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Introduction

World health statistics 2007 presents the most recent health statistics for WHO's 193 Member States. This third edition includes a section with 10 highlights of global health statistics for the past year as well as an expanded set of 50 health statistics.

World health statistics 2007 has been collated from publications and databases produced by WHO's technical programmes and regional offices. The core set of indicators was selected on the basis of their relevance to global health, the availability and quality of the data, and the accuracy and comparability of estimates. The statistics for the indicators are derived from an interactive process of data collection, compilation, quality assessment and estimation occurring among WHO's technical programmes and its Member States. During this process, WHO strives to maximize the accessibility, accuracy, comparability and transparency of health statistics.¹

In addition to national statistics, this publication presents statistics on the distribution of selected health outcomes and interventions within countries, disaggregated by gender, age, urban versus rural setting, wealth, and educational level. Such statistics are primarily derived from analyses of household surveys and are available only for a limited number of countries. We envisage that the number of countries reporting disaggregated data will increase during the next few years.

The core indicators do not aim to capture all relevant aspects of health but to provide a comprehensive summary of the current status of a population's health and the health system at country level. These indicators include: mortality outcomes, morbidity outcomes, risk factors, coverage of selected health interventions, health systems, inequalities in health, and demographic and socioeconomic statistics.

All statistics have been cleared as WHO's official figures in consultation with Member States unless otherwise stated. WHO's estimates use data from publicly accessible databases, peer-reviewed methods of estimation, and consultation with experts around the world. The estimates published here should, however, still be regarded as best estimates made by WHO rather than the official view of Member States.

As the demand for timely, reliable and comparable information on key health statistics continues to increase, users need to be well informed about the definitions used and the quality and limitations of health statistics. More detailed information, including a compendium of statistics and an online version of this publication, is available from WHO's Statistical Information System (<http://www.who.int/statistics>). The web site also includes information on how each statistic is derived.

The online version of *World health statistics 2007* will be updated regularly, and it includes the most recent estimates and time-series of relevant health statistics. The online version also provides, whenever possible, metadata describing the sources of data, estimation methods and quality of estimates. It is hoped that careful scrutiny and use of the statistics presented in this report will lead to progressively better measurement of relevant indicators of population health and health systems.

1. To meet these objectives, WHO has initiated the organization-wide Programme on Health Statistics. For more information, see <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/programme/en/index.html>.