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MALAYSIA MORTALITY RATE AND ITS CAUSES

BY AZIZUL AZHAN HUSSAIN
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
UITM CAWANGAN TERENGGANU



In 2024, Malaysia recorded 34.1 million population, an increase of 1.9% compared to the previous year. This figure is contributed by both citizens and non-citizens. In general, citizens can be categorized as Malay bumiputera, other bumiputra, like those from Sabah and Sarawak, and indigenous people in Semenanjung. Two of the biggest non bumiputra ethnicities are Indian and Chinese, while non-citizens are mostly made up of foreign workers, expatriates, refugees or asylum seekers, and foreign students. It is important to note that the population does not count temporary citizens, who are the people that stay in Malaysia legally for a short stay, often under specific visas and permits.

In 2023, DOSM published a massive 533 pages report on Malaysia death statistics for the year. The report highlighted and discussed in detail, both medically verified death, and death that cannot be verified by medical professionals. The research and statistics on Malaysia mortality rate are critical for nation building, as they highlight

several aspects that has direct impact on both the government and its citizen, namely:

- 1.Public health assessment
- 2.Healthcare planning and resource allocation
- 3.Economic implications
- 4.Life expectancy and development indicators
- 5.Monitoring epidemics and pandemics, like Covid-19 in the past, and monkeypox (Mpox) currently
- 6.Population growth and demographics
- 7.Social inequalities.

In general, mortality rates serve as a key indicator for national health, economic stability, and social development, helping governments and organizations create strategies for improving the overall well-being of their population.

In Malaysia, mortality rates are contributed by a variety of factors, including chronic diseases, infectious diseases, accidents, and lifestyle related conditions.

From an article published by KKM in 2019, there are five major categories of death causes in Malaysia. Heart diseases tops the list at 20.6%, followed by stroke with 13.9%. Number three is lower respiratory infections at 11.3%, and diabetes mellitus accounts for 5.0%. The last one in the list is road injuries which also recorded 5%. It is important to note that this was recorded in 2019, which is a year before Covid-19 pandemic. Up to September 2024, all Covid-19 related deaths in Malaysia are at 37,351 with the last known Covid-19 death recorded in April 2024. Malaysia, however, has not officially declared itself as Covid-19 free. It only transitions to an endemic phase which marks the beginning of living with the virus as a manageable endemic disease.

Fast forward into five years, and in 2024 little has changed in terms of categories of leading Malaysian death causes. Ischaemic heart diseases lead the chart, followed by pneumonia (respiratory or lung related diseases), cerebrovascular diseases (stroke or blood vessels and blood supply to the brain), Covid-19 infection, and transport accidents.

Detailed studies by KKM and DOSM further categorized death as in specific categories based on particular interest of researchers. These include, among others, causes and rate of death by gender, by ethnicity and gender, by sex, state and district, by neonatal (period of life from birth to 28 days) and by maternity mothers.

- Suicide rate is on the increase, could be due to the increasing rate of mental issues (5.2 deaths per 100, 000).
- Suicide tend to occur among younger individuals, particularly those aged 15 to 29.
- Health care concerns vary among different cultures, because cultural practices and beliefs can influence health seeking behavior, mortality rates and worldview perspective.
- Malaysia ranks better in terms of mortality rate in general compared to Indonesia, but falls behind Singapore.

Perhaps what is more important than the statistics is how we as individuals lead our daily life on a day to day basis. A significant portion of death in Malaysia is attributed to the non-communicable diseases (NCD), such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, accounting for over 70% of total deaths. This reflects a shift from infectious diseases to chronic health issues due to lifestyle changes. NCDs may include heart diseases and stroke, various types of cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes (both type 1 and type 2 diabetes), and mental health disorders.

It is important to note that prevention and management are two of the major ways to address the prevalent issues of NCDs, which involves promoting healthy lifestyle choices, implementing public health policies, and improving healthcare services. Early detection and effective management of these diseases are critical to improving health outcomes.

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Some key takeaways from this massive research are:

1. Heart diseases are the leading cause of death.
2. In every 2 minutes, there are two deaths recorded in Malaysia.
3. Selangor recorded the highest life expectancy at birth for 2022 to 2024 while Terengganu recorded the lowest life expectancy at birth for the same period.
4. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are the leading specific causes of death.
5. There are about 500,000 more males than females in the country currently.
6. Women live longer, based on male life expectancy at around 72 years, and women at approximately 78 years.



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Faculty of Business and Management

Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun

Sura Hujung, 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

Tel: +609-8400400

Fax: +609-8403777

Email: biznewzuitm@gmail.com