New UN estimates highlight tremendous progress in reducing child mortality since 1990, but also reveal that one child under 15 dies every five seconds around the world

A new study by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), released on 19 September 2019, reveals that the world has made considerable progress in reducing child mortality since 1990. The total number of deaths among children and young adolescents under 15 years of age fell by 56 per cent from 14.2 million in 1990 to 6.2 million in 2018. Still, one child or young adolescent died every five seconds in 2018.

- Press release
- Levels and Trends in Child Mortality, 2019

Key findings
- Remarkable progress in improving child survival since 1990:
  - In 2018, 5.3 million children under five years of age died (15,000 every day) compared to 12.5 million in 1990 (34,000 every day)
  - Globally, the under-five mortality rate dropped to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 from 93 in 1990 – a 58 per cent decline.
  - The mortality among children aged 5 to 14 fell by 52 per cent from 1.7 million in 1990 to 0.9 million in 2018.
- The majority of child and young adolescent deaths (85 per cent) occurred during the first five years of life.
- Most children under the age of five died from preventable or treatable causes such as complications during birth, pneumonia, diarrhea, neonatal sepsis and malaria.
- In 2018, children and young adolescent faced the highest risk of dying in the first month of life with an average of 7,000 deaths occurring every day globally.
- In 2018, 2.5 million children died in the first month of life – accounting for 47 per cent of all under-five deaths, increasing from 40 per cent in 1990.
- For older children and adolescent aged 5 to 14 years, the probability of dying continues to decline, dropping from 15 deaths per 1,000 children in 1990 to 7 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 recorded an average of 78 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- 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.
- 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.
- Of the remaining 74 countries, progress will need to be accelerated in 53 to reach the SDG target by 2030.
Data and methodology

This new release provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on global child mortality, including a public database containing about 20,000 country-year data points from more than 1,600 series across 195 countries from 1990, or earlier, to September 2018 for mortality of children younger than 5 years. The data are derived from nationally-representative vital registration systems, population censuses, household surveys, and sample registration systems.

In this round of estimation, a substantial amount of newly available data has been added to the underlying database for under-five, infant and neonatal mortality. Data from 40 new surveys or censuses were added for 36 countries and data from vital registration systems or sample vital registration systems were updated for 133 countries. In total, more than 1,500 country-year data points for 300 series were added or updated. The database, as of August 2019, contains over 20,000 country-year data points from more than 1,600 series across 195 countries from 1990, or earlier, to 2018. For mortality among children aged 5 to 14 years, data were calculated from censuses and surveys, or vital registration records of population and deaths. The database for mortality among children aged 5 to 14 contains more than 6,600 data points.

An overview on the methodology used to generate the estimates is available in the report. A more detailed explanation of the model used in developing the UN IGME child mortality estimates is available here. For more information on child mortality estimation methods, please refer to the PLOS Medicine Collection on Child Mortality Estimation Methods.

Also available for download:

Estimates

- Country estimates of under-five, infant, child and neonatal mortality
- Country estimates of mortality among children aged 5 to 14
- Country estimates of sex-specific under-five, child and infant mortality
- Country-specific methodological notes
- Global and regional estimates of mortality among children under age 5
- Global and regional estimates of mortality among children aged 5 to 14

Source data

- Source data of mortality among children under age 5
- Source data of mortality among children aged 5 to 14

About UN-IGME

The United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation or UN IGME was formed in 2004 to share data on child mortality, harmonise estimates within the UN system, improve methods for child mortality estimation report on progress towards child survival goals and enhance country capacities to produce timely and properly assessed estimates of child mortality. IGME is led by
UNICEF and includes the World Health Organization, the World Bank Group and the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

For more information, including estimates, empirical data and methodology, visit:
http://www.childmortality.org/