

SIDS & SUDC Facts and Figures



- There are around 193 unexplained deaths of babies and young children every year in the UK
- 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.

- SIDS in the UK (babies aged under 12 months)*:

	England & Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland	UK Total	UK rate (per 1000 live births)
2021	166	15	1	182	0.26
2020	162	14	4	180	0.26
2019	187	23	4	214	0.30
2018	213	28	4	245	0.34
2017	189	15	2	206	0.27
2016	226	18	6	250	0.32
2015	195	21	4	220	0.28
2014	217	14	4	235	0.30
2013	252	17	9	278	0.36
2012	234	29	2	265	0.33
2011	247	29	5	281	0.34
2010	261	26	5	292	0.36
2009	283	24	3	310	0.39
2008	287	22	3	312	0.39
2007	273	31	4	308	0.40

- SUDC in the UK (babies aged 12–24 months)*:

	England & Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland	Total
2021	11	0	0	11
2020	12	1	0	13
2019	12	2	0	14
2018	9	5	1	15
2017	14	1	1	16
2016	15	2	0	17
2015	14	4	0	18
2014	15	2	1	18
2013	18	0	1	19
2012	17	0	0	17
2011	11	0	0	11
2010	16	3	0	19
2009	18	2	4	24
2008	8	3	0	11
2007	19	0	4	23

The majority of sudden unexplained deaths of children occur in babies aged under one year. In the UK in 2021, 6% of sudden unexplained deaths of children under 2 were amongst children aged 12-24 months.

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

England & Wales 2021

- 166 unexplained infant deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2021, a rate of 0.27 deaths per 1,000 live births, an increase from 0.26 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2020.
- 63% of all unexplained infant deaths were boys in 2021 (0.33 deaths per thousand live births). This has remained the same from 2020.
- In 2021, the SIDS rate was almost 4 times higher in mothers aged under 20 years compared to all other age groups.

Statistician's Quote

"The unexplained infant mortality rate had been generally decreasing since records began in 2004, but has remained stable since 2014."

"Since 2016, there has been a progressive increase in registration delay for unexplained infant deaths. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is likely to have lengthened existing registration delays because of delays in coroner's proceeding during this time. This was reflected in the larger-than-average differences between the provisional and final data for both 2019 and 2020. Next year, we will have a more accurate picture of late death registrations for deaths that occurred in 2021."

Office for National Statistics

1991-2021

- Since the launch of the Back to Sleep Campaign in England and Wales in 1991, the number of SIDS deaths has fallen by over 81%.

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