

Survival rates for newborns in America nearly same as Sri Lanka, UNICEF finds

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Five newborn babies die every minute on Earth, an "alarmingly high" statistic as up to 80 percent of them are preventable, according to a new report from UNICEF.

That's 1 million children who die on the same day they're born and about 2.6 million who are stillborn around the world. The United Nations' children's agency found that in America, a baby's risk of dying as a newborn is just barely lower than the risk in Sri Lanka or the Ukraine.

Babies' odds of dying as infants are typically linked to the poverty and income levels of the country where they're born, and that number varies widely. A baby born in Pakistan is nearly 50 times more likely to die within the first month of its life than another child born in Japan, according to UNICEF.

"While we have more than halved the number of deaths among children under the age of five in the last quarter century, we have not made similar progress in ending deaths among children less than one month old," UNICEF's executive director Henrietta H. Fore told The Guardian. "Given that the majority of these deaths are preventable, clearly, we are failing the world's poorest babies."

But the relationship shown between wealth and newborn mortality does not offer an explanation for why some rich nations see so many [infant deaths](#). Newborns in the United States and Kuwait—two high-income countries—die at a rate of four per every 1,000 births. The total number of deaths per the same number of births in Sri Lanka is five.

"Every year, 2.6 million newborns around the world do not survive their first month of life," Fore said. "One million of them die the day they are born. We know we can save the vast majority of these babies with affordable, quality healthcare solutions for every mother and every newborn. Just a few [small steps](#) from all of us can help ensure the first small steps of each of these young lives."

The report found that in Japan, Iceland and Singapore, babies stand their best chance of survival, but children born in Pakistan, Afghanistan and

the Central African Republic have some of the lowest odds across the world. Eight of the top 10 most dangerous places for a child to be born were all in sub-Saharan Africa, the report said, because the women there are far less likely to receive assistance during birth due to issues like poverty, war and weak or nonexistent governments.

In countries like the U.S., where extreme poverty and a lack of [health care](#) institutions don't factor into infant [death](#) rates, other, preventable elements come into play. More than 80 percent of newborn fatalities are caused by complications from birth, prematurity and infections like pneumonia or sepsis. The report said that these deaths could be prevented with access to clean water and disinfectants, by breastfeeding within the first hour of life, skin to skin contact and the help of skilled midwives.

UNICEF is launching a global campaign this month called Every Child Alive to call for better treatment of pregnant women, girls and their newborns by world governments and [health care providers](#).

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