

SIDS and SUDC Facts and Figures

The Lullaby Trust's definition of sudden infant death syndrome and sudden unexplained death in childhood:

The sudden and unexpected death of a baby is usually referred to by professionals as 'sudden unexpected death in infancy' (SUDI) or 'sudden unexpected death in childhood' (SUDC), if the baby was over 12 months old. The death of a baby that is unexpected is also sometimes referred to as 'sudden infant death'.

Some sudden and unexpected deaths can be explained by the post-mortem examination, revealing, for example, an unforeseen infection or metabolic disorder. Deaths that remain unexplained after the post-mortem are usually registered as 'sudden infant death syndrome' (SIDS) or 'sudden unexpected death in childhood' (SUDC) in a child over 12 months.

Sometimes other terms such as SUDI or 'unascertained' may be used.

In 2023, there were 538 **unexpected** deaths in England and Wales and 16 in Northern Ireland. This data is not differentiated for Scotland.

There were 188 **unexplained** deaths of babies and young children in the whole of the UK.

Deaths < 1 year of age*

	England & Wales	Scotland	N. Ireland	UK Total	UK Rate (per 1000 live births)
2012	234	29	2	265	0.39
2013	252	17	9	278	0.41
2014	217	14	4	235	0.35
2015	195	21	4	220	0.33
2016	226	18	6	250	0.37
2017	189	15	2	206	0.31
2018	213	28	4	245	0.36
2019	187	23	4	214	0.32
2020	162	14	4	180	0.27
2021	189	15	1	205	0.30
2022	187	16	2	189	0.28
2023	164	19	5	188	0.29

Most sudden unexplained deaths of children occur in babies aged under one year. In the UK in 2023, 10% of sudden unexplained deaths of children under 2 were amongst children aged 12-24 months.

Deaths >1 year / < 2 years of age*

	England & Wales	Scotland	N. Ireland	UK Total
2012	17	0	0	17
2013	18	0	1	19
2014	15	2	1	18
2015	14	4	0	18
2016	15	2	0	17
2017	14	1	1	16
2018	9	5	1	15
2019	12	2	0	14
2020	12	2	0	14
2021	11	2	0	13
2022	11	1	0	12
2023	18	4	0	22

* Data collected from Office for National Statistics (ONS), National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

England & Wales 2023

164 unexplained infant deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2023, a rate of 0.28 deaths per 1,000 live births, a decrease from 0.31 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022.

Of these, 87% occurred within the first 6 months of life.

The rate of SIDS in low birthweight (2.5kg or 5½ lbs) babies was 4 times higher than babies born over this weight.

51% were boys (0.28 deaths per thousand live births). This is a decrease from 66% in 2022.

The rate of unexplained infant deaths was almost 4 times higher in mothers aged under 20 years compared to all other age groups.

Since the launch of the Back to Sleep Campaign in England and Wales in 1991, the number of SIDS deaths has fallen by 81%, saving the lives of more than 30,000 babies.