

CHAPTER 5

Health Status and Health Problems of Thai People

1. Overall Physical Health Status Indicators

Over the past three decades, the overall physical health status of the Thai people has a promising trend of improvement as evidenced by the following:

1.1 Life Expectancy at Birth

In 2002, the life expectancy at birth of Thai people was 69.1 years. Though higher than that of the people in other developing countries and of the world population, life expectancy of Thai people is still lower than that for several other ASEAN countries (Table 5.1). However, during 1964-2000, Thais' life expectancy at birth substantially increased from 55.9 years to 69.4 years for males and 62.0 years to 74.1 years for females. In 2025, it is expected that the life expectancy of Thai citizens will reach 74.8 years for males and 80.3 years for females (Table 5.2). It is noteworthy that female's life expectancy is higher than males; however, the gap has been gradually narrowing from 6.1 years for the period 1964-1965 to 4.7 years for the period 1995-2000.

The World Health Report 2003 also revealed that, in 2002, Thailand's healthy life expectancy (HALE) was 60.1 years: 57.7 for males and 62.4 for females, which were lower than those for several other ASEAN countries (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Life Expectancy at Birth of Thai People in Comparison with Those for Other Countries

Group of countries	Life expectancy at birth			Healthy life expectancy (2002) ⁽⁴⁾		
	1998 ⁽¹⁾	2001 ⁽²⁾	2002 ⁽³⁾	Total	Male	Female
WHO/SEAR						
Sri Lanka	73.3	72.3	72.5	61.6	59.2	64.0
Thailand	68.9	68.9	69.1	60.1	57.7	62.4
Indonesia	65.6	66.2	66.6	58.1	57.4	58.9
Maldives	65.0	66.8	67.2	57.8	59.0	56.6
India	62.9	63.3	63.7	53.5	53.3	53.6
Bhutan	61.2	62.5	63.0	52.9	52.9	52.9
Myanmar	60.6	57.0	57.2	51.7	49.9	53.5
Bangladesh	58.6	60.5	61.1	54.3	55.3	53.3
Nepal	57.8	59.1	59.6	51.8	52.5	51.1
ASEAN						
Singapore	77.3	77.8	78.0	70.1	68.8	71.3
Brunei	75.7	76.1	76.2	65.3	65.1	65.5
Malaysia	72.2	72.8	73.0	63.2	61.6	64.8
Thailand	68.9	68.9	69.1	60.1	57.7	62.4
Philippines	68.6	69.5	69.8	59.3	57.1	61.5
Vietnam	67.8	68.6	69.0	61.3	59.8	62.9
Indonesia	65.6	66.2	66.6	58.1	57.4	58.9
Myanmar	60.6	57.0	57.2	51.7	49.9	53.5
Laos ^{53.7}	53.9	54.3	47.0	47.1	47.0	
Cambodia	53.5	57.4	57.4	47.5	45.6	49.5
High human development index						
Japan	80.0	81.3	81.5	75.0	72.3	77.7
Canada	79.1	79.2	79.3	72.0	70.1	74.0
Ireland	79.1	79.6	79.9	72.8	72.1	73.6
Sweden	78.7	79.9	80.0	73.3	71.9	74.8
Switzerland	78.7	79.0	79.1	73.2	71.1	75.3
World	66.9	66.7	66.9	-	-	-
High human development index	77.0	77.1	77.4	-	-	-
Medium human development index	66.9	67.0	67.2	-	-	-

Source: ⁽¹⁾ UNDP, Human Development Report 2000.

⁽²⁾ UNDP, Human Development Report 2003.

⁽³⁾ UNDP, Human Development Report 2004.

⁽⁴⁾ WHO, World Health Report 2003.

Table 5.2 Life Expectancy at Birth of Thai People

Year	Male	Female	Female-male difference
1964-1965 ⁽¹⁾	55.9	62.0	6.1
1974-1976 ⁽¹⁾	58.0	63.8	5.8
1985-1986 ⁽¹⁾	63.8	68.9	5.1
1990-1995 ⁽²⁾	68.6	73.4	4.8
1995-2000 ⁽²⁾	69.4	74.1	4.7
2000-2005 ⁽³⁾	67.9	74.9	7.0
2005-2010 ⁽³⁾	69.6	76.2	6.6
2010-2015 ⁽³⁾	71.3	77.5	6.3
2015-2020 ⁽³⁾	73.1	78.9	5.8
2020-2025 ⁽³⁾	74.8	80.3	5.5

- Sources:** ⁽¹⁾ Reports on Population Change Surveys, 1964-1965, 1974-1976, 1985-1986, 1989, 1991, and 1995-1996. National Statistical Office.
- ⁽²⁾ Chiraphan Kallapavit et al. Adjustments of Population Estimates for Thailand in 1990-2020, June 1998.
- ⁽³⁾ Population Projection for Thailand, 2000-2025. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2003.

1.2 Maternal Mortality

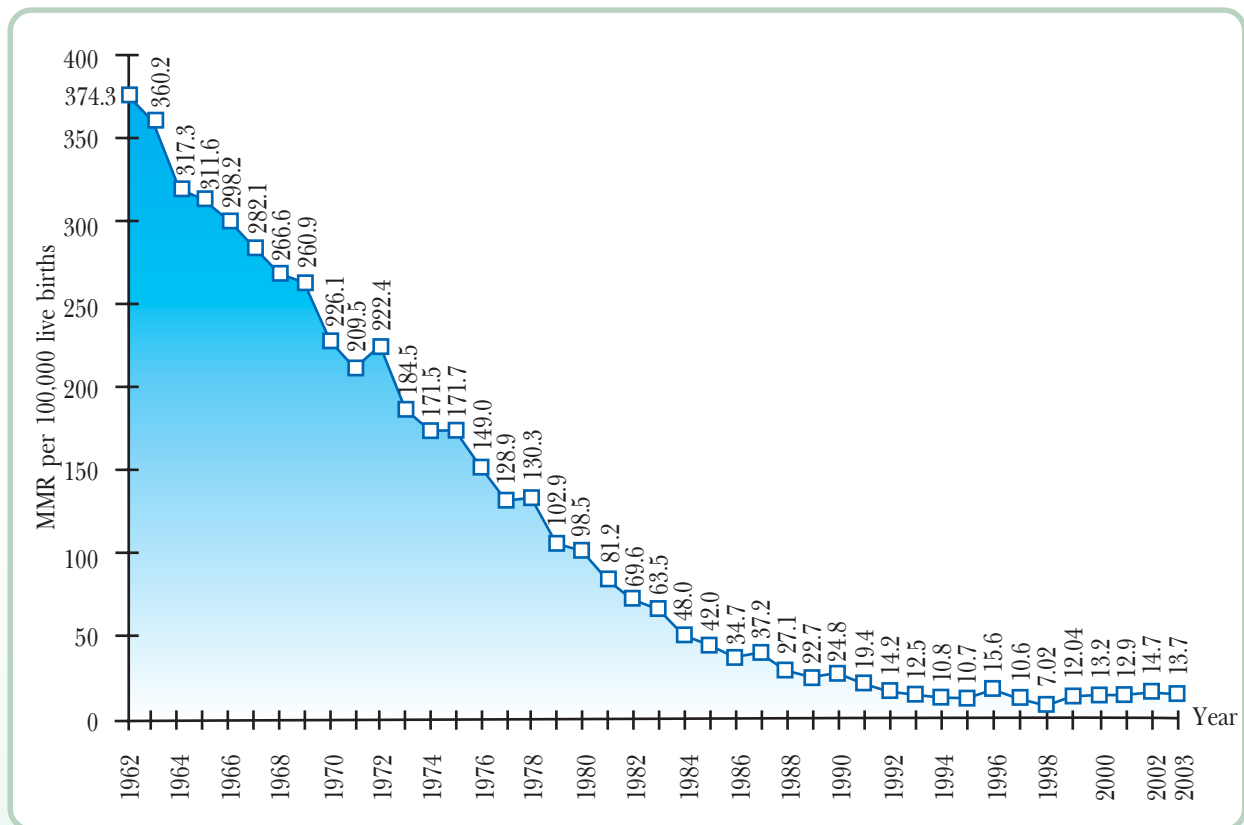
The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Thailand has declined from 374.3 per 100,000 live births in 1962 to 13.7 per 100,000 live births in 2003 (Figure 5.1). However, MMR estimates from several surveys are higher than the reported figure. For example, the 1995-1996 RAMOS¹ survey on mortality among women of reproductive age revealed a MMR of 44.1, while the Safe Motherhood Project² reported the MMR for the same period at 16.3, and the 2003 study of Yongjuea Laosirithavorn³ reported a MMR of 52.2 for the period.

¹ Survey on Mortality among Women of Reproductive Age Using the Reproductive Age Mortality Survey Method. Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health.

² Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health. Report on Maternal in Thailand. Safe Motherhood Project, 1995-1996.

³ Yongjuea Laosirithavorn. Situation and Report on Maternal Mortality Resulting from Pregnancy and Childbirth in Thailand, 1995-1996, 2003.

Figure 5.1 Maternal Mortality Ratio, Thailand, 1962-2003

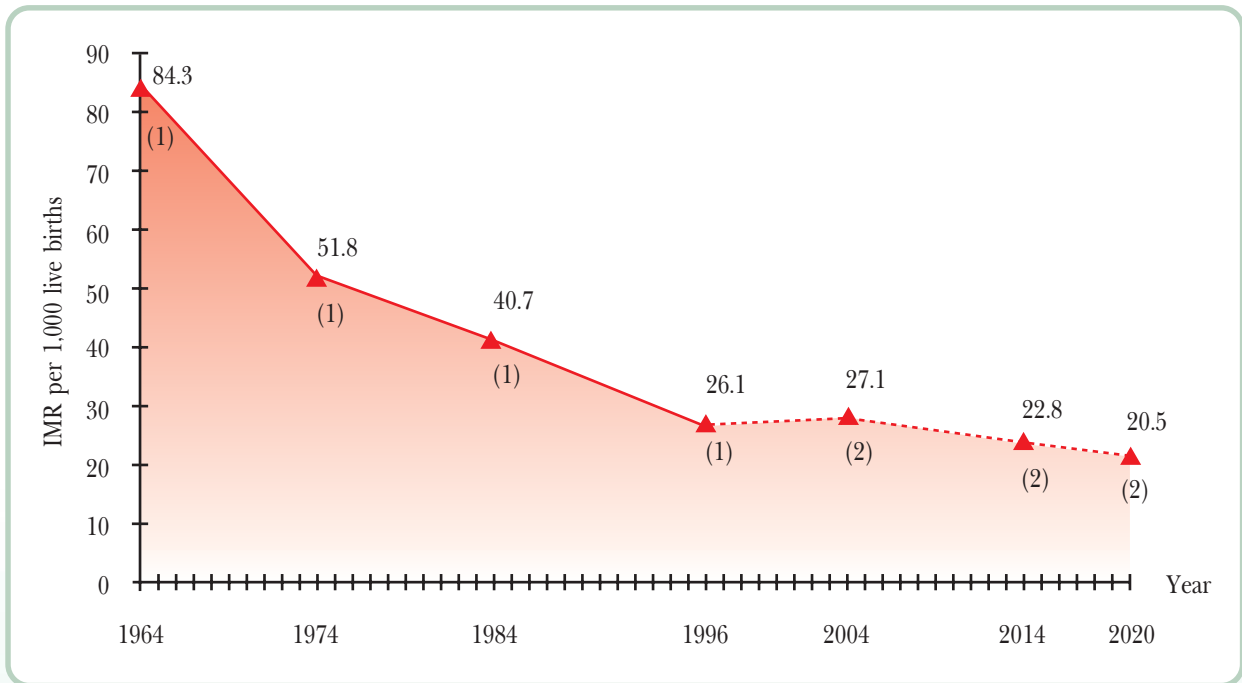


Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health.

1.3 Infant Mortality

In Thailand, the infant mortality rate (IMR, per 1,000 live births) rapidly declined from 84.3 in 1964 to 40.7 in 1984 and to 26.1 in 1996. It is expected that the IMR will drop further to 20.5 in 2020 (Figure 5.2). However, although IMR for Thailand is lower than the global average, it is still higher than that for some other countries in the same region such as Singapore and Malaysia (Table 5.3).

Figure 5.2 Infant Mortality Rate for Thailand, 1964-2020



Sources: (1) Estimates were derived from the data from the Population Changes Survey. National Statistical Office.

(2) Estimates from Population Projection for Thailand, 1990-2020. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board.

Table 5.3 Infant Mortality Rate and Child Mortality Rate for Thailand in Comparison with Those for Other Countries, 1980, 2001 and 2002

Group of countries	IMR per 1,000 live births			CMR per 1,000 live births		
	1980	2001	2002	1980	2001	2002
WHO/SEAR	32	42	42	43	55	65
Sri Lanka	34	17	16	48	19	19
Thailand	49	24	24	58	28	28
Indonesia	90	33	32	125	45	43
Myanmar	109	77	77	134	109	108
India	115	67	65	173	93	90
Nepal	132	66	62	195	91	83
Bangladesh	132	51	48	205	77	73
Maldives						
Bhutan						
ASEAN						
Singapore	12	3	3	13	4	4
Malaysia	30	8	8	42	8	8
Brunei						
Thailand	49	24	24	58	28	28
Philippines	52	29	28	81	38	37
Vietnam	57	30	20	70	38	26
Indonesia	90	33	32	125	45	43
Myanmar	109	77	77	134	109	108
Laos	127	87	87	200	100	100
Cambodia						
High human development index						
Sweden	7	3	3	8	3	3
Japan	8	3	3	10	5	5
Switzerland	9	5	5	11	6	6
Canada	10	5	5	13	7	7
Ireland	11	6	6	14	6	6
World	80	56	55	121	81	81
High income	13	5	5	15	7	7
Middle income	57	31	30	80	38	37
Low income	116	80	79	171	121	121

Source: The World Bank. World Development Indicators, 1999, 2000/2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

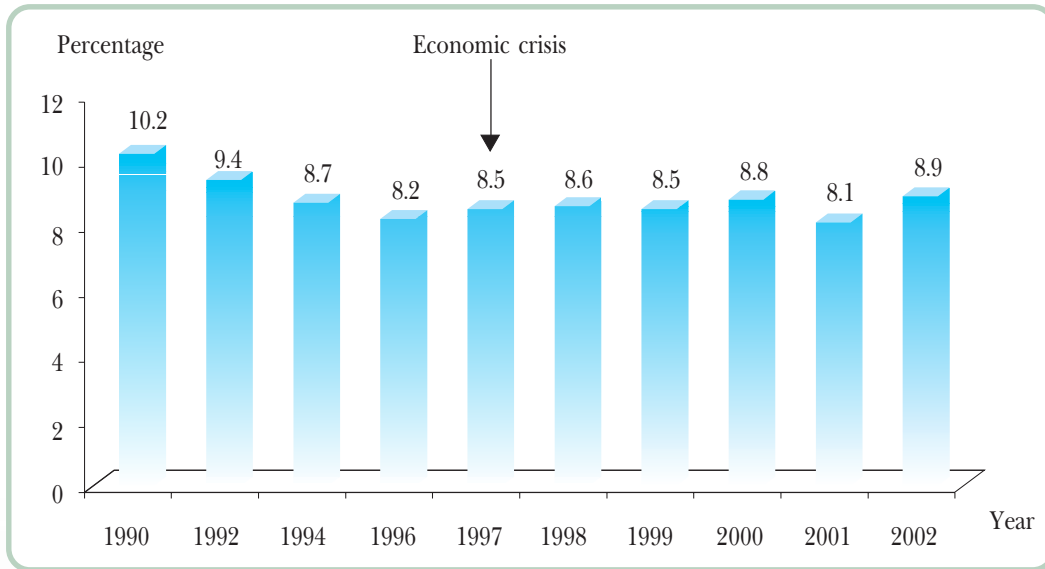
Note: CMR per 1,000 live births among children under 5 years of age.

1.4 Low Birth Weight

Overall, the rate of low-birth-weight newborns (weighing less than 2,500 grams) has dropped from 10.2% in 1990 to 8.9% in 2002 (Figure 5.3). However, it has been noted that since the 1997 economic crisis, the problem of low birth weight has been more serious, especially among the poor and unemployed, the rate being significantly higher than in the better-off group. It has also been found that the rate is highest in the South and the Northeast⁴.

⁴ Preeda Tae-arak, Panbaudee Ekachampaka, Suthisarn Wattanamano and Rujira Taverat. Health Status of Pregnant Women Attending ANC Clinics and Those Delivering Babies at State Hospitals after the Economic Crisis, 2003.

Figure 5.3 Percentage of Low-birth-weight Newborns (weighing less than 2,500 grams), 1990-2002

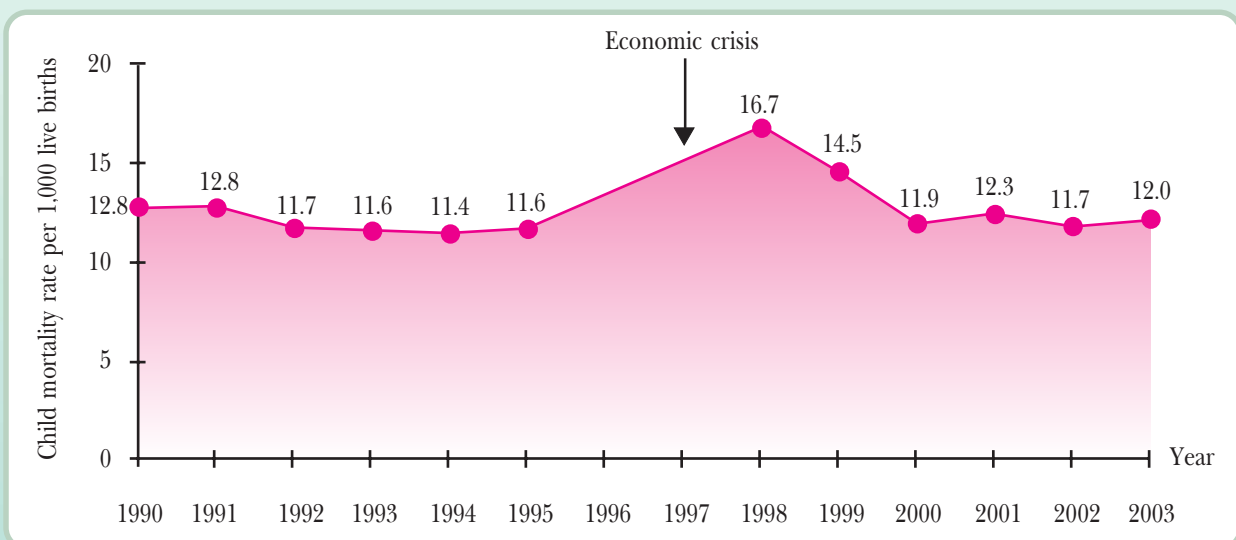


Source: Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health.

1.5 Mortality Rate of Children

The child mortality rate (among children aged under 5 years per 1,000 live births) has not significantly changed from 12.8 in 1990 to 12.0 in 2003. It is noteworthy that during the first stage of the economic crisis the rate rose to 16.7 in 1998 and has had a tendency to drop since 1999 (Figure 5.4). It is also noted that the rate reported by the civil registration office tends to be lower than reality, whereas the rate of 31.4 was derived from the 1996 population change survey.

Figure 5.4 Child Mortality Rate in Thailand, 1990-2003



Source: Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health.