

## **NCDs**

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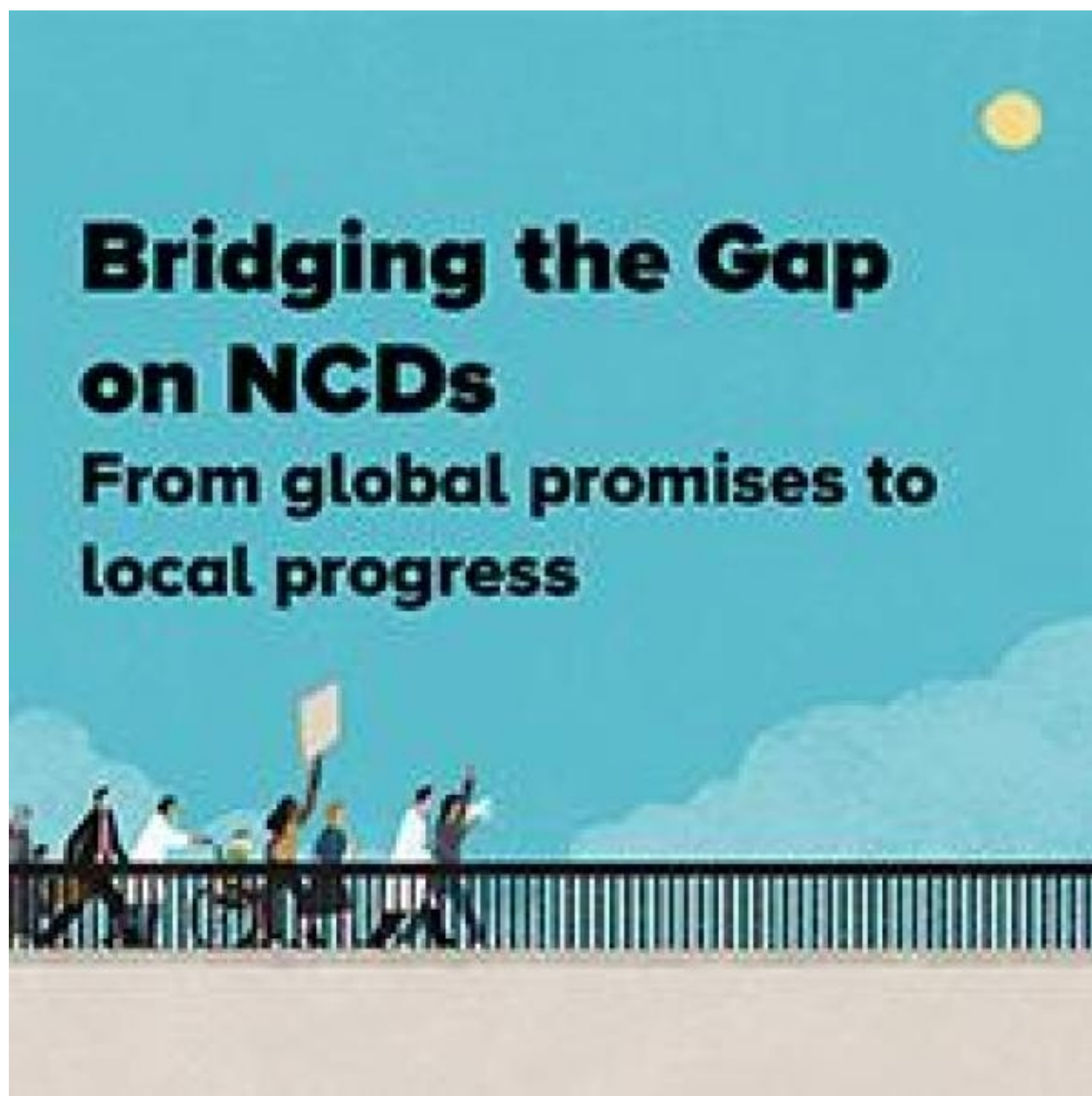


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Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) – mainly cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes – are the #1 cause of death and disability worldwide.

NCDs (Noncommunicable diseases) could be largely prevented if action is taken to address their common risk factors, especially when the poorest and most vulnerable populations are put at the centre.



## **Fast Facts**

- NCDs (noncommunicable diseases) are the #1 cause of death and disability worldwide, accounting for 74% of all deaths and more than three out of four years lived with a disability.
- NCDs are not transmissible from person to person. These chronic conditions require long term or lifelong care, and include cancers, cardiovascular disease, stroke, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, mental health and neurological conditions, chronic kidney disease, among many others.
- An estimated 80% of NCDs are preventable. They are driven by modifiable risk factors including tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, and air pollution.
- NCDs are a sustainable development issue. They have a disproportionate impact on people living in low- and middle-income countries, and are both a cause and a consequence of poverty.

## What are the top noncommunicable diseases?

NCDs are a relatively new priority on the global health agenda, with the first UN High-Level Meetings on NCDs taking place in 2011 and 2014. These focused on a '4x4' approach; that is, four main NCDs – cardiovascular diseases (CVD), cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases – and four main modifiable risk factors – tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity.

In 2018, the third UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs also formally recognised mental health and air pollution as core components of the NCD response, thereby introducing the '5x5' approach. While the top five diseases make up the largest burden of morbidity and mortality from NCDs, there are hundreds of other important diseases and conditions that also need addressing outside the 5x5 to tackle NCDs.

### 5x5 Diseases

- **Cancer** is a leading cause of chronic-disease related death in the world, with around 10 million people dying from cancer every year. While the global burden of cancer is increasing, at least one-third of cancers are preventable, and many cases and deaths can be averted through prevention and early detection. [Discover more about Cancer](#) [1].
- **Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** - including heart attacks and stroke - kills more people globally than any other disease, accounting for nearly 18 million deaths per year with around one-third of these deaths occurring before 70 years of age. [Discover more about CVD](#) [2].
- **Diabetes** is one of the world's most common diseases, with 537 million people now living with diabetes globally, and is a leading cause of death. As diabetes rates increase year-on-year, access to treatment and care is a major global health challenge, with about 50% of people living with diabetes unable to access a regular supply of the insulin they need to survive. [Discover more about Diabetes](#) [3].
- **Chronic respiratory diseases**, including asthma, are under-recognised, under-diagnosed, under-treated & insufficiently prevented. Although breath is fundamental to life, lung health is less well recognised as a critical health factor than other indicators, such as weight and blood pressure. [Discover more about respiratory diseases](#) [4].
- **Mental health** is a state of wellbeing where people and societies function at their best. A person's ability to maintain good mental health is down to a range of factors such as social, environmental, psychological, and biological factors. [Discover more about mental health and neurological disorders](#) [5].

### Conditions outside the 5x5

- **Eye health conditions** include refractive error, cataracts, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and other diseases that affect our vision. The link between eye health conditions and NCDs is complex, with the most common NCD eye health conditions often manifesting in people living with NCDs, such as diabetes, and vice-versa. [Discover more about eye health conditions and NCDs](#) [6].
- **Oral health diseases** including tooth decay, tooth loss, and periodontal disease affect around 3.5 billion people globally, almost half of the world's population. In fact, they are the most common NCD. As oral diseases start to develop early in childhood, they are also an indicator of socio-economic status in both children and adults. [Discover more about oral health and NCDs](#) [7].
- **Obesity** is a known risk-factor for many NCDs but is also increasingly considered a disease in its own right. Today, 800 million people worldwide are living with obesity including 39 million children under the age of 5 years in 2020 and 340 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 in 2016. NCD deaths attributable to obesity have risen to 5 million per year while effective actions to both prevent and treat obesity remains stagnant. [Discover more about Obesity](#) [8].
- **Chronic kidney disease (CKD)** is increasingly recognised as a global health priority. Kidney failure is the most severe form of CKD and is the direct cause of over one million deaths each year. The prevalence and associated burden of CKD is rising worldwide; most of all in low-income and middle-income countries. [Discover more about kidney disease](#) [9].
- **Thyroid conditions** can lead to serious health issues if not treated, due to the vital role that thyroid hormones play in regulating heart and gastrointestinal function, brain development and function, physical development, and cellular metabolism. [Discover more about thyroid conditions](#) [9].

## Social and economic determinants of NCDs

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NCDs affect everyone, everywhere. 41 million people die every year due to an NCD, accounting for 74% of all deaths worldwide, and annual deaths from NCDs are projected to escalate to 52 million by 2030.

However, most NCDs are preventable, with poor health largely driven by five main modifiable risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, alcohol use and air pollution.



**TOBACCO  
USE**



**ALCOHOL  
USE**



**UNHEALTHY  
DIET**



**PHYSICAL  
INACTIVITY**



**AIR  
POLLUTION<sup>32</sup>**

[Learn more about the risk factors for NCDs.](#) [10]

## NCDs are a sustainable development issue

NCDs represent far more than a health issue – they are a major development and human rights issue, as they disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable populations. This is due in part to some NCD risk factors being more prevalent among poorer communities than in those with high socioeconomic status.

A country's stage of economic development, cultural factors, and social and health policies also influence the chances of surviving an NCD. People in poor countries and communities generally have worse access to health care for timely diagnosis and treatment of NCDs, and conditions must be managed with limited resources.

At a household level, most people in LMICs pay out-of-pocket for much of their NCD treatment and care. Out-of-pocket health expenses push an estimated 100 million people worldwide into extreme poverty every year, and also contribute to constraining the “bottom billion” in chronic poverty.

If the global community is to meet Sustainable Development Goal targets for 2030, NCDs must be urgently addressed.

## From commitment to action

Since 2010, NCDs have been rising on national and global health and development agendas. Since then, there have been a series of political commitments made, including the landmark 2011 UN Political Declaration on NCD Prevention and Control, the 2025 global NCD targets, the WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020, and the integration of NCDs into 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

All of these commitments prioritise health as a central factor in promoting and achieving sustainable social, economic and environmental development. The world now has a truly global agenda for prevention and control of NCDs, with shared responsibilities for all countries based on concrete targets – yet the necessary action and investment has been unacceptable slow to follow. Scaling up and accelerating action on NCDs should be seen as the fulfilment of a promise by governments, and a moral imperative rather than a choice.

**Related Content:** [Governments commit to reduce suffering and deaths from NCDs](#) [11]

[NCDs](#) [12]

[heart disease](#) [13]

[cardiovascular disease](#) [14]

[diabetes](#) [15]

[cancer](#) [16]

**Panel Image**



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**Link:** <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/bridging-the-gap-on-ncds-from-global-promises-to-local-progress-policy-brief>

**Panel Image Link Text:** [Post-2015 Advocacy Toolkit, PDF]

**Tag feed:** [Noncommunicable diseases](#) [17]

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**Source URL:** <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/NCDs>

### Links

- [1] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/cancer>
- [2] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/cardiovascular-diseases>
- [3] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/diabetes>
- [4] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/chronic-respiratory-diseases>
- [5] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/mental-health-and-neurological-disorders>
- [6] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/integrating-eye-health-into-the-ncd-response-people-centred-approaches-to-prevention-and-care>
- [7] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/why-and-how-to-integrate-oral-health-into-the-ncd-and-uhc-responses>
- [8] <https://www.worldobesity.org/news/towards-a-global-action-plan-on-obesity-world-obesity-attends-the-150th-who-executive-board>
- [9] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-ensuring-inclusive-ncd-responses>
- [10] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/risk-factors-prevention>
- [11] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/governments-commit-to-reduce-suffering-and-deaths-from-ncds>
- [12] <https://ncdalliance.org/category/tags/ncds>
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