

# Country Disease Outlook

## Malawi

August 2023



### Background

Malawi is a landlocked country in east Africa, bordered by Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. It is a low-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$ 635 (2021) and a population of 20 million (2021).

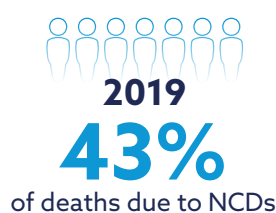
### Key points

- ❖ Malawi has a high burden of communicable and non-communicable disease (NCDs), with the latter making up 40% of deaths in 2019.
- ❖ Malawi has 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.
- ❖ Malawi had 897,880 people receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2021 and has almost achieved the 95-95-95 goals for HIV, reaching 93-97-93 in 2021.
- ❖ Malawi's coverage rates of vaccination in children have historically been high. The high vaccination coverage in 2020 and 2021 was maintained. The country achieved 90% coverage for the first-dose of the measles-containing vaccine and 93% for the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine in 2021.

**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 40% of deaths in 2019. Malawi's Health Sector Strategic Plan III 2023-2030 highlights that NCDs are the fastest growing cause of mortality and morbidity in Malawi.

## Communicable diseases

### Malaria

Malaria remains a significant public health problem in Malawi, with an estimated 4.4 million cases in 2021 (with an incidence rate of 244.4 per 1000), resulting in 7,392 deaths. The country was on track to meet the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria incidence rate per 1,000 target between 2015 and 2017, however the gap between the incidence rate and its target has increased each year since 2018 and Malawi is no longer on track to meet the targets.

### Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

In 2021, incidence of tuberculosis for Malawi was 132 cases per 100,000 people. The mortality rate of TB cases (all forms, excluding HIV coinfection) has reduced since 2015, from 22 to 15 per 100,000 population in 2021, and the TB mortality rate among HIV-positive people has fallen from 46 to 24 in the same period.

The 95-95-95 goals are very close to being fully achieved:

- ▲ 93% of people living with HIV that know their status.
- ▲ 97% of people living with HIV who know their status are on treatment.
- ▲ 93% of people living with HIV and on treatment who are virally suppressed.

Approximately 897,880 people were receiving anti-retroviral treatment in 2021.

### Neglected tropical diseases

Malawi is endemic for four out of the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA), namely onchocerciasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis schistosomiasis and trachoma. It has eliminated lymphatic filariasis. In 2021, there were 5.7 million people targeted for MDA, and almost all (4.9 million) were treated.

Other notable NTDs that remain endemic human African trypanosomiasis (*rhodesiense*), leishmaniasis (cutaneous), leprosy and rabies.

## Non-communicable diseases

NCDs are a major health problem in Malawi. The age-standardised mortality rate across four major NCDs (Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Respiratory Disease, Cancer and Diabetes) was 721 per 100,000 in males and 523 in females in 2021.

Malawi has implemented efforts on the NCD progress indicators related to NCD policy and plan, NCD guidelines, tobacco taxes and alcohol availability, but progress has been more limited on indicators related to tobacco (smoke free/pollution, health warning, advertising ban and media campaign), alcohol (advertising restrictions, taxes), salt policies, trans fat policies, marketing to children and physical activity awareness.

## Childhood Immunization

Malawi's coverage rates of vaccination in children have historically been high, with the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine above 90% since 2018. Malawi was able to maintain its vaccination coverage in 2020-21, managing to reach 90% coverage of the first-dose of the measles-containing vaccine and 93% of the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine.

There were an estimated 44,650 under-immunised children and 31,893 zero-dose children in 2021. Malawi also experienced an outbreaks of measles and rubella in 2020. It is important for Malawi to maintain its high vaccination coverage and also consider how to implement catch-up vaccination strategies.

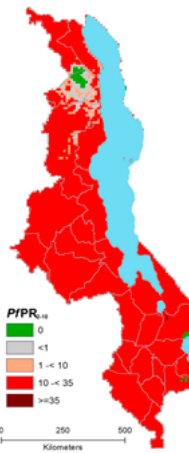
## Child survival

Based on the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) estimates, the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 57 to 42 per 1000 live births between 2015 and 2021, it is still above the SDG target of 25 per 1,000 live births. Similarly, neonatal mortality fell from 22 to 19 per 1,000 live births in the same period, although it remains above the SDG target of 12.

**MALARIA**

POPULATION AT RISK IN 2022	TOTAL MALARIA CASES IN 2021	TOTAL MALARIA DEATHS IN 2021
<b>19.9 million</b>	<b>4.4 million</b>	<b>7,392</b>

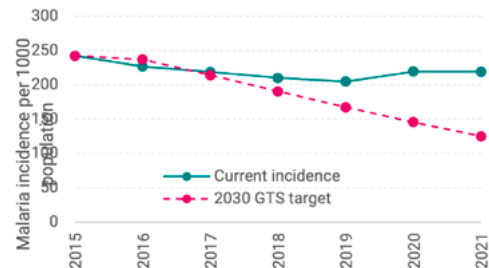
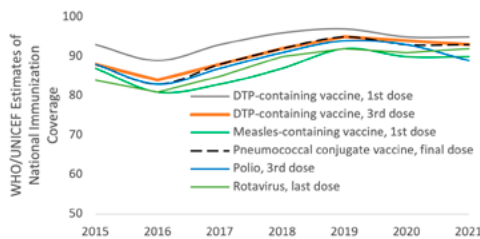
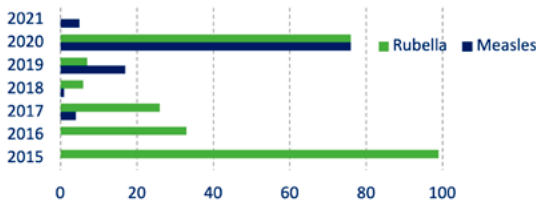
ITN use in children under five years 67.5% and 61.0% use of ACTs among those for whom care was sought and received a finger or heel prick



*Plasmodium falciparum* malaria prevalence in children in Malawi in 2020. Estimates from the Malaria Atlas project

**Malaria incidence in 2021 compared to GTS targets shows that the country was initially on target but has since reversed targets since the 2016-17 period**

**EXPANDED PROGRAMME ON IMMUNIZATION IN CHILDREN**



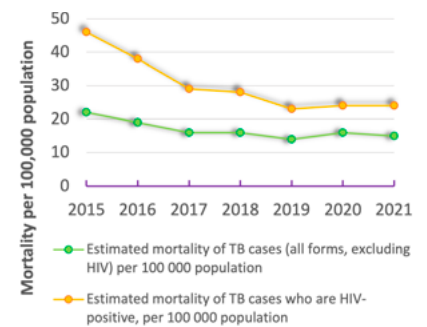
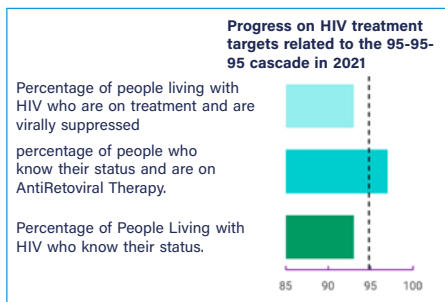
**Zero dose children 31,893 Under-immunized 44,650**

WUENIC estimates show that vaccination coverage has remained relatively high since a drop in 2016. With the exception of 3rd dose of polio (83%) all other vaccine antigens had a coverage greater than 90%.

Outbreaks of measles and rubella in 2020.

**HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS**

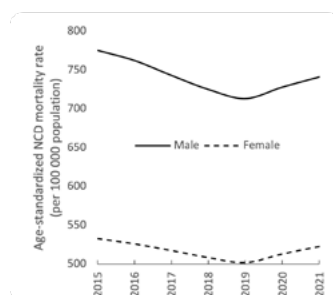
- 897,880** people receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2021
  - 87%** Treatment success rate for HIV-positive TB cases
  - 47%** of children (aged < 5 years) household contacts of bacteriologically-confirmed TB cases on preventive treatment
- 3%** Domestic funding for TB  
**3%** Domestic funding for 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)**
- Lymphatic filariasis (Eliminated)
  - Soil-transmitted helminthiasis
  - Schistosomiasis
  - Trachoma
  - Onchocerciasis

**PC-NTDs treatment in 2021**  
**5.7 million** targeted for MDA  
**4.9 million** treated with MDA

**OTHER MAJOR NTDS**

- Human African trypanosomiasis (*rhodesiense*)
- Leishmaniasis (cutaneous)
- Leprosy
- Rabies