

Stillbirths and Infant Deaths

In 2015:

- 76 stillbirths were registered, 6.2 per cent fewer than in 2014 and the lowest number ever recorded in Northern Ireland.
- The 124 infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) represent a slight increase on the previous year (118 infant deaths) and equate to 5.1 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Three quarters (74 per cent) of all infant deaths occurred in the first week of life.

**76 STILLBIRTHS
and
124 INFANT DEATHS**

3.1 stillbirths
per 1,000 live and still births

This stillbirth
rate is the
lowest
on record

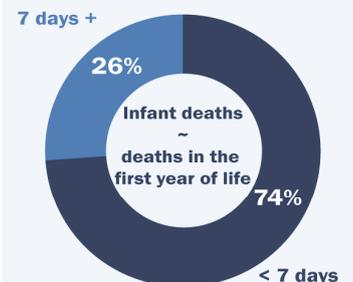
76 stillbirths registered

6.2% ↓
than the 2014 figure

5.1 infant deaths
per 1,000 live births

124 infant deaths registered

5.1% ↑
than the 2014 figure

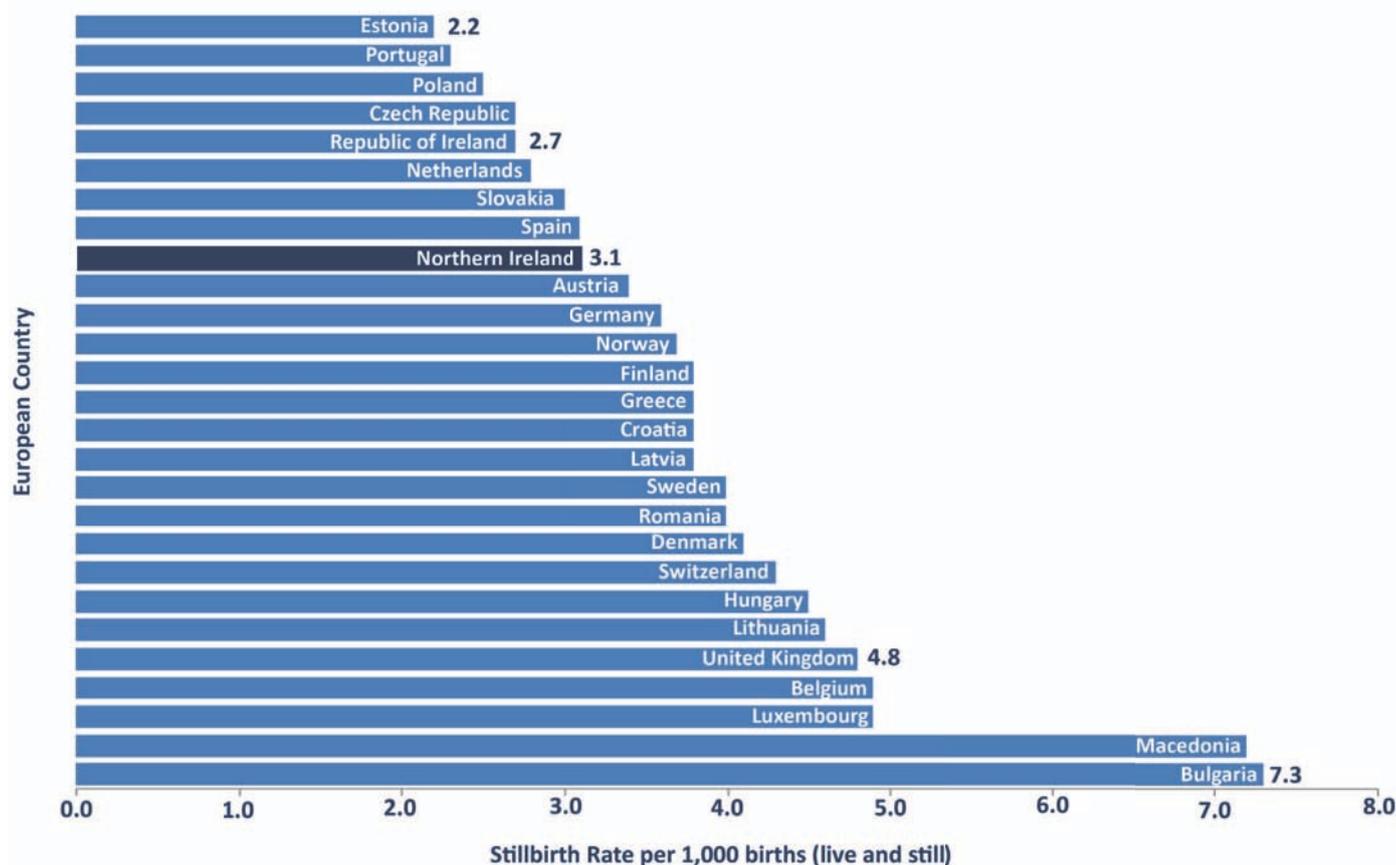


**74% of infant deaths occurred
in the first week of life**

76 stillbirths registered – lowest number ever recorded in NI

3.1 stillbirths per 1,000 births – lowest rate ever recorded in NI

Figure 1.21: Latest available stillbirth rates for European countries



Stillbirth Numbers and Rates

A stillbirth is a baby that is born deceased after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy¹². In 2015, there were 76 stillbirths registered, a decrease of 6.2 per cent on the previous year and the lowest number ever recorded in Northern Ireland.

Over the past 30 years the stillbirth rate has fallen significantly, from 6.4 stillbirths per 1,000 births (live and still) in 1985 to 3.1 in 2015. Indeed, the 2015 stillbirth rate represents the lowest ever recorded in Northern Ireland. This fall has happened despite a change in the definition of stillbirths in 1992, which reduced the minimum period of gestation from 28 to 24 weeks. Having said that, the 2015 stillbirth rate in Northern Ireland was higher than in other European countries such as Estonia, where the most recent stillbirth rate was documented as 2.2 per 1,000 births (live and still) in 2013¹³. Against this background, through the work of charities such as SANDS (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity)¹⁴ and ‘Count the Kicks’¹⁵ the aim is to further decrease the stillbirth rate throughout the UK.

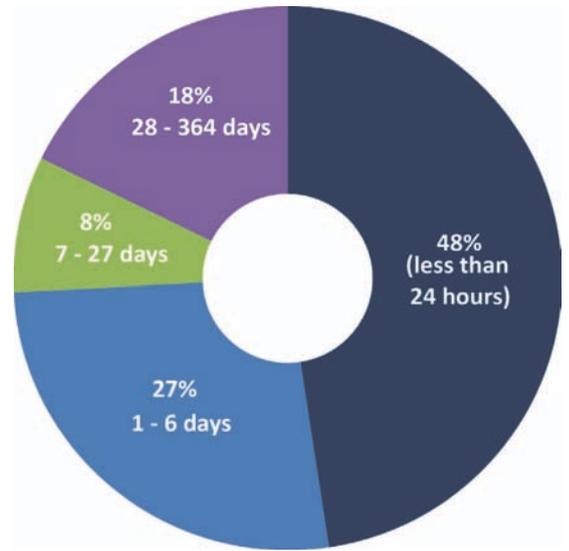
Infant Death Numbers and Rates

The number of infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) totalled 124, representing a small increase from the 2014 figure of 118. Deaths in infants aged under 1 week old accounted for 74 per cent of all infant deaths with 48 per cent of infants dying on their first day of life.

Over the past 30 years, the infant death rate has fallen from 9.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1985 to 5.1 in 2015. However as illustrated in Figure 1.23, the rate in 2015 remains one of the higher rates in Europe, which (based on the latest available data) ranges from 1.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in Cyprus to 11.1 in Turkey.

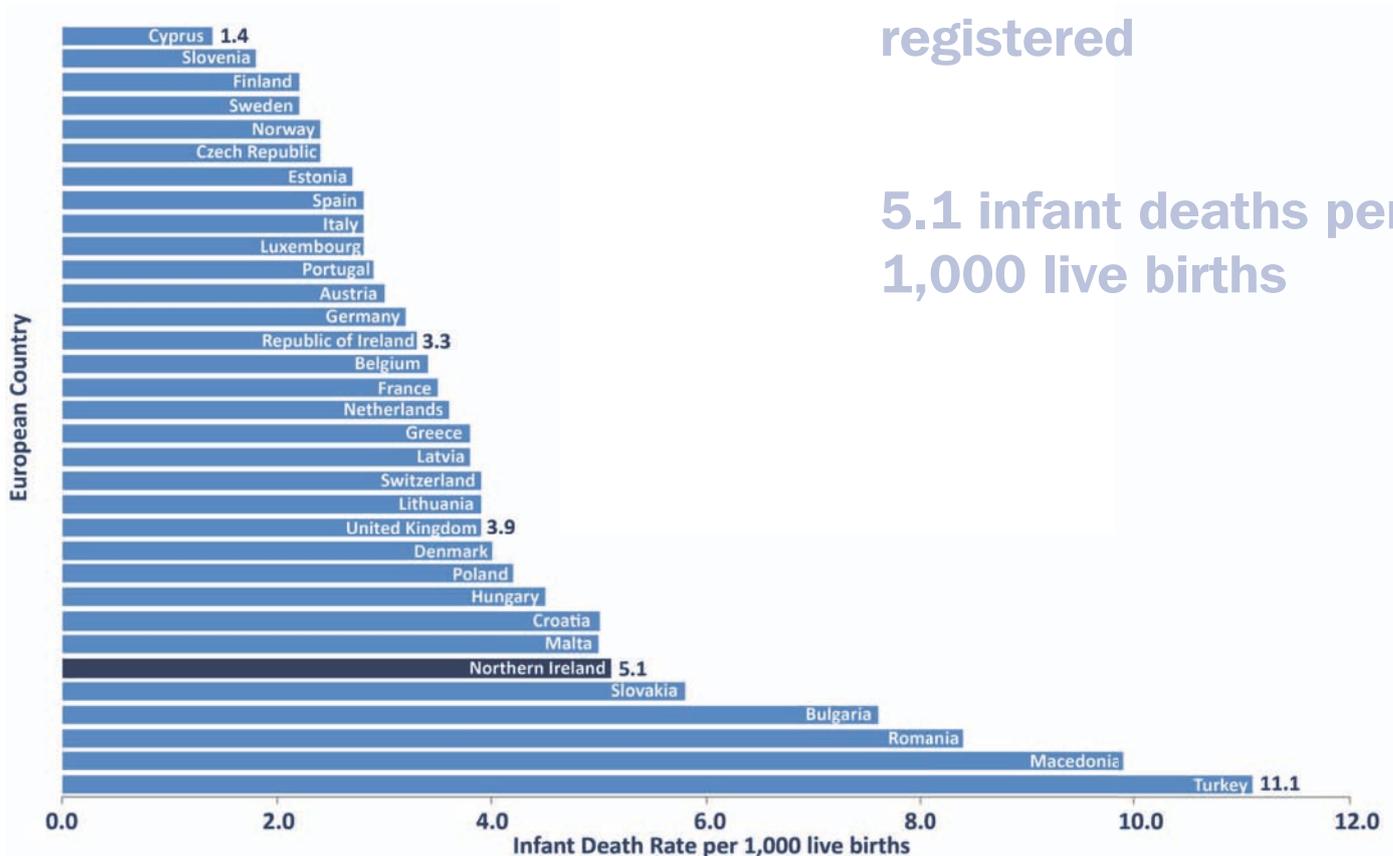
As with stillbirths and infant deaths, the numbers of perinatal, neonatal and postneonatal deaths (see Appendix 3 for definitions) have reduced greatly since the 1940's and 1950's. However in 2015, both the number of perinatal deaths (169) and neonatal deaths (102) were marginally higher than in 2014 (161 and 96 respectively). Similar to previous years, males accounted for more perinatal, neonatal and postneonatal deaths than females.

Figure 1.22: Infant deaths by age at death (2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 28Kb)

Figure 1.23: Latest available infant mortality rates for European countries



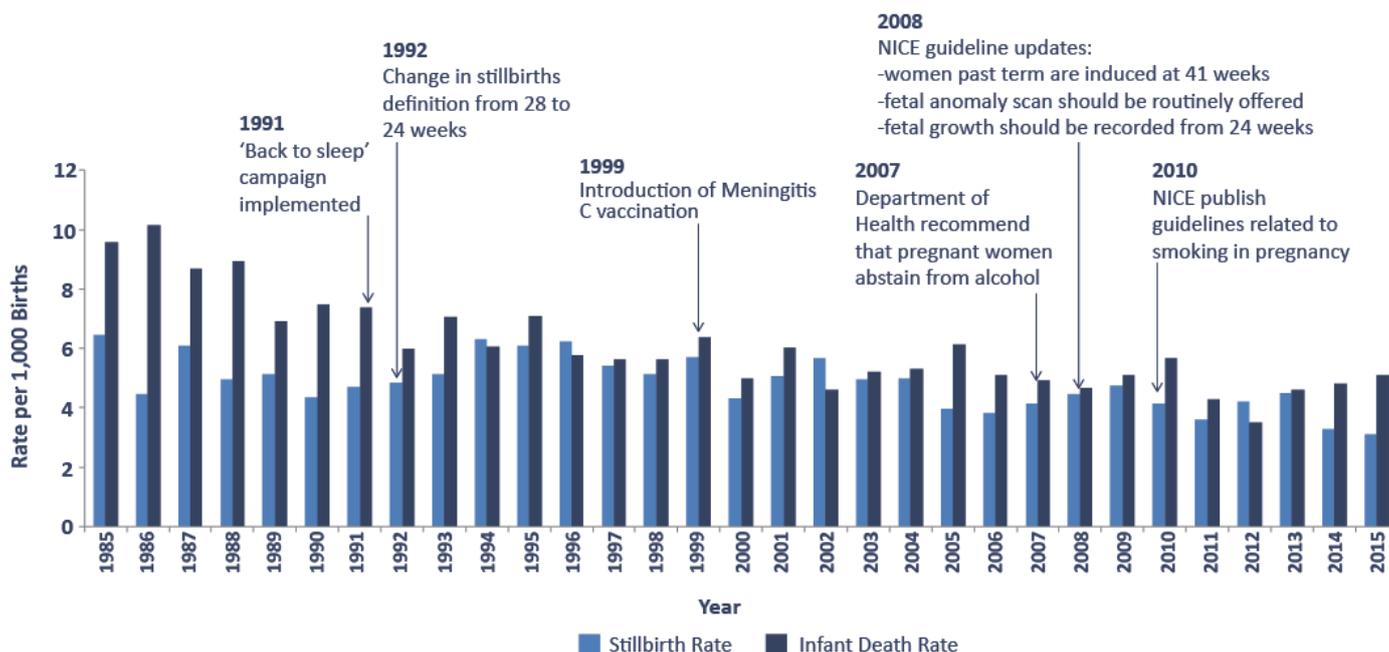
124 infant deaths registered

5.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births

[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 31Kb)

Latest available figures range from 2012 to 2015. Source: Eurostat¹³

Figure 1.24: Stillbirth and infant death rates (1985 to 2015)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 34Kb)

Record low number and rate of stillbirths in 2015

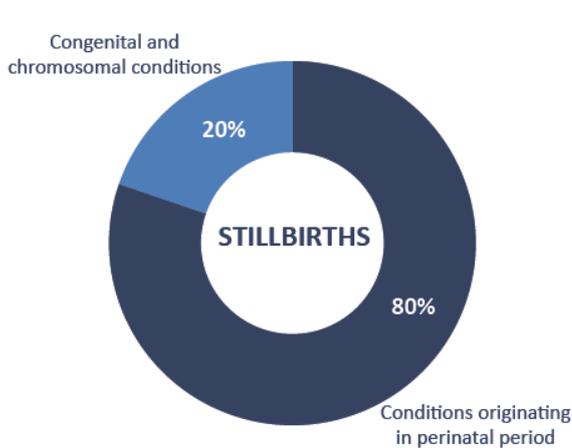
Causes of Infant Deaths and Stillbirths

All deaths and stillbirths are coded using the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th revision (ICD-10). Classification of the underlying cause of death is done by reference to the death certificate and additional information from the certifying doctor. Further information relating to ICD-10 codes used to classify causes of death, including those discussed below, can be found on the World Health Organisation website¹⁶.

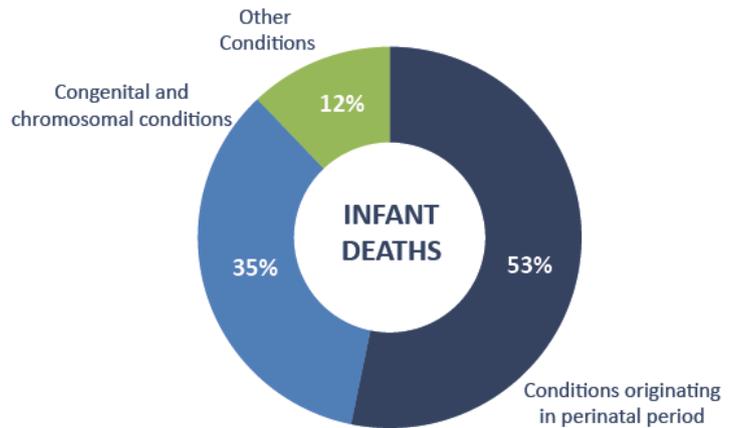
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities refer to conditions present at birth that are caused by an abnormally formed part of the body, having an abnormal number of chromosomesⁱ, or having chromosomes with missing or extra pieces. These conditions were the cause of 20 per cent of stillbirths and 35 per cent of infant deaths.

A further 80 per cent of stillbirths and 53 per cent of infant deaths were caused by conditions originating in the period after the 28th week of pregnancy (i.e. in the perinatal period).

ⁱ Chromosomes are the thread-like bodies that contain genetic/hereditary information.

Figure 1.25: Stillbirths and Infant Deaths by Cause of Death (2015)

[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 29Kb)



[Download Chart](#) (XLS Format – 29Kb)

Other conditions include sudden infant death syndrome, also known as ‘cot death’, which is the sudden unexplained death of a child aged under 1 year old. In 2015, 4 infants died as a result of sudden infant death syndrome. The number of infant deaths attributed to this cause has fluctuated between 0 and 16 deaths over the past 30 years, with lower numbers during the 2000’s compared to during the 1980’s and 1990’s. There were also 11 infant deaths caused by infectious and parasitic diseases, diseases of the circulatory, respiratory and nervous systems and other ill-defined and unspecified causes of mortality.

Pregnancy, Childbirth and Puerperium

Occasionally deaths are caused by pregnancy, childbirth and the period immediately following childbirth. In 2015, 1 maternal death was registered due to complications of labour and delivery. There was also 1 maternal death in 2014. Over the past 30 years, 32 maternal deaths have been registered with the highest number (5 deaths) reported in 2009.

4 deaths due to sudden infant death syndrome (‘cot death’)