**Maternal mortality: Key findings**

**Progress speeding up, but few countries will meet MDG 5 target**

Maternal mortality has fallen by 1.3% annually since 1990, but 293,000 women worldwide still die due to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth each year. Nearly every region of the world has seen accelerated declines in maternal mortality since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals. Since 2003, 137 countries have experienced accelerated declines in maternal mortality. However, only seven developing countries – most in Central and Eastern Europe – are on track to meet the MDG 5 goal of a three-quarters reduction in maternal mortality.

**Trends in maternal mortality around the world**

Progress in reducing maternal mortality has varied dramatically by region, but almost all regions have seen accelerated declines in the last decade. Most of Asia and Latin America achieved sustained, substantial declines in maternal mortality, while countries in North Africa and the Middle East made only modest progress. Compared to other regions, East Asian countries made the most progress, reducing maternal mortality by an average of 9% per year since 1990. Maternal mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean either held steady or increased from 1990 to the early 2000s – even doubling in Southern Africa – before beginning a fast decline through 2013. The United States was among just eight countries that experienced an *increase* in maternal mortality since 2003, joining Afghanistan and countries in Africa and Central America.

**Improving our understanding of maternal mortality**

The Global Burden of Disease 2013 (GBD) study represents an advancement in the science of measuring maternal mortality. The findings are based on a variety of new data. The data used to estimate maternal deaths are derived from sources such as surveys, censuses, and surveillance systems, as well as verbal autopsy analyses for 180 countries. Verbal autopsy is a method for determining causes of death by surveying members of a household about the deceased's symptoms prior to death and other relevant information. In contrast to the UN, whose estimates of maternal mortality in West Africa are largely extrapolated from estimates of child mortality, GBD uses a method that has been found to be more accurate.

> **Innovative Science**
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> - New data have sharpened our understanding of trends in maternal deaths
> - Findings based on data from a total of 180 countries
> - Study employs most accurate maternal mortality estimation methods identified to date

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**Recommendations**

In the next 15 to 20 years, bringing maternal mortality down to levels currently seen in most high-income countries will require the following:

- Scaling up interventions and funding
- Strengthening health systems and family planning services
- Reducing anemia and malnutrition
- Preventing malaria during pregnancy
- Providing calcium and micronutrient supplementation
- Encouraging skilled birth attendance and in-facility delivery
- Discouraging early motherhood
- Reducing unsafe abortion

**More information**

To learn more about the study upon which this summary is based, please visit the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's website: ihmeuw.org/mdg-5

For questions, please contact IHME:

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