Reference List

- (1) Verschuuren M, Achterberg PW, Gijsen R, Harbers MM, Vijge E, Wilk EA, et al. ECHI Indicator Development and Documentation - Joint action for ECHIM final Report Part II. II ed. RIVM; 2012.
- (2) Euro-Peristat project. European perinatal health report: Core indicators of the health and care of pregnant women and babies in Europe in 2015. 2018.
- (3) DG SANCO. Heidi Data tool: European Community Health Indicators: http://ec.europa.eu/health/indicators/indicators/index_en.htm. DG SANCO; 2012.
- (4) OECD. Health at a glance: Europe 2018 OECD. Paris: OECD Publishing; 2018.