

Diabetes cases to double to 1.3 billion by 2050: study

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The number of people suffering from diabetes worldwide will more than double to 1.3 billion by 2050 driven by structural racism and gaping inequality between countries, new research predicted on Friday.

Every country on the globe will see an increase in the number of patients with the chronic disease, according to the most comprehensive analysis of global data projecting out to 2050.

Some 529 million people were estimated to already be living with diabetes, one of the top 10 causes of death and disability.

That number—95 percent of which are cases of type 2 diabetes—will top 1.3 billion in less than three decades, according to a study published in the *Lancet* journal.

High body mass index—an indication that people could be overweight—was linked to more than half of deaths and disability from diabetes.

Other factors included people's diets, exercise, smoking and alcohol.

Liane Ong, lead research scientist at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) and first author of one of the studies, said one factor was how diets had changed.

"Over the course of 30 years, different countries have really migrated from traditional food habits—maybe eating more fruits and vegetables, eating healthier greens—to more highly processed foods," she told AFP.

The research also estimated that by 2045, three quarters of adults with diabetes will live in low- and middle-income countries.

But even in wealthy countries such as the United States, diabetes rates were almost 1.5 times higher among minorities such as black, Hispanic, Asian or Native Americans, a separate *Lancet* study said.

Study co-author Leonard Egede, of the Medical College of Wisconsin,

blamed a "cascade of widening diabetes inequity".

"Racist policies such as residential segregation affect where people live, their access to sufficient and [healthy food](#) and [health care services](#)," he said in a statement.

Ong said "the challenge is that we don't really see one type of intervention that's going to fix everything".

Instead, fighting diabetes will require long-term planning, investment and attention from countries around the globe, she said.

In an editorial, the Lancet said that "the world has failed to understand the social nature of [diabetes](#) and underestimated the true scale and threat the disease poses."

"Diabetes will be a defining disease of this century," it added.

More information: Diabetes: a defining disease of the 21st century, *The Lancet* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01296-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01296-5)

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