



# Maternal Death

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## Introduction

A maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.<sup>1</sup>

The maternal mortality ratio in developing countries in 2015 is 239 per 100 000 live births versus 12 per 100 000 live births in developed countries. There are large disparities between countries, but also within countries, and between women with high and low income and those women living in rural versus urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

## Why Do Women Die?

Women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and most are preventable or treatable. Other complications may exist before pregnancy but are worsened during pregnancy, especially if not managed as part of the woman's care. The major complications that account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths are:

- Severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth).
- Infections (usually after childbirth).
- High blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia).
- Complications from delivery.
- Unsafe abortion.<sup>3</sup>

## Maternal Age

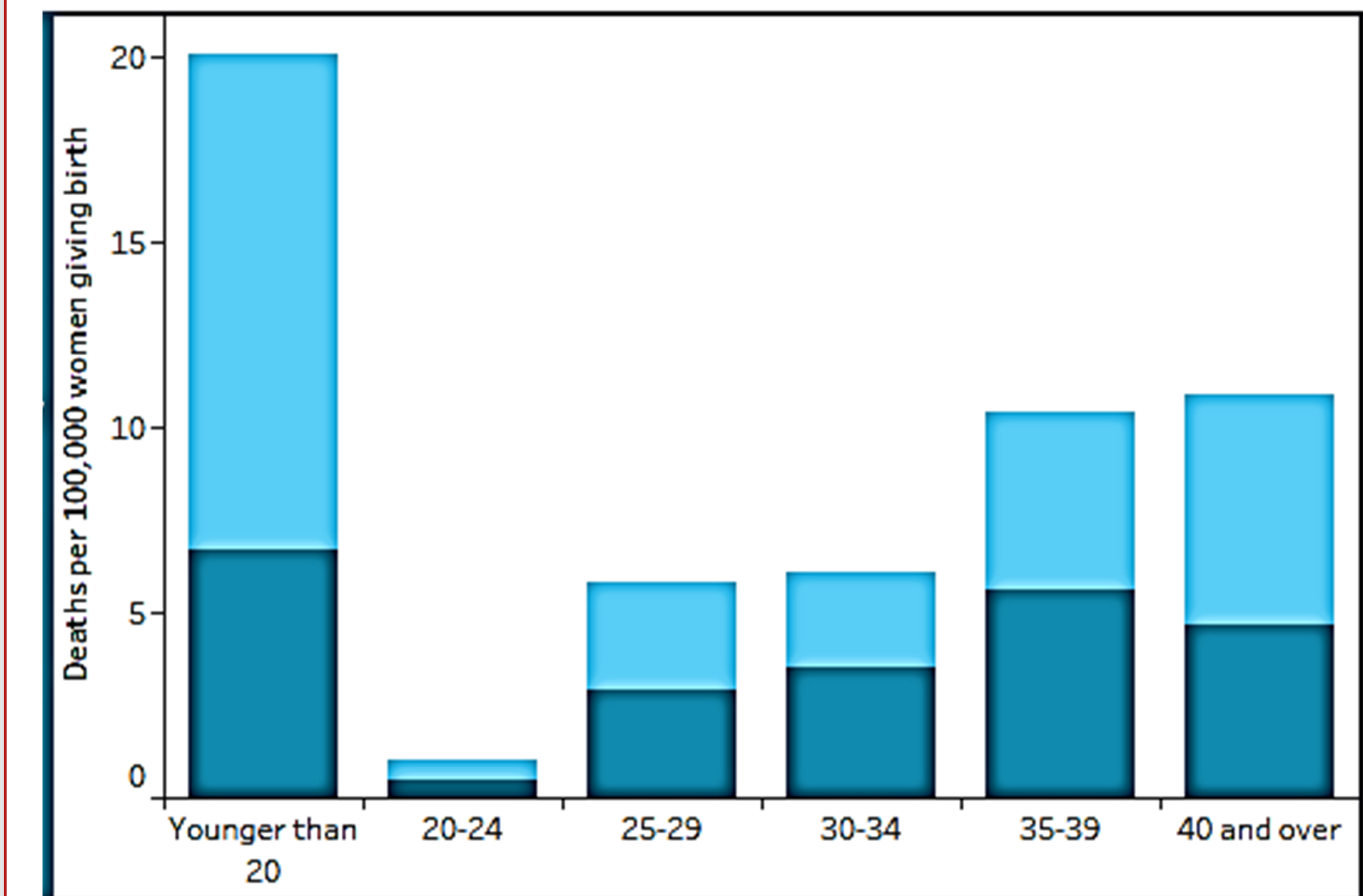


Figure (2)  
Maternal mortality ratio , by maternal age , 2012- 2016

## Classification

**Direct obstetric deaths:** are those resulting from obstetric complications of the pregnancy state (pregnancy, labour and the puerperium), from interventions, omissions, incorrect treatment.

**Indirect obstetric deaths:** resulting from previous existing disease or disease that developed during pregnancy and which was not due to direct obstetric causes, but which was aggravated by physiologic effects of pregnancy.

**Coincidental maternal deaths:** deaths from unrelated causes which happen to occur in pregnancy or the puerperium.

**Late Maternal Deaths:** the death of a woman from direct or indirect obstetric causes, more than 42 days, but less than year after termination of pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

To avoid maternal deaths, it is also vital to prevent unwanted and too-early pregnancies. All women, including adolescents, need access to contraception, safe abortion services to the full extent of the law, and quality post-abortion care.

## References

1. International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Geneva, World Health Organization, 2004.
2. Patton GC, Coffey C, Sawyer SM, Viner RM, Haller DM, Bose K, Vos T, Ferguson J, Mathers CD. Lancet, 2009, 374:881–892.
3. Global Causes of Maternal Death: A WHO Systematic Analysis. Say L, Chou D, Gemmill A, Tunçalp Ö, Moller AB, Daniels JD, et al. Lancet Global Health. 2014;2(6): e323-e333.

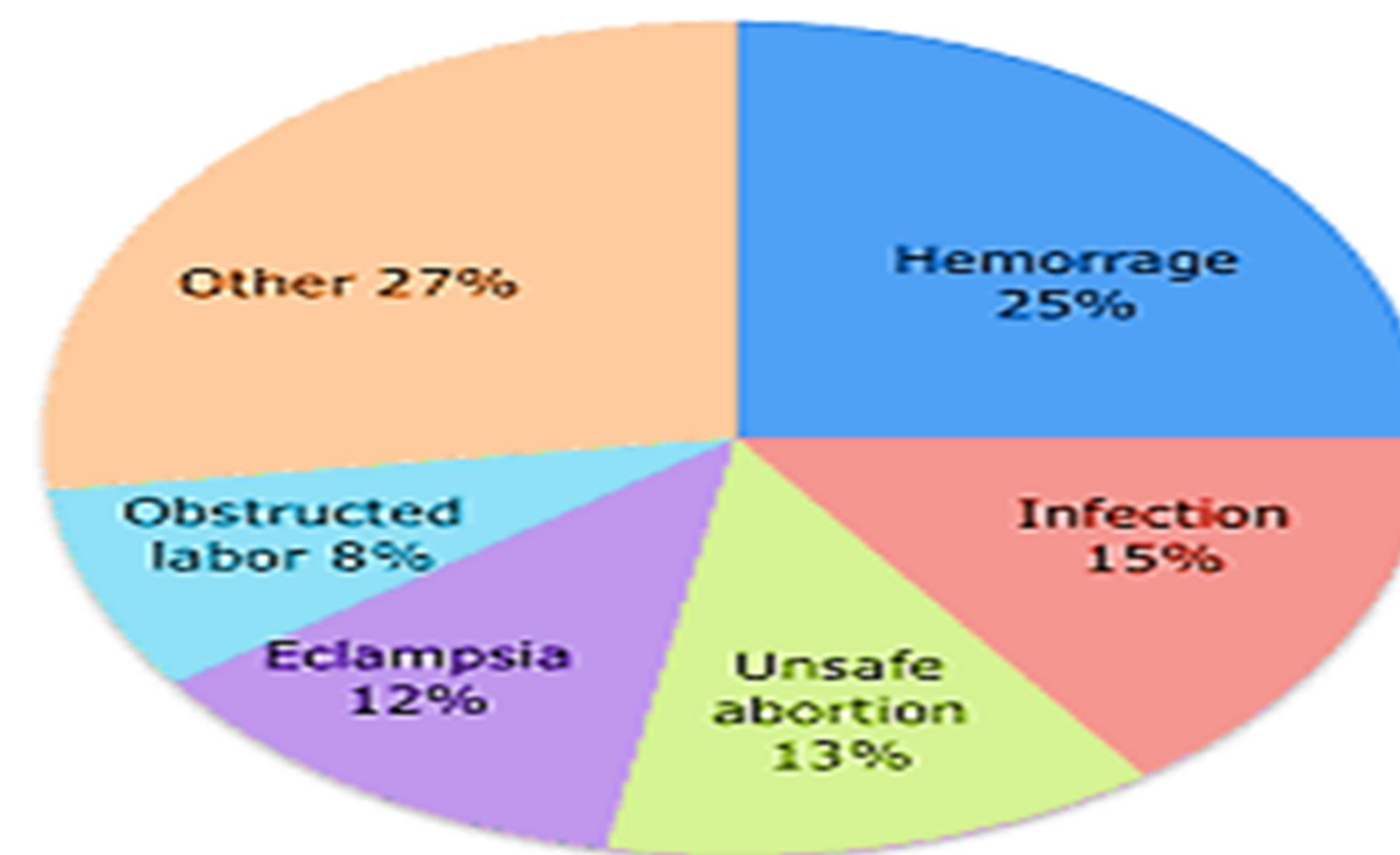


Figure (1)  
Causes of maternal death worldwide