

2006-07 Namibia Demographic and Health Survey

Policy Brief



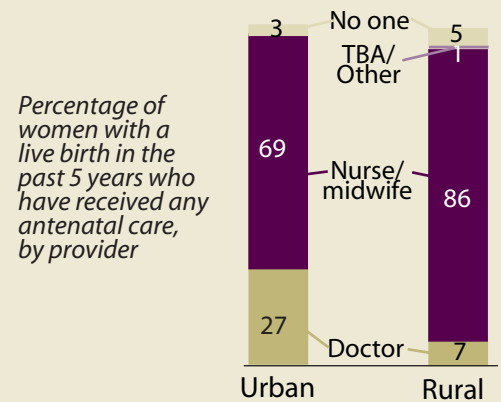
Maternal Health

The survival and well-being of mothers and children depend on the health care a woman receives during pregnancy, at the time of delivery, and in the first two months after she gives birth. Although professional health care is available to most Namibian mothers, there are still gaps in services and accessibility that contribute to significant mortality among childbearing women.

Antenatal Care Has Increased in Rural Areas

Ninety-five percent of all Namibian women see a health professional at least once before giving birth. The proportion of rural women who receive antenatal care rose from 88 percent in 2000 to 93 percent in 2006-07. Most of these women (86 percent) receive care from a nurse or midwife and 7 percent from a doctor. Ninety-five percent of rural mothers go to government-run, rather than private, health facilities for antenatal care.

Antenatal Care



First Trimester Care Still Lacking

Seven in ten women make four or more antenatal care visits during their pregnancies, but only one in three makes her first visit during the first three months of pregnancy when complications, such as anemia, high blood pressure, and genital infections, can more easily be prevented.

Neonatal Services Do Not Reach All Mothers

Although

- ◆ Over nine in ten women were weighed, had their blood pressures measured, and gave urine and blood samples, and
- ◆ Eight in ten took iron tablets or syrup to prevent anemia,

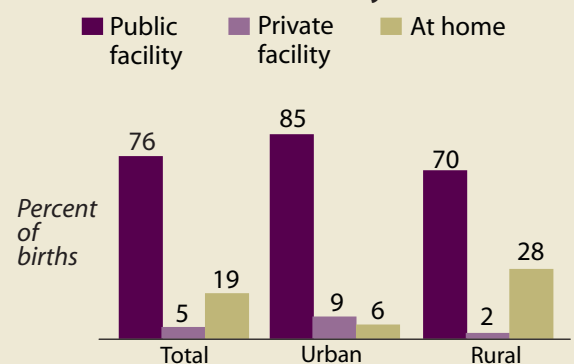
Only

- ◆ Six in ten women learned about pregnancy complications, and
- ◆ Five in ten were protected against neonatal tetanus, the leading cause of death among children less than one month of age in developing countries.

More Deliveries Occur in Health Facilities

Between the 2000 and 2006-07 surveys, the number of deliveries in health facilities increased from 75 to 81 percent. Seventy-six percent are in public facilities, and 5 percent are in private centers, and only 19 percent are delivered at home. In urban areas, women give birth in a facility more often than women in rural areas (94 compared with 72 percent). The percentage of births delivered in health facilities ranges from 54 percent in Kunene to 95 percent in Khomas.

Place of Delivery



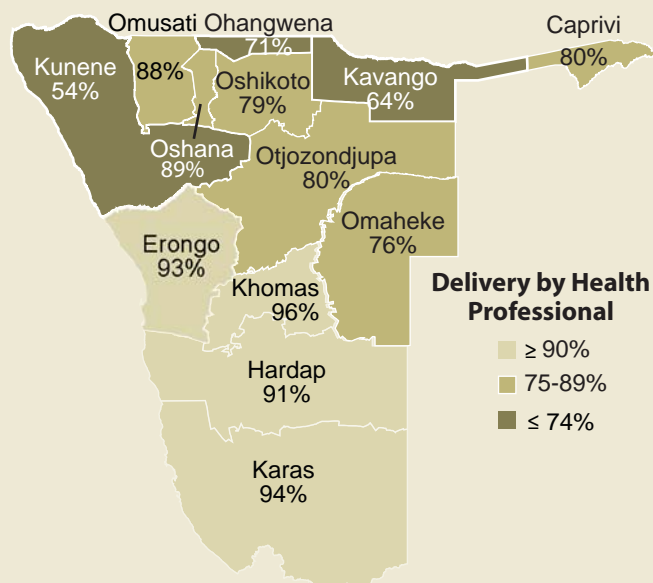


Health Professionals Attend More Births

Eight in ten births are delivered with assistance from doctors, nurses, or midwives, 6 percent more than in 2000. Traditional birth attendants, relatives, or friends assist 18 percent of deliveries. Of sub-Saharan African countries which participated in DHS programme, Namibia places first in percentage of professionally assisted births.

Postnatal Care Not Universal

Many maternal deaths occur during the first 48 hours after delivery due to complications from pregnancy and delivery, so all women should receive a checkup during that time. Although 78 percent of women receive postnatal care, 65 percent see a health professional during the critical first two days after giving birth. Twenty-two percent of women receive no postnatal care at all. First-time mothers are more likely to get postnatal care than women with six or more children (79 compared with 63 percent).



Access to Care Remains Problematic

Seventy percent of women experience problems accessing health care. Some women report not being able to get permission (10 percent) or money (39 percent) to go for treatment. Others are dissuaded by distance (42 percent) or transportation (42 percent). Still others fear going alone (27 percent) or not finding a female health provider present in the facility (17 percent). The most common reason for not seeking health care is concern that no provider will be in attendance (44 percent).

Maternal Mortality Has Increased Dramatically

Since the mid-1980s, maternal mortality (deaths that occur during childbirth or during the first two months after birth) has increased substantially. For the ten-year periods before the surveys administered in 2000 and 2006-07, maternal mortality increased from 271 deaths to 449 deaths per 100,000 live births.