

Levels & Trends in
**Child
Mortality**

Report 2019

Estimates developed by the
UN Inter-agency Group for
Child Mortality Estimation



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CHILD SURVIVAL: KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Tremendous progress in child survival has been made over the past two decades. The total number of deaths among children and young adolescents under 15 years of age dropped by 56 per cent from 14.2 (14.0, 14.5)¹ million in 1990 to 6.2 (6.0, 6.7) million in 2018. Still, one child or young adolescent died every five seconds in 2018.
- Globally, 85 per cent of deaths among children and young adolescents in 2018 occurred in the first five years of life, accounting for 5.3 million deaths, of which 2.5 million (47 per cent) occurred in the first month of life, 1.5 million (29 per cent) at age 1–11 months, and 1.3 million (25 per cent) at age 1–4 years. An additional 0.9 million deaths occurred among children aged 5–14 years.
- Among children and young adolescents under 15 years of age, the risk of dying was highest in the first month of life, at an average rate of 18 (17, 19) deaths per 1,000 live births globally in 2018. In comparison, the probability of dying after the first month and before reaching age 1 was 11 (11, 12) per 1,000, the probability of dying after reaching age 1 and before reaching age 5 was 10 (9, 11) per 1,000, and the probability of dying after reaching age 5 and before reaching age 15 was 7 (7, 8) per 1,000.
- The global under-five mortality rate fell to 39 (37, 42) deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 from 93 (92, 95) in 1990 and 76 (75, 78) in 2000 – a 59 (55, 60) per cent and 49 (46, 52) per cent decline, respectively. The neonatal mortality rate fell to 18 (17, 19) deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 from 37 (36, 38) in 1990 and 31 (30, 31) in 2000 – a 52 (47, 53) per cent and 42 (37, 45) per cent decline, respectively.
- The total number of under-five deaths dropped to 5.3 (5.1, 5.7) million in 2018 from 12.5 (12.4, 12.7) million in 1990. On average, 15,000 children died before age 5 every day in 2018 compared to 34,000 in 1990 and 27,000 in 2000. Among the 5.3 million under-five deaths in 2018, 2.9 (2.8, 3.1) million were boys and 2.4 (2.3, 2.6) million were girls.
- The global number of neonatal deaths declined from 5.0 (4.9, 5.2) million in 1990 to 2.5 (2.4, 2.7) million in 2018 – 7,000 deaths every day in 2018 compared with 14,000 in 1990. Neonatal deaths accounted for 47 (45, 49) per cent of all under-five deaths in 2018, increasing from 40 (39, 41) per cent in 1990 due to a faster global decline in mortality among children aged 1–59 months than for children in their first month of life.
- For older children and young adolescents aged 5–14 years, the probability of dying continues to decline, dropping from 15 (15, 16) deaths per 1,000 children aged 5 in 1990 to 7 (7, 8) in 2018. The total number of deaths in this age group dropped from 1.7 (1.7, 1.8) million in 1990 to 1.4 (1.4, 1.5) million in 2000 and to 0.9 (0.9, 1.0) million in 2018.
- Children continue to face widespread regional disparities in their chances of survival. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest under-five mortality rate in the world. In 2018, the region had an average under-five mortality rate of 78 deaths per 1,000 live births. This translates to 1 in 13 children dying before

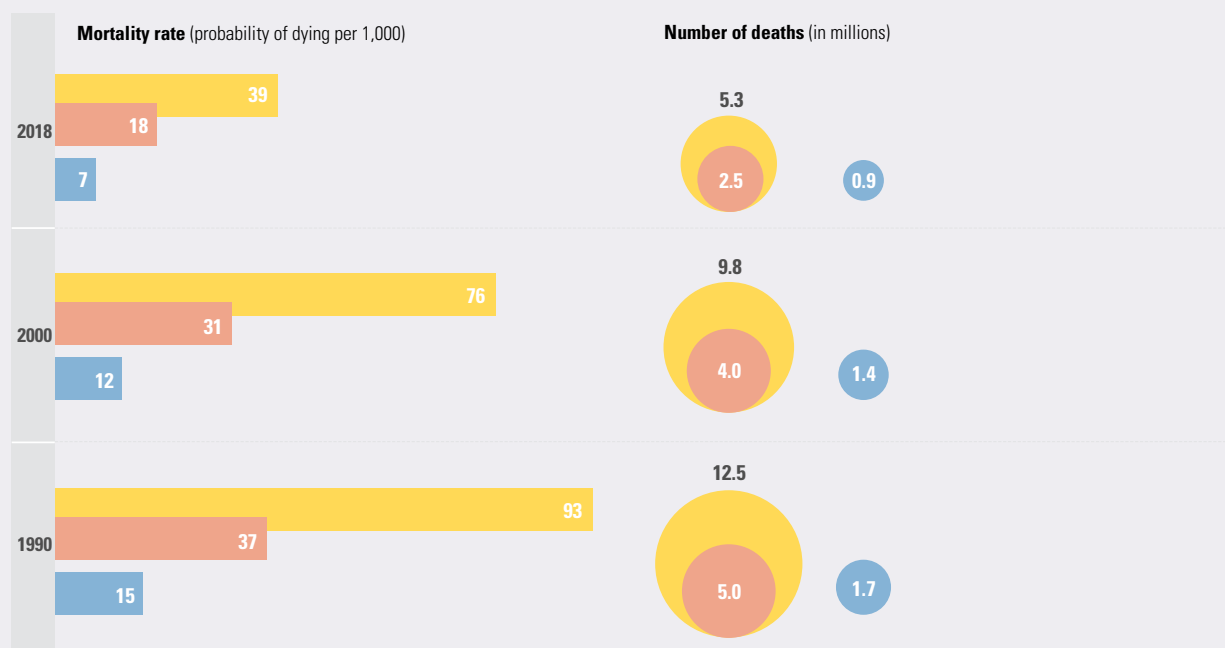
his or her fifth birthday – 16 times higher than the average ratio of 1 in 199 in high-income countries.

- It is urgent to further accelerate progress in preventing child deaths. Current trends predict that close to 10 million 5- to 14-year-olds and 52 million children under 5 years of age will die between 2019 and 2030. Almost half of these under-five deaths will be newborns whose deaths can be prevented by reaching high coverage of quality antenatal care, skilled care at birth, postnatal care for mother and baby, and care of small and sick newborns.

- In 2018, 121 countries had already achieved an under-five mortality rate below the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 25 or fewer deaths per 1,000 live births; those countries should aim to maintain progress and further reduce disparities among their populations. Of the remaining 74 countries, progress will need to be accelerated in 53 to reach the SDG target by 2030.
- If all countries reach the SDG child survival targets by 2030, 11 million lives under age 5 will be saved – more than half of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

Global mortality rates and deaths by age

■ Children under age 5
■ Neonatal
■ Children and adolescents aged 5–14 years



Introduction

Thirty years ago, the world made a commitment to protect and fulfil children's rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among the most fundamental of these rights is the right of every child to survive.² While substantial progress in child survival has been made since then, the failure to fully meet that commitment reverberates today for millions of children: In 2018 alone, 5.3 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday and almost 1 million children aged 5–14 years died.

It is especially unacceptable that these children and young adolescents died largely of preventable or treatable causes like infectious diseases and injuries when we have the means to prevent these deaths. The continued burden of child deaths is a call to redouble efforts to realize the Convention's promise and other international human rights commitments that protect every child's right to survive.

Although the global number of child deaths remains high, the world has made tremendous strides in reducing child and young adolescent mortality over the past few decades. The global under-five mortality rate declined by 59 per cent from 93 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 39 in 2018, while mortality among children aged 5–14 years fell by 53 per cent from 15 to 7 deaths per 1,000 children aged 5. Still, the burden of child deaths remains immense – the number of children aged 0–14 years that died in 2018, 6.2 million, is equivalent to the current population of Nicaragua.

The global community recognizes the urgent need to end preventable child deaths, making it an essential part of global child survival goals and initiatives including the United Nations Global

Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)³ and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴ The third SDG calls for an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under age 5, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and under-five mortality to at least as low as 25 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030.

Sound policies, concerted efforts and appropriate resources are needed to accelerate progress and achieve the child survival goals. If current trends continue, 53 countries will not meet the SDG target on under-five mortality by 2030. This would result in 11 million excess child deaths between 2019 and 2030 in addition to the 41 million children who will die before age 5 between 2019 and 2030, even if all countries meet the SDG target by 2030.

Protecting every child's right to survive will require addressing persistent inequities and disparities in maternal and child health while also ensuring universal access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable care for women, children and adolescents. It also demands great understanding of levels and trends in child mortality, as well as the underlying causes of child and young adolescent deaths to help guide policymaking and planning.

Given the absence of reliable vital registration data in many countries – an important resource for monitoring births and deaths – evidence-based estimation of child mortality remains a cornerstone for tracking progress towards child survival goals. These estimates enable governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to set priorities and

plan national and global health strategies and interventions.

The United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) produces estimates of child and young adolescent mortality annually, reconciling the differences across data sources and taking into account the systematic biases associated with the various types of data

on child and adolescent mortality. This report presents the UN IGME's latest estimates – through 2018 – of neonatal, infant and under-five mortality as well as mortality among children aged 5–14 years.⁵ It assesses progress in the reduction of child and young adolescent mortality at the country, regional and global levels, and provides an overview of the methods used to estimate the mortality indicators mentioned above.



Levels and Trends in Child Mortality

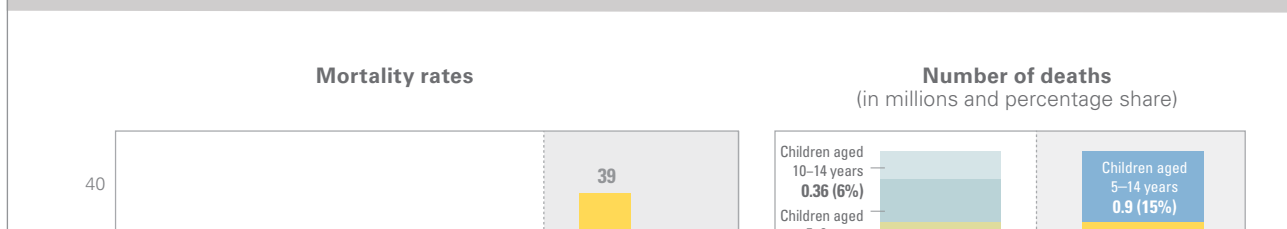
Despite progress over the past two decades, in 2018 alone, an estimated 6.2 million children and young adolescents under age 15 died, mostly from preventable causes. Newborns account for 2.5 million of these deaths, children aged 1–11 months for 1.5 million, children aged 1–4 years for 1.3 million, children aged 5–9 years for 560,000 and young adolescents aged 10–14 years for 360,000 (Figure 1, Figure 2).

The youngest children face the greatest risk of dying among children under age 15. The age distribution of the mortality of children and young adolescents shows that the highest risk of death is during the neonatal period (the first 28 days of life). In 2018, the neonatal mortality rate was estimated at 18 deaths per 1,000 live

births globally. The probability of dying after the first month and before reaching age 1 was at 11 per 1,000, and the probability of dying after reaching age 1 and before reaching age 5 was at 10 per 1,000. For children aged 5–14 years, the probability of dying was estimated at 7 per 1,000 children aged 5 years, with the probability of dying after reaching age 5 and before reaching age 10 at 4 deaths per 1,000 and 3 per 1,000 for young adolescents aged 10–14 years (Figure 1).

The vast majority of child and young adolescent deaths occur at the youngest ages. Of the 6.2 million deaths in 2018, 85 per cent (5.3 million) occurred in the first five years of life (Figure 1). About half (47 per cent) of the under-five deaths occurred in the neonatal period (2.5 million).

FIGURE 1 In the first month, the mortality risk is the highest
Global mortality rates and number of deaths by age, 2018



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