

Who is most at risk and why are these groups vulnerable to TB?

Some groups are more vulnerable than most to developing and dying of TB disease. Often they are people who are already disadvantaged in other ways, which makes them less able to cope with the consequences of contracting TB, yet at the same time more likely to develop the disease.

The urban poor

- ▷ Many poor people are forced to live in overcrowded conditions, which increases the risk of TB transmission.
- ▷ In Manila, the prevalence of TB of the urban poor was found to be 1.5 times that among the urban non-poor populations surveyed.
- ▷ The estimated prevalence of TB in Chiapas, a Mexican state with a very large impoverished population, was found to be twice the national average.

Migrants

- ▷ Migrants often arrive in a new country and subsequently develop active disease because of poor diet and living conditions.
- ▷ Limited access to health services in their adopted country can prevent migrants from timely diagnosis and receiving TB treatment. This may contribute to increased TB transmission.
- ▷ Immigrants (25 to 39 years old) in Paris have 12 times the rate of TB disease found among French nationals of the same age.

Refugees, internally displaced people and people living in complex emergency

- ▷ Refugees, internally displaced people and those people hosting them are often exposed to all the risk factors described above because of the instability, insecurity and a physical collapse of the social and health infrastructure.
- ▷ Malnutrition, stress and lack of access to early diagnosis and treatment are especially high in complex emergencies.

Who is most at risk and why *are these groups vulnerable to TB?*

- ▷ Population movements and complex emergencies result in poor housing conditions, especially overcrowding, increasing dissemination of TB and other airborne diseases.
- ▷ There is high mortality, especially among refugee women and children.

The homeless

- ▷ In many industrialised countries the homeless are the group most at risk for TB.
- ▷ In the UK, TB is 200 times more common among the homeless than among the general population.
- ▷ San Francisco's homeless population has 270 TB cases per 100,000 population, and the homeless of Paris have a rate of 240 cases per 100,000. These rates are similar to those of some of the poorest countries in the world, such as Bangladesh.

Prisoners

- ▷ Prisoners are at risk of contracting TB because of overcrowding and the inadequate diet often found in prison systems in poor settings.
- ▷ Prison systems in poor settings are not geared to deal with the large numbers of TB patients; thus no access to diagnosis and poor treatment is the result.
- ▷ Outbreaks of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in prisons in the former USSR in the 1990s risked spreading these dangerous strains of TB to the community through families, prison staff, and released prisoners.

People living with HIV/AIDS

- ▷ TB is a leading killer of people infected with HIV.
- ▷ At least 1 in 3 people infected with HIV will develop TB in their lifetime.
- ▷ People infected with HIV have an up to 10% chance per year of developing active TB if not treated with antiretroviral therapies (ARVs).