

DIABETES IN NUMBERS

The number of people living with, and dying of, diabetes across the world is shocking: 90 million Chinese live with diabetes and 1.3 million died in 2011; 23% of Qatari adults have developed diabetes. Here we chart the extent of the global epidemic and present some of the implications for national governments by **Tony Scully**.

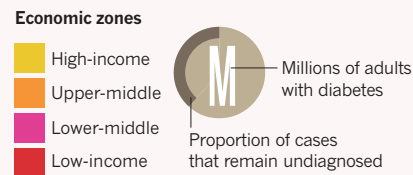
TSUNAMI OF DIABETES

1 Type 2 diabetes accounts for almost 90% of all cases of diabetes in adults worldwide. In general, as countries become richer, people eat a more sugar- and fat-rich diet and are less physical active — and the incidence of diabetes rises. On average, nearly 8% of adults living in high-income countries (see map for country classification) have diabetes. It is, however, upper-middle and middle-income countries that have the highest prevalence of diabetes; over 10% of adults in these countries have the condition.

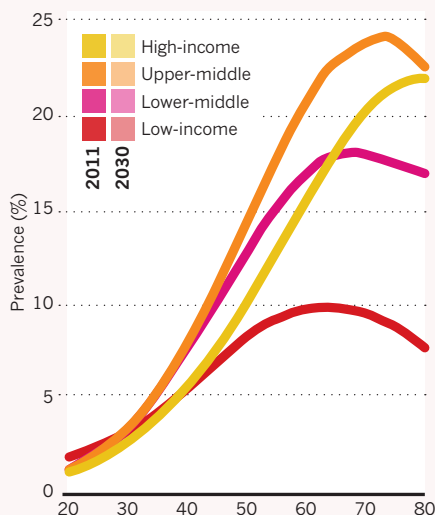
2 In high-income countries, diabetes primarily afflicts people over 50 years of age. But in middle-income countries, the highest prevalence is in younger people — the most productive age groups. As these people age, and as life expectancies increase, prevalence in older age groups will rise further. This trend will put a huge burden on healthcare systems and governments.

3 The mortality rate of diabetes varies sharply with the prosperity of the country. In 2011, the disease caused more than 3.5 million deaths in middle-income countries, of which more than 1 million were in China and just less than a million were in India. Approximately 1.2 adults die of a diabetes-associated illness per 1,000 cases in 2011 in low- and middle-income countries: more than double the mortality rate of high-income countries. Mortality rates are much lower in high-income countries with the greater healthcare recourses, but those tolls are still high: approximately 180,000 people died in the United States in 2011, for example.

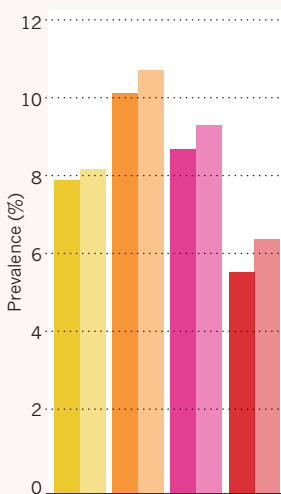
4 Unsurprisingly, high-income countries spent vastly more on diabetes-related costs in 2011 than lower-income countries. In developing countries, the looming costs in human lives, healthcare expenditure and lost productivity threatens to undo recent economic gains.



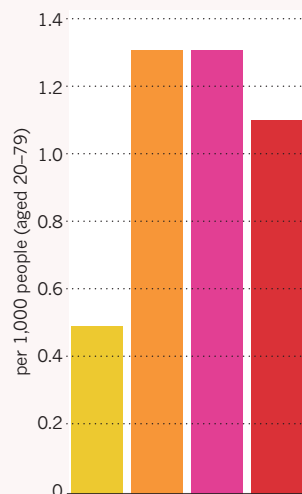
346 M people worldwide have diabetes. More than 80% of diabetes deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, according to the WHO.



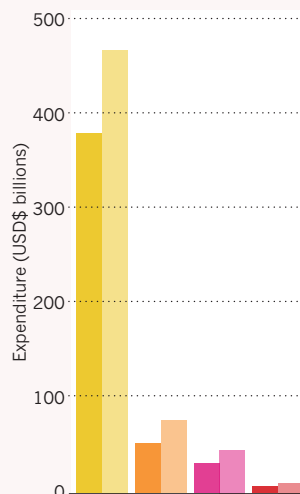
1 Prevalence of diabetes among adults (aged 20–79)



2 Prevalence of diabetes in adults (aged 20–79)



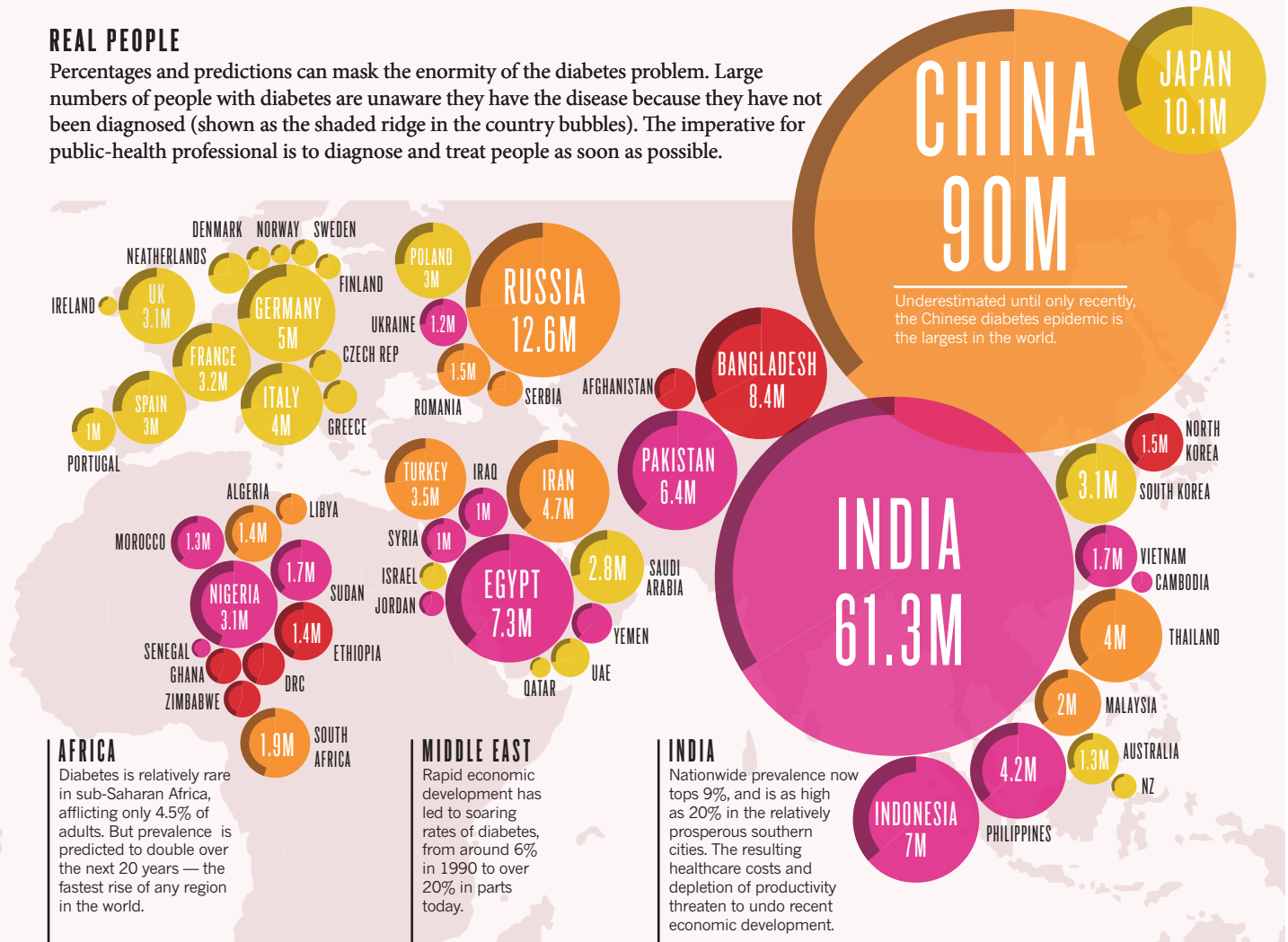
3 Mortality rates in adults (aged 20–79)



4 Total healthcare expenditures (2011)

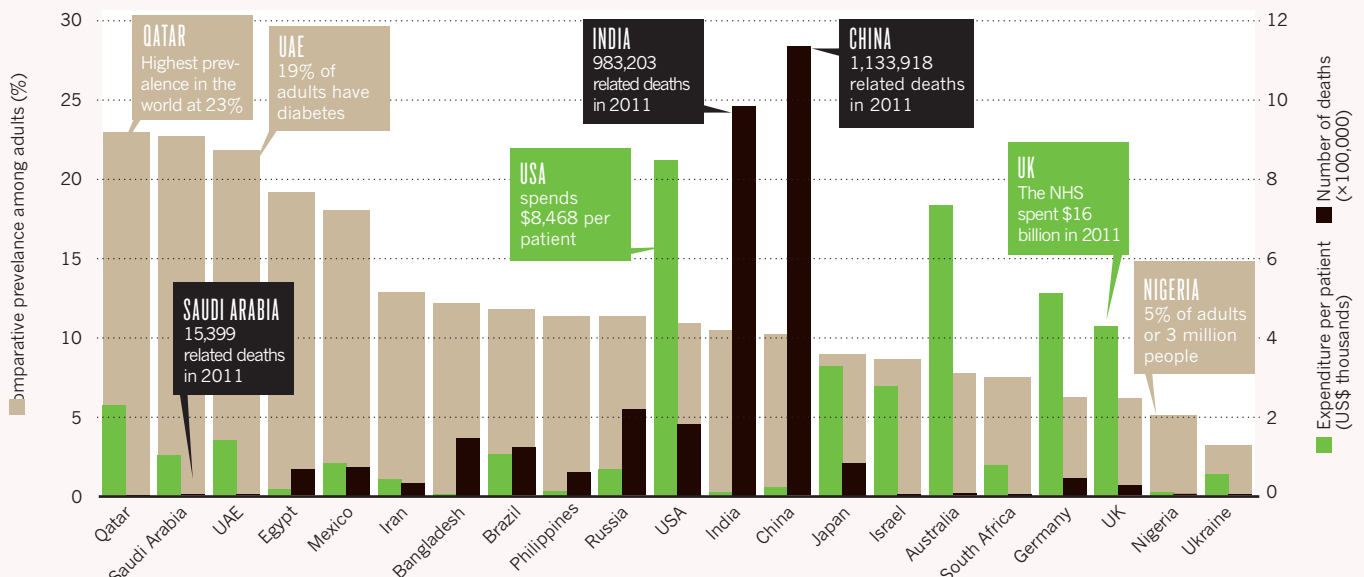
REAL PEOPLE

Percentages and predictions can mask the enormity of the diabetes problem. Large numbers of people with diabetes are unaware they have the disease because they have not been diagnosed (shown as the shaded ridge in the country bubbles). The imperative for public-health professional is to diagnose and treat people as soon as possible.



THE INVESTMENT GULF

Figures for a selection of countries detail national prevalence alongside total expenditure per patient and number of diabetes-related deaths. The countries with the highest prevalence and rates of mortality spend far less per patient than some other countries. As epidemics mature, costs and mortality are estimated to rise.



International Diabetes Federation. The IDF Diabetes Atlas. Fifth Edition. Brussels (2011).