

# 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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S U S T A I N A B L E  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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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.

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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

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

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

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