



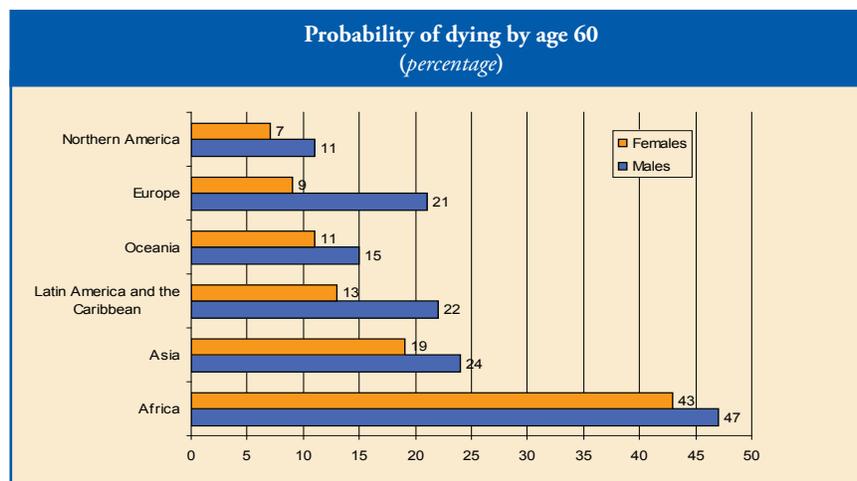
Sex Differentials in Mortality

1. *In most countries, male mortality is higher than female mortality at all ages and male life expectancy is lower than female life expectancy.*

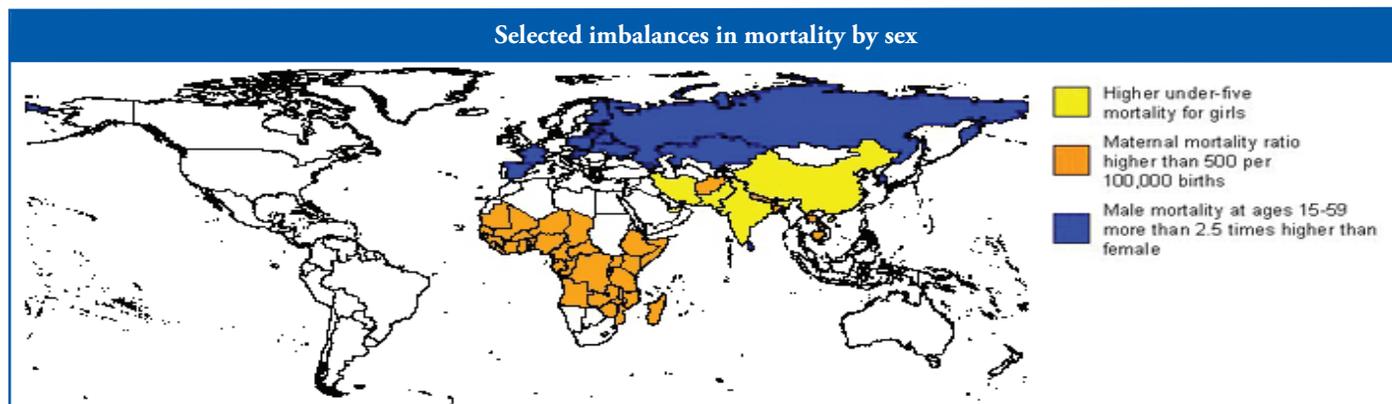
- **Death before age 60 is far more common among males than among females.** In all world regions, men have a higher chance of dying before age 60 than women. In Europe, males are more than twice as likely to die before age 60 as females and in Latin America and the Caribbean they are 73 per cent more likely to die by age 60.
- **Behavioural factors have a major impact on differences in survival by sex.** Cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, aggressive driving and exposure to occupational hazards are more common among men. In developed countries, cigarette smoking accounts for a large fraction of the differences in mortality by sex.¹
- **Women's higher survival is also due partly to biological factors.** Even in early infancy, boys are more likely than girls to die because of respiratory distress and prematurity. During the reproductive years, women are less likely than men to develop cardiovascular diseases. The reasons for these biological differences are not certain but sex hormones are believed to play a role.

2. *In Africa, the differences between female and male mortality are smaller, and both sexes suffer from very high mortality risks*

- **Communicable diseases are major causes of death before age 60 in most countries in Africa and some of those diseases are major killers of women.** HIV prevalence, for instance, is higher in women than in men in the countries in Africa where overall HIV prevalence is high.
- **Maternal mortality is also an important cause of female deaths in Africa.** Among the 52 countries where maternal conditions accounted for 15 per cent or more of the disability adjusted life years for women aged 15 to 59 in 2004, 35 are in Africa.²
- **Nevertheless, males in Africa still have a higher probability of dying by age 60 than females:** 47 per cent vs. 43 per cent. In 54 per cent of the countries in Africa, non-communicable diseases account for a higher proportion of the burden of disease among men aged 15 to 59 than among women in the same age group. In virtually all countries in Africa, injuries account for at least double the share of the burden of disease among men aged 15 to 59 than among women aged 15 to 59, and in 18 countries the share of injuries in the burden of disease in men is four times that in women.



Source: World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision, United Nations publication, Sales No. 09.XII.6.



NOTES: Haiti (not visible due to map scale) has a maternal mortality ratio of 670. Afghanistan, Nepal and Niger fall into both categories highlighted for females.
Sources: *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision* (data shown refer to 2005-2010); WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA/World Bank (2007), *Maternal mortality in 2005*.

3. Excess female child mortality exists in some countries and maternal mortality and morbidity remain high in parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean

- **Girls in the two most populous countries start off at a disadvantage.** China and India are among the few countries where under-five mortality is higher among girls than among boys. In China, excess female mortality is concentrated among infants under one year of age. In India, mortality under age one is about equal for girls and boys, but it is higher for girls aged 1 to 4 than for boys of the same age. In both countries, preference for sons translates into delays in seeking healthcare for girls who are sick and poorer nutrition among girls, all of which contribute to their higher mortality relative to that of boys. Because of the weight of China and India, under-five mortality for Asia as a whole is higher for girls (61 per 1,000 in 2005-2010) than for boys (56 per 1,000).
- **Pregnancy and childbirth remain dangerous for women in several countries in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.** Of the 17 countries outside of Africa where maternal conditions account for at least 15 per cent of the burden of disease among women aged 15 to 59, 13 are in Asia or Oceania, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Yemen. The rest are Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras. The countries where maternal mortality and morbidity remain high are among the poorest in their regions, reflecting the major shortcomings in the ability of their health systems to meet women's needs.

4. Male mortality is especially high relative to that of females in Eastern Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **In Eastern Europe, at the mortality levels prevailing in 2005-2010, 34 per cent of men aged 15 would die before age 60 but just 12 per cent of women would.** In the Russian Federation, 43 per cent of 15-year-old boys would not live to see their 60th birthday, compared to 15 per cent of girls. Belarus and Ukraine have probabilities of dying by sex similar to those for Eastern Europe as a whole and therefore, men aged 15 to 59 in those countries are more than two and a half times more likely to die before age 60 than women of the same age.
- **Injuries account for important proportions of the burden of disease among men aged 15 to 59 in many countries.** In the majority of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the share of injuries in the burden of disease among men aged 15 to 59 is at least three times that among women of the same age. Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the highest rates of homicide among young men.³ Outside of Latin America, injuries account for at least 35 per cent of the burden of disease among men aged 15 to 59 in Iraq, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka and Yemen.

NOTES

¹ Waldron, Ingrid (2009). Gender differences in mortality—causes and variation in different societies. Pp. 38-54 in P. Conrad, ed., *The Sociology of Health & Illness: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Worth Publishers.

² World Health Organization (2009). Death and DALY estimates for 2004 by cause for WHO member States. Available at http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates_country/en/index.html.

³ World Health Organization (2009). Disease and injury regional estimates for 2004. Available at http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates_regional/en/index.html.