

Country Disease Outlook

Lesotho

August 2023



World Health
Organization

African Region

Background

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a landlocked country in southern Africa, encircled by South Africa. It is a lower middle-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$ 1,107 (2022) and a population of 2.3 million (2022).

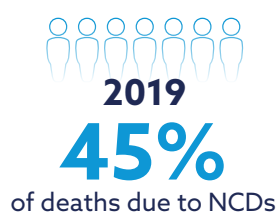
Key points

- ◆ Lesotho has a high burden of communicable and non-communicable disease (NCDs), with the latter making up 45% of deaths in 2019.
- ◆ Lesotho improved its child survival rates between 2015 and 2021, however it is not yet meeting the SDG targets for neonatal or under-five mortality rates.
- ◆ Lesotho had 232,439 people receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2021 and has met only one of the three 95-95-95 goals, with additional efforts particularly needed to increase the treatment rates among people living with HIV that know their status.
- ◆ Lesotho's coverage rates of vaccination in children have historically been fairly high and close to achieving the 90% target levels. In 2021 the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine reached 87%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 90%. It is important for Lesotho to continue to strengthen its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to ensure that no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases into the future.

UHC/CN

Universal Health Coverage/Communicable
and Non-communicable Diseases
WHO Regional Office for Africa





Broad disease outlook

The country has a high burden of both communicable (such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS) and non-communicable disease (NCDs). The latter was estimated to have caused 45% of deaths in 2019.

Communicable diseases

Malaria

Lesotho was certified as malaria-free by WHO in 2012 as it is considered to be a country where malaria never existed or disappeared without specific measures.

Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

Lesotho has the second highest incidence of TB in the world, estimated to be 724 cases per 100,000. Approximately 73% of these patients are co-infected with HIV. The mortality rate of TB cases (all forms, excluding HIV coinfection) has increased since 2015, going from 52 to 62 per 100,000 population in 2021. In contrast, the TB mortality rate among HIV-positive people is much higher but has decreased from 249 to 172 in the same period.

Lesotho has met one of the 95-95-95 goals:

- ▲ 92% of people living with HIV know their status.
- ▲ 81% of the people living with HIV that know their status are on treatment.
- ▲ 79% of people living with HIV and on treatment are virally suppressed.

Approximately 232,439 people were receiving anti-retroviral treatment in 2021.

Neglected tropical diseases

Lesotho was endemic for one of the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA), namely soil-transmitted helminthiasis. In 2020, there is limited data on the number of people targeted and treated with MDA.

Other notable NTDs that remain endemic are chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses, taeniasis and cysticercosis, leprosy, and rabies.

Non-communicable diseases

NCDs are a significant health problem in Lesotho. The age-standardised mortality rate across four major NCDs (Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Respiratory Disease, Cancer and Diabetes) was high at 1320 per 100,000 in males and 970 in females in 2021.

Lesotho has implemented limited efforts on the NCD progress indicators on NCD guidelines and tobacco taxes, however there is very limited progress against the remaining indicators. These include the other indicators relating to tobacco, as well as those relating to the NCD guidelines, alcohol advertising restrictions, alcohol taxes, salt policies, trans fats policies, marketing to children and physical activity awareness.

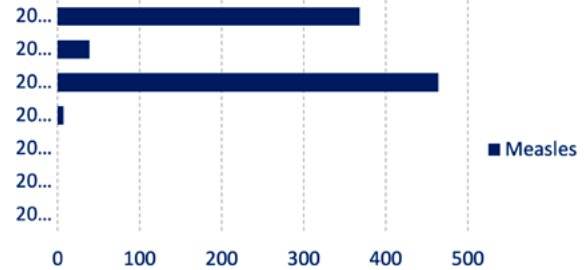
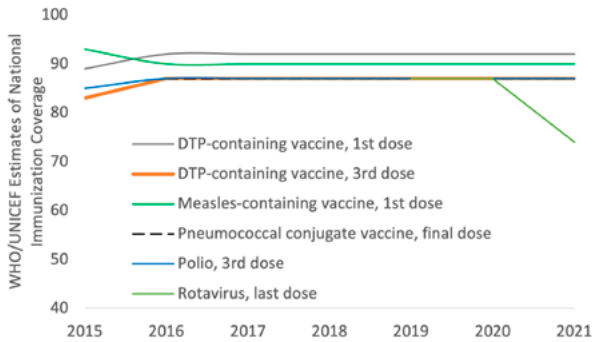
Childhood Immunization

Lesotho's coverage rates of vaccination in children have historically been fairly high and close to achieving the 90% target levels. In 2021 the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine reached 87%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 90%. This resulted in 4,528 zero-dose children and 7,358 under-immunized children. It is important for Lesotho to continue to strengthen its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to ensure that no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases into the future.

Child survival

Based on the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) estimates, the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 85 to 73 per 1,000 live births between 2015 and 2021, although it is still well above the SDG target of 25 per 1,000 live births. Similarly, the neonatal mortality rate decreased from 38 to 35 per 1,000 live births in the same period, remaining above the SDG target of 12.

EXPANDED PROGRAMME ON IMMUNIZATION IN CHILDREN



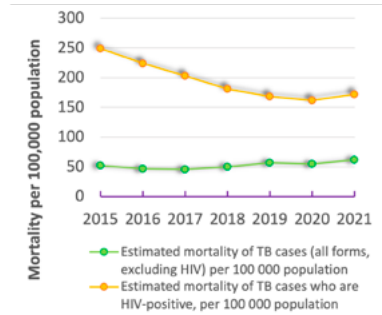
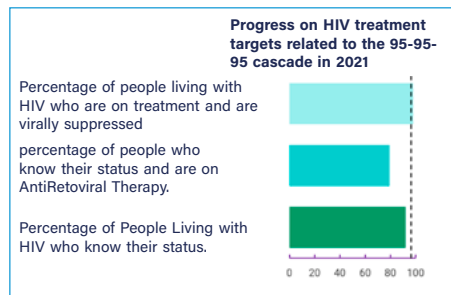
Zero dose children 4,528 Under-immunized 7,358

WUENIC estimates show that vaccination coverage in Lesotho was >80% but measles declined in 2020.

Measles outbreaks were reported in 2019 and 2021

HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS

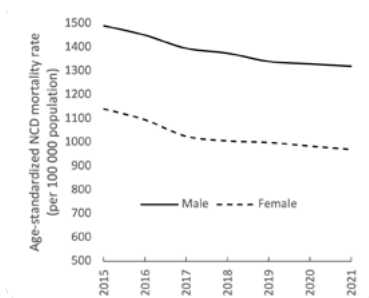
- 232,439** people receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2021
- 76%** Treatment success rate for HIV-positive TB cases
- 92%** of children (aged < 5 years) household contacts of bacteriologically-confirmed TB cases on preventive treatment
- 41%** Domestic funding for TB
- Limited data on domestic funding for HIV



- Indicator 1 - Targets
- Indicator 2 - CRV Mortality
- Indicator 3 - Surveys
- Indicator 4 - NCD policy and Plan
- Indicator 5A - Tobacco taxes
- Indicator 5B - Tobacco smoke free/pollution
- Indicator 5C - Tobacco health warning
- Indicator 5D - Tobacco advertising ban
- Indicator 5E - Tobacco media campaign
- Indicator 6A - Alcohol availability
- Indicator 6B - Alcohol advertising restrictions
- Indicator 6C - Alcohol taxes
- Indicator 7A - Salt policies
- Indicator 7B - Trans fats policies
- Indicator 7C - Marketing to children
- Indicator 8 - Physical activity awareness
- Indicator 9 - NCD guidelines

NCD PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Achieved**
- Partially achieved**
- Not achieved/Unknown**



NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Endemic NTDS requiring Preventive Chemotherapy (PC)

- Soil-transmitted helminthiasis

PC-NTDs treatment in 2021

Limited data targeted for MDA
Limited data treated with MDA

OTHER MAJOR NTDS

- Chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses
- Taeniasis and cysticercosis
- Leprosy
- Rabies