

Urgent need for COVID-19 vaccine equity

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Credit: Nataliya Vaitkevich from Pexels

COVID-19 vaccine programs are expected to cost poorer countries an additional 56.6% on health budgets, compared with just 0.8% on wealthy countries' health expenditure, according to new data from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the University of Oxford.

According to the research, inequity will have a 'lasting and profound impact' on socio-[economic recovery](#) in low and lower-middle income countries unless there is [urgent action](#) to make vaccines affordable and accessible to everyone.

With the current cost of vaccines calculated at an average US\$15.80, and without immediate global financial support, low-income countries are forecast to see [health](#) costs soar by more than half, to vaccinate fully a target of 70% of their populations. But high-income countries would have to increase spending by just 0.8 percent to achieve the same results. This would account for half of low-income countries' projected GDP growth in 2021, against 0.2% for high-income countries.

These insights come from the Global Dashboard on Vaccine Equity , a joint initiative from UNDP, WHO and Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government, which combines the latest COVID-19 vaccination information with the most recent socio-economic data. It illustrates why vaccine equity is not only critical to saving lives but also to driving a fairer and faster recovery from the pandemic.

According to Dashboard data on per capita GDP growth rates from the World Economic Outlook, richer countries are projected to vaccinate quicker and recover economically quicker from COVID-19, while [poorer countries](#) have not even been able to vaccinate their health workers and most at-risk population and may not achieve pre-COVID-19 levels of growth until 2024.

Meanwhile, Delta and other variants are driving some countries to reinstate strict public health social measures. This is further worsening the social, economic and health impact, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

"In some low- and middle-income countries, less than 1% of the

population is vaccinated—this is contributing to a two-track recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner. "It's time for swift, collective action—this new COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Dashboard will provide Governments, policymakers and international organizations with unique insights to accelerate the global delivery of vaccines and mitigate the devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic."

"Vaccine inequity is the world's biggest obstacle to ending this pandemic and recovering from COVID-19," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "Economically, epidemiologically and morally, it is in all countries' best interest to use the latest available data to make lifesaving vaccines available to all."

Dr. Thomas Hale, the Blavatnik School's Associate Professor of Global Public Policy concluded, "Closing the vaccine gap is required to put this pandemic behind us. The dashboard can help scale up and accelerate global delivery of vaccines by providing accurate, up-to-date information on not just how many vaccines have been given, but also the policies and mechanisms through which we get them into arms."

Designed to empower policy makers and development partners to take urgent action to reduce vaccine inequity, the Global Dashboard breaks down the impact of accessibility against a target for countries to vaccinate their at-risk populations first to reduce mortality and protect the health system and then move on to vaccinating larger shares of the population to reduce disease burden and re-open socio-economic activity.

The data provided by Oxford is part of the Blavatnik School's [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#), which tracks and compares policy responses around the world. The Global Dashboard on Vaccine Equity currently includes Oxford data on international support

(announced offers of COVID-19 related aid spending to other countries), investment in vaccines (announced public spending on COVID-19 vaccine development) and vaccination policy (policies for [vaccine](#) delivery for different groups).

More information: Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity:
data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/

Provided by University of Oxford

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