

Mortality, sudden infant death syndrome (ICD 798.0)

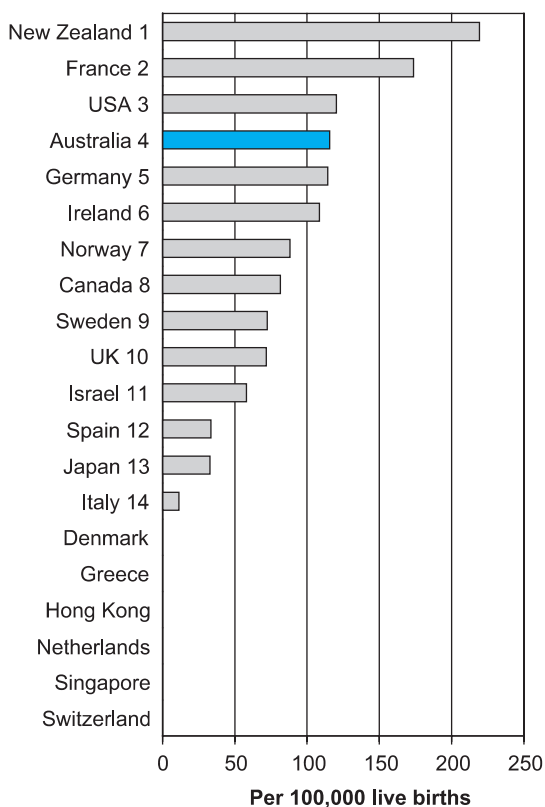


Figure 1: SIDS death rates, 1992

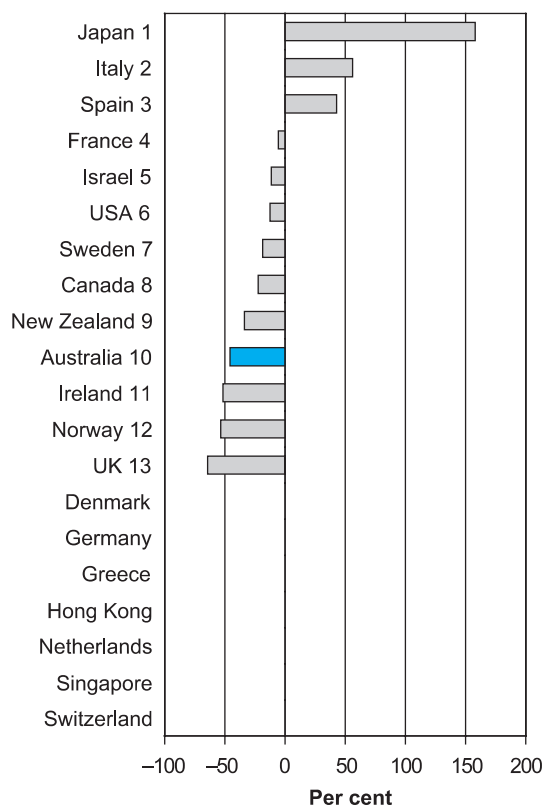


Figure 2: Changes in SIDS death rates, 1987 to 1992

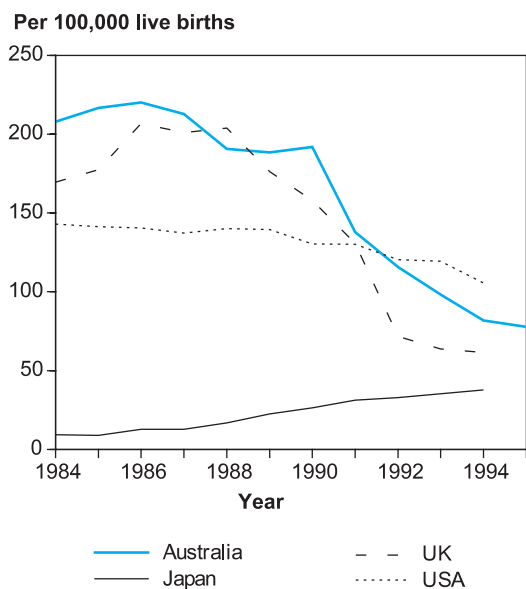


Figure 3: Trends in SIDS death rates, 1984 to 1995

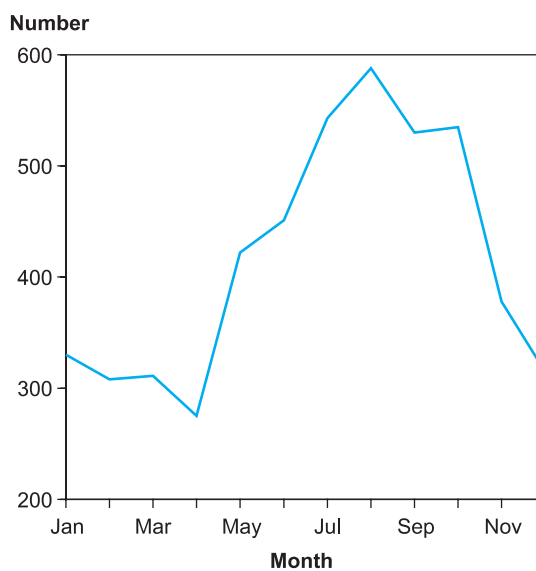


Figure 4: Total SIDS deaths by month, Australia, 1984 to 1995

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Crude death rate for infants aged 0, sudden infant death syndrome (per 100,000 live births)

Country	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Australia	207.8	216.6	220.0	212.8	190.6	188.3	191.8	137.8	115.7	98.2	81.8
Canada				104.8			81.1	87.0	81.5	68.5	
Denmark											
France	158.5	160.2	173.3	183.8	180.4	183.5	141.7	192.9	173.6	159.2	
Germany (FRG)	138.1	158.5	162.9		161.4	167.1	173.4	154.8	114.2	109.0	97.1
Greece	3.2	6.0	18.6	16.0	21.4	22.7	8.8			7.7	39.5
Hong Kong											
Ireland	185.3	214.8	250.7	224.2	219.8	198.0	184.8	138.5	108.6		
Israel				65.6	51.8	69.5	61.0	54.9	58.1	65.9	
Italy	1.5	3.8	4.1	7.3	11.6	12.5	10.8	14.7	11.4		
Japan	9.3	8.9	12.7	12.7	16.9	22.6	26.4	31.3	32.8	35.3	37.8
Netherlands	125.0	108.3	109.5	92.1	57.9	70.4	56.6				
New Zealand	428.0	372.6	354.0	331.2	352.8	347.7	271.0	235.0	219.4	198.8	
Norway			194.2	188.8	212.1	239.4	136.2	121.7	88.2	62.0	
Singapore											
Spain	15.4	20.4	23.5	23.4	25.8	26.0	33.4	41.2	33.5		
Sweden				88.8	78.5	105.2	117.8	106.7	72.4	70.4	
Switzerland										113.8	
UK	169.6	177.5	206.7	200.9	203.9	176.3	157.9	130.7	71.7	63.8	61.4
USA	142.9	141.3	140.5	137.3	140.1	139.4	130.3	130.1	120.3	119.4	105.6

Sources: WHO 1996d, and previous issues.

- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is one of the major causes of infant mortality in Australia and other developed countries. It is defined as the sudden and unexplained death of an infant where the death remains unexplained despite complete post mortem examination.
- Although deaths attributed to SIDS are by definition unexplained, various risk factors have been identified, and appropriate preventive measures have been suggested – avoiding the prone sleeping position, a preference for breast-feeding babies, avoiding exposure to cigarette smoke and ensuring that babies are not over-heated. A seasonal effect is also known to be associated with SIDS deaths, with greater mortality in colder months (Figure 4).
- In 1984, the SIDS death rate in Australia was 208 deaths per 100,000 live births. By 1995 this rate had fallen to 78 deaths per 100,000 live births. This noteworthy fall has been largely attributed to a national SIDS prevention campaign that began in the early 1990s.
- Death rates for SIDS are variable among developed countries. New Zealand and France had rates exceeding 150 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1992, whereas Spain, Japan and Italy recorded rates below 50 deaths per 100,000 live births (Figure 1). Coding-of-death and autopsy procedures vary widely internationally; the comparisons provided here therefore should be interpreted with caution.
- SIDS death rates in Australia and Northern Europe, however, have decreased significantly, in particular in conjunction with recommendations to place infants on their back to sleep (Willinger 1995, Forsdahl & Andersen 1996). However, rates in the United States continue to decline slowly, despite education campaigns (Figure 3).
- Between 1987 and 1992, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom recorded falls in mortality of 30% or more (Figure 2). Italy, Japan and Spain on the other hand recorded increases, although these may reflect no more than changing coding practices.

For more information, see:

Dwyer T, Ponsonby AL 1992. Sudden infant death syndrome – insights from epidemiological research. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 46: 98–102.

Willinger M 1995. SIDS prevention. *Pediatr Ann* 24: 358–64.