

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION TUBERCULOSIS NOTIFICATION UPDATE, 1994

Based on *Weekly Epidemiological Record* 1995;71:65-69

More than three million cases of tuberculosis were notified in 1994, but the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over eight million cases might have occurred in the world. This under-reporting reflects missing or incomplete information or poor performance of the recording and reporting systems of some national tuberculosis control programs. Three-quarters of the notified cases have been recorded in Asia and Africa. Underlying causes are poverty, urbanisation, malnutrition, and HIV.

Tuberculosis notifications

Notifications of tuberculosis cases for 1994, as reported to WHO by January 1996, were analysed. Most data were provided by WHO Member States through the WHO Regional and Country Offices or directly from National Tuberculosis Control Programmes.

In mid-1995, the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme sent a data collection form to all Member States and other countries and areas to obtain information on the burden of tuberculosis in 1994. These forms were returned to the Global Programme for data analysis. Additional information was obtained from reports by other organisations involved in tuberculosis control, and from published literature. Prior to finalisation of the report, the data were sent to all WHO Regional Offices for verification and updating.

Out of 214 countries and areas, a total of 141 (66%) responded to the WHO inquiry for 1994 tuberculosis notification data. Information for another 17 countries and areas was obtained from other sources. These 158 countries and areas account for 90% of the global population. As not all countries provided WHO with data for 1994, the latest reports available between 1990 and 1994 have been used to generate a global picture of the disease (Table and Figure).

Table. Tuberculosis cases notified in the world for 1994, by WHO Region¹

WHO Region	Number of cases notified	Rate (per 100,000 population)
Africa	54,1360	96.8
Americas	264,221	34.9
Eastern Mediterranean	237,937	55.2
Europe	286,608	33.3
South-East Asia	1,298,999	94.4
Western Pacific	725,014	45.5
Global	3,354,139	60.1

1. Based on latest reports available.

The data shown should be interpreted with caution for a number of reasons:

- the information for the most recent years was sometimes missing or incomplete;
- for several countries the performance of the recording and reporting system of the National Tuberculosis Programme is poor;
- case definitions vary between countries; non-standard definitions are sometimes used for pulmonary and extrapulmonary tuberculosis, and not all countries distinguish between new tuberculosis cases and relapses.

Global tuberculosis situation

Figure 2 shows the latest available case notification rates (per 100,000 population) for all countries, categorised by low (<25), medium (25-100), and high (>100) levels of notification. Over 3.3 million cases of tuberculosis have been notified. This figure constitutes under-reporting, as it has been estimated that 7.5 million cases occurred in 1990 and 8.8 million will occur in 1995¹.

Regional tuberculosis situation

In the African, Eastern Mediterranean and European Regions, notifications are on the increase. In Africa, HIV, malnutrition, urbanisation and, to some extent, improvements in surveillance, may be the underlying factors. In Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, large population movements, social upheaval, and in some countries HIV, have resulted in the re-emergence of a

Figure. Distribution of notified tuberculosis cases for 1994, by WHO Region

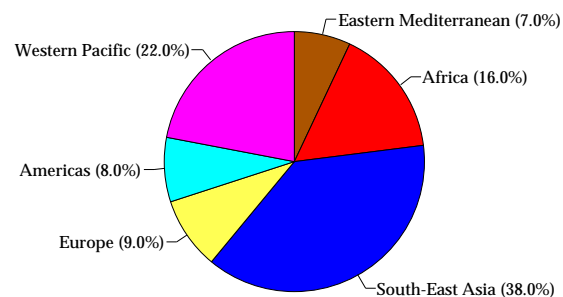
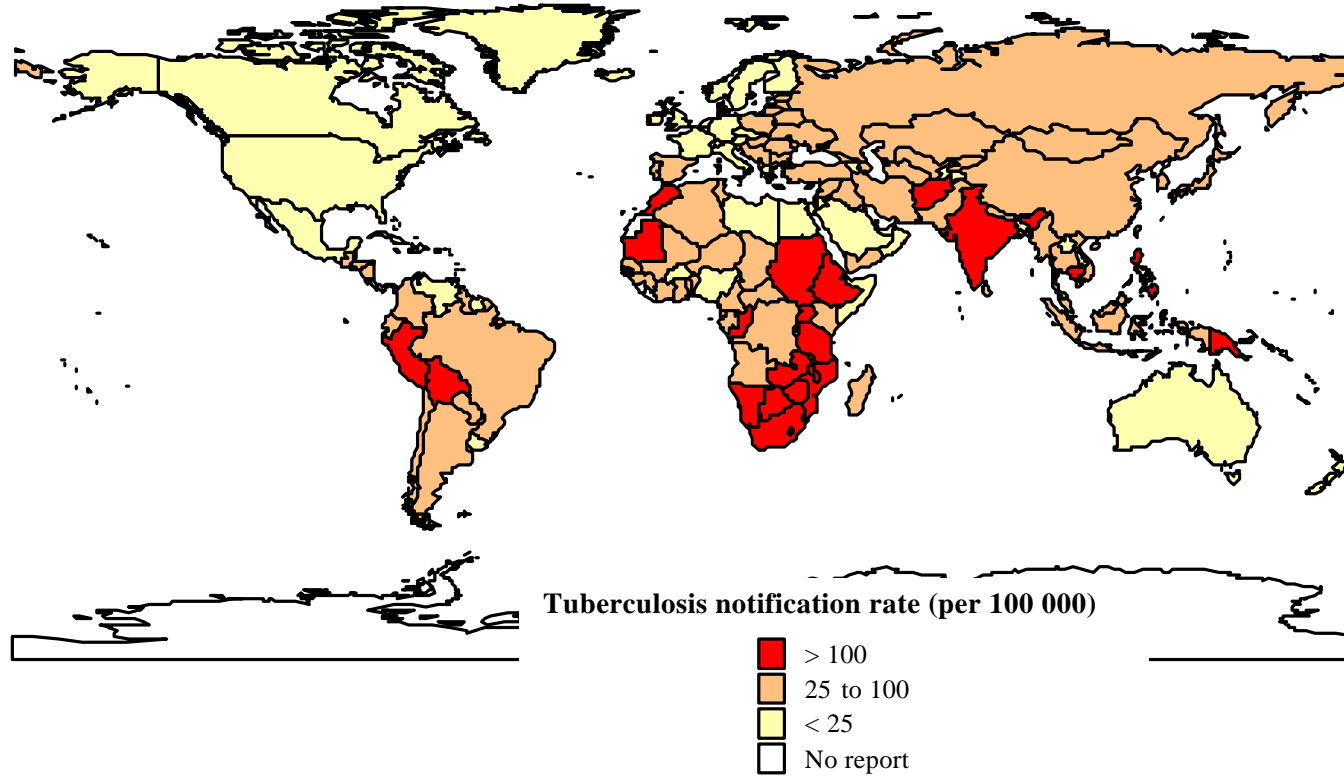


Figure 2 . Tuberculosis notification rates for 1994, by country



disease which until a few years ago was no longer considered a public health threat.

In the Regions of the Americas and the Western Pacific, case notification rates have remained relatively stable, indicating no significant improvements in tuberculosis control.

In the South-East Asia Region, a significant decrease in the case notification rates occurred during the past four years. This phenomenon is most likely an artefact, reflecting marked fluctuations in reporting activities of some large countries.

Tuberculosis Notification Update, February 1996 (ref. WHO/TUB/96.197), is available from the Programme Manager, Global Tuberculosis Programme, World Health Organization, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland, fax 41 22-791 41 99. It can also be ordered via email: raviglione@who.ch, levym@who.ch, schmidts@who.ch.

Reference

1. Dolin PJ, Raviglione MC, Kochi A. Global tuberculosis incidence and mortality during 1990-2000. *Bull World Health Organ* 1994;72:213-220.