



Seven Things to Know About the State of Global Immunization

(Source: A Press Release by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance)

Each year, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF release a set of figures that offer a powerful glimpse into the health of the world's children.

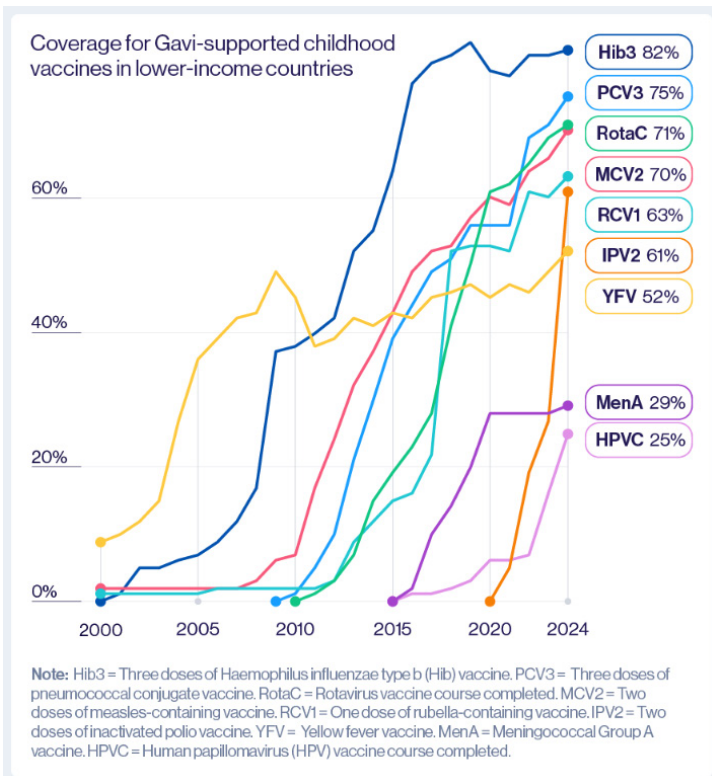
Known as the *WHO/UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage (the WUENIC)*, this dataset tells us how many children across the globe are being protected against deadly but preventable diseases like measles, tetanus and polio.

The latest numbers reveal seven key takeaways about the progress in the 57 lower-income countries supported by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

1. *More children are being immunized with Gavi support than ever before.* In 2024, more than 72 million children in lower-income countries were vaccinated against a range of deadly infectious diseases – more than any previous year.

This remarkable achievement, bolstered by Gavi's routine immunization support, reflects not just logistical progress but a growing commitment by countries to invest in immunization through co-financing where countries contribute towards the cost of the vaccines they receive. In 2024 lower-income countries contributed a record US\$255 million towards co-financing.

This momentum has helped Gavi surpass one of its biggest milestones. Between 2000 and 2024, more than 1.2 billion children have been immunized with its support, topping Gavi's original goal of 1.1 billion by 2025.



(continued on Page 2)

Around the Globe...

◆ **Pfizer**, through their **Global Health Fellows Program** (a signature skills-based volunteering program) has partnered with the **IFPW Foundation** to provide coaches and mentors to local supply chain healthcare professionals through the **IFPW Foundation STEP 2.0 Initiative**. Narasimhan Group Lead, *Hari Prasad* said, "I've worked in drug development throughout my entire career. Unlike in large metro cities, railroads and even internet connectivity in these areas can't be taken for granted. Restocking the warehouse, updating the database, and ensuring appropriate delivery of medicines were the key challenges, and this program enabled us to provide solutions." The Pfizer Global Health Fellows Program has also deployed Pfizer colleagues to Djibouti, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Pakistan and across southeast Asia. The IFPW Foundation is grateful to Pfizer for its unwavering support of the IFPW Foundation and its STEP 2.0 Initiative.

◆ Diseases such as measles, rubella and polio could become endemic to the U.S. again if vaccine rates decline, according to modeling run by researchers at **Stanford Medicine**. Childhood vaccination rates have been falling in the U.S., especially since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lower levels of immunity have resulted in a resurgence in measles cases, including a recent outbreak in western Texas that infected more than 620 people, leading to 64 hospitalizations and the deaths of two children.

◆ **Novartis**, in partnership with a Swiss non-profit, has received the first approval for a medicine to treat babies who are infected with malaria. The drug, *Coartem Baby* is approved for infants weighing between two and five kilograms and have contracted the deadly mosquito-borne disease. *Coartem Baby* was endorsed by **Swissmedic** under a prearranged *Marketing Authorization for Global Health Products (MAGHP)* procedure, which will facilitate rapid approvals in eight African nations. The drug will be introduced on a "large not-for-profit basis to increase access in areas where malaria is endemic," Novartis added.

◆ The **Global Pharma Health Fund (GPHF)**, a non-profit organization voluntarily supported by **Merck KGaA**, is pleased

(continued on Page 2)

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Seven Things (cont.)...

2. *Basic coverage rates are steadily on the rise following declines during the COVID-19 pandemic.* In 2024, 70% of Gavi-supported countries maintained or improved coverage with three doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis-containing (DTP3) vaccine. This is often used as a proxy to measure countries' ability to consistently reach children with essential vaccinations. As a result, DTP3 coverage in Gavi-supported countries increased to 82%, one percentage point shy of pre-pandemic levels.

Many African countries have now fully recovered, with DTP3 coverage back up at 76%, the same as it was in 2019, even though population growth means countries must reach increasing numbers of children to achieve gains. However, not all regions fared so well. Despite gains in many Gavi-supported countries in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean region – including Pakistan, Syria and Somalia – overall DTP3 coverage in the region dropped to 79% due to large conflict-related declines in Sudan and Yemen.

3. *Routine childhood immunization in fragile and conflict-afflicted countries is holding steady with many showing improved coverage.* Maintaining immunization coverage in areas grappling with fragility and conflict is no small feat, but in the 12 countries that Gavi classifies as such, coverage with three doses of DTP3 held steady at 61% after sharp declines in 2022 and 2023.

4. *Measles vaccination coverage in lower-income countries has also increased.* Measles vaccination rates are rebounding after sharp pandemic-era declines, but immunity gaps remain dangerously wide. The virus's exceptionally high transmissibility means that even small drops in coverage can trigger serious outbreaks, and most countries are well below the 9% coverage required to arrest measles outbreaks from occurring.

5. *Children are being protected against more diseases than ever before.* Lower-income countries are now protecting more people against more diseases than at any point in history. In 2024, average vaccination coverage rose by 8pp across ten vaccines supported by Gavi, with notable gains in routine immunization against polio, cervical cancer, measles, pneumonia, rotavirus and yellow fever.

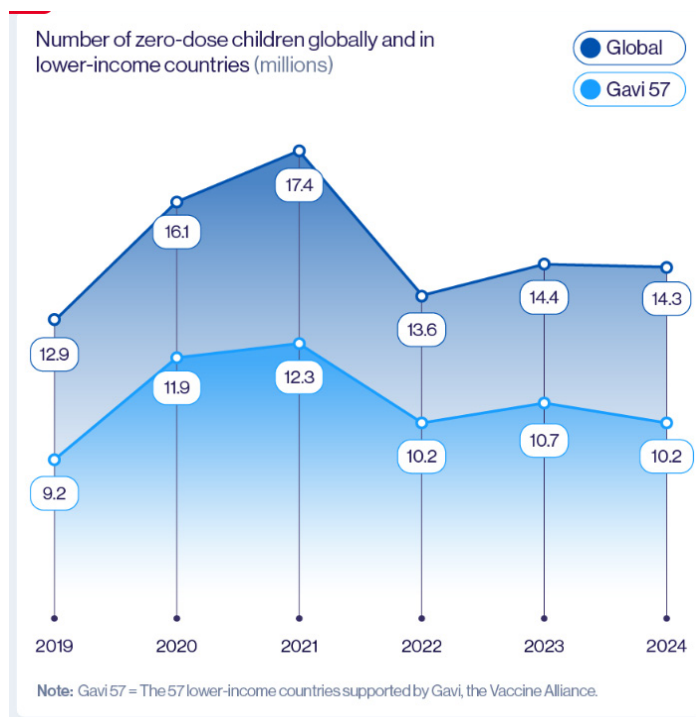
6. *More girls are being protected against cervical cancer.* Since revitalizing its human papillomavirus (HPV) program in 2023, Gavi has helped drive a dramatic scale-up in protection against one of the leading causes of cancer deaths among women in lower-income countries.

Thanks to these efforts, more girls in lower-income countries were protected with the HPV vaccine in 2024 than in the entire previous decade combined. As of 2024, 60 million girls in total have been fully protected against HPV with Gavi support.

7. *The number of children receiving no essential childhood immunizations has declined, but there is still a long way to go.* The number of zero-dose children in Gavi-supported countries fell by half a million in 2024. Coverage with the first dose of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis-containing vaccine (DTP1) is an important indicator of how many children do not have access to life-saving vaccines. This stood at 87% in 2024, which is nearly back to pre-pandemic levels largely thanks to targeted efforts in populous countries like India, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia.

To reach unvaccinated children in fragile settings, Gavi works closely with countries through targeted programs, including the *Zero-Dose Immunization Program*, which has delivered nine million vaccine doses in conflict-affected regions in Africa. Yet progress is still far behind Gavi's

2025 goal of reducing the number of zero-dose children to 6.9 million by 2025. This would require a 32% drop over the next year.



Around the Globe (cont.)...

to announce its new Minilab analytical method on diethylene and ethylene glycol (DEG/EG) detection in liquids for oral use (e.g. cough syrups) to protect patients, in particular children, from preventable harm. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has issued several alerts about over-the-counter syrups contaminated with the toxic industrial chemicals diethylene glycol (DEG) and ethylene glycol (EG), which have been linked to at least 300 deaths in children worldwide. To address this issue, the GPHF has adopted the WHO's two-level testing approach, which begins with thin-layer chromatography (TLC) for initial screening and is followed by confirmation using gas chromatography in regional laboratories. This method is readily available when using the GPHF's Minilab test kit and helps countries quickly identify and respond to contaminated medicines.

◆ An **INTERPOL**-coordinated operation across 90 countries has resulted in the seizure of 50.4 million doses of illicit pharmaceuticals worth US\$65 million, highlighting the alarming scale of the global trade in unapproved and counterfeit medicines. *Operation Pangea XVII*, which took place from December 2024 to May 2025, saw the arrest of 769 suspects and the dismantling of 123 criminal groups worldwide. Nervous system agents, including psychostimulants, anti-anxiety drugs, and medications for Parkinson's disease, topped the list as the most seized product type, with erectile dysfunction medicines, the second highest. Other commonly seized product types include anabolic steroids, anti-diabetic medicines, anti-smoking products, dermatological agents, health supplements, herbal products and psychotherapeutic agents. The seizures and arrests are the largest in the operation's 17-year history.

(Sources: Fierce Pharma, Interpol and Press Releases)