

CHILD AND MATERNAL MORTALITY

A falling rate can still mean millions of deaths

Global child and maternal mortality have fallen substantially. Reading the progress correctly requires keeping counts, rates, ratios, shares, periods, and uncertainty separate.

4.86m

estimated under-five deaths in 2024

90% UI: 4.69-5.21m

47%

of under-five deaths occurred in the first 28 days in 2024

260,000

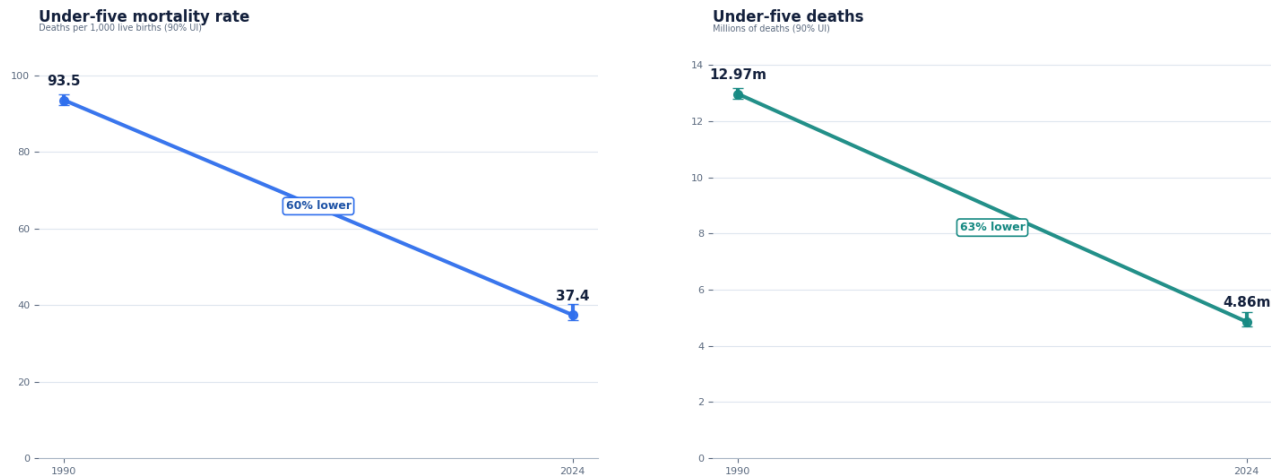
estimated maternal deaths in 2023

80% UI: 230k-308k

WORLD SUFFERING INDEX | VISUAL BRIEF

A falling rate can still mean millions of deaths

The probability of dying before age 5 and the number of under-five deaths both fell - but they answer different questions.



In 2024, an estimated 4.86 million children still died before age 5.
Use the rate to compare risk relative to live births; use the count to understand scale.

Source: UN IGME, Levels & Trends in Child Mortality - Report 2025. | World: 1990 and 2024; 90% uncertainty intervals. worldsufferingindex.org

Main finding. The global under-five mortality rate fell 60% from 1990 to 2024, while the count fell 63%. Despite that progress, an estimated 4.86 million children died before age 5 in 2024.

Five points for accurate coverage

1. Count is not rate

A rate compares mortality risk relative to live births. A count communicates total scale.

2. The neonatal figure is a subset

The 2.27 million neonatal deaths in 2024 are already included in the 4.86 million under-five deaths.

3. Child and maternal years differ

The latest child estimate is 2024; the latest maternal estimate is 2023. Do not create a same-year total.

4. Uncertainty levels differ

UN IGME child estimates use 90% intervals; MMEIG maternal estimates use 80% intervals.

5. Required pace is not forecast

The 14.8% annual maternal reduction needed for 2024-2030 is a target-consistent scenario, not a prediction.

Regional panels are not rankings

The fixed order allows the four measures to be compared across the same eight SDG regions.

Sources

UN IGME, Levels & Trends in Child Mortality - Report 2025; WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA/World Bank Group/UN DESA, Trends in maternal mortality estimates 2000 to 2023 (2025); UN Statistics Division SDG regional groupings.

Release note. Visual Brief v1.1 is source-locked. Seven exact official files were validated, reconciled, and hashed; three source-native maternal corrections were applied.

Available assets

Eight-page Visual Brief; six charts in wide and mobile PNG and font-safe SVG; chart-data CSVs; accessible data tables; source and methods note; production audit workbook; manifests and QA package.

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