

Infant deaths in India decline by 7.5% in 2017: UN Report

6.3 million children and young adolescents died in 2017 mostly from preventable cause while 802,000 infants died in India in 2017

According to a report on Levels and Trends in Child Mortality by United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME), over the last two decades, the world made substantial progress in reducing mortality among children and young adolescents (including children under age 5, children aged 5–9 and young adolescents aged 10–14). Still, in 2017 alone, an estimated 6.3 million children and young adolescents died, mostly from preventable causes. Children under age 5 accounted for 5.4 million of these deaths, with 2.5 million deaths occurring in the first month of life, 1.6 million at age 1–11 months, and 1.3 million at age 1–4 years. An additional 0.9 million deaths occurred among children aged 5–14.

Despite progress over the past two decades, in 2017 alone, an estimated 6.3 million children and young adolescents died, mostly from preventable causes. Around the world remarkable progress in child survival has been made and millions of children have better survival chances than in 1990.

The under-five mortality rate fell to 39 (37, 42) deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017 from 93 (92, 95) in 1990 – a 58% reduction. This is equivalent to 1 in 11 children dying before reaching age 5 in 1990, compared to 1 in 26 in 2017. In most of the SDG regions the under-five mortality rate was reduced by at least half since 1990. In 74 countries, the under five mortality rate was reduced by more than two-thirds. Among those countries, 33 low-and lower-middle-income countries achieved a two thirds or more reduction in the under-five mortality rate since 1990. The total number of under-five deaths dropped to 5.4 (5.2, 5.8) million in 2017 from 12.6 (12.4, 12.8) million in 1990. On average, 15,000 children died every day in 2017, compared to 34,000 in 1990.

Levels and trends in the under-five mortality rate, by sustainable Development Goal region, 1990-2017

Region	Under five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)				Annual rate of reduction (percent)		
	2005	2010	2015	2017	1990-2017	1990-2000	2000-2017
Sub-Saharan Africa	128	102	82	76	3.2	1.6	4.2
Northern Africa and Western Asia	41	33	29	27	3.7	3.9	3.7
Central and Southern Asia	75	60	47	43	3.9	3.1	4.4
Central Asia	47	35	26	23	4.2	1.4	5.8
Southern Asia	76	61	48	44	3.9	3.2	4.4
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	29	22	17	16	4.8	3.6	5.5

Source: PHD Research Bureau, data compiled from UN Report

India's Outlook

There has been a decline of around 7.5% in infant deaths in India from around 867,000 in 2016 to 802,000 in 2017. In 2016, India's infant mortality rate was 44 per 1,000 live births. In 2017, sex-specific under-five mortality rate was 39 in 1,000 live births for male and 40 in 1,000 live births for females.

Lack of access to water, sanitation, proper nutrition and basic health services resulted in 802,000 infant deaths in India in 2017, despite the government's programmes on sanitation, health and nutrition. The report highlighted that most children under the age of five die because of preventable or treatable causes such as complications during birth, pneumonia, diarrhoea, neonatal sepsis and malaria. By comparison, among children between 5 and 14 years of age, injuries become a more prominent cause of death, especially from drowning and road traffic. Within this age group, regional differences also exist, with the risk of a child from sub-Saharan Africa dying 15 times higher than in Europe.

"Infant deaths were reported the highest in the world in India, followed by Nigeria at 466,000, Pakistan at 330,000 and the Democratic Republic of Congo at 233,000 (DRC). India recorded 605,000 neonatal deaths in 2017, and the number of deaths among children aged 5-14 was recorded at 152,000.

An estimated 6.3 million children under 15 years of age died in 2017, or 1 every 5 seconds, mostly of preventable causes, according to the report. The vast majority of these deaths—5.4 million—occur in the first five years of life, with newborns accounting for around half of the deaths.

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Warm regards,

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