

Half of the countries in the world do not achieve immunization rates sufficient to curb the transmission of illnesses such as measles

<http://medicamentalia.org/vaccines/>

- *Vaccination levels are not improving: global average immunisation coverage has increased by only 1% since 2010*
- *Europe registered 26,000 measles cases in 2015 -far more than the 611 reported across the American continent- and seven of the ten countries with the lowest confidence level in vaccine are European.*
- *The Civio Foundation (Spain) releases a global journalistic investigation on immunisation levels and vaccine prices*

Madrid – February 13th, 2017 – Since 2010, vaccination levels have barely improved: global average immunisation coverage has increased only 1%. And the problem is still there: in 2015, 105 of the 187 countries analysed by the WHO (out of the current 196 existing in total) had not achieved the immunisation rate necessary to create a shield capable of curbing measles transmission, the so-called herd immunity. That is, over half of the countries in the world have not given the first dose of the vaccination against this disease to at least 95% of children of the age to be vaccinated, the percentage required for the shield to be effective.

[Medicamentalia - Vaccines](#) is a journalistic investigation by Spanish [Civio Foundation](#) into the current situation of vaccination worldwide, combining data analysis with field research in a range of countries. This is the sequel to a project focused on access to medicines, which was awarded Investigation of the Year 2016 (small newsroom) in the Data Journalism Awards and the Gabriel García Márquez Journalism Prize (Innovation category).

The data reveals that the average immunisation rate in low-income countries (as defined by the World Bank) is under 83%, while in high-income countries the average rate is almost 95%. "Contagion is not a local phenomenon, nor even regional, nor much less determined by level of income", explain the authors of this investigation. "The contagion of such an elusive diseases does not stop at any border, it is a global problem. The planet's shield against measles, in that very first dose, is of 85%. In 2015 nearly 200,000 measles cases were registered worldwide and 73,844 children under the age of four died from this avoidable evil. The problem persists also in illnesses such as diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, while the immunisation of the DTP, the vaccine that protects against all these diseases, is far to be enough in a lot of countries".

In Pakistan, polio is reluctant to disappear entirely, although the first vaccine was invented in the 1950s. In 2016, just 42 cases of this disease were recorded worldwide. 21 of these cases were in Pakistan and another 13 just over the border with Afghanistan. Another examples, Guatemala has gone from high levels of immunization, with the problem already overcome, to suffering a downturn. According to WHO data, the vaccination rate in the country fell from 93% in 2013 to 67% in 2014. A survey carried out in 2016 by the Guatemalan Human Rights Council, Action Against Hunger, ALIANMISAR (National Alliance for Indigenous Women's Organisations for Reproductive Health, Nutrition and Education) and the Alliance for Nutrition showed that seven out of ten children under the age of two had not received their basic quota of vaccinations.

When the problem is not just a question of resources

[Medicamentalia - Vaccines](#) highlights that some high-income countries have lowered their guard and their immunization rates have dropped, as confidence in vaccines has begun to fall. Seven out of the ten countries with the lowest confidence level in vaccines are European, led by France, with 41% of survey interviewees stating they disagree with the affirmation “vaccines are safe”, despite scientific evidence. Some diseases are coming back. Europe registered 26,000 measles cases in 2015, far more than the 611 registered across the American continent.

“Europe is sending us measles”

According to the Civio Foundation, this statement from Doctor Eduardo Suárez, director of the immunisation programme at the Department of Health of El Salvador, is accurate. Whilst the Americas declared itself to be free of this disease, outbreaks multiplied in significantly higher-income countries. Almost 26,000 cases were registered in Europe in 2015, far more than the 611 registered across the American continent, the majority of which were in Canada and the United States. Germany registered 2,464 measles cases in 2015, only exceeded by Kyrgyzstan. In Silicon Valley new outbreaks are also being recorded, while vaccination rates remain below the required minimum and the new President of the United States, Donald Trump, has met with leaders of anti-vaccine movements.

“With the lack of confidence in vaccines on the table, it’s important to remember the goals achieved by vaccines”, explains Civio’s researchers. “Diseases that have been practically eradicated today could decimate entire generations just a few years ago. In 1980, nearly two centuries after the first experiments to develop a vaccine, smallpox was officially eradicated worldwide. And polio can also be eradicated. Just 42 cases of this disease were registered worldwide in 2016, across only four countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Laos and Nigeria”.

The Civio Foundation’s team points out that [Medicamentalia - Vaccines](#) is not a closed investigation. “Over the coming weeks we will publish research on disease outbreaks and analyze thoroughly the price differences when countries and organizations buy vaccines, as well as the opacity of these transactions, which reduces the bargaining power of countries when dealing with pharmaceutical companies”, explains Eva Belmonte, lead journalist of this investigation.

MORE INFO: <http://medicamentalia.org/vaccines/>

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Fundación Ciudadana Civio (www.civio.es) is a non-for-profit organisation, specialised in data journalism, investigative journalism, and visualisations.

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