



Key messages on **NCD prevention and control**

Noncommunicable diseases are the leading causes of mortality in the Americas

- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) - principally cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases were responsible for 6 million deaths in 2021 in the Americas, which represent 65% of the total deaths in the region.
- Of the NCD deaths, 2.3 million (38%) were premature in people under 70 years of age.
- NCD deaths are caused by
 - cardiovascular diseases - 2.2 million deaths (36%)
 - cancer - 1.4 million deaths (23%)
 - chronic respiratory diseases - 0.4 million deaths (7%)
 - diabetes - 0.3 million deaths (5%)
- For cancer deaths, leading causes in the Americas include: prostate, lung and colorectal cancer in men; and breast, lung, colorectal and cervical cancer in women.

NCD premature mortality is not decreasing at the pace needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goal target in the Americas

- Governments agreed to a Sustainable Development Goal target to reduce NCD premature mortality by 1/3rd by 2030, from 2010.
- NCD premature mortality was reduced by only 10% between 2010 and 2024. Without faster implementation and more comprehensive NCD prevention and control interventions, the region will not meet the target.

Common risk factors are increasing and driving the rise in NCDs

- NCDs are driven by four common risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol. These behaviors are shaped by social, environmental, economic and commercial determinants that require policy and regulatory interventions to change.

- Tobacco use is perhaps the single most important contributor to NCDs: 16% of adults use tobacco in the Americas in 2022.
- Obesity is another major NCD risk factor: 34% of adults were obese in 2022, a substantial increase from 26% in 2010.
- The majority of people are physically inactive in the Americas. This includes 81% of school-aged adolescents (11-17 years) and 35% adults (18 years and older) who had insufficient physical activity, in 2022.
- Harmful use of alcohol also contributes to NCDs: the annual average consumption among adults was 7.51 liters of pure alcohol per capita in 2019.



NCDs have a significant economic impact on societies

- NCDs lead to reduced productivity, absenteeism, increased healthcare costs, and hinder economic growth.
- Due to the sheer magnitude of NCDs, the economic impact is staggering. In South America alone, NCDs will cost \$7.3 trillion, equivalent to 4% of GDP over the next 30 years (2020-2050).
- This provides a strong rationale for national governments, private sector and donor organizations to invest in NCD prevention and control.

International funding for NCDs remains under-prioritized

- Less than 4% of annual development assistance for health worldwide is allocated to NCDs. It has declined by 2.2% between 2021 and 2023, despite being the leading causes of death and disability.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO PREVENT AND CONTROL NCDs

- **Strengthen a whole of government and whole of society approach to NCDs:** Implementing evidence-based policies, legislation and regulations across relevant government sectors and civil society is needed to reduce tobacco use, regulate alcohol consumption, and limit access to ultra-processed and sugar-rich foods and beverages.
- **Invest in primary care for NCDs:** Governments must integrate NCD diagnosis, treatment and control into primary healthcare services, ensuring that people living with NCDs receive timely, continuous and effective treatment.
- **Leverage fiscal policies for NCD prevention:** Taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and sugar-sweetened beverages can reduce consumption and generate revenue to fund health programs.
- **Expand NCD surveillance and monitoring:** Improve NCD data collection and monitoring systems to track NCD trends, evaluate interventions, and inform policy decisions.
- **Address health inequalities associated with NCDs:** Targeted interventions are needed to reduce high NCD mortality rates in vulnerable populations where NCD rates are high and access to health services is limited, and where NCD mortality remain disproportionately high.
- **Leverage development assistance and international cooperation for NCDs:** Development assistance and international cooperation remains important mechanisms to increase investment in NCDs. These resources play a crucial role in supporting technical cooperation, public goods, policy tools, and innovative care.



HOW CAN PAHO ASSIST GOVERNMENTS TO PREVENT AND CONTROL NCDs

PAHO has been a leader in NCD prevention and control in the Americas for over 25 years. Through technical cooperation, policy guidance, and regional strategies, PAHO supports countries in:

- **Developing national NCD policies and action plans:** PAHO has helped member states implement national NCD action plans aligned with WHO's Global NCD Action Plan, and fostered multi-sector collaboration and partnerships.
- **Implementing successful primary care interventions for NCDs:** PAHO supported initiatives to increase NCD diagnosis, treatment and control, including HEARTS for hypertension control are leading to expanded health services for NCDs.
- **Building country capacity:** PAHO provides training, technical support, and evidence-based guidance to strengthen health systems' response to NCDs, NCD surveillance systems and regulations to reduce risk factors.
- **Advancing the 2030 Agenda:** PAHO collaborates with governments, civil society, and development partners to accelerate progress towards the SDG target on NCDs.

By scaling up investments, strengthening policies, and ensuring equitable access to NCD prevention and care, the Americas can reduce premature mortality, improve health outcomes, and foster sustainable development. The time to act is now.