

# Health in the Overseas Territories

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In overseas territories, health is a reflection of inequality. More than just a question of healthcare, it crystallises the problems facing these territories: poverty, isolation and difficult access to essential resources. Talking about health therefore raises the question of the promise of republican equality.

## Health, a symbol of inequality in overseas territories

Beyond economic and social determinants, overseas territories face a unique health and environmental context, with multiple exposures (pollutants, toxic algae, climatic hazards) and a tropical climate (chikungunya, dengue, Zika) that shape an individual's health from birth to death. Unequal access to care and insufficient and poorly coordinated provision are compounded by difficulties in recruiting and retaining health professionals, which affect the organisation and continuity of care. Finally, mistrust of health institutions is part of a broader context of structural fragility in healthcare systems and the perception of persistent inequalities in access compared to mainland France.

## Aiming for equal treatment for all citizens and solidarity between territories

Faced with what it considers to be a systemic crisis, the CESE is calling for an ambitious and coordinated health policy for overseas territories. It is therefore calling for a comprehensive approach that identifies the specific needs of these territories. This approach must take into account health determinants, new public health emergencies, financing and the organisation of the healthcare system. Based on an assessment of the eleven overseas territories and contributions from the CESERs, the EESC has formulated 17 highly operational courses of action. In particular, it recommends developing partnerships and cooperation between overseas and mainland France territories for the sharing of skills, training, telemedicine and continuity of care. The CESE proposes promoting health diplomacy. Only by integrating social, environmental and territorial dimensions to better understand the health realities and challenges specific to overseas territories will it be possible to improve the design, organisation and implementation of appropriate and effective health policies.

Excess mortality in overseas departments and regions compared to the national level:

+89%  
in Mayotte

+37%  
in French  
Guiana

+9%  
in Guadeloupe

Source: study by Santé publique France, Inserm and the Statistics Directorate of the Ministry of Health (DREES) based on data from 2023 concerning causes of mortality in France at the same age - July 2025

### 1 BETTER IDENTIFY NEEDS TO BETTER RESPOND TO THEIR SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Develop detailed health statistics in overseas territories.
- Make health and environmental issues priorities in regional health projects. • Systematically include in Regional Health Projects (PRS) a comparison with the average situation observed in mainland France and by region.

### 2 DEVELOPING SOLIDARITY

- Contractually commit each overseas territory to a collaboration or 'partnership' with a mainland health territory: telemedicine advisors, training courses for interns, etc.
- Implement forward-looking management of healthcare worker demographics by regional health agencies in conjunction with the relevant local authorities (scholarship system, training, recruitment, etc.) to retain them.

### 3 IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

- Create an interministerial health committee in the overseas territories to ensure the effectiveness and consistency of public action, better territorialisation of decisions and their adaptation to local realities, with an annual report submitted to Parliament for examination by committees. • Draw up an inventory of public health 'emergencies' and an action plan (with a five-year deadline for each 'emergency' including measures and funding) detailed in the ARS regional health programmes, and entrust their evaluation to the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs (IGAS).
- Establish in each overseas territory a formal agreement between the State, local authorities (DROM and COM) and public and private health establishments setting out territorialised public health objectives, committing stakeholders to the organisation of care (human, technical and financial resources) on prevention, continuity of care and quality of treatment, and strengthening coordination between stakeholders to ensure consistent and collaborative health governance. • Recognise and support traditional medicine in overseas territories through a legal framework to develop the complementarity of conventional and traditional medicine and guarantee against any risk of illegal practice of medicine.

#### THE RAPPOORTEURS

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