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# Tackling the Health Crisis in Africa

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## 1.1 Introduction

Africa is the second largest continent in the world in terms of both area and population, with 54 independent countries. 18% of the world's population, as reported by [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa), resides in Africa. It is a continent rich in natural resources including but not limited to natural gas, oil, water, minerals, and arable land.



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According to the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](https://www.unep.org/), Africa is home to some 30% of the world's mineral reserves, 8% of the world's natural gas and 12% of the world's oil reserves. It includes that Africa has 40% of the world's gold and up to 90% of its chromium and

platinum, along with the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium in the world. Furthermore, it states that Africa holds 65% of the world's arable land and 10% of the planet's internal renewable fresh water source.

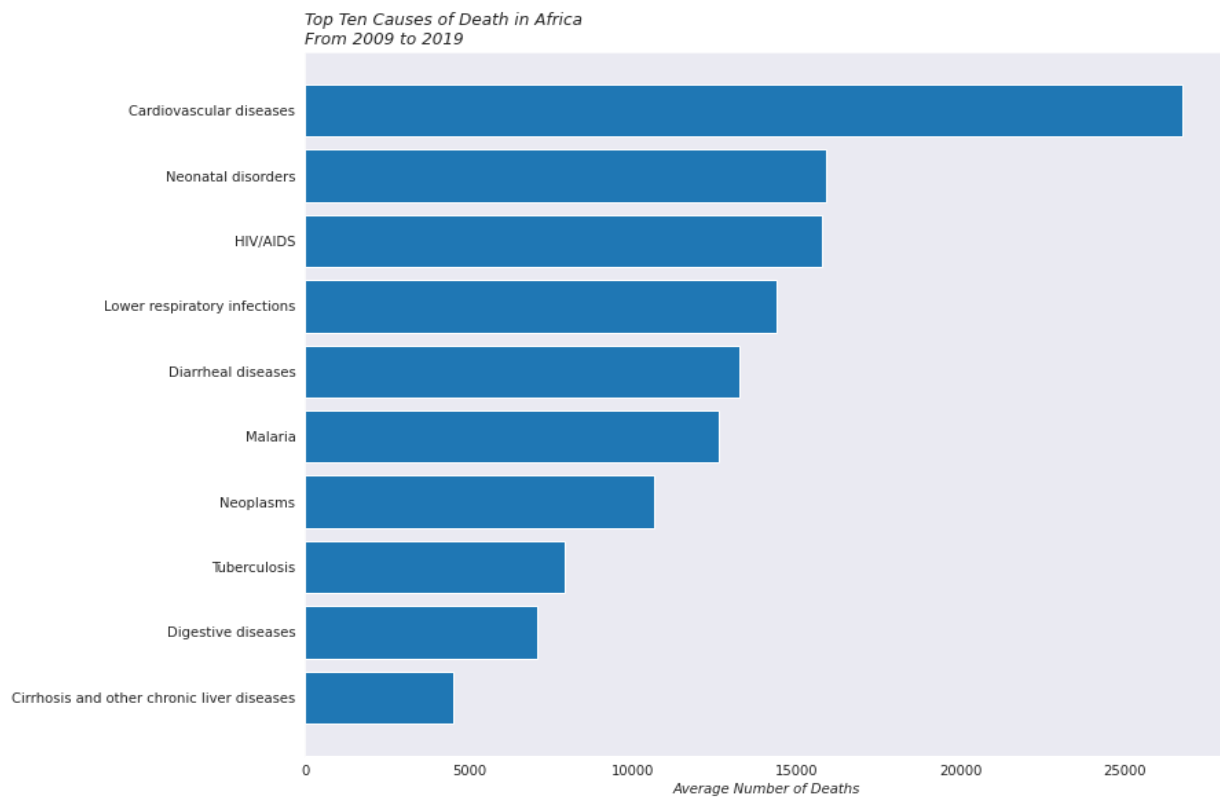
However, in spite of these resources, Africa's health situation is dire. [Statista](#) reports that over 10 million people died in Africa as a whole in 2019, and predicts that number will rise by over 2 million by 2027.

The statistics are alarming, and as stated by [WHO](#) Africa will never climb out of poverty unless its devastating health challenges are tackled, for health is wealth.

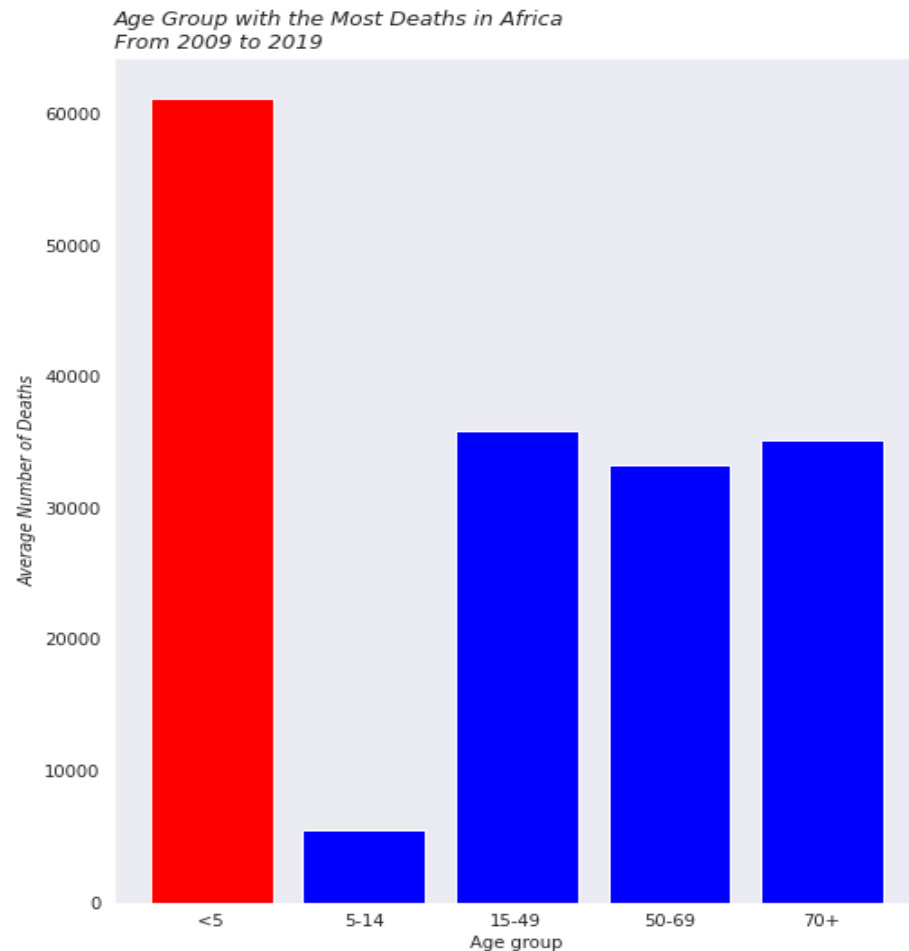
So, how can the health crisis in Africa be tackled?

## 1.2 Findings

Africa has seen a high fatality rate from cardiovascular diseases, neonatal disorders, HIV/AIDS, lower respiratory infections, and diarrheal diseases. They rank among the top 5 causes of mortality in Africa, with cardiovascular diseases accounting for a substantial portion of the fatalities.

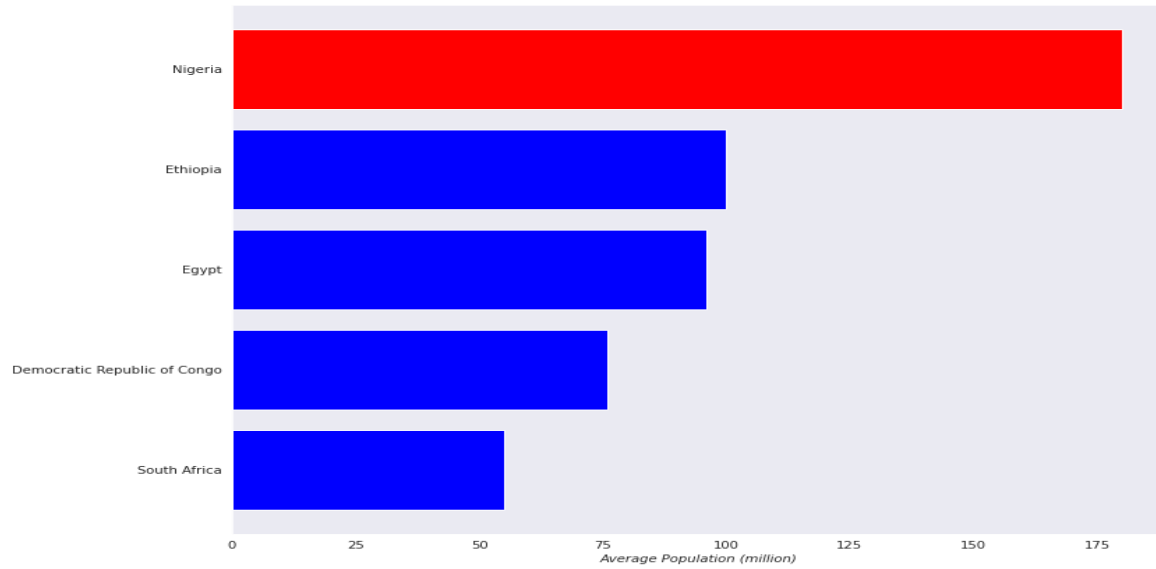


The number of deaths reported for children under the age of five between 2009 and 2019 shows the impact of diseases such as neonatal disorders, lower respiratory infections, and diarrheal diseases, which can be fatal in children. According to the data, children under the age of five die more frequently in Africa than people in other age groups.

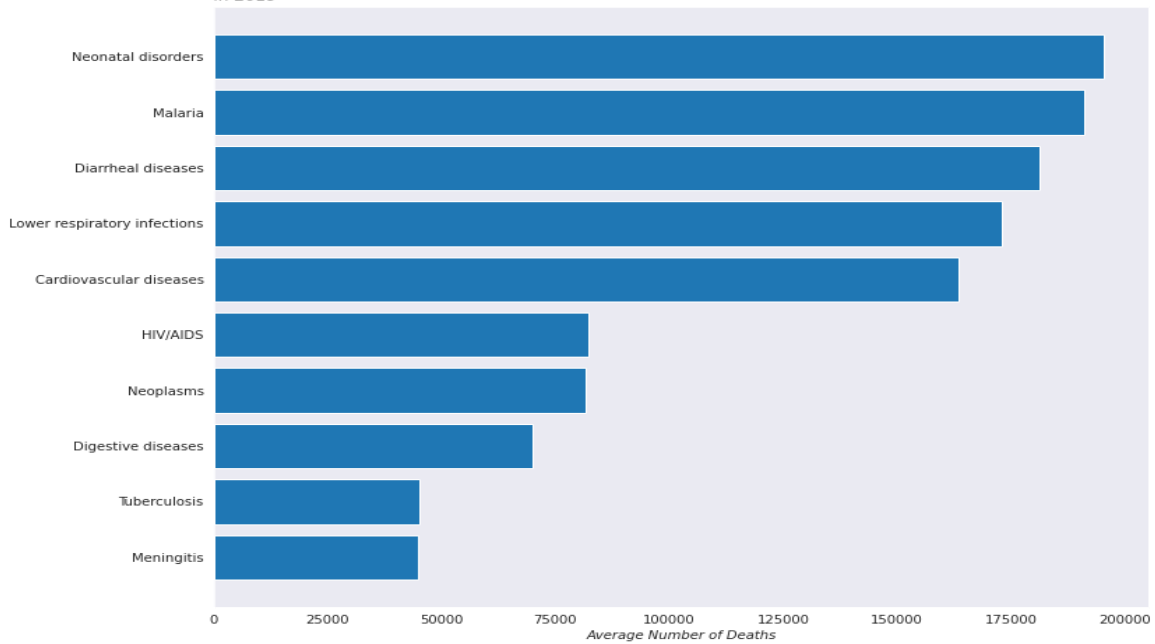


Furthermore, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with an average population of approximately 180 million people between 2009 and 2019, leads the other 19 African countries that produce the most deaths by a significant margin with an average of over 45,000 fatalities reported between 2009 and 2019.

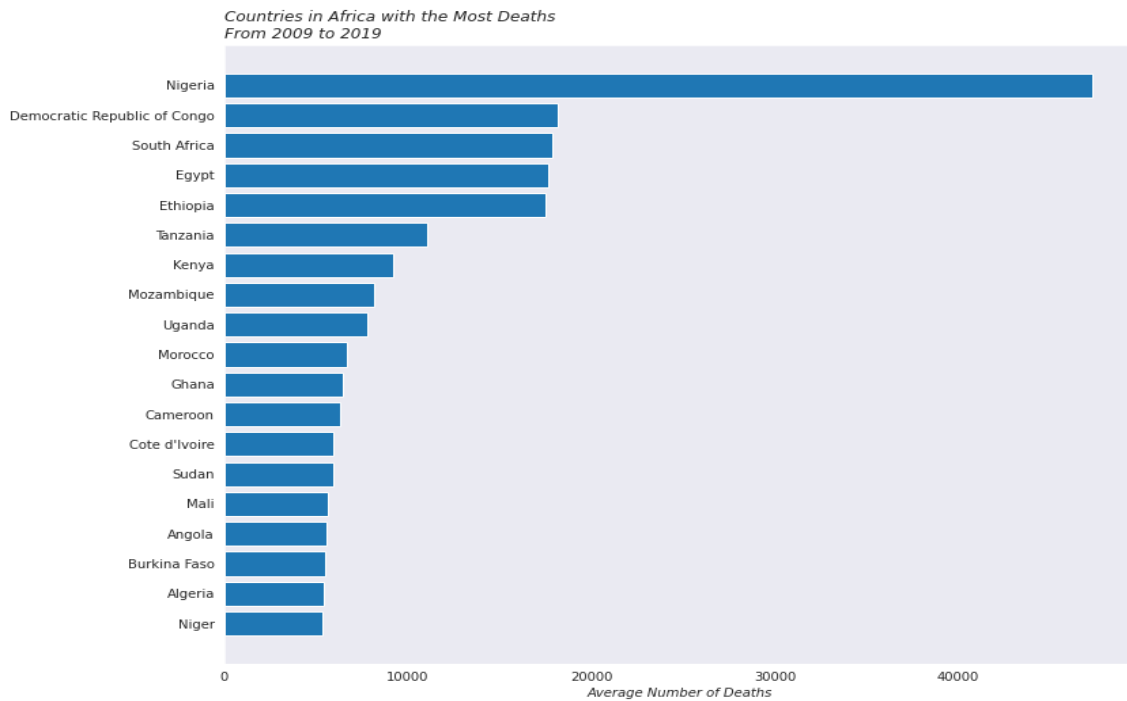
*Top 5 Most Populous Countries in Africa  
From 2009 to 2019*



*Top 10 Causes of Death in Nigeria  
in 2019*



This demonstrates that Nigeria contributes significantly to the total number of recorded fatalities in Africa each year. In 2019, the major causes of death in Nigeria were neonatal disorders, malaria, diarrheal diseases, lower respiratory infections, and cardiovascular diseases. All of which ranked among the top ten causes of death in Africa between 2009 and 2019.



### 1.3 Recommendations

- According to [WHO](#), most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioral risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol using population-wide strategies. Those strategies should be adopted in Africa, particularly in 19 countries with the highest death rates.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) could intensify campaigns on immunization of children against diseases that can be fatal to them (e.g pneumococcal disease and influenza), and the need for preventive treatment and early and exclusive breastfeeding for babies in Africa. Due to its significant role in the annual death toll in Africa, Nigeria should be given top consideration.
- More awareness-raising initiatives should be developed and implemented in rural areas of Africa, particularly in Nigeria, to support the use of insecticides to kill mosquitoes, mosquito nets to prevent bites, drug prevention, and the elimination of mosquito breeding grounds through proper sanitation and hygiene.
- Access to clean water should be improved in Africa, as well as the promotion of hygiene education, particularly in the rural areas, beginning in the countries with the highest death rates in Africa.
- More focus should be given to preventive interventions for HIV/AIDS in Africa.

According to [World Bank](#), preventive interventions such as encouraging behavior change through peer education, communication programs, and voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), increasing condom use through the promotion and distribution of condoms, ensuring safe blood supply, preventing mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) through brief courses of ARV, and



offering alternatives for infant feeding, among others, could significantly slow the spread of HIV/AIDS. Also, these interventions could be targeted at high-risk groups (e.g., injecting drug users).

## **1.4 Limitation**

- The data used in this analysis is outdated; the number of deaths in Africa due to different causes and by age group ends in 2019. A more recent dataset might yield different outcomes.

## References

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