

New Population Indicators of Mortality: Maternal-Oriented Measures of Infant and Under-Five Mortality

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The IMR and U5MR have declined dramatically over the last century. These reductions, however, may poorly reflect how the affected populations experience the phenomenon of infant/child death. In this study, we execute a simple exercise: we reconfigure the IMR and U5MR to index not the rate of mortality for live births but the rate at which mothers experience each. We calculate maternal-oriented mortality indicators for 20 African countries over a 30-year period. Results show: the prevalence of mothers who lose an infant/child is substantially higher than the IMR and U5MR suggest; losing an infant/child is the modal reproductive experience in some regions of select countries; and mothers' exposure to infant/child death can increase even as the IMR and U5MR decrease. Our study offers a new standard to quantify the public health threat of child bereavement and to empirically capture the salience of high-mortality conditions for women's demographic behavior.