

50 FACTS

Births

- 1 About 139 million babies were born in 1995, a 12% increase over the last 15 years. However, mainly due to increasing contraceptive use, women are having fewer babies—an average of 3 today compared to 3.2 in 1990 and 3.7 in 1980.
- 2 Of all the births in 1995, almost 16 million were in the developed world, almost 25 million in the least developed countries, and over 98 million in other developing countries.
- 3 Between 1990-1995, about 15 million babies were born each year to teenagers or women over 35. Birth rates among young women aged 15-19 are twice as high in the developing world as in developed countries.

Life Expectancy

4. Average life expectancy at birth globally in 1995 was more than 65 years, an increase of about 3 years since 1985. It was over 75 years in developed countries, 64 years in developing countries, and 52 years in least developed countries.
5. The world's lowest life expectancy at birth, just 40 years, is in Sierra Leone—barely half of the world's highest, in Japan, where it is 79.7 years.
6. At least 18 countries in Africa have a life expectancy at birth of 50 years or less.

7. The number of countries with a life expectancy at birth of over 60 years has increased from at least 98 (with a total population of 2.7 billion) in 1980 to at least 120 (with a total population of 4.9 billion) in 1995.

8. On average, women today can expect to live over 4 years longer than men—67.2 years versus 63 years. The female advantage is greatest in Europe—almost 8 more years—and smallest in South-East Asia, where it is just one year.

Deaths

9. About 52 million people died in 1995. The number is almost the same as it was 35 years ago, but the global population has almost doubled in that time.

10. More than 17 million of the 52 million deaths in 1995 were due to infectious diseases.

11. Of more than 11 million deaths among children under 5 in the developing world, about 9 million were attributed to infectious diseases, 25% of them preventable through vaccination.

12. Of the 52 million deaths, almost 34 million occurred at the extremes of life—over 11 million children died before the age of 5; over 22 million people survived until at least 65.

13. Cancer killed about 6.6 million people in 1995.

14. In Africa, more than 40% of all deaths were among children under 5.

15. About 8.4 million infants died last year before their first birthday. Developed

market economies had only 6.9 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 106.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in the least developed countries.

Population

16. The global population in mid-1995 was about 5.7 billion people. The current population growth rate of 1.5% per annum is the lowest recorded since the Second World War.
17. The population is expected to grow by about 90 million people a year for the next 20 years, dropping to about 50 million a year by 2050.
18. The world's 48 least developed countries have a combined population to day of about 589 million; this is expected to increase to 1.7 billion by the year 2050.
19. In 1995, about 2.6 billion people-45% of the global population-were living in urban areas. The proportion is expected to reach 60% by the year 2025. Twenty years from now, 33 of the world's biggest cities will have a combined population of more than 500 million people.

Child Health

20. The prevalence of underweight children under 5 years fell from 34% in 1985 to 31% in 1995 for developing countries as a whole; but it is 40% in the least developed countries.
21. There were an estimated 6.7 million more underweight children in sub-Saharan Africa in 1995 than in 1990.
22. The number of countries with an infant mortality rate of below 50 per 1,000 live births has risen from at least 77 (with a total population of 1.3 billion) in 1980 to at least 103 (with a total population of 3.2 billion) in 1995.

Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases

23. At least 30 new diseases have been scientifically recognized around the world in the last 20 years.
24. The existence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was unknown barely a decade ago. Today more than 20 million adults are estimated to be infected. The cumulative total could reach 40 million in the next 5 years.
25. Several new hepatitis viruses have been identified in recent years. Hepatitis B has infected 2 billion people alive today, of whom 350 million are chronically infected and therefore at risk of death from liver disease. About 100 million are chronically and incurably infected with hepatitis C and are similarly at risk. Hepatitis E can cause major epidemics in countries with hot climates.
26. A completely new strain of cholera, called *Vibrio cholerae* 0139, appeared in south-eastern India in 1992 and has since spread to other areas of India and parts of South-East Asia.
27. The Ebola virus was unknown 20 years ago. The Ebola hemorrhagic fever outbreak in Zaire in 1995 was fatal in about 80% of cases. The natural host of the virus remains a mystery.
28. Since hantavirus infections were first recognized in the United States in 1993, they have been detected in more than 20 American states. They can cause a pulmonary syndrome with a fatality rate of over 50%. Cases have also occurred in Canada and in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.
29. Recently-recognized organisms such as *cryptosporidium* or new strains of bacteria such as *Escherichia coli*

cause epidemics of food borne and waterborne diseases in both industrialized and developing countries.

30. Tuberculosis, once regarded as virtually under control, is making a deadly comeback, killing about 3.1 million people a year. Drug-resistant tuberculosis is spreading in many countries.
31. Cholera, absent in South America for decades, struck Peru in 1991 and has since spread throughout the continent. Worldwide it is endemic in at least 80 countries and causes 120 000 deaths a year.
32. Diphtheria epidemics that began in the Russian Federation in 1990 have since struck in 15 eastern European countries. WHO estimates there are 100 000 diphtheria cases and up to 8000 deaths year worldwide.
33. The biggest epidemic of yellow fever in the Americas since 1950 struck Peru in 1995.
34. More than 2 billion people worldwide are at risk of dengue fever.
35. There were at least 333 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases worldwide in 1995, excluding HIV infections.
36. WHO aims to have a team of experts on site anywhere in the world within 24 hours of being asked to help control an epidemic.

Disappearing Diseases

37. Poliomyelitis is targeted for global eradication by the year 2000. There are now 145 countries completely free of the disease.
38. Leprosy is steadily being defeated and should no longer represent a

significant public health problem within the next few years.

39. Guinea-worm disease (dracunculiasis) could be completely eradicated within the next few years. Cases worldwide have fallen from 3.5 million in 1986 to about 120 000 in 1995; only 1-4 cases remained in most endemic villages.
40. River blindness (onchocerciasis) is being eliminated from 11 West African countries.
41. Chagas disease is being eliminated from 6 countries in South America-Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Infectious Diseases and Cancer

42. Sexually transmitted human papilloma viruses are responsible for most of the 529 000 cases of cervical cancer a year-65% of the cases in industrialized countries, and 87% of those in developing countries.
43. About 434 000 cases a year of liver cancer-82% of the world total-are due to hepatitis B or hepatitis C viruses.
42. Hepatitis B causes 316 000 and hepatitis C causes 118 000 of the cases. The viruses are transmitted in several ways, including through contaminated blood and sexually.
44. Some 550 000 new cases a year of stomach cancer are attributed to the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, transmitted in foods. The figure equals about 55% of all cases of this cancer worldwide.

Immunization

45. May 1996 marks the 200th anniversary of the first successful immunization, by Dr. Edward Jenner in England, who protected a child against smallpox by innoculating him with cowpox virus

46. The global eradication of smallpox was officially declared at WHO's World Health Assembly in 1980. The last naturally acquired case of smallpox was reported in Somalia in 1977.
47. About 80% of the world's children have been immunized against six diseases-diphtheria, measles, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, tetanus and tuberculosis. But in many African countries, under 50% of children have been immunized.
48. About 300 million children were immunized against poliomyelitis in 1995. India alone immunized 82 million children against the disease in a single day.
49. More than 700 000 deaths from tetanus among newborn babies were prevented in 1995 by immunization of women with tetanus toxoid vaccine.
50. New or improved vaccines are being developed against diarrheal diseases, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, measles, bacterial meningitis, neonatal tetanus and tuberculosis.

NOTES AND NEWS

FELLOWSHIP TRAINING IN NEONATOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

An unexpected and unique vacancy has occurred in our accredited training programme. We are a modern six ventilator level three referral center for North Queensland, linked in research to the James Cook University. Training is available in the management of medical and surgical problems of neonates, including transport. Strong commitment to research for publication and participation in university courses in epidemiology and biostatistics is integral. This is a position with responsibility and preference will be given to candidates who have worked in level three units. This Fellowship training is commencing in October 1996 and is available initially for one year. Please contact: Dr. John Whitehall, Director, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Kirwan Hospital for Woman, Townsville, Queensland, Australia. Fax 61-77-732103 Phone 61-77-730252.

CME IN NEONATOLOGY AND WORKSHOP ON NEONATAL RESUSCITATION

This event is being organized by the Department of Pediatrics, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi on October 6 and 7, 1996. For further details please contact: Prof. B.D. Bhatia, Department of Pediatrics, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221 005 (U.P.). Telephone: 0542/310921.