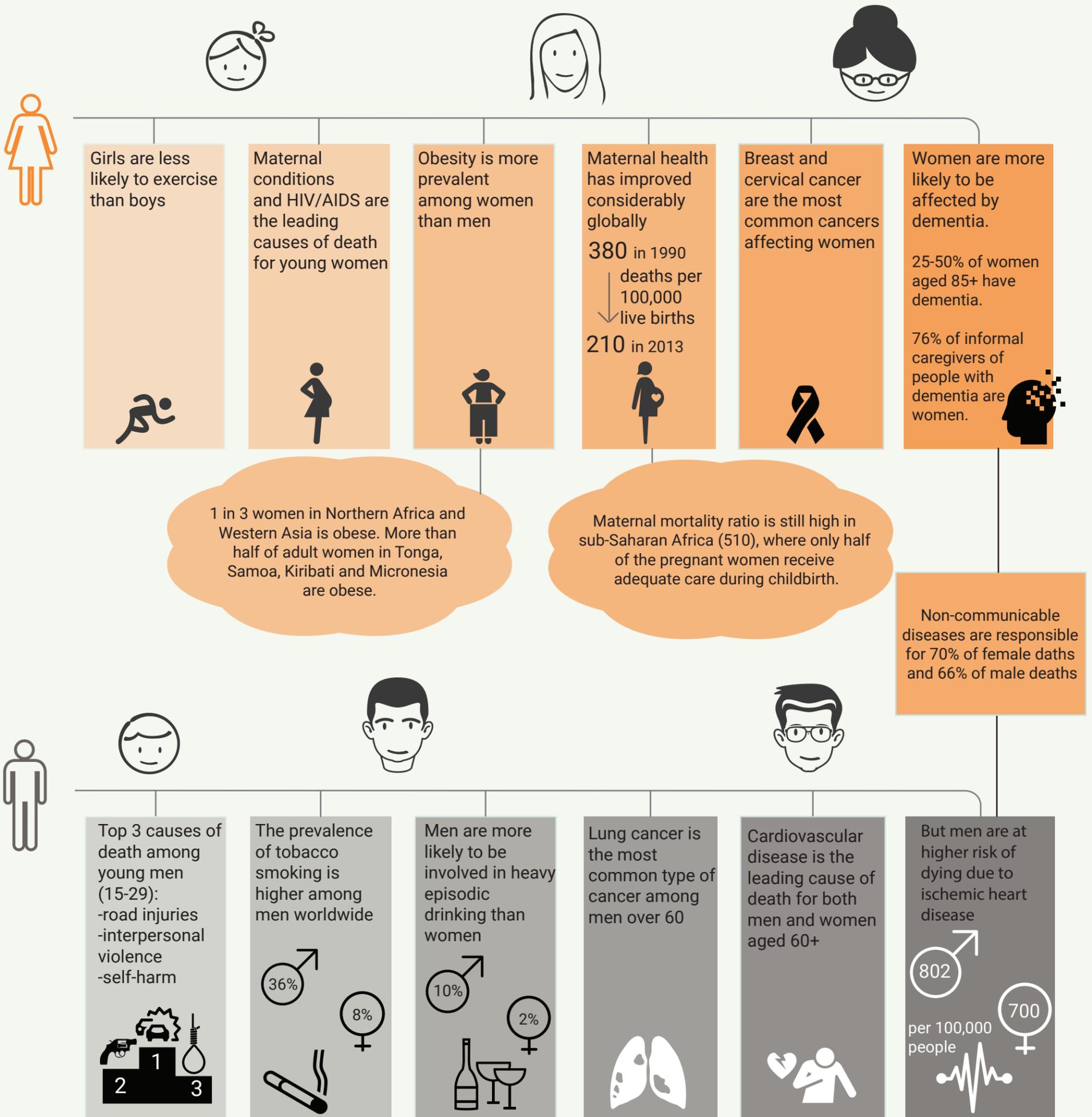
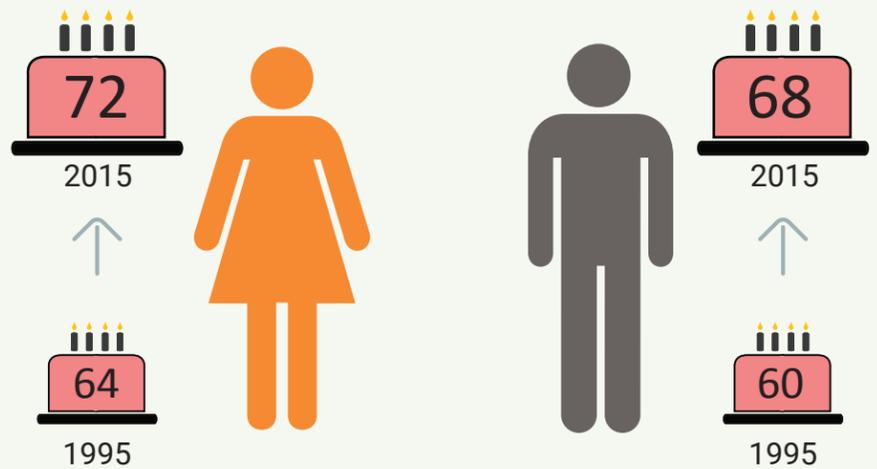


HEALTH

Globally, life expectancy has risen over the last 20 years for both men and women



Health – Key findings

- Thanks to medical and technological improvements, **life expectancy** over the past 20 years has increased for both sexes – reaching 72 years for women and 68 years for men. The gender gap (in favour of women) tends to widen as life expectancy increases. Women live 6 to 8 years longer than men in Latin America and the Caribbean, the developed regions and the Caucasus and Central Asia, but only 2 to 3 years longer in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and Southern Asia.
- During childhood, most of the differences in health between girls and boys are due to biological factors and are to the disadvantage of boys. **Under-5 mortality** is higher for boys than for girls in all regions except Southern Asia, where girls have higher than expected mortality, suggesting gender-related discriminatory practices. Underweight and stunting among children under-5 years of age affect boys more than girls, as a result of their higher biological vulnerability to the disease, while immunization coverage seems to be gender neutral. Early in the teenage years, girls and boys start to differ in terms of the adoption of **healthy or risky behaviours**: In developing regions, girls aged 13-15 are less likely than boys of the same age to exercise physically.
- Unsafe sex is a leading **risk factor** in the health of adolescents and young adults. Women still die of complications due to pregnancy and childbirth, and HIV/AIDS in developing regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Traditional gender roles and expectations associated with early marriage and lack of decision-making power among married girls increase their exposure to adolescent pregnancy, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections. Risky behaviours and images of masculinity also have a harmful effect on adolescent boys and young men who are at a higher risk of dying from road injuries and self-harm in both developed and developing countries. Injuries are much more common among men than women through the entire life course and are the cause of death with the widest disparity between women and men: Overall, injuries represent a 12 per cent share in global male deaths compared to a 7 per cent share in female deaths.
- **Contraceptive use and the demand for family planning** that is met have been increasing in all developing regions. Yet, they remain low in sub-Saharan Africa (27 per cent of women using any contraceptive method and 24 per cent of women with an unmet need for family planning) and Oceania (38 per cent of women using any contraceptive method and 25 per cent of women with an unmet need for family planning).
- **Maternal mortality** has declined by 45 per cent since 1990, yet remains high in sub-Saharan Africa (510 deaths per 100,000 live births), a region that still experience levels similar to Southern Asia 20 years ago, and where only half of women give birth with adequate care.
- Non-communicable diseases continued to increase as a share of all causes of death. Worldwide, in 2012 non-communicable diseases (such as cardiovascular, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes) were the dominant **cause of death** (70 per cent of all female deaths and 66 per cent of all male deaths), following an increase of 8 percentage points since 2000 for both women and men. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, communicable diseases remained the most prevalent cause of death (almost 50 per cent for both women and men).
- **Deaths due to non-communicable diseases** are most prevalent during **older ages**. Among the most common non-communicable diseases, cardiovascular disease kills more women than men (because women tend to live longer than men and are the majority of older persons), but the risk at each age is higher for men than women; men are more likely than women to develop and die from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; and while breast and cervical cancers are the most common forms of cancer among women, lung cancer is the most common among men.
- Many **risk factors contributing to non-communicable diseases** (over the entire life course) have a gender component. Prevalence of tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption is higher among adult men (36 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively) than among adult women (8 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively). Obesity prevalence is higher for women (14 per cent) than for men (10 per cent) and it has almost doubled for both sexes since 1980. Little difference is found in diabetes prevalence among women and men at the global level. However, gender gaps are found across regions and at the country level.
- As the share of older persons in the population increases (**population ageing**), the prevalence of non-communicable diseases and the proportion of persons with disabilities also increase. Mental disorders, in particular **dementia**, are among the major causes of disability in later life. In 2013, an estimated 44 million people globally were living with dementia, a number that is expected to double every 20 years. Women are more likely than men to be affected by dementia, due to their greater longevity and the typically late onset of the disease.