

INTERNATIONAL INFANT MORTALITY

In 2008, the U.S. infant mortality rate (6.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births) was higher than the rate for many other industrialized nations. Differences in infant mortality rates among industrialized nations may reflect variation in the definition, measurement, and reporting of fetal and infant deaths. However, recent analyses of the differences in gestational age-specific infant mortality indicate that this disparity is most likely related to the high rate of preterm birth in the United States.³⁶ Infants born preterm (or less than 37 weeks gestation) have higher rates of death and disability than infants born at term (37 weeks gestation or more).³⁷ Although the United States compares favorably with European countries with respect to the survival of preterm infants, the higher rate of preterm birth in the United States overall significantly impacts the infant mortality rate.

In 2008, the United States ranked 28th in infant mortality among industrialized nations. In comparison, Iceland and Sweden, both with infant mortality rates of 2.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, were ranked first, followed by Finland and Japan, both with a rate of 2.6 deaths per 1,000. The United States did not always rank this low; in 1960, it ranked 12th, with Iceland, Norway and the Netherlands reporting the three lowest rates among industrialized nations that year.

International Infant Mortality Rates and Rankings,* Selected Countries,** 1960 and 2008

Source (II.10): The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Country	Rank 1960	Rank 2008
Australia	6	21
Austria	20	13
Belgium	18	13
Canada	13	24
Chile	28	29
Czech Republic	5	7
Denmark	9	19
Finland	7	3
France	14	15
Germany	19	11
Greece	21	5
Hungary	24	25
Iceland	1	1
Ireland	16	15
Israel	---	15
Italy	23	8
Japan	17	3
Mexico	27	30
Netherlands	3	15
New Zealand	11	23
Norway	2	5
Poland	25	25
Portugal	26	8
Republic of Korea	---	11
Slovak Republic	15	26
Spain	22	8
Sweden	4	1
Switzerland	8	19
Turkey	29	30
United Kingdom	10	22
United States	12	28

*Rankings are from lowest to highest infant mortality rates (IMR). Countries with the same IMR receive the same rank.

**Countries with at least 2.5 million population and listed in the OECD database.

--- Data not available.