

FACT SHEET

The Lancet's Stillbirth Series

Global and South Africa statistics

Global

Worldwide each year at least 2.6 million babies are stillborn during the last 12 weeks of pregnancy – over 7,300 every day. The poor are most affected: 98% of stillbirths occur in low-income and middle-income countries and more than two thirds are in rural families. Three out of every four stillbirths occur in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where there is a critical shortage of skilled health workers – both midwives and doctors.



With only 11% of the world's population, Africa carries over 40% of the disease burden. It is also home to only 3% of the world's health workers.¹ Almost half of all stillbirths could be prevented with universal (99%) coverage of evidence-based interventions. Saving lives depends critically on care at birth.

Stillbirths total number (2009)	2.6 million ²
Newborn deaths total number (2008)	3.6 million ³
Maternal deaths total number (2008)	358,000 ⁴
Facility births (%)	65% ⁵

South Africa



Each day in South Africa, over 61 babies are stillborn during the last 12 weeks of pregnancy. An additional 58 newborn deaths occur every day. Maternal and newborn deaths as well as stillbirths could be prevented by improving quality of care, especially during childbirth, addressing disparity as well as developing the skills and commitment of those working in the health care system. Universal coverage of key interventions for maternal and newborn health and stillbirths could prevent 24,000 deaths at an additional cost of ZAR 35 per person (general population).

Stillbirths total number (2009)	23,000 ²
Rank for number of stillbirths*	176
Rank for stillbirth rate*	148
Newborn deaths total number (2008)	21,0 00 ³
Maternal deaths total number (2008)	4,500 ⁴
Facility births (%)	91% ⁵
Number of physicians, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population	48.5 ⁶

*out of 193 countries

References

- ¹ World Health Organization. Global Atlas of the Health Workforce. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010. <http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/>
- ² Lawn JE, Blencowe H, Pattinson R, et al, for The Lancet's Stillbirths Series steering committee. Stillbirths: Where? When? Why? How to make the data count? *Lancet* 2011; published online April 14. DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)62187-
- ³ Lawn JE, Kerber K, Enweronu-Laryea C, Cousens S. 3.6 Million Neonatal deaths – What is progressing and what is not? *Semin Perinatol* 34:371-386
- ⁴ UN Maternal Mortality Estimates 2008 available at <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/9789241500265/en/index.html>
- ⁵ UNICEF. *State of the World's Children 2011*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2011.