

Global snapshot 2016:

The largest population of adolescents ever

- The world is now home to 1.8 billion adolescents, the largest population in human history.
- Population growth has mostly occurred in low and middle-income countries where adolescents experience a heavy and complex burden of disease. More than half of the world's adolescents now live in these settings and carry two thirds of the global disease burden for adolescents.

Disease

- More than half of the total disease burden experienced by adolescents is due to non-communicable diseases (including mental disorders). NCDs are the leading cause of disease for adolescents in every country and this has changed little since 1990.
- A quarter of the total disease burden is due to communicable, maternal and nutritional disease. However almost all of this disease burden is borne by adolescents living in 70 low and middle-income countries.

Substance use

- Tobacco smoking prevalence declined overall, but 136 million adolescents smoked daily in 2016.
- 71 million adolescents reported binge drinking in 2016, a slight increase since 1990.
- Tobacco smoking and binge drinking increased most rapidly among girls in many low and middle-income countries.

Nutrition and obesity

- One in five (324 million) adolescents was overweight or obese in 2016. One in four (430 million) was anaemic.
- Overweight and obesity are increasing rapidly for adolescents across all countries, and yet are not included as a specific focus of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sexual and reproductive health

- In 2016 there were 12 million live-births to adolescent mothers, almost three-quarters of which occurred in countries where adolescents experience a heavy burden of disease.
- An estimated 66 million girls were married as children before turning 18 (child marriage). Forty per cent of girls in countries with the poorest health profiles were married as children.
- 73 million young women aged 15-24 in 2016 could not access contraception.

Injury

- Males carried three quarters of the global disease burden due to injuries in 2016.

Education

- 300 million (half) of 20 to 24-year-olds had not completed secondary school in 2016, a figure that has improved little since 1990.
- Although there was gender parity in secondary school completion, young women in low and middle-income countries were five times less likely than boys to be in employment and further training.