Infant and child mortality rates reflect the economic, social, and environmental conditions and the quality of a country’s health system. Infant mortality is death among children who are not yet one year of age, and infant mortality rate (IMR) is the proportion of infant deaths per 1,000 live births in a given year. Developed and high-income countries have lower IMRs than developing and low-income countries. In 2019, the average IMR recorded for all reported countries was 28.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. San Marino has the lowest IMR of 1.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the Central African Republic has the highest IMR of 81 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Infant mortality has decreased significantly in the last few decades. In 1990, the IMR of all reported countries was 64.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. The death rate has decreased by 56% in 2019, which the IMR was 28.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. Maldives experienced the greatest decrease in IMR from 63 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 6.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 (↓ 90%). On the contrary, Dominica is the only country in recorded history that experienced a sharp increase in IMR. In 1990, IMR in Dominica was 12.9 deaths per 1,000 live births and had increased to 30.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2020 (↑ 140%).

Child mortality refers to the death of a child under the age of five. Child mortality, also known as the 'Under-five Mortality Rate,' is the probability per 1,000 live births that a newborn baby will die before reaching the age of five. Decreasing child mortality rates is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals</a> established by the United Nations, in which all countries are aiming to reduce the child mortality rate to as low as 25 (2.5%) deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030. Maldives and Dominica mark the greatest increase and decrease in child mortality rate. Maldive had a decrease of 91% in child mortality from 85.8 deaths per 1,000 live births to 7.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Dominica saw an increase of 110% from 16.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 34.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019.

Many causes of child mortality has saw an decrease in the number of cases over the years. In 1990, lower repiratory infections, which includes pneumonia, bronchitis, and tuberculosis, accounts for the lives of 2.34 million children. While lower respiratory infections are still the leading causes of child mortality, the number of deaths per year has decreased to 808,919 (↓ 65%) deaths in 2019. Other leading causes of child deaths include neonatal preterm birth complication (premature births), diarrheal diseases, birth asphyxia and trauma; and congenital birth defects (congenital disorders).

Every country has agreed to uphold the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal to reduce the child mortality rate to 2.5%, or less than 25 child deaths per 1,000 live births, by 2030. Currently, 3.9% of children do not survive the five-year mark, meaning about 15,000 children die every day globally. Max Roser of Our World in Data published a blog post on the likelihood of reaching this goal. In Roser's projection, for the world to reach the 2.5% goal, the number of child deaths would have to significantly reduce from 6.3 million deaths per year in 2015 to 2.66 million deaths per year in 2030. Based on past trends, the current UN projection does not support the likelihood of achieving this goal. Based on the projection, we can only reduce the child mortality rate to approximately 4.5% (4.5 million deaths per year) by 2030, which is still 2 million short of the goal.

However, the unlikelihood of reaching this goal does not mean achieving it at some point in the future is no longer a priority. We wave come a long way from a world Infant Mortality rate of 64.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 28.2 in 2019 and a world Child Mortality Rate of 93 deaths to 37.7 deaths (60%). It is still very important to improve our health care and child care, so this goal can soon become a reality.

Sources:

**Chart 1, Chart 2**

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN>

**Chart 3**

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT>

**Chart 4**

https://ourworld qindata.org/child-mortality

**Chart 5**

<https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality-global-goal>