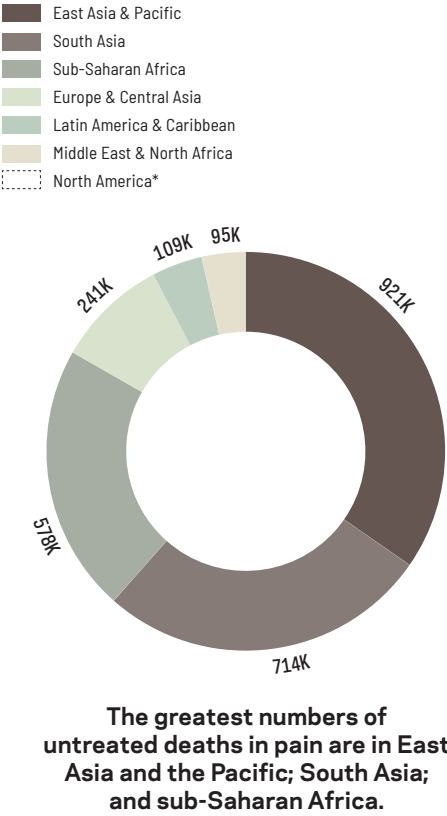


# PAIN CONTROL

Millions of cancer patients, almost entirely in low- and middle-income countries, lack access to essential pain medicines.

**FIGURE 32.3**  
*Untreated deaths in pain by region, 2016*



\*Zero untreated deaths in pain in North America, 2016.

Essential medicine lists of the World Health Organization and many countries include opioid analgesics, such as morphine. The moderate or severe pain experienced by approximately 80% of people with advanced cancer cannot be relieved without them.

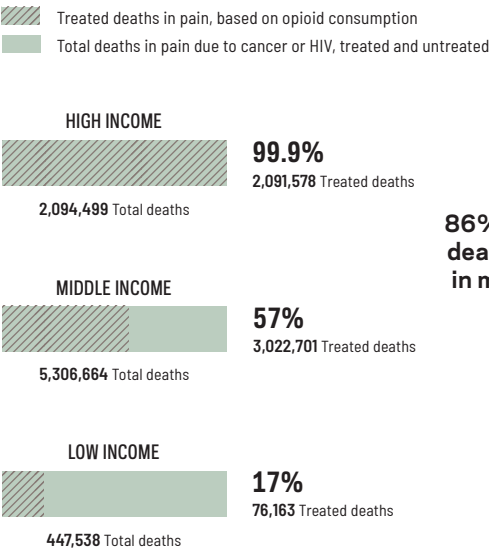
But access to opioid analgesics is limited in low- and middle-income countries, where 85% of the world’s population consumes just 7% of the medicinal opioids. **FIGURE 32.2** Legal and regulatory restrictions, cultural misperceptions about pain, inadequate training of healthcare providers, poorly functioning markets, weak health systems, and concern about addiction and non-medical use all contribute to limited access, even though morphine, the most effective treatment for severe pain, is safe, effective, inexpensive, and easy to use.

Meanwhile, some high-income countries are dealing with a very different challenge related to pain relief, as rates of addiction continue to rise due to harmful and non-medical use of opioids.

Worldwide, the number of cancer patients in need of pain relief is projected to increase 48% from 2018 to 2035, but the increase is likely to be considerably higher in the regions with more rapidly increasing cancer rates and with the lowest access to pain relief, including South-Eastern Asia (projected 54% increase in cancer cases) and Africa (72% increase), where consumption of pain relief is sufficient to cover less than 25% of deaths in pain.

**FIGURE 32.3** A balanced approach to access to opioids with sufficient measures to prevent harmful and non-medical use has been achieved by many Western European countries and in some low- and low-middle income countries.

**FIGURE 32.2**  
*Total cancer and HIV deaths in pain and those treated for pain, by income level, 2016*

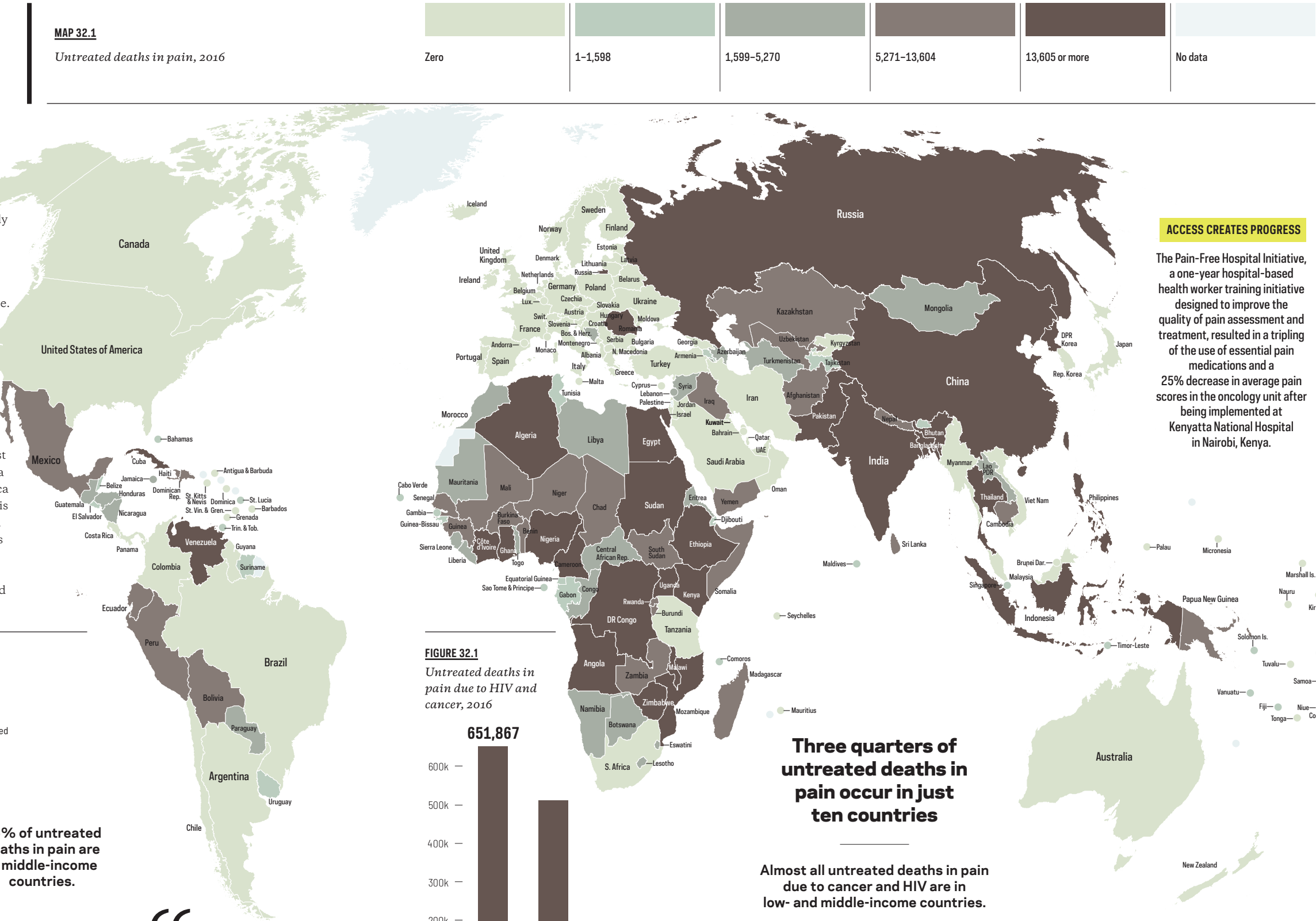


**86% of untreated deaths in pain are in middle-income countries.**

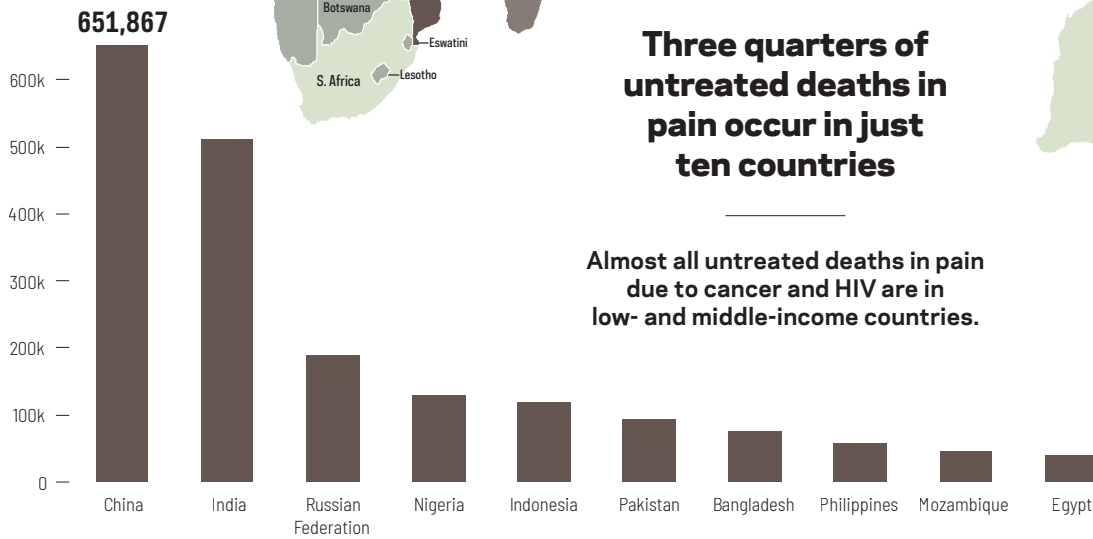
“Improved access to oral morphine is mandatory for the treatment of moderate to severe cancer pain, suffered by over 80% of cancer patients in terminal phase.

— World Health Organization

**MAP 32.1**  
*Untreated deaths in pain, 2016*



**FIGURE 32.1**  
*Untreated deaths in pain due to HIV and cancer, 2016*



**ACCESS CREATES PROGRESS**

The Pain-Free Hospital Initiative, a one-year hospital-based health worker training initiative designed to improve the quality of pain assessment and treatment, resulted in a tripling of the use of essential pain medications and a 25% decrease in average pain scores in the oncology unit after being implemented at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya.