

# Somalia

## Key Facts

Total Population:	10495,600
Population aged under 18 years:	5677,500
Population aged under 5years:	1956,900
Population aged 10-19 years:	2521,300
Migration to the UK:	2001 Census identified approximately 45,000 people
Capital:	Mogadishu
Area:	637,657sq km
Languages:	Somali (official), Arabic, Italian, English
Major religions:	Sunni Muslim
Life expectancy:	55.1 years
Political party:	Federal Republic of Somalia
President:	Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

## Geographical Location



## Economy

Labour force by occupation	Agriculture	71%
	Industry and services	29%
Child labour:	Children aged 5-14 years in 2006	1,148,265 (49%)

Somalia maintains an informal economy largely based on livestock, remittance/money transfer companies, and telecommunications. Agriculture is the most important sector with livestock normally accounting for about 40% of GDP and more than 50% of export earnings. Livestock, hides, fish, charcoal, and bananas are Somalia's principal exports, while sugar, sorghum, corn, qat, and machined goods are the principal imports. Somalia's small industrial sector, based on the processing of agricultural products, has largely been looted and the machinery sold as scrap metal.

## Education

Net attendance at primary school (2008-2013):	Males	25.1%
	Females	20.8%
Net attendance at secondary school (2008-2013):	Males	9.5%
	Females	4.6%

The civil war in Somalia has completely decimated the educational system. Now the focus is on survival. Before the war, the educational system was similar to that of western countries. Children started school around the age of five or six and attended four years of elementary school, four years of middle school, and four years of high school. The Qur'an is taught in school and children may also receive private religious tutoring, which typically begins at three or four years of age. Before the war, there were both public and private schools, but now only private schools are available for those who can afford it. College or higher education can be pursued after the age of 17, if affordable. Prior to the war, higher education was free.

## Child Protection

Percentage of children married - by age of 15:	8.4%	(2005-2013)
- by age of 18:	45.3%	(2005-2013)

Children orphaned by AIDS (2013):	est 30,000
Children orphaned due to all causes (2013):	est 630,000

## Politics - Key political dates:

**19th century** - European colonial powers gradually make inroads into Somalia's rival regional states, with the bulk of the area coming under Italian rule and the British establishing control of the northwest.

**1960** - Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland become independent, merge and form the United Republic of Somalia. Aden Abdullah Osman Daar elected president.

**1967** - Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke beats Aden Abdullah Osman Daar in elections for president.

**1969** - Mohamed Siad Barre assumes power in coup after the assassination of the elected president; he goes on to declare Somalia a socialist state and nationalises most of the economy.

**1974-75** - Severe drought causes widespread starvation.

**1981** - Opposition to Barre's regime begins to emerge after he excludes members of the Mijertyn and Isaq clans from government positions, which are filled with people from his own Marehan clan.



**1991** - Mohamed Siad Barre is ousted in 1991 sparking decades-long civil war between rival clan warlords and the disintegration of central authority. The power struggle between clan warlords kills and wounds thousands of civilians. Former British Somaliland declares unilateral independence.

**1990s**- US-spearheaded UN peacekeeping mission fails to restore peace, hundreds of Somalis die in the process. Northern Puntland region declares autonomy in 1998.

**2000s**- As rival warlords tore the country apart into clan-based fiefdoms, an internationally-backed unity government formed in 2000 struggled to establish control, and the two relatively peaceful northern regions of Somaliland and Puntland effectively broke away.

**2004** December - Tsunami off Indonesia displaces 10,000s on Somali coast.

**2005-2012** Pirates - mainly operating out of Puntland - pose a major menace to shipping off the Somali coast, before falling away as a threat as a result of an international naval operation.

**2006** - Militias loyal to the Islamist Union of Islamic Courts capture Mogadishu and much of the country's south after defeating clan warlords. This leads to intervention by Ethiopian, and later, African Union, forces...

**2007-11** - An African Union peacekeeping force, Amisom, begins to deploy and Ethiopian troops withdraw in 2009. Al-Shabab - a jihadist breakaway from the Islamic Courts - advance into southern and central Somalia, prompting an armed intervention by Kenya.

**2010-12** - Famine kills almost 260,000 people. Foreign aid assistance significantly restricted by Al-Shabab.

**2012** - Efforts to restore a central authority since 2000 finally make substantial progress, with the swearing in of the first formal internationally backed parliament in more than 20 years, and the holding of the first presidential election since 1967. Civic activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is made president. Subsequently Somalia has been inching towards stability with pro government forces recapturing Islamic extremist territories within Somalia, but the new authorities continue to face ongoing challenge from Al-Qaeda-aligned Al-Shabab insurgents.

**2013** June - Veteran Al-Shabab leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys is taken into custody by government troops after he is ousted by more extreme Al-Shabab figure Ahmed Abdi Godane. Spike in violence with various attacks by Al-Shabab, including on presidential palace and UN compound in Mogadishu.

**2013** September - Al-Shabab seize shopping centre and kill 60 people in Kenyan capital Nairobi, saying it is retaliation for Kenya's military involvement in Somalia.

**2013** September - International donors promise 2.4 billion dollars in reconstruction aid in three-year "New Deal".

**2014** September - Al-Shabab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane killed in US drone strike. Government offers 2 million dollar bounty for his successor, Ahmad Omar.

**2014** November-December - Al Shabab carry out mass killings in north-east Kenya, including on a bus and a camp of quarry workers.

**2015** April - Al-Shabab claim responsibility for killing 148 people, mainly Christian students, at Garissa University College in northern Kenya. Kenya carries out air raids on Al-Shabab bases in Somalia in retaliation.

Al-Shabab militia :

- "The Youth" in Arabic
- Controls large areas of Somalia
- Formed as a radical offshoot of the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006
- Include foreign jihadists
- Has launched cross-border raids into Kenya, Uganda
- Estimated to have 7,000 to 9,000 fighters
- Announced merger with al-Qaeda in 2012



Political parties and leaders:

- CADHI [Abdirahman IBRAHIM]
- Cosmopolitan Democratic Party [Yarow Sharef ADEN]
- Democratic Green Party of Somalia or DGPS [Abdullahi Y. MAHAMOUD]
- Democratic Party of Somalia or DPS [Maslah Mohamed SIAD]
- Green Leaf for Democracy or GLED
- Hiil Qaran
- Justice and Communist Party [Mohamed NUR]
- Liberal Party of Somalia
- National Unity Party (Xisbiga Midnimo-Quaran) [Abdurahman BAADIYOW]
- Peace and Development Party or PDP
- Somali National Party or SNP [Mohammed Ameen Saeed AHMED]
- Somali People's Party [Mahamud Hassan RAGE]
- Somali Green Party (local chapter of Federation of Green Parties of Africa)
- Tayo or TPP [Mohamed Abdullahi MOHAMED]
- Tiir Party [Fadhil Sheik MOHAMUD]
- United and Democratic Party [Salad Ali JELLE]
- United Somali Parliamentarian

## National Service

Somalia's national service consists of the National Security Force known as the Somali Army. Eighteen years is the legal minimum age for compulsory and voluntary military service.

## Human Rights

The warring parties in Somalia's long-running armed conflict continue to displace, kill, and wound civilians. Restrictions on humanitarian access exacerbate the human rights and humanitarian crises. The Islamist armed group Al-Shabaab abandoned several towns after a joint military offensive by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Armed Forces in 2014. However, Al-Shabaab maintains control of large areas of south-central Somalia, where it administers public executions and beatings and restricts basic rights. Al-Shabaab carried out deadly attacks in government-controlled areas such as Mogadishu, targeting civilians, including lawmakers and other officials.

Somali government security forces, African Union (AU) troops, and allied militias were responsible for indiscriminate attacks, sexual violence, and arbitrary arrests and detention. The Somali government largely failed to provide security and protect rights in areas under its control. Ongoing insecurity in government-controlled areas, including Mogadishu, and political infighting and reshuffles detracted from progress on justice and security sector reform. Political efforts to establish federal states fuelled inter-clan fighting in some areas.

### ***Abuses by Government Forces***

Civilians have been caught up in fighting between government forces and Al-Shabaab, skirmishes between government forces over control of checkpoints, and in inter-clan fighting over land and over the haphazard and politicized creation

of federal states. They have become casualties of indiscriminate attacks by government forces in their heavy-handed responses to public protests and rebel attacks.

Somalia's national intelligence agency, NISA, routinely carried out mass security sweeps, despite having no legal mandate to arrest and detain suspects. NISA reportedly have mistreated suspects during interrogations. Government forces and clan militia regularly clash, causing civilian deaths, injuries, and destruction of property.



Government forces have been known to target specific villages such as KM-50 village, where they fought a local militia, beat residents, and looted and burned homes and shops. Several civilians were reportedly killed and many civilians fled the area.

### ***Abuses by Al-Shabaab***

Credible reports indicate that Al-Shabaab continues to carry out targeted attacks and killings, including public beheadings and civilian executions. Al-Shabaab also administers arbitrary justice and severely restricts basic rights.

They have been behind suicide bomb attacks that have killed civilians.

### ***Sexual Violence***

While the full scope of sexual violence in Somalia remains unknown due to underreporting and absence of data, it is clear that internally displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to rape by armed men, including Somali government soldiers and militia members. Government forces and allied militia have also taken advantage of insecurity in newly recovered towns to rape local women and girls. The government endorsed an action plan to address sexual violence, but implementation was slow.

Some soldiers from Uganda and Burundi deployed as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia sexually exploited and assaulted women and girls on their bases in Mogadishu. In some cases women and girls were offered humanitarian assistance, medicine, and food in exchange for sex. Few women filed complaints due to a fear of reprisals and an absence of effective and safe complaints mechanisms.

### ***Recruitment of Children and Other Abuses***

Al-Shabaab in particular targets children for recruitment and forced marriage, and attacks schools. The UN documented recruitment and use of children by government forces and allied militia. UN experts on children in armed conflict raised concerns about the unlawful detention of 55 children, reportedly formerly associated with armed groups, in the Serendi rehabilitation camp in Mogadishu. Government authorities committed to implement action plans signed in 2012 to end the use of child soldiers, as well as the killing and maiming of children, but progress has been slow.

### ***Access to Humanitarian Assistance***

According to the UN, over 1 million people, many of them displaced persons, face acute food insecurity and 120,000 Somalis have been newly displaced since the beginning of 2014, as a result of ongoing military operations. Tens of thousands of displaced people remain in dire conditions in Mogadishu and are subjected to evictions, sexual violence, and clan-based discrimination at the hands of government forces, allied militia, and private individuals including camp managers.

Ongoing attacks on humanitarian workers, insecurity, local power struggles, and restrictions imposed by the warring parties posed challenges for humanitarian agencies trying to address basic needs. For example, on December 18, 2013, unidentified gunmen killed three Syrian doctors and one Somali doctor while traveling to a health post outside Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab used its control of supply routes to impose blockades around Hudur, Bulo-Burte, Elbur and Qoryoley and other towns taken over by AMISOM and Somali government forces, severely restricting the movement of goods, assistance, and people, including by attacking civilian vehicles.

### ***Attacks on Media***

Somalia remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist, with unlawful arrests, beatings and killings occurring. Government harassment and intimidation of journalists in Mogadishu, particularly by NISA, and threats against media outlets has increased. In Somaliland, the authorities have harassed popular newspapers.



## ***Key International and Regional Actors***

Foreign and regional partners prioritized financial assistance to AMISOM for the military offensives against Al-Shabaab and to mentor and train the Somali armed forces. On January 22 2014, 4,395 Ethiopian troops formally merged with AMISOM, joining troops from Burundi, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, and Kenya to bring the force's strength to 22,126 troops. Support to the Somali government has focused on building the security apparatus, resulting in a proliferation of new security entities, and integration of militias. The United States has also deployed a number of military advisors to assist AMISOM and Somali security forces. The US Defense Department claimed responsibility for an airstrike that killed Al-Shabaab's leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane.

Much of the international and regional community focus, including that of the UN and European Union, has centered on the implementation of a federalist form of government. In addition to their large military presence in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia trained and provided military support to government-affiliated militia. Both focused on the status of border areas and have been involved in negotiations over the creation of new federal states in these areas.

Host countries of Somali refugees, including Kenya and several European countries, used alleged improvements in security in Mogadishu as grounds for returning Somalis, including asylum seekers and refugees, to Somalia, despite

volatility on the ground and continued risk of persecution and serious harm from generalized violence. Between April and mid-May, Kenya deported 359 Somalis, including registered refugees, to Mogadishu without access to the UN refugee agency, in violation of its international obligations. Saudi Arabia also deported 33,605 Somalis between December 2013 and May 2014 without giving them the opportunity to file protection claims.

## **Drug Use**

Qat, also known as miraa, gat, khat, chat, kat or Arabian tea, is a mild stimulant used by some Somali's. It is derived from fresh leaves from the catha edulis tree. When the leaves are chewed, the active stimulant ingredient, cathinone, which is related to amphetamine, is released. Qat is felt to make ones thoughts sharper and is often used in conjunction with studying, acting as a stimulant. It is only used by men, and its use is more common in Northern Somalia and the Ogaden. Qat historically has been listed by the DEA as a schedule IV drug (unrestricted), however recently it was changed to a schedule I drug (most restricted) due to concerns for potential abuse. Most Somali gunmen use it to keep them away. It is thought to contribute to the many incidences of violence during early morning hours.

## **Family life**

Family is extremely important in the Somali community. The focus of Somali culture is on the family; family is more important than the individual in all aspects of life. Somalis will live with their parents until they get married. In times of sickness or marriage, all resources are pooled and it is understood that whatever you have is not only yours. Men are usually the head of the household. Women traditionally manage the finances and take care of the children. It is considered culturally unacceptable for a man to not be perceived as being in charge of his home. At the wedding ceremony, the groom is told by the elder/sheik/father/father-in-law that he is responsible for feeding his family and respecting his wife. More recently more women in Somalia work outside the home, due to increasing financial hardships primarily caused by war and resulting inflation.

Marriages can either be arranged or be a result of personal choice. The common age of marriage is around 14 or 15 years old. Men who can afford to do so, may have up to 4 wives, as is customary in Islamic tradition. However, not all wealthy men exercise this option. In urban areas, a man with multiple wives provides separate homes for his different families. Whether these families interact or not depends on the preference of the individuals involved. In rural areas, it is more common for a man with more than one wife to have a single household, where the families care for the farm or livestock together.



Children and elders share mutual respect. When addressing another family member or friend, words for “aunt,” “uncle,” “brother,” “sister,” and “cousin” are used depending on the person's age relative to the speaker.

## ***Gender Roles***

As in many Islamic cultures, adult men and women are separated in most spheres of life. Although some women in the cities hold jobs, the preferred role is for the husband to work and the wife to stay at home with the children. Female and male children participate in the same educational programs and literacy among women is relatively high.

## ***Family and Kinship Structure***

There are several main clans in Somalia and many, many subclans. In certain regions of the country a single subclan will predominate, but as the Somalis are largely nomadic, it is more common for several subclans to live intermixed in a given area. Membership in a clan is determined by paternal lineage. Marriage between clans is common. When a woman marries a man of another clan, she becomes a member of that clan, though retains connection with her family and its clan.

## ***Extended Families***

Living with extended families is the norm. Young adults who move to the city to go to school live with relatives rather than live alone. Similarly, people who do not marry tend to live with their extended families. Divorce does occur, though proceedings must be initiated by the husband.

Childbearing usually commences shortly after marriage. A woman's status is enhanced the more children she bears. Thus it is not unusual for a Somali family to have seven or eight children. The concept of planning when to have or not to have children has little cultural relevance for Somalis.

## ***Child Birth***

In Somalia the lifetime average number of children per woman is 6 compared with 2 in the UK. Expectant and newly-delivered mothers benefit from a strong network of women within Somali culture. Before a birth, the community women hold a party (somewhat like a baby shower) for the pregnant woman as a sign of support. Births most frequently occur at home, and are attended by a midwife.

## ***Post-Partum Practices***

Newborn care includes warm water baths, sesame oil massages, and passive stretching of the baby's limbs. An herb called malmal is applied to the umbilicus for the first 7 days of life.

When a child is born, the new mother and baby stay indoors at home for 40 days, a time period known as afatanbah. Female relatives and friends visit the family and help take care of them. This includes preparing special foods such as soup, porridge, and special teas. During afatanbah, the mother wears earrings made from string placed through a clove of garlic, and the baby wears a bracelet made from string and malmal in order to ward away the Evil Eye. Incense (myrrh) is burned twice a day in order to protect the baby from the ordinary smells of the world, which are felt to have the potential to make him or her sick. At the end of the 40 days there is a celebration at the home of a friend or relative. This marks the first time the mother or baby has left the home since the delivery. There is also a naming ceremony for the child. In some families this occurs within the first 2-3 weeks of the baby's life, in other families, the naming ceremony is held at the same time as the celebration at the end of afatanbah. These ceremonies are big family gatherings with lots of food, accompanied by the ritual killing of a goat and prayers.

## ***Infant Feeding and Care***

Breastfeeding is the primary form of infant nutrition. It is common to breastfeed a child until 2 years of age. Supplementation with animal milks (camel, goat, cow) early in the neonatal period is common. This is especially true during the first few days of life, as colostrum is considered unhealthy. Camel's milk is considered to be the most nutritious of animal milks. A few Somalis use bottles, but more



commonly, infants, including newborns are offered liquids in a cup. A mixture of rice and cow's milk is introduced at about 6 months of age, and subsequent solid foods after that. Most Somali women are uncomfortable with the Western idea of pumping breastmilk. They believe that human milk shouldn't be stored because it will go bad.

## ***Child Rearing Practices***

Diapering is not common in Somalia. When the baby is awake, the mother will hold a small basin in her lap and then hold her baby in a sitting position over the basin at regular time intervals. Somali mothers claim that within a short period of time infants are trained to use the "potty." At night-time, a piece of plastic is placed between the mattress and the bedding. The bedding and plastic are cleaned daily.

## ***Adolescence, Adulthood and Old Age***

Adulthood is considered to begin around the age of 18, though it is acceptable to marry and have children around the age of 15. Mothers begin to prepare girls to run a household when they are between seven and nine years old. At this time, girls are expected to accept considerable responsibility around the house.

There is a great difference between rural and urban life. In rural areas, it is typical to follow a family trade. Some children may be able to attend school for a few years and then join the family trade. Impoverished people work hard to gain financial security and seek the most profitable employment. If a family lives in an urban center, they are more likely to have received more education.

## **Cultural Etiquette**

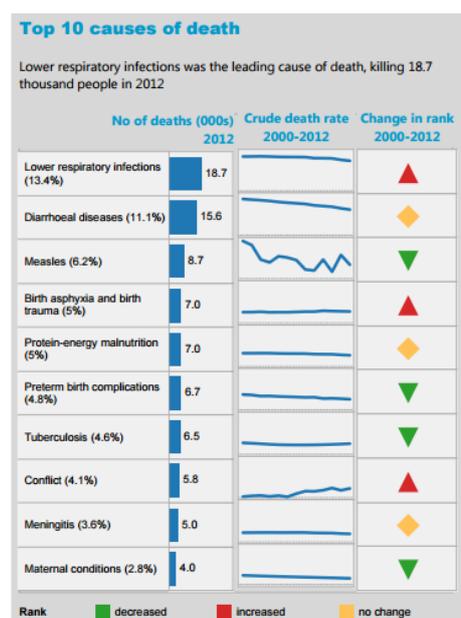
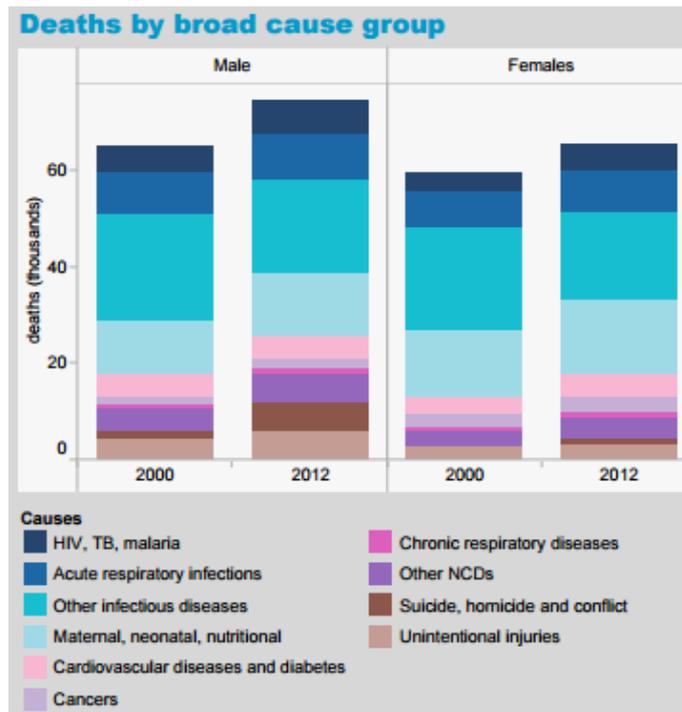
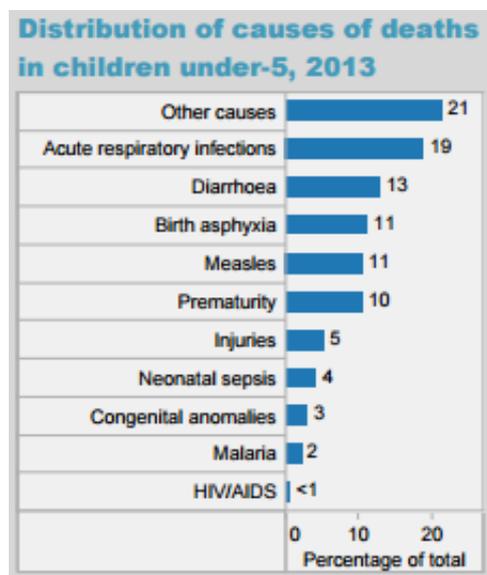
- The civil war is based on interclan and interfactional conflicts. When addressing Somali culture, it is considered disrespectful to refer to "clans" or "tribes." Tribes were names originally given in order to place families and locate people, but now they reinforce prejudices produced by the civil war.
- Due to Islamic tradition, men and women do not touch each other. Thus men shake the hands of other men, and women shake each other's hands. Always offer your right hand; the left hand symbolizes uncleanness and is used for personal hygiene. If a child begins to show left-handed preference, the parents will actively try to train him or her to use the right hand. Thus left-handedness is very uncommon in Somalia.
- Do not move away from a Somali who stands "close" to you during conversation. It is customary for a Somali to stand about one foot away.
- Place your feet flat on the floor if you are sitting on a chair, or fold them under you if you are sitting on the floor.
- As per Muslim tradition, married women are expected to cover their bodies including their hair. In Somalia, some Somali women wear veils to cover their faces. The traditional women's dress is called a hejab, and the traditional clothing for a man is called a maawis. The snug-fitting hat that men wear is a qofe.
- Somali names have three parts. The first name is the given name, and is specific to an individual. The second name is the name of the child's father, and the third name is the name of the child's paternal grandfather. Thus siblings, both male and female, will share the same second and third names. Women, when they marry, do not change their names. By keeping the name of their father and grandfather, they are, in effect, maintaining their affiliation with their clan of birth.



## Health

### Mortality

Neonatal mortality rate per 1000 live births:	46.2	(2013)
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births:	90	(2013)
Under 5 mortality rate per 1000 live births:	146	(2013)



## Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- FGM has been estimated to affect more than 80% of women and girls in Somalia (97.9% prevalence in women and 46% prevalence in girls between 2004-2013).
- 64.5% of the population support the practice of FGM between 2004-2013.

## Infectious diseases

- TB - Somalia has a high incidence of tuberculosis of 40-499/100,000 population.
- HIV - The rate of HIV in this country is low at  $\leq 1\%$ .
- Mother to child transmission is 14%.
- Children living with HIV was estimated in 2013 to be 5400.
- Hepatitis B - Somalia has an intermediate prevalence of hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C - Somalia has a higher prevalence of hepatitis C than the UK.
- Malaria - There is a high risk of malaria in Somalia predominantly due to *P. falciparum*.
- The rate of new cases is 1.9 per 1000 of population.
- Enteric Fever - There is a risk of typhoid infection in Somalia.
- Helminths - There is a risk of helminth infections including schistosomiasis and soil transmitted helminthiasis in Somalia.
- Polio - Polio cases have recently been reported in Somalia.

## Immunisations

Percentage coverage in under 1s:

DPT1	52%	
DPT3/pentavalant Hib	42%	combination vaccine: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and Hib
BCG	33%	
PCV3	0%	
HBV3 (hepatitis B)	34%	
Rotavirus	0%	
Hib	34%	
Polio	47%	
Newborns protected against tetanus	64%	

## Nutrition

Percentage of babies exclusively breastfed < 6 months:	9.1%
Introduction to solid, semi-solid or soft foods 6-8 months:	15.6%
Breastfeeding at age 2:	35.2%
Percentage of who are underweight:	32.8%
Percentage of whose growth was stunted:	42.1%
Percentage whose growth was wasted:	13.2%
Vitamin A deficiency	- There is a high risk of vitamin A deficiency in Somalia.



## **Health Beliefs**

Somali traditional medicine is practiced by "traditional doctors" who are usually older men of the community who have learned their skills from older family members. Modalities used include, fire-burning, herbal remedies, casting, and prayer. Fire-burning is a procedure where a stick from a special tree is heated till it glows and then applied to the skin in order to cure the illness. It is commonly used for hepatitis, where the heated stick is applied once to each wrist and 4 times to the abdomen. It is also commonly used for marasmus, the heated stick is applied to the head in order to reduce the head size. Pneumonia is treated with fire-burning, herbs, and sometimes percutaneous removal of fluid from the chest. Seizures are treated with herbs and readings from the Koran. Stomach-aches and back-aches are treated with the herb habakhedi, while rashes and sore throats are treated with a tea made from the herb dinse.

Traditional doctors are also responsible for helping to cure illnesses caused by spirits. Somalis have a concept of spirits residing within each individual. When the spirits become angry, illnesses such as fever, headache, dizziness, and weakness can result. The illness is cured by a healing ceremony designed to appease the spirits. These ceremonies involve reading the Koran, eating special foods, and burning incense. The illness is usually cured within 1 or 2 days of the ceremony.

In Somali culture there also exists the concept of the "Evil Eye." A person can give someone else an Evil Eye either purposefully or inadvertently by directing comments of praise at that person, thereby causing harm or illness to befall them. For example, one does not tell someone else that they look beautiful, because that could bring on the Evil Eye. Similarly, Somali mothers cringe when doctors tell them that their babies are big and fat, out of fear the Evil Eye will cause something bad to happen to their child. More acceptable comments are to say that the child is "healthy" or "beautiful."

Circumcision is universally practiced for both males and females. It is viewed as a rite of passage, allowing a person to become a fully accepted adult member of the community. It is commonly viewed as necessary for marriage, as uncircumcised people are seen as unclean. Male circumcision is performed at various times between birth and 5 years of age. It is accompanied by a celebration involving prayers and the ritual slaying of a goat. It is performed either by a traditional doctor or by a nurse or doctor in a hospital.

