



TRENDS IN NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE - SCIENCE

NEWS: The World Bank published the report, *Unlocking the Power of Healthy Longevity: Demographic Change, Non-communicable Diseases, and Human Capital*, in September 2024.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

- **Focus:** Addressing demographic changes, particularly an aging population, and the rise of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Low-and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).
- **Projections:** Global deaths from NCDs are expected to rise from 61 million in 2023 to 92 million by 2050.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):** Achieving progress in NCD management could potentially halve avoidable deaths and meet SDG targets.

Healthy Longevity Initiative (HLI)

- **Objective:** Aims to reduce avoidable deaths and disabilities while enhancing physical, mental, and social well-being.
- **Approach:** Life course perspective focusing on sustained health throughout aging, with minimal deterioration before death.
- **Feasibility:** The initiative's vision appears overly optimistic, particularly for LMICs like India due to gaps in healthcare infrastructure and funding.

Challenges in LMICs (India Focus)

- **Healthcare Accessibility:** Vision of universally accessible and quality healthcare remains distant in India.
- **Systemic Issues:** Corruption, under-equipped hospitals, and a shortage of trained healthcare staff persist.
- **Financial Strain:** High out-of-pocket expenses, inadequate insurance coverage, and impoverishment due to healthcare costs are major concerns.

India's Aging Population and NCD Trends

- **Demographic Shift:** India has the second-largest elderly population (140 million, 60 years+), with a higher growth rate compared to the general population.
- **NCD Burden:** NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes are leading causes of death.
- **Economic Impact:** Rising NCD prevalence could impoverish families, increase mortality, reduce investments, and slow economic growth.

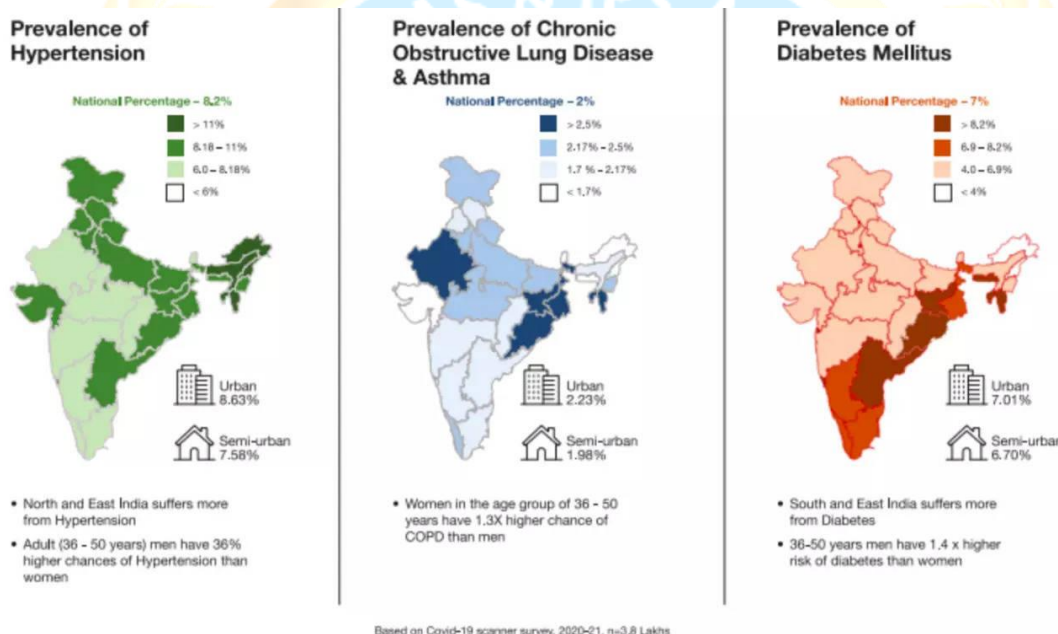


Contributing Factors to Rising NCDs

- **Lifestyle Risks:** Tobacco use, alcohol abuse, sedentary lifestyles, and unhealthy diets high in refined grains and saturated fats contribute to NCD risks.
- **Healthcare Access:** Rural and remote areas suffer from limited access to primary healthcare, impeding early detection and regular screenings for NCDs.

Impact of Social Security Schemes

- **Focus Areas:** Diabetes and heart diseases.
- **Study Insights:** Social security measures slightly alleviate the financial burden of healthcare for the elderly, but travel and treatment costs remain high.
- **Health Insurance:** Limited coverage due to low awareness, complicated processes, and frequent claim rejections; potential largely untapped.



Diet and NCD Risk

- **Dietary Influences:** High intake of refined grains, excessive rice consumption, and red meat increase risks of diabetes and heart diseases.
- **Price Sensitivity:** Rising costs of sugar and oil exacerbate risks for diabetes and heart diseases.

Age and NCD Correlation

- **Age Gradient:** Older individuals have higher risks of diabetes and heart disease due to sedentary habits, poor diets, and genetic predispositions.
- **Genetic Factors:** Indians show a higher risk of type 2 diabetes at younger ages and lower BMI compared to Western populations.



Ayushman Bharat Scheme: Potential and Limitations

- **Objective:** Targets health insurance coverage for the bottom 40% of households.
- **Challenges:** Insufficient funding, eligibility restrictions, and corruption hamper effectiveness.
- **Limitations:** Insurance alone is inadequate without robust healthcare infrastructure and provider availability.

Issues with Hospital Costs and Regulatory Measures

- **Cost Concerns:** Private hospitals often inflate prices, making healthcare unaffordable.
- **Supreme Court Directive:** In February 2024, the Supreme Court of India urged the government to regulate hospital procedure rates.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Enforcing price caps is difficult without strong mechanisms; impacts are often temporary.

Behavioural Factors in NCD Management

- **Obesity Risks:** High-calorie diets and lack of physical activity drive obesity, a major risk for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.
- **Tobacco Use:** Reducing tobacco consumption is essential, with taxation on unhealthy products recommended for broader impact.

Conclusion

- **Uncertain Future:** While reforms are necessary, the timeline and execution remain uncertain, leaving the effectiveness of proposed measures in doubt.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/debating-the-healthy-longevity-initiative/article68860898.ece>