

Forum: Health and Youth

Issue: The Question of The issue of equitable vaccine distribution

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INTRODUCTION

In the time and age of the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution of vaccines in an equitable fashion is of vital importance; however, it is important to stress the fact that it is essential for vaccines of other diseases(including hepatitis B and Polio) to be distributed equitably and in a timely fashion for specifically newborn children. For adults, it is imperative for Tetanus and Flu vaccines to be in constant circulation within the health care system without it impacting the country's economy heavily.

The goal is to allow countries to purchase a plethora of vaccines without it being a heavy economic opportunity cost for them. The country should not have to compromise on other components of its economy due to the purchasing of essential vaccinations.

Vaccinations, in the long run, are more beneficial to the country than other healthcare methods, including: undergoing direct provisional research, bulk purchasing medication and using government-imposed restrictions as well PPE to reduce the spread of the illness. Although it is recommended that these arrangements are adopted alongside the distribution of vaccines. These methods should not be used solely as they do not help in reducing the death rate and simply act as an extra cost incurred for the country.

Vaccinations are the best solution to any sort of illness. They are useful for helping prevent illnesses by giving the recipients immunisation, as well as, reducing the effect of the symptoms of the illness if it is contracted. Overall, vaccines reduce the chance of hospitalisation and in some circumstances, death.

The most obvious solution to make vaccine distribution more equitable is by removing its scarcity factor of it. By producing more vaccines, there is less need to ration demand; so, the price of it may fall.

KEY DEFINITIONS OF TOPICS

Equitable vaccinations - Making vaccines cheaper, so, countries can buy larger amounts of them; ideally, so that every citizen can have one.

Distribution - Spreading equally (in this situation vaccines) around the world so that there is no inequality between high and low-income countries.

mRNA vaccinations - Vaccines that use genetic code to trigger an immune response from the immune system. Require highly specialist machinery and people, making it more expensive to create. Also, they need to be stored in freezers that go down to temperatures of 2 degrees.

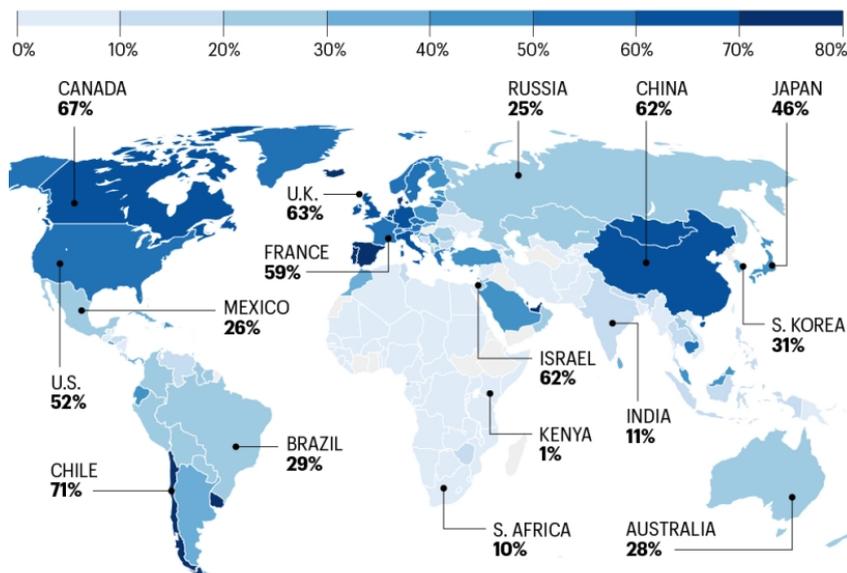
Viral vector vaccinations - Vaccines that use inactive cells from the virus itself to trigger an immune response from the immune system. The most common sort of vaccines but often have less effect than the mRNA vaccines.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Map depicting the contrast in vaccine distribution around the world. Note the economic state of the countries that have low vaccination rates.

COVID-19 GLOBAL VACCINE TRACKER

SHARE OF THE POPULATION THAT IS FULLY VACCINATED

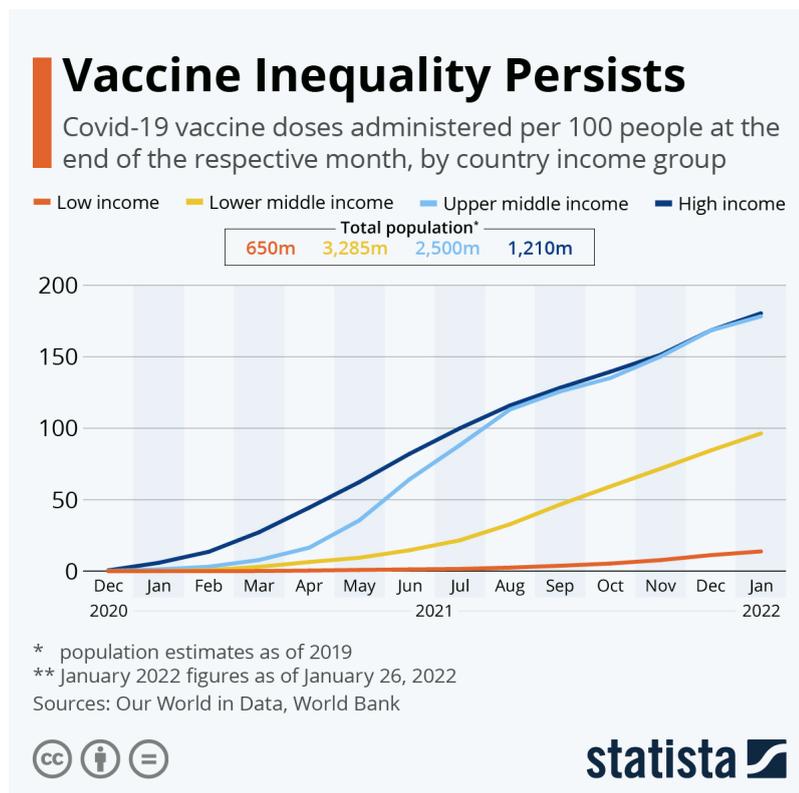


SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

DATA THROUGH 8/31/2021

FORTUNE

Graph showing the lack of vaccine distribution within countries that are low income.



A shocking statistic that depicts the current state of vaccine inequity would be the fact that, in February 2021, 10 countries (conveniently high income) had 75% of their population vaccinated; while, in 130 other countries, they had 0% of their population vaccinated.

Another statistic would be that, by June 2021, North America had distributed 69 vaccines per 100; on the other hand, Africa only had 3.3 per 100.

These two facts clearly highlight the issue of inequitable vaccine distribution. It also implies the reasons why it occurs, mainly, there is a correlation between the economy of the country and its ability to distribute vaccines. One reason why this is are the characteristics of the producer. The big names: Oxford-Astrazeneca, Pfizer and Moderna are all established within these high income countries. They are subsidised by their respective governments and therefore have no incentive to export their vaccines. They feel that their responsibility to supply lies within their own country and their close allies.

Vaccine producing firms also imitate any other economic-profit hungry business. They manage to protect their stream of income by establishing intellectual property rights, which includes patents with a 20-year long span. What this essentially does is legally

brand the vaccine, which prevents other firms in both the same and other countries from producing the same vaccine. One clear solution to this would be simply outlawing patents on vaccines.

Countries can help themselves establish equitable vaccines by increasing the amount of subsidy to their healthcare firms. This would allow firms to be able to purchase the resources they need to manufacture vaccines and hire specialized scientists.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

COVAX - A coalition of the CEPI, GAVI, WHO and UNICEF. Aim to equitably distribute vaccines to all countries around the world. They supply enough doses to cover 20% of the applicable population in each country. They also supply aid to recover economies affected by the pandemic.

CEPI - An externally financed organisation. They have three purposes: to use their own resources and people to research into viruses, invest in firms that create vaccines and plan responses to pandemics as well as purchase bulk amounts of vaccines and keep them in storage, ready to distribute

GAVI - Work with the intention of providing vaccines to countries in very bad economic situations. Funded by Bill and Melinda Gates, they prioritise distributing vaccines to children.

WHO - Sub organisation of the UN, have done extensive research and planning with regards to illnesses.

Oxford Astrazeneca - The vaccine that is most distributed within low-income countries due to it being a viral vector, distributed by COVAX.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

E/C.12/2020/2 - Indicates that the priority for all members of the states healthcare system should be the immunization of COVID-19. The factor of discrimination should be completely eradicated. Furthermore, vaccine producing firms should revoke their right to patents to allow other companies to enter the market. This will impact the original vaccine producer's profit and so they should be fairly compensated by the WHO.

GA/12367/2021 - Requested for high-income nations to share the surplus of their vaccine doses, free of charge. Also, pleaded for members of states to waive their patents to vaccine production so that low-income countries can begin production too.

76th GA session - Created the 'Fellowship of HOPE' which invited young diplomats from underrepresented countries to the UN president's office in order for them to convey their country's health care struggles.

Timeline of Events

1798 - European imperial powers collaborate to make the smallpox vaccine. Allowing for not a single case being reported for 40 years.

1956 - Polio vaccine introduced. In the long term, cases fell by 99% in comparison to global figures.

2000 - GAVI was established in collaboration with WHO with the intention of providing vaccines to low-income countries. By 2018, they helped vaccinate 100 million people.

2009 - During the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, high-income countries did not share their surplus of vaccines. Creating shortages in low-income countries.

2020 - High-income countries placed a number of orders for COVID-19 that surpassed their own combined populations by 1 billion.

Bibliography:

[Secretary-General Calls Vaccine Equity Biggest Moral Test for Global Community, as Security Council Considers Equitable Availability of Doses | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

[From Vaccine Nationalism to Vaccine Equity – Finding a Path Forward | NEJM](#)

[Vaccine equity: 'Race is on' to inoculate health workers and those most at risk globally | COVID-19 | UN News](#)

[Decrying Covid-19 Vaccine Inequity, Speakers in General Assembly Call for Rich Nations to Share Surplus Doses, Patent Waivers Allowing Production in Low-Income Countries | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ecosoc7039.doc.htm>

[Unequal Vaccine Distribution Self-Defeating, World Health Organization Chief Tells Economic and Social Council's Special Ministerial Meeting | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases](#)

[Statement on universal and equitable access to vaccines for the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)