

PEOPLE



The *People* section documents demographic trends, labor force structure, poverty incidence, income distribution, education inputs and outcomes, and health services and status. Together these indicators provide a multidimensional portrait of human development and social welfare. For 2012 a new table has been added, and the contents of others have changed. Table 2.20 now shows data by sex for three measures of the prevalence of child malnutrition—underweight, stunting, and wasting—and for the proportion of overweight children. Data on antiretroviral therapy coverage and cause of death have been added to table 2.22. And table 2.23 now includes neonatal mortality rates computed with the same methodology used to estimate infant and under-five mortality rates. Also new is table 2.24, which presents selected health indicators by income quintile. These subnational data highlight substantial within-country disparities between the poor and rich in mortality and fertility rates and in child and reproductive health outcomes.

Table 2.8 provides more recent data on poverty at international poverty lines for more countries, including global and regional poverty estimates released by the World Bank in February 2012. In 2008, 1.29 billion people, or 22 percent of developing countries' population, lived below the extreme poverty line of \$1.25 a day, down from 1.94 billion people, or 52 percent of developing countries' population, in 1981. In 1990, the benchmark year for the Millennium Development Goals, the extreme poverty rate was 43.1 percent.

Progress has been slower at the \$2 a day poverty line, around which many people in lower middle-income economies live. The number of people living below \$2 a day fell from 2.59 billion in 1981 to 2.47 billion in 2008—a decrease of only 120 million—and the number of people living on \$1.25–\$2 a day almost doubled

to 1.18 billion in 2008. This bunching up just above the extreme poverty line indicates the vulnerabilities faced by a great many people in the world.

Looking at the trend from 2005 to 2008, both the absolute number and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty declined in every developing country region. This across-the-board reduction over a three-year monitoring cycle is the first since the World Bank began monitoring extreme poverty. Since 2008 food, fuel, and financial crises have had sharp negative impacts on vulnerable populations and slowed poverty reduction in some countries, but global poverty kept falling. In fact, a preliminary survey-based estimate for 2010—based on a much smaller sample than the global update—indicates that the global poverty rate at \$1.25 a day fell to less than half its 1990 value. If these results are confirmed by follow-up studies, the first target of the Millennium Development Goals—cutting the extreme poverty rate to half its 1990 level—may have been achieved on a global level before the 2015 target date.

The World Bank's database of international poverty measures now includes income or consumption data collected by national statistical offices drawn from 850 household surveys and interviews with 1.23 million randomly sampled households in nearly 130 countries. The most recent year for which a reliable global estimate can be calculated is 2008, because for many low-income countries more recent data are either not available or not comparable with previous estimates. The availability, frequency, and quality of poverty monitoring data remain low, especially in small states and in countries and territories with fragile situations. The need to improve household survey programs for poverty monitoring in these countries is urgent. But institutional, political, and financial obstacles continue to hamper data collection, analysis, and public access.

