

WORLD HEALTH STATISTICS

2021

MONITORING
HEALTH FOR THE

SDGs

S U S T A I N A B L E
D E V E L O P M E N T G O A L S



World Health
Organization

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The *World health statistics* report is the World Health Organization's (WHO) annual compilation of the most recent available data on health and health-related indicators for its 194 Member States. The 2021 edition features the latest data for 50+ health-related indicators from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and WHO Triple Billion targets. The 2021 report additionally focuses on the human toll and impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, highlighting the importance of tracking inequalities and the urgency to accelerate progress to get back on track and recover equitably with the support of robust data and health information systems.

World health statistics 2021: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals

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FOREWORD

When the *World health statistics* was released last year, we were still in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries were responding rapidly under uncertain conditions, frontline health workers were making heroic efforts to contain the spread of the virus, and governments and partners were scrambling to assist those in need.

One year on, the world has made great strides. But the race against this coronavirus and its variants is still on, and there is still much work to be done. At the time of writing, more than 160 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and 3.3 million deaths had been reported to WHO. Yet these numbers are only a partial picture, as many countries have not been able to accurately measure and report on deaths that are either directly or indirectly attributable to COVID-19.

One of the greatest lessons from the pandemic is the importance of timely, reliable, actionable and disaggregated data. This requires strong country data and health information systems through collaboration between governments, ministries of health, national statistical offices and registrar generals. It also requires engagement with the private sector, academia, nonprofit organizations, and the scientific community to ensure data is accessible as a public good.

WHO's *World health statistics* report 2021 presents the latest data for more than 50 health-related indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals and WHO's "Triple Billion" targets.

It finds an overall increase in global life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at birth as a result of improvements in several communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, noncommunicable diseases, injuries and their underlying determinants. Persisting inequalities also continue to impact population health in most, if not all, aspects. Despite the overall improvement in service coverage, between and within countries disadvantaged populations still have lower access to care and are at greater risk of facing catastrophic costs.

While premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases – the world's leading cause of death – continue to fall, progress has slowed in recent years and key risk factors including tobacco use and alcohol consumption, hypertension, obesity and physical inactivity will require urgent and targeted intervention.

Deaths from communicable diseases have also declined but continue to claim millions of lives each year, particularly in lower-resource settings where many people cannot access quality health services. There has also been a steady decrease in mortality from suicide, homicide, unintentional poisoning and road traffic injuries, but many more of these deaths can still be prevented and men are at higher risk of dying from these causes than women.

To close these gaps and meet the global goals, we must continue to focus on the equitable distribution of services and access to quality, affordable healthcare and effective interventions in all countries and for all populations. We must also be on alert that COVID-19 has disrupted many essential services and that the distribution of health and care workers varies widely, with the lowest density of medical doctors, nurses and midwives in the areas where they are needed most. Out-of-pocket spending on healthcare is also on the rise, with the most vulnerable populations at greatest risk of being pushed into poverty, thus further widening inequalities.

Real-time, quality data to track population health is critical for every country to improve health outcomes and eliminate health inequalities. WHO is committed to work with countries and partners to strengthen health information systems and support data-driven policies and interventions. COVID-19 is not the first pandemic and likely will not be the last. In order to be better prepared we must have better data.



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAR	After Action Review
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AFR	African Region
AMR	Region of the Americas
ARR	annualized rate of reduction
ASR	age-standardized rate
BMI	body mass index
CDR	crude death rate
CI	confidence interval
CIx	concentration index
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CRD	chronic respiratory disease
CRVS	civil registration and vital statistics
CVD	cardiovascular disease
DALY	disability-adjusted life year
DBP	diastolic blood pressure
DHS	demographic and health survey
DTP3	diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (third dose)
EMR	Eastern Mediterranean Region
EUR	European Region
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
GHE	global health estimates
GHO	Global Health Observatory
GLASS	Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System
GPMB	Global Preparedness Monitoring Board
GPW 13	Thirteenth General Programme of Work
HALE	healthy life expectancy
HCW	health and care workers
HEPI	Health Emergencies Protection Index
HIC	high-income country
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HWF	health workforce
IHR	International Health Regulations (2005)
IHR MEF	International Health Regulations Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
IPV	intimate partner violence
IQR	interquartile range

JMP	WHO/UNICEF joint monitoring programme
KAP	knowledge, attitudes and practices
LE	life expectancy
LIC	low-income country
LMIC	lower-middle-income country
MCV2	measles second dose
MICS	multiple indicator cluster survey
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
MoPH	ministry of public health
NCD	noncommunicable disease
NHWA	National Health Workforce Accounts
NTD	neglected tropical disease
ODA	official development assistance
PCV3	pneumococcal conjugate vaccines
PM_{2.5}	particulate matter 2.5 micrometres or less in diameter
RHS	reproductive health surveys
RMNCH	reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SBP	systolic blood pressure
SCI	service coverage index
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAR	South-East Asia Region
SII	slope index of inequality
SPAR	State Party self-assessment annual reporting tool
SPH	Strategic Partnership for Health Security and Emergency Preparedness
TB	tuberculosis
TFA	trans-fatty acid
UHC	universal health coverage
UI	uncertainty interval
UMIC	upper-middle-income country
UN	United Nations
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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