

View

2. Global Risk for Mortality

Table 1: [WHO](#) numbers of the 10 leading global risks for mortality (death), 2004

Rank	Risk Factor	% of total deaths
1	High blood pressure	12.8
2	Tobacco use	8.7
3	High blood glucose	5.8
4	Physical inactivity	5.5
5	Overweight and obesity	4.8
6	High cholesterol	4.5
7	Unsafe sex	4.0
8	Alcohol use	3.8
9	Childhood underweight	3.8
10	Indoor smoke from solid fuels	3.3

The number of total global deaths in 2004 was 59 million people.

Table 1 shows the 10 most common [risk](#) factors that caused a large portion of total global deaths in 2004 according to the [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO). The top six leading [risk](#) factors are all linked to potential development of long-term diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancers.

The ranking seen in **Table 1** differs if income and other demographic factors are considered.

For **high-** and **middle-income** countries, the most important [risk](#) factors are those related to long-term diseases whereas in **low-income** countries, factors such as childhood malnutrition and unsafe sex are much more widespread.

[Risk](#) factors also change with **age**. Some [risk](#) factors almost exclusively affect children such as malnutrition and indoor smoke from solid fuels. For adults, there are considerable differences depending on age:

- Unsafe sex and addictive substances (e.g. tobacco and alcohol) account for most of the health problems in younger adults
- [Risk](#) factors for long-term diseases and cancers mainly affect older adults.

Gender differences also exist. For example, men are much more likely to be at [risk](#) of factors associated with addictive substances. Women during pregnancy often suffer from iron deficiency.

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