

## Reducing maternal mortality in the Americas

Since 2016 the MMR has been rising in the Region of the Americas, despite a global reduction of over 16% since 1990. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this deterioration in maternal mortality, setting back programs to reverse the negative trend and address systemic weaknesses in regional health systems.

### Maternal deaths are a manifestation of inequities

The pandemic highlighted a number of obstacles to ensuring equitable access to appropriate health care in the Region. These include inequities in socioeconomic status, access to health services, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment, place of residence, and age. Data show that the MMR remains higher for indigenous women, women of African descent, women living in poverty, migrants, and women residing in rural areas.

### Reducing maternal mortality is achievable

Available tools, such as timely access to maternal care and access to modern contraceptive methods after childbirth can make a reduction in maternal mortality a reality.

### Training professionals to make a difference

Improving surveillance registration and proper classification of maternal deaths remains at the heart of any attempt to tackle rising maternal deaths and in guiding future actions for their prevention. Through PAHO's Virtual Campus of Public Health, training on its Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response Framework is available to all health professionals as part of efforts to formulate strategies to improve maternal health.

## Toward zero maternal deaths



# Preventing the preventable

## Reducing maternal deaths to zero

Since 2015, maternal mortality has been steadily increasing in the Americas, highlighting the need for urgent action. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in 2020 returned to the same level observed in the early 2000s, marking a setback of 20 years. Between 2015 and 2020, the MMR increased by 17% in the Americas, leading to 25 maternal deaths per day in 2020. Compared with other WHO Regions, the Americas has registered the highest increase in the MMR globally. Despite the fact that 98% of births were attended by skilled health personnel in 2020, the MMR in the Americas for that year was 68 deaths per 100 000 live births. It is estimated that since 2020 the MMR has remained at the same high level for the Region.

Tackling this negative trend, in March 2023 the Regional Task Force for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality, led by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), launched the campaign Zero Maternal Deaths: Prevent the Preventable to accelerate progress toward the regional goal of fewer than 30 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births, as outlined in PAHO's Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas.

Ninety percent of maternal deaths are preventable and the tools to get there – such as timely access to maternal care and modern contraceptive methods after childbirth – are available.

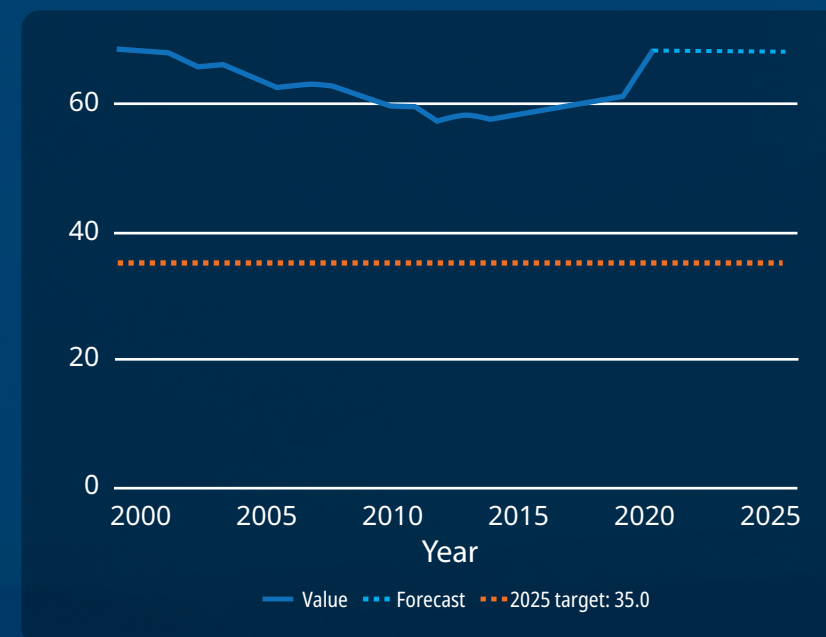
The Regional Task Force issued *Nine Steps to Reduce Maternal Mortality*, a practical guide with recommendations and actions for public policy and health systems. The steps are now being integrated in countries with the highest MMR: Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.



**9 out of 10 deaths are preventable**



### Maternal mortality ratio trend (deaths per 100 000 live births), Region of the Americas



Following a **16.4%** reduction between 1990 and 2015, maternal mortality grew in Latin America and the Caribbean by **15%** between 2016 and 2020.

**COVID-19** exacerbated the increase

**6x** higher odds of maternal death for pregnant women with COVID-19 compared to uninfected women