

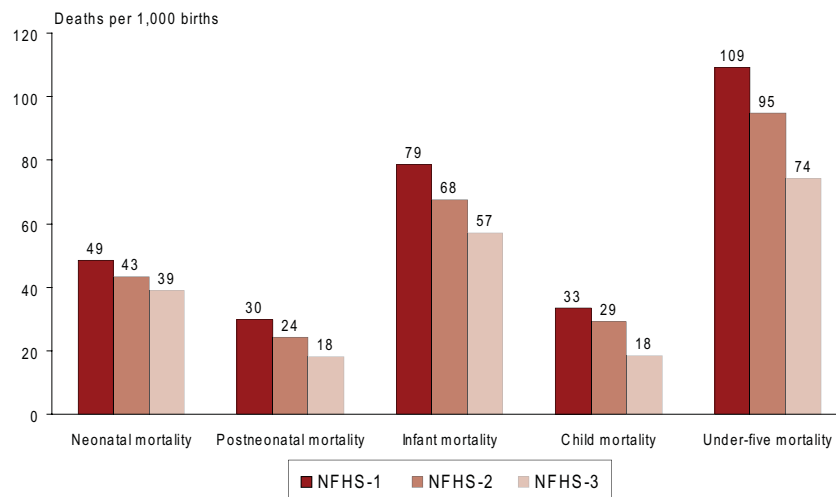
Child Health

NFHS-3 found mixed news about children's health in India. More children are now surviving infancy and young childhood. Infant mortality has decreased by 16 percent from NFHS-2 in 1998-99. At the same time, however, fewer than 50 percent of children are fully vaccinated against common infectious diseases.

Infant Mortality Continues to Decline

- For India's children, the prospects of living until age 5 are better than ever before. Infant mortality declined from 79 deaths per 1,000 live births in NFHS-1 (1991-92) to 68 in NFHS-2 to 57 in NFHS-3. Declines in child mortality are even more pronounced. Still, more than one in 18 children die within the first year of life, and more than one in 13 die before reaching age 5.
- Preventing closely spaced births reduces the risk of infant deaths. The infant mortality rate is 86 for births less than 2 years apart, 50 for births 24-35 months apart, and 30 for births 36-47 months apart. Twenty-eight percent of births in recent years have been spaced less than 2 years apart despite the lower chance of survival for these births.
- Infant mortality rates dropped substantially in numerous states—Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. Still, infant mortality is highest in Uttar Pradesh (73). The lowest infant mortality rates are found in Kerala and Goa (15).

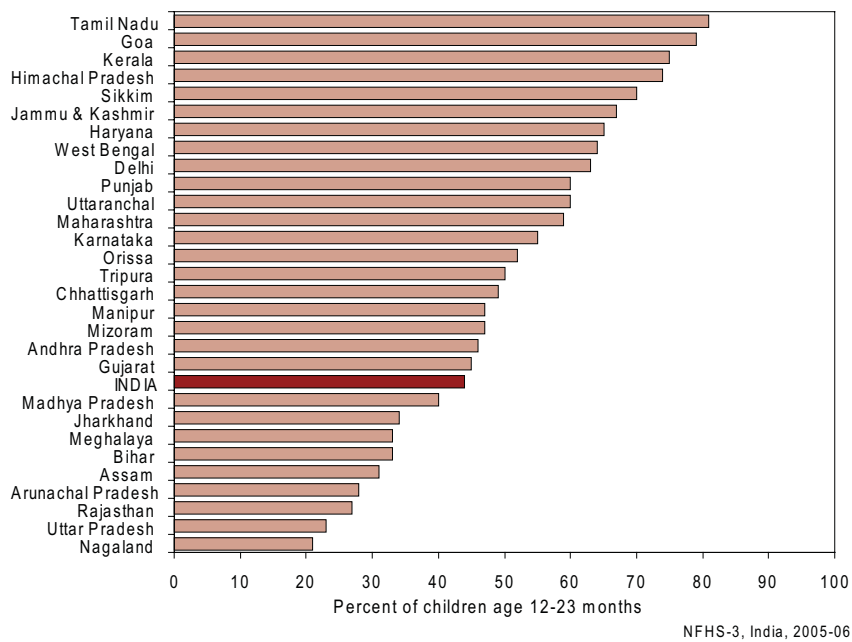
Early Childhood Mortality Rates for the Five-Year Period Preceding the Survey, NFHS-1, NFHS-2, and NFHS-3



Child Immunization Coverage Varies Widely among the States

- Nationwide, only 44 percent of children ages 12-23 months are fully vaccinated. This represents only a very slight change from 42 percent in NFHS-2 but a more substantial improvement from NFHS-1 when only 35 percent of children were fully vaccinated.
- There have been substantial improvements in coverage of all individual vaccines except DPT vaccine against diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus. Just over three-fourths of all children have received a BCG vaccination against tuberculosis, all 3 doses of polio vaccine, and the first dose of the DPT vaccine. The lowest coverage is for the measles vaccination (59 percent) and all 3 doses of the DPT vaccine (55 percent). Ensuring that children receive ALL the recommended vaccines is a major challenge for health care professionals.
- Progress in vaccination coverage varies widely among the states. Less than one-third of children are fully vaccinated in Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam. At the other end of the spectrum, at least three-quarters of children have received all the recommended vaccinations in Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Kerala.
- Between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3, full vaccination coverage increased substantially in a number of states, including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Sikkim, and West Bengal. However, coverage actually worsened in other states, such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.

Full Immunization Coverage by State



Treatment of Childhood Illnesses Need Improvement

- The majority of children under age 5 who were sick with fever, diarrhoea, or acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the two weeks before the survey were taken to health care facilities or to a health care provider for advice or treatment.
- However, less than half (43 percent) of children with diarrhoea received oral rehydration treatment or increased fluids, as recommended, and 26 percent received no treatment at all. Sixteen percent received antibiotics, which are not recommended for treating most childhood diarrhoea.

For more information about infant and child mortality, please see Chapter 7 in the NFHS-3 final report. For more information about child health, see Chapter 9.