

We're living longer but with more disability

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The Global Burden of Disease Study 2010 (GBD 2010), has found people around the world are living longer but often with many years of compromised health.

The study is co-authored by the Head of The University of Queensland's School of [Population Health](#), Professor Alan Lopez and the Director for the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, Dr Christopher Murray.

It reveals the leading causes of death, disability and injury.

GBD 2010 – set to be launched at London's Royal Society on 14 December - is the world's largest ever investigation of [global health](#).

Involving 1000 collaborators over five years, the study examines 291 conditions and 67 [risk factors](#) for 21 global regions.

Professor Lopez said that the study's update was driven by need.

"We know that dozens of countries have taken the methodology of GBD and applied it to their own situation to better inform local [health planning](#) and policies. However, we knew we could improve it," Professor Lopez said.

"We knew we needed to update our 20-year-old estimates and make use of today's better methods, enhanced availability of data and increased expertise and there was a huge demand for it.

"Studies such as this which provide us with comprehensive and reliable health information are essential if countries are to be better informed about their health priorities and how these are changing."

Results of the study will be featured in a special issue of *The [Lancet](#)*, which will be devoted entirely to GBD 2010 findings.

These findings include:

- People are living longer all over the world but especially in high-income countries.
- Life expectancy in Australia has risen so much since 1990 that the country now has among the 10 longest [life expectancies](#) in the world for both women and men.
- The years that people are living with a disability is growing, particularly in high-income countries.
- The increase in disability has largely been driven by increases in population and population ageing, and has important implications for health services.
- Child mortality is down, even in sub-Saharan Africa and other poor countries, but much less progress has been made in preventing death among young adults, particularly men, who are dying, mostly due to violence, injuries, suicide and HIV/AIDS.
- High blood pressure is the world's leading cause of mortality and disability.
- It is no longer just the rich world's problem, with a high salt diet seeing the issue surface in poor countries as well.
- The second biggest burden on world health is tobacco smoking which is falling in the developed world but rising in the developing world.
- Child malnutrition has decreased, as has the burden of disease from unsafe water and sanitation, showing global health progress

has been made.

- But while malnutrition is down, GBD 2010 found that rising rates of obesity and other lifestyle-related risk factors were becoming the dominant forces in disease.
- Dietary risk factors and physical inactivity collectively caused 10 per cent of the disease burden.

These latest findings update the original GBD 1990, which was the first study to measure not just mortality, but the impact of disease and years lived with disability.

It is one of the world's most cited investigations and has influenced [health](#) policies and budgets around the globe.

Provided by University of Queensland

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