A **survivorship curve** is a [graph](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chart) showing the number or proportion of individuals surviving at each age for a given species or group (e.g. males/females). Survivorship curves can be constructed for a given [cohort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cohort_%28statistics%29) (a group of individuals of roughly the same age) based on a [life table](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_table).

There are three generalized types of survivorship curve, which are simply referred to as **Type I**, **Type II** and **Type III** curves.

* Type I survivorship curves are characterized by high survival in early and middle life, followed a rapid decline in survivorship in later life. [Humans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human) are one of the species that show this pattern of survivorship.
* Type II curves are an intermediate between Type I and III, where roughly constant [mortality rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortality_rate) is experienced regardless of age. Some [birds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bird) follow this pattern of survival.
* In Type III curves, the greatest mortality is experienced early on in life, with relatively low rates of death for those surviving this bottleneck. This type of curve is characteristic of species that produce a large number of [offspring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offspring) (see [r/K selection theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R/K_selection_theory)). One example of a species that follows this type of survivorship curve is the [Octopus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octopus).

The number or proportion of organisms surviving is plotted on the [y-axis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cartesian_coordinate_system), generally with a [logarithmic scale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logarithmic_scale) starting with 1000 individuals, while their age, often as a proportion of [maximum life span](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximum_life_span), is plotted on the x-axis.