



Department of Political Science
Master's Degree in International Relations
Major in Global Studies
Chair of International Economics

THE PANDEMIC-WORLD DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIP.
A COMPARISON BETWEEN CUBA AND ITALY.

SUPERVISOR
Prof. Paolo Garonna

CANDIDATE
Nicolò Capomacchia
641402

CO-SUPERVISOR
Prof. Gregory Alegi

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021

Index

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Covid-19 pandemic and world development as global problems.....	4
1.1 Conceptual approach to the global problems of development.....	4
1.2 World development as a global problem.....	5
1.3 The pandemic as a global problem. An overview of the institutional debate.....	13
1.4 Critical positions.....	25
1.5 Partial conclusions.....	30
Chapter II: World development crisis and Covid-19 pandemic.....	31
2.1 Economic dimension of the development process.....	31
2.2 Social dimension of the development process.....	42
2.3 Partial conclusions.....	58
Chapter III: Responses to the pandemic in selected countries: Cuba and Italy.....	59
3.1 Cuba's socioeconomic situation prior to the pandemic.....	59
3.2 Cuba: management of the pandemic and its impact.....	64
3.3 Italy's socioeconomic situation prior to the pandemic.....	70
3.4 Italy: management of the pandemic and its impact.....	76
3.5 Partial conclusions.....	81
Conclusions.....	83
Recommendations.....	84
Bibliography.....	85
List of annexes.....	97

Introduction

Global problems have been a feature of the world since the late 20th century. Since the 1970s and 1980s, their multidimensional character has been recognized, covering worldwide environmental, economic, social, political-military, legal-institutional, educational and cultural, scientific-technical, and ethical issues. Global problems have been analyzed using a variety of criteria, ranging from the most superficial, which categorize them as catastrophes, to those that view them as contradictions or conflicts that arise in specific spheres of human activity, to those that perceive them as imbalances and disproportions (Baró, 2006).

The difficulties that world development has been presenting have led it to be catalogued as a global problem. Baró (2006) pointed out that current world development is distinguished by enormous contradictions and conflicts at the planetary level and by disproportions, imbalances and inequalities at both regional and international levels; if these world development trends continue, the world might be led to a catastrophe of global scope and origin, and this could affect the survival of human beings and of the planet itself.

The Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) is occurring in a world scenario characterized by huge problems. In such case, that is the current defining global health problem, and it is the world's biggest challenge since World War II. The pandemic, however, is more than simply a health problem; it is also tied to a global socioeconomic and political crisis.

In isolation and on the surface, the pandemic could be classified as a worldwide crisis in the sense of a health disaster. This is the perspective that dominates the literature from many fields of knowledge; a positivist approach focused on the manifestations of the pandemic and the consequences it has had on national economies prevails. The objective circumstances in which it happens, as well as the true sources of the problems that it exacerbates, are not considered.

However, it is a much more complex phenomenon. If the pandemic is analyzed with a holistic, systemic approach, it is possible to understand its link to a global socio-economic and political crisis. In this sense, it is essential to investigate the dialectical relationship between the pandemic and world development problems in order to understand the urgent need to build viable alternative development strategies.

- *Scientific issue.*

Based on the above, the following scientific problem emerges: what are the elements that determine the dialectic relationship between the pandemic and world development as a global problem?

- *Overall objective.*

To address the relationship between the pandemic and world development as a global problem, considering theoretical positions and practical reactions.

- *Specific objectives.*

1. To systematize the main ideas regarding the relationship between the pandemic and the development of the nations.
2. To characterize the global context in which the pandemic - world development relationship takes place.
3. To compare the pandemic - development relationship in selected countries: Cuba and Italy

- *Methodology.*

This research report is presented via analysis and synthesis, after processing the selected bibliography and synthesizing those concepts that reflect the key views at world level with regard to the pandemic and its connection with the global crisis scenario.

By means of the logical and historical analysis, the general elements that determine the international context marked by world development problems, in which the Covid-19 pandemic is taking place, are presented. Analysing from the general to the particular, leads to the identification of those essential aspects that distinguish the interrelation between the pandemic and the problems of world development, as well as their concrete expression in selected countries.

- *Structure of work.*

In order to fulfill the overall objective, this thesis is structured in the following way: in the first chapter "Covid-19 pandemic and world development as global problems", general aspects of world development problems are presented; the official views of international and regional institutions in relation to the pandemic and the crisis are summarized, as well as opinions of some academics with critical positions. In the second chapter "World development crisis and Covid-19 pandemic" are presented data that quantify the pandemic - world development relationship as a global problem;

finally, in the third chapter "Responses to the pandemic in selected countries: Cuba and Italy", a comparative analysis between these two countries is carried out using a number of selected variables.

CHAPTER I: Covid-19 pandemic and world development as global problems.

This chapter is organized from general to specific. It begins with a conceptual presentation of world development problems, and then focuses specifically on the Covid-19 pandemic, which is one of the most alarming global problems at this time. Lastly, a review of the international debate around the pandemic and its relation to the global crisis is provided.

Section 1.1: Conceptual approach to the global problems of development

Development studies, as a discipline of economic science, emerged in the post-World War II context. However, some authors identify its antecedents throughout universal economic thought, where development was linked to the idea of wealth, progress, growth, among other terms (Unceta, 2009)¹.

Accepted theories on development problems generally have a first-world origin and are determined by historical contexts and specific methodological and ideological theoretical positions (Medina, 2021). Despite the theoretical diversity, since the 1990s there has been a conceptual evolution that tends to recognize the multidimensionality of the development process and the need to combine short, medium- and long-term policies.

In this thesis, development is considered as a multidimensional, transdisciplinary, multicausal and historically conditioned ² process, which is aimed at improving the material and spiritual conditions of human beings, who are both objects and subjects of such process that interrelates national and international factors. If current world development trends continue, the world could be led to a global catastrophe, which would threaten human life: in addition to economic challenges, there are also social, political-military, and environmental problems, to name a few.

The notion of global problem proposed by Silvio Baró (2006) is used as a starting point for this research investigation. According to this author, global problems are those phenomena or processes that pose significant threats to human existence and the preservation of the planet itself.

¹ From being associated with economic growth and industrialization, development has come to be seen as a process involving a structural change that must affect the social, political, institutional, and economic dimensions.

² For further information on how the subject has developed over the last two centuries, please consult (Unceta, 2009)

Concern for the discovery, investigation, and suggestion of measures for the solution of global problems grew across nearly the whole globe in the 1970s as a consequence of reports issued by the Club of Rome. As global environmental, social, political-military, legal-institutional, educational and cultural, scientific-technical, ethical, and, of course, economic problems were identified, progress in studies on global problems in the 1970s and 1980s made it possible to appreciate their multidimensional nature (Baró, 2006).

Despite the fact that the events of the 1980s demonstrated the ineffectiveness of neoliberal economic policies in promoting growth and development, their application advanced even further in the 1990s due to the weakening of underdeveloped nations' negotiating capacity, the extension of these economic policies to industrialized nations such as those of the European Union after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and the transition of ex-socialist economies. Economic contraction, high interest rates, high unemployment, backwardness in the treatment of underdeveloped countries, the introduction of very negative rules and principles for the regulation of international relations, the rise of poverty even within the developed countries, resulted from the widespread application of neoliberal economic precepts almost everywhere in the world. This led to a high degree of worldwide global awareness of global problems.

Since the 1990s, world development has been considered a global problem because economic difficulties have reached an enormous level in terms of depth, geographical scope and multidimensionality; this happens in a context of globalization where there is a strong interdependence among nations (Baró, 2006). Development problems, previously identified only with underdeveloped countries, began to have significant and concrete expressions in the developed pole.

Section 1.2: World development as a global problem

In particular, world development process is a global problem because there are complex situations that can be summarized as it follows: imbalance in the distribution of world wealth; imbalance in world power and in decision-making; contradiction between capitalist rationality and the planet rationality; contradiction between scientific-technical potentialities and the level of solutions to humanity's problems; contradiction between human resources and marginalized areas of the planet;

threats to human survival because of an high level of environmental contamination and an irrational use of natural resources (Baró, 2006).

World economy is experiencing a period of great uncertainty. This is not only due to the serious global economic problems occurring at the world level, but also to the multifaceted consequences that these problems generate; in this regard, the social impacts are the most visible ones, among which the persistence of poverty and social polarization stand out. This makes world development itself one of the most important global problems facing mankind today.

In view of these objective issues, governments seek to arrange themselves in order to temporarily mitigate their impact. World leaders convened in New York in September 2000 to endorse the United Nations Millennium Declaration, after a decade of unprecedented United Nations conferences and summits. Countries agreed to develop a solid global partnership to combat extreme poverty and formed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight objectives with a 2015 deadline (UNDP, *Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio*, s.d.).

Carrying out the objectives of that program was fair and necessary: it could work as a palliative to extreme situations that exist in the world. However, world development problems cannot be solved through the mechanisms proposed by the MDGs, which are not true development goals because they did not have a multidimensional approach: they constitute a reductionist proposal focused on extreme poverty, they lose sight of the universalist vision of development and do not identify the causes of the problem, working solely on its manifestations ³.

Moreover, despite the announced commitment, the MDGs were not achieved, and poverty levels did not decrease as expected. In this regard, the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), are more ambitious than their predecessors due to their multidimensional approach. However, like the previous objectives, they seek short-term solutions to certain development problems without analyzing their essence. Consequently, they do not imply transformations in terms of power relations and, for this reason, SDGs are unlikely to solve world development problems too. In relation to this, critical authors point out that national governments lack sufficient power to confront transnational forces and major powers, which can set the limits for the achievement of the goals established in the 2030 Agenda.

³ When the MDGs were presented, the concept of sustainable development and UNDP human development already existed, both with a multidimensional approach and concrete proposals.

Blanca Munster on the SDGs thinks that:

“One of the most important lessons that can be learned and that will determine the future of the new agenda is that, far from being a given and defined framework, it is a result of the international political economy of development in a context of growing transnationalization of structural power. Therefore, the use of the agenda, its evolution and its real capacity to transform the logics of structural power is what will determine its capacity to contribute to the construction of a more just, equitable and sustainable world. This utilization cannot be viewed as an uncritical adoption, nor can it be circumscribed to the implementation period that has begun as of 2016” (Munster, 2018, p. 12).

This Agenda was conceived in a complex and contradictory international context, marked by problems that characterize world development. The major problems are presented in the following paragraphs; although methodologically they are addressed separately, they should be considered as a whole, since their systemic relationship is what shapes the behavior of world development.

- Technological development: monopolization of knowledge

There is a tendency towards private appropriation of knowledge, particularly in relation to the interests of large transnational corporations. Capitalism has created mechanisms for the privatization of knowledge, such as strengthening of intellectual property rights, displacement of research funding to the private business sector, and selective flow of qualified personnel (Lage, 2001). As pointed out by Jorge Núñez (2009), the possibility that Science and Technology work in the sense of exacerbating our time's disparities and conflicts rather than resolving them is significant. High technology, which is a determining factor in the development process at present, is extremely costly and therefore difficult to access for underdeveloped countries.

The high degree of monopolization of knowledge resulting from capitalist competition and the logic of capital accumulation is expressed in a very high level of technological development, controlled by major economic powers and transnational corporations. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is the visible expression of all this ⁴. In relation to this, there is a direct relationship between the growing

⁴ The present context shows a level and scope of technological development that, due to its disruptive nature, has been identified as the 4RI, as described by Klaus Schwab (Schwab, 2016) during the World Economic Forum.

technological development and the accentuation of the essential contradictions of the capitalist system (Medina, 2022).

In this regard, it is important to underline the contradiction between the more social character of production - disguised by the automation of processes and the advance of the digital economy - and the more private character of appropriation, which is increasingly monopolistic.

The 4RI deepens and hides the existing contradiction between labor and capital, behind a supposedly higher level of material well-being. Furthermore, it increases the practically absolute control over the working class, and even over the capitalist class itself, by the world elite that dominates the current technological development (Medina, 2022).

The increasing levels of capital accumulation, linked to the application of high technology in production and services, have a limiting factor in the contraction of effective demand and, therefore, of consumption. The automation and re-skilling of jobs displaces the labor force, resulting in increased unemployment, job insecurity, lower incomes for the population and widening consumption gaps. The very high level of technological development achieved is based on a contradictory process of development and destruction of the productive forces. This is expressed fundamentally in terms of the material development of these forces, combined with their destruction at the social level (Medina, 2022).

This leads to the contradiction between material development and social development. The expanded accumulation of capital has historically occurred on the basis of a process of material destruction and creation. Nevertheless, the great scientific-technical advances of the last decades have not improved the living conditions of the majority of the world population, in spite of the fact that the possessor of the commodity labor force is the most dynamic agent in the development of the productive forces. Although not generalized, there has been a social regression characterized by severe limitations to access to goods and services, including the most basic ones. This occurs because most of the population lives from the sale of its labor force, and this depends on the conditions under which this sale takes place, often with increasing labor flexibilization and precariousness.⁵

⁵ For example, Germany, consolidated as the most powerful economy in the European Union, the fourth largest in the world and benchmark of the 4RI, has 16.08 million inhabitants at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which represents 20 percent of its population (Euronews, 2019). The evolution of the poverty rate has been related to the increase in precarious work, the flexibilization of working hours and the lack of protection of family benefits (Medina, 2022, p. 10).

As Zoe Medina states:

"The increase in material possibilities is accompanied by growing levels of exploitation as a response to the difficulties of capital valorization. Such exploitation is often disguised in the form of participative salaries, and compensated by redistribution policies, which in essence turn out to be regressive and accentuate the social deterioration of the productive forces. An example of this has been the policies of dismantling public services in areas such as education, health and pensions, accompanied by policies for addressing extreme poverty, disguised as social assistance programs" (Medina, 2022, p. 11).

This material development at the expense of further social deterioration is visible in highly lucrative activities, such as the fashion industry, whose high profits - in not a few cases - are guaranteed by work in conditions of semi-slavery and child exploitation. However, this material development also takes place in a veiled way, with the so-called "self-employed workers" of the digital economy; in this context, the worker not only sells his labor power, but also makes his own means of production available to big capital.

To the above are added the companies linked to the new information and telecommunications technologies. The measures of labor flexibilization and teleworking have transferred to the worker part of the expenses previously assumed by their employers, such as Internet, electricity, maintenance of equipment, etc. Knowledge, science, technology, and innovation are key elements in development processes, but they can have destructive effects, especially when they respond to the logic of capital accumulation.

- The financialization of economic activity

Neoliberal policies were a crucial element in the emergence of financialization of economic activity. Gerald Epstein argues that "*financialization refers to the growing importance of financial interests, financial markets and financial agents and institutions in the functioning of national and international economies*". (Epstein, 2005, p. 3)

According to this viewpoint, financialization is defined as a growth in the importance of financial capital, which translates into a rise in the economic and political power of the agents who represent it, and hence an increase in their ability to impose their interests. Financial activity is not only growing at an unprecedented speed, but it is also altering its composition in terms of markets, products, and

players. These changes are deep enough to affect the logic that governs economic functioning. Non-financial sector enterprises, families, and governments interact and influence the economic dynamics of developed and developing nations' economies, according to the logic of financialization, so that all economic operations are subject to financial market criteria (Medialdea, 2013).

Financialization generates a series of obstacles that hinder the expansion of the fundamental components of demand: the growing participation of non-financial companies in the financial business diverts business resources away from investment projects; the increase in the financial wealth of certain families, and in general the greater access to debt, does not allow for a generalized and sustained growth in private consumption over time; finally, the margin of maneuver of the State to undertake expenditures is very narrow (Medialdea, 2013).

The regressive trend associated with neoliberal policies is exacerbated by two factors: financialized company strategies exploit salaries and labor conditions as an adjustment variable, while the economic policy at the service of financial capital especially harms lower-income families.

According to Ángel González-Tablas, *"like any capital that prides itself on exercising its function, financialization favors the creation of surplus at the expense of labor, but in the distribution of surplus it privileges fictitious capital at the expense of productive capital"* (González-Tablas, 2007, p. 337).

- Unemployment

Global economic problems have accentuated their impact on the social sphere, especially in the last 30-35 years. As a result of the slowing global economy and the widespread adoption of highly efficient and labor-saving contemporary technology, unemployment has become a chronic phenomenon, even in countries with historically low jobless rates.

Because of the low levels of employment, employers were able to expand their bargaining power over employees and trade unions, resulting in a highly negative shift in labor markets and affecting the levels of unionization among workers (Baró, 2006).

Increased labor supply, particularly in developed countries' labor markets (made up of employed, unemployed, and immigrants), would lead to a decrease in nominal and real wage levels, as well as the dismantling of achievements made by workers after long struggles in terms of employment conditions, legal provisions on working conditions (safety and hygiene at work), and aspects related to assistance and social security for workers and their families.

All of this would result in greater levels of exploitation for employees, more profits for employers, the spread of poverty and unprecedented levels of social division.

- Poverty

Poverty is one of the social problems that has received remarkable attention in academic circles, governments, and international organizations since the late 1980s. This is because of two reasons. The massive scale to which this phenomenon has grown around the world - particularly in Africa and Latin America - and the feeling of unfairness that many people felt as a consequence of these realities, as well as a fear of the dangers of national and worldwide political instability that may result from it.

The problem of poverty began to be approached from three different perspectives: proof of societal unfairness that questioned the presence of democratic governments and the widely proclaimed defense of human rights; risk of social uprisings; a constraint for underdeveloped countries to have labor resources in line with the most recent scientific and technical paradigms (Munster, 2006, p. 157). As poverty was identified with these three factors, alleviating it was no longer seen as a sequential, automatic result of economic growth, as represented by the Kuznets Curve. It was subsequently acknowledged that were required strategies and policies targeted at addressing the problem, in which the State plays a crucial role, but only in the sense of easing its most severe manifestations via redistribution mechanisms. Therefore, emphasis would be on the phenomenon of poverty rather than its real causes.

The growth of poverty and the increase in social polarization have the following repercussions for the logic of capitalist accumulation: they have a negative impact on labor force qualification and the system's goal of high productivity (increasingly sophisticated means of production, while displacing living labor, require the labor force employed to have higher levels of qualification); they restrict the development of individual capabilities to make use of certain market-integrated commodities or services that ensure a faster rate of capital turnover, such as internet commerce; they accentuate the capital-consumption contradiction, which manifests itself mainly through the restriction of effective demand. Furthermore, poverty has a harmful impact on the environment: it is often associated with poor farming practices, the use of toxic products and the employment of polluting technologies, among other factors; it increases migration phenomena from underdeveloped to developed countries and the availability of a larger labor force has an influence on employees' working situations in such countries; poverty in underdeveloped countries is an obstacle to competitive insertion in global value chains; it causes discontent, which may lead to political unrest (Medina, 2018).

- Food security

The researcher Aurelio Suárez states that:

"Hunger in the world is not caused by the technological incapacity of supply but by the purchasing incapacity of a considerable group of consumers; that is, by poverty. Here again, the maxim is fulfilled: capitalism has an infinite capacity of supply to which does not correspond an equal demand. We are experiencing a food crisis in the midst of overproduction; we are facing an economic problem and not a technical one." (Suarez, 2002)

Behind the hunger that plagues large masses of people worldwide, lies the logic of capital accumulation, which is always in search of greater profitability; this situation worsens if it involves neoliberal measures. The world is experiencing a food crisis that is not due to a problem of food insufficiency, because the supply of food is enormous, but is limited on the demand side: the problem is one of access and availability.

Global food production and distribution is led by transnational corporations, which through agribusiness compete with small and medium-sized national producers, especially in developing countries. Agribusinesses affect the biodiversity of the places and undermine the diversification of food production. Moreover, companies have acquired farmland in underdeveloped countries which depend on the food sector, both to produce food for consumption and for exports.

- Health

Health is one of the dimensions of human development identified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990. Despite its relationship with economic development, the global health condition has deteriorated during the past thirty years as a result of neoliberalism's effect on health-care systems. The neoliberal ideology, places the private sector in charge of health-care activities and detaches the state from its role as guarantor and financier of the population's health, leaving only health problems not covered by the private sector under its control.

Health has become an individual and private responsibility and this implies a shift away from the Welfare State's ideological system. The public sector is being defunded in order to enable commercial health care corporations to enter the market: health is nowadays a private activity that fuels capitalist accumulation. It may be purchased or sold according on the availability of funds or the population's immediate requirements.

In the field of medicine, scientific advancements and technological innovations need a significant investment of resources. In this regard, modern technologies provide a new road for capital circulation (Petras, 2000). This sector becomes significant for private capital interested in the healthcare technology business. To the extent that the public hospital is unable to acquire new technologies owing to a lack of funding, tertiarization-privatization procedures are promoted. All of this is justified by a societal consensus based on the belief that the private sector is superior to the public sector and that the latter is ineffective. The public sector's deficit levels are never ascribed to defunding caused by adjustment measures or unregulated service outsourcing, but rather to systemic failures (Guerra, 2006).

Health is not only a national problem but also a global problem. Health gaps in diseases suffered by developed and developing nations are largely marked by national policies, but on the other hand there is a knowledge and technology monopoly power in the hands of transnational companies, which dominate the main advances in this sphere, and in whose hands is the solution to highly lethal diseases.

In synthesis, all these problems that characterize world development and make it a global problem in itself, are summarized in the following statement made by Alberto Acosta, who identifies them as the root causes of a multifaceted crisis. This author pointed out:

"Consumerism and productivism. Technologies that accelerate capital accumulation. Increasingly authoritarian states. Unrestrained ambition and selfishness. Individualism transformed into a social disease. Hunger of millions of people, not due to lack of food. Rampant extractivism. Flexibilization/precarization of labor. Predominance of finance, especially in its speculative activities. Cult to the religion of permanent economic growth."
(Acosta, 2021, p. 4)

In this context, where contradictions abound, emerged the Covid-19 pandemic.

Section 1.3: The pandemic as a global problem. An overview of the institutional debate.

At the social level, disease and death are the direct and most visible effects of the pandemic. However, it also has an impact on the process of expanded capital accumulation, with notable repercussions at the material and social levels.

The current world crisis has given rise to pronouncements aimed at alleviating the existing situation, from international and regional organizations and institutions. However, their approaches are generally focused on the health crisis and possible solutions to it. Behind this lies a short-term vision based on analyses carried out using a positivist method that overlooks the structural problems existing in the different regions of the planet and within societies, both developed and underdeveloped; therefore, they also overlook the existence of problems linked to world development as an expression of contradictions inherent in the very logic of capitalist accumulation.

The following is a synthesis of the approaches of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the European Union (EU).

- World Health Organization (WHO)

On December 31, 2019, the People's Republic of China's government reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) instances of pneumonia of unknown origin that occurred in Wuhan City, Hubei Province. Between that date and January 3, 2020, WHO received 44 reports of probable cases, the majority of which were linked to a seafood market in Wuhan. The responsible virus was discovered and called "new coronavirus" by Chinese officials on January 7. China released the nCoV genetic sequence on January 12 for nations to utilize in the creation of diagnostic kits. In the weeks that followed, nCoV started to spread extensively across China, Korea, and dozens of other nations around the globe, due to persons who had been in Wuhan province and returned to their home countries.

Because of the scale and speed with which the epidemic spread, WHO proclaimed it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30; on February 11, it announced that the new coronavirus illness would be known as "Covid-19"; and on March 11, it formally declared it a pandemic (Bravo & Magis, 2020). Consequently, WHO has been making remarks on the situation's progression based on research, expert opinion, advice from its regional offices, and worldwide experiences.

In this regard, the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for Covid-19 was conceived: this strategic approach serves as a guide for governments to prepare for pandemic management by adjusting to each scenario in order to reduce the consequences for the people, society, and economy.

The operational guidance describes key actions to reorganize and maintain access to essential health services with quality for all. The recommended activities are aimed specifically at governments, institutions, health workers, the most vulnerable groups and the rest of the community (WHO, 2020).

As for the WHO's opinion on the crisis, this institution acknowledges that the pandemic is a crisis, but it only characterizes it as a health issue and does not discuss the preceding circumstances that fostered its spread. This organization expressed a vision focused on its specific issue, which is health, just one of the dimensions of development.

- World Bank (WB)

The World Bank declares itself to be an international organization specialized in finance that focuses its activities on helping developing countries that are in a situation of poverty or need economic support through loans or credits.

This institution has a strong economic character and has pointed out the need for coordinated measures to face the crisis. In this regard, it stated:

"This is a serious public health problem that requires coordinated measures and constant transparency, both within China and around the world. Our support will focus on the areas of disease surveillance, food safety and crisis response, and will include an exchange of international experiences in handling similar crises and an analysis of the impacts of this outbreak on the Chinese economy. In the medium term, the World Bank Group and China will continue to work together to address outstanding development challenges, including global public goods, in line with our recently announced Country Partnership Framework." (World Bank, 2020a).

Its priorities were set out in June 2020, in a document entitled "Saving Lives, Scaling-up Impact and Getting Back on Track" (World Bank Group, 2020). It sets as a priority to help the countries in the transition from crisis to recovery through the following steps: *"Saving lives; protecting the poor and vulnerable; securing the foundations of the economy; and strengthening policies and institutions to achieve resilience, based on transparent and sustainable borrowing and investments."* (World Bank, 2021a). Evidently, these are medium and short-term measures, focused on manifestations of

underdevelopment, but not on the causal elements that have caused countries and sectors of the population to have to face Covid-19 already in conditions of poverty and exclusion.

The WB attributes the growing poverty situation to the pandemic, it considers that it is likely that millions more people will fall into extreme poverty as a result of the new Coronavirus, and that those who are already poor will worsen their condition and suffer even more restrictions. It also warns that more than 1 billion people' jobs are at risk, and that improved social protection schemes for the most vulnerable workers are needed. Evidently, it overlooks the high levels of international poverty existing up to 2019 (which the WB itself had recognized in its annual reports, also calling for action to combat it (World Bank, 2018a)), as well as the destruction of jobs resulting from the deepening of the labor-capital contradiction within the framework of the international economic system ⁶.

Although this institution for years has not contributed effectively to the solution of the structural problems of the underdeveloped economies, under the current conditions, they state:

"The World Bank is committed to do everything possible to help on all these fronts. We recognize that the massive scale of the Covid-19 pandemic demands a truly exceptional response. We are already working with more than 100 low- and middle-income countries to support their health systems and large-scale responses, as well as to lay the foundation for recovery" (World Bank, 2021b).

The WB, like the WHO, in its official line did not recognize that the pandemic accentuated the effects of the crisis of the development model that was already present before 2019. The WB, moreover, proposes to solve the problem through loans, which generates more indebtedness for underdeveloped countries: this institution has approved more than USD 150 billion in loans to countries to face the health, economic and social impact generated by the pandemic.

It is noteworthy its call to the large transnational corporations, some of which have placed their profitability above the lives of people. In this sense, the WB expressed:

"We reiterate the call to pharmaceutical companies, organizations involved and their respective governments involved in the procurement and delivery of vaccines, to collaborate

⁶ For example, the digitalization and automation of production and service processes in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution not only increases unemployment but also disguises the capital-labor contradiction. For more information, see (Medina, 2022).

to increase transparency and publicly disseminate more information on contracts, options and agreements related to vaccines, financing and delivery agreements, and doses delivered and plans for future delivery" (World Bank, 2021b).

With respect to the above quote, it should be emphasized that the WB is a guarantor of the expanded reproduction of capital, and if this institution is formulating these ideas, it means that the pandemic not only is affecting certain sectors of the population, but it is also disturbing the mechanism of reproduction of financial capital, that is to say, it is also troubling the major powers.

The WB considers that the crisis that the world is experiencing is due solely to the Covid-19 pandemic; it does not perceive the crisis as a structural problem, but as a conjunctural one. However, it identifies that its impact is not only on health but also on economic variables and places the solution to the crisis in the medium and long term. It considers that the pandemic may lead to a lost decade, which will be characterized by low growth, the collapse of healthcare systems and a new wave of debt crises. To this end, its solution to the pandemic focuses on creating financial tools for global impact. It should be noted in this regard that the theoretical position this institution is orthodox and is expressed with economic positions in line with the neoliberal doctrine; as a matter of fact, throughout the last thirty years this institution has been one of its major promoters.

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the world's leading organization dedicated to fighting hunger. It provides technical assistance to developed and underdeveloped countries for the elaboration of policies, programs and projects at local, municipal, regional and national levels aimed at eliminating hunger and malnutrition; it is also a source of knowledge and information and helps developing and transition countries to modernize and improve their agricultural, forestry and fisheries activities in order to ensure good nutrition for all; furthermore, it promotes family farming, provides guidance on animal and plant health, and strengthens communities in different agroecological zones to enhance and conserve their food and nutritional heritage for the benefit of present and future generations (Friedrich, 2021).

This institution explicitly recognizes that the pandemic has had profound consequences for food security and nutrition⁷, although it claims that these problems existed prior to the outbreak of this disease; according to the report "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2020), some 2 billion people were already moderately or severely food insecure.

In an interview Dominique Burgeon, Director of FAO's Emergencies and Resilience Division, explains the challenges that Covid-19 poses to the most vulnerable countries and communities already facing high levels of hunger due to the crisis that already existed before 2019, and how FAO is preparing to help them (FAO, 2020).

The major problem for achieving food security remains access to food and not its production: access to food is limited by a problem of inequity in terms of income distribution and by the monopolistic practices carried out by the companies that dominate these productions. This is the situation in many underdeveloped countries, but it can also be observed in developed ones, such as the United States.

When Covid-19 first emerged, the key issue was containing numerous dangers of food chain disruption. Export restrictions were imposed almost immediately, and consumers began stockpiling food. Food markets remain stable due to the gradual reduction of containment measures and policies directed at the agri-food sector. FAO works to maintain the continuity of the food supply chain, including in rural, peri-urban, and metropolitan regions, by supporting the functioning of food markets, value chains, and local systems via a variety of initiatives. It also focuses on ensuring that people along the food supply chain avoid the risk of Covid-19 infection, raising awareness of better food and health practices. Given the severity of the global situation, it stated: *"Further slowing or reduction in the delivery of humanitarian aid could be catastrophic in crises"* (FAO, 2020).

Anticipating that the pandemic was likely to be prolonged and could have a major impact on lives and livelihoods, incomes, food security and nutrition, FAO undertook a comprehensive assessment to determine, country by country, region by region, the most dangerous threats to food availability and accessibility and to the production and distribution systems for food and agricultural products during the recovery period and beyond. As the virus spreads, the global food system is strained by

⁷Food systems encompass all activities related to food production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption. The three constituent elements of systems the food supply chains, food environments, and consumer behavior (HLPE, 2017, p. 11).

border closures, quarantines, population stockpiling of large quantities of food, and supply chain problems and disruptions.

FAO is reorganizing its humanitarian programming to ensure the continued delivery of assistance in countries where there is a high level of assistance needs, while addressing necessities arising from the direct and indirect effects of Covid-19. In this regard it stated:

"We are expanding our field program to provide small farmers and herders, seeds, implements, feed and other agricultural inputs, along with animal health support, so that they can continue to generate income and produce food for their families and communities. In those communities where malnutrition and poverty are prevalent, distribute seeds and home gardening equipment, food storage systems and poultry and other small animals to improve household nutrition and diversify incomes.(...)Everywhere we work we will stabilize access to food by supporting people's purchasing power through cash transfers, so that affected families can meet basic household needs without having to sell essential goods" (FAO, 2020).

FAO became active in order to sustain and then expand programs to preserve the most essential means of livelihoods in countries facing protracted crises or food insecurity. This institution places particular emphasis on agricultural livelihoods and food systems. If people's livelihoods continue to be destroyed as a result of Covid-19, once the existing health crisis has declined, there will be serious problems in rebuilding them.

As opposed to other institutions, the FAO does not attribute the food crisis to the pandemic, and recognizes that it has worsened in the pandemic context. The FAO acknowledged in its official speech that there was already a food crisis in the world and that the pandemic deepened it: the pandemic emerged in a crisis and fueled it. However, although the FAO is trying to counteract nutrition problems in the short and medium term, it is noticeable that this organization does not propose any structural change in the world development model and does not condemn the economic system that sustains it, but rather passively accepts it.

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is an institution that has historically had among its objectives the promotion of Latin American development. Its

multidimensional conception of development remains valid in its approach to the pandemic. In the current context and as part of its systemic vision of development, the emphasis on social development was reiterated by ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, speaking at the side event of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020. In this regard, she affirmed: *"The response to the Covid-19 crisis requires a new social pact for a more inclusive welfare system"* (Bárcena, 2020).

In this respect, she stated that the pandemic has highlighted structural weaknesses in Latin America and the Caribbean's economic, social protection, and health sectors. She emphasized that prior to the pandemic, the region had been facing seven years of weak development, with rising rates of poverty, extreme poverty, and inequality, limited fiscal policy space, and increasing social tensions (Bárcena, 2020).

As opposed to those who attribute the problems of underdevelopment to the Covid-19 pandemic, for ECLAC, the latter revealed the structural problems of this economic model and the shortcomings of the social protection system and gaps in the welfare system (CEPAL, 2020a). It confirmed the need to rethink development and formulate solutions for a post-Covid world. According to her: *"Building back better in Latin America and the Caribbean after the pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease means building back with equality and sustainability"* (Bárcena, 2020).

In this regard, ECLAC stated that responses to the crisis require a new social covenant to transform the relationship between the State, the private sector and society. Mario Cimoli, ECLAC Deputy Executive Secretary, pointed out that:

"Social pacts require a deep dialogue in the post-Covid recovery process: the economy will not be reactivated with the market, there will be a need for a central role of the State, which must be able to intervene in a transparent, radical and diffuse way and put the issue of equality and poverty at the center, since relying only on the market would lead to inefficiencies and the persistence of inequalities. Social cohesion in the post-Covid-19 recovery agendas [...] it is critical to prioritize welfare and ensure universal access to the benefits our societies need."
(EUROsociAL+, 2021)

Furthermore, Bárcena stressed the importance for countries to increase investment in health and social protection systems through multilateral and coordinated methods based on solidarity (UNHCR,

2021). This includes recognizing, safeguarding, and fulfilling economic, social, and cultural rights, with a focus on ensuring that health and social protection remain key to all response, preparedness, and recovery activities. It also demands the protection of civil and political rights, such as the right to participate in political sphere, freedom of expression, and association.

In order to overcome the current situation, ECLAC, in addition to acknowledging the progress being made with vaccination, explains the need to collaboratively build future scenarios that consider a style of development with greater equality and sustainability, and that have as an enabling condition the reconstruction of trust in institutions.

The pandemic has shown not only the structural inadequacies of the existing economic model, but also the flaws and shortcomings of social protection systems. According to this institution, it is necessary to move toward decent work, recognize the State's responsibility to its respective populations, the market, and families, as well as promote access to social protection, ensuring access to quality public health systems, which is essential to protect people's quality of life.

ECLAC emphasizes the detrimental impact of the pandemic on the Latin American development process, and in this context, on the amplification of poverty, which has historically plagued the region. Furthermore, it pointed out that in a context where the Covid-19 pandemic has not yet been contained, social setbacks in terms of inequality, inequity in access to health, education, and nutrition persist, reflecting the fact that economic recovery will not be sufficient to achieve transformative, equitable, and environmentally sustainable recovery.

ECLAC relates this situation to the vaccination process and to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, it has expressed:

"We have made an urgent call for a solidarity and collective response for equitable access to vaccines, liquidity and concessional financing. We have also reaffirmed the commitment to the 2030 Agenda as the roadmap for a transformative, greener, more equitable and people-based recovery." (Bárcena, 2020)

This organization advocated for universal access to Covid-19 tests and medical care, as well as adequate access to basic services and support for the consumption of the population at risk of poverty.

It also urged governments to provide financial assistance to the most needy segments of society and to safeguard jobs.

Latin American and Caribbean countries are characterized by structural conditions of inequality, inequity, vulnerability, and social exclusion, as well as informality in employment, low quality social protection systems, and productive structures with a low level of integration and limited ability to maintain sustainable levels of growth. These circumstances are evident in the institutional structure of health systems, and the pandemic has exacerbated them. Given the inadequate, segmented, and fragmented health systems, as well as weak and insufficient social protection systems, a huge portion of the region's population has seen its fundamental needs unsatisfied (Bárcena, 2021).

ECLAC also stated that the pandemic has had a significant discriminatory influence on certain population groups and their ability to respond to it; this is reflected in specific age groups, ethnicities, genders, or social groups. It considers that although the crisis affects the entire labor force, *"the situation of informal workers of both sexes, and especially that of women and young, indigenous, Afro-descendant and migrant people"* (CEPAL, 2020b, p. 1) is a strong weak point. As a result, it argues that short, medium, and long-term social protection measures to combat the pandemic's consequences must include the welfare of the whole population, particularly those who are currently suffering the most from the crisis's repercussions ⁸.

In order to address the socioeconomic impacts of the crisis, ECLAC proposes governments to guarantee temporary monetary to fulfill basic necessities and sustain family consumption, which will be critical to achieve a durable and reasonably high degree of recovery (CEPAL, 2020c). From a long-term perspective, ECLAC reiterates that the scope of these transfers should be permanent and should extend beyond persons living in poverty to reach large segments of the population that are highly vulnerable to poverty, such as non-poor low-income and lower middle-income sectors. This will make it possible to move towards a basic income which should be introduced gradually over a certain length of time, depending on the circumstances of each nation.

⁸ Women are in a very complex situation. Paid domestic workers, many of whom are indigenous, migrant or Afro descendant, have almost no access to social security and there is uncertainty about their wages, since they often do not have a formal employment contract. In addition, due to quarantines, school closures and the need for care in the case of one or more infected persons in the home, the non-remunerated domestic workload assumed by women, adolescents and girls has increased, as well as cases of violence against them. (CEPAL, 2020b)

This institution has a vision of the pandemic that is indisputably linked to the structural problems of the region. It incorporates such an approach in its analyses as an element to be considered in relation to the present and future regional development process.

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a United Nations organization responsible for supporting nations in eradicating poverty and achieving long-term economic and human development progress. UNDP said that in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world development context has changed dramatically. *"The world is facing unprecedented socio-economic disruption, at a time of deep inequality, ecological fragility and growing distrust within and between societies."* (UNDP, 2020, p. 1). It also explained that this pandemic is a health crisis, but that Covid-19 has also caused a humanitarian and development crisis with severe social, economic, and political implications that might last for years, especially in nations already suffering from vulnerability, poverty, and conflict.

This organization's response is based on the pursuit of three objectives: to assist countries in their efforts to fight the pandemic and protect people from its effects, to organize themselves to respond to outbreaks, and to help them recover from the economic and social effects of the crisis (UNDP, 2020).

UNDP did not limit itself to classifying the crisis only as an health one, it assumes a multidimensional view of its effects and, in order to fight them, it overcomes the short-term approach adopted by other international institutions; however, like almost all the organizations above analyzed, it does not make a structural analysis and does not express an opinion on the crisis experienced by the current development model of the countries, even though it recognizes the serious problems that plagued the world before the pandemic.

- European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) is a supranational political and economic union comprising 27 member states of Europe (Schütze, 2009). The theoretical position of the European Union is orthodox, and is expressed through the recognition, divulgation and implementation of the precepts of the Economics, in particular of the neoliberal thinking. In response to the crisis, the EU launched the Next Generation

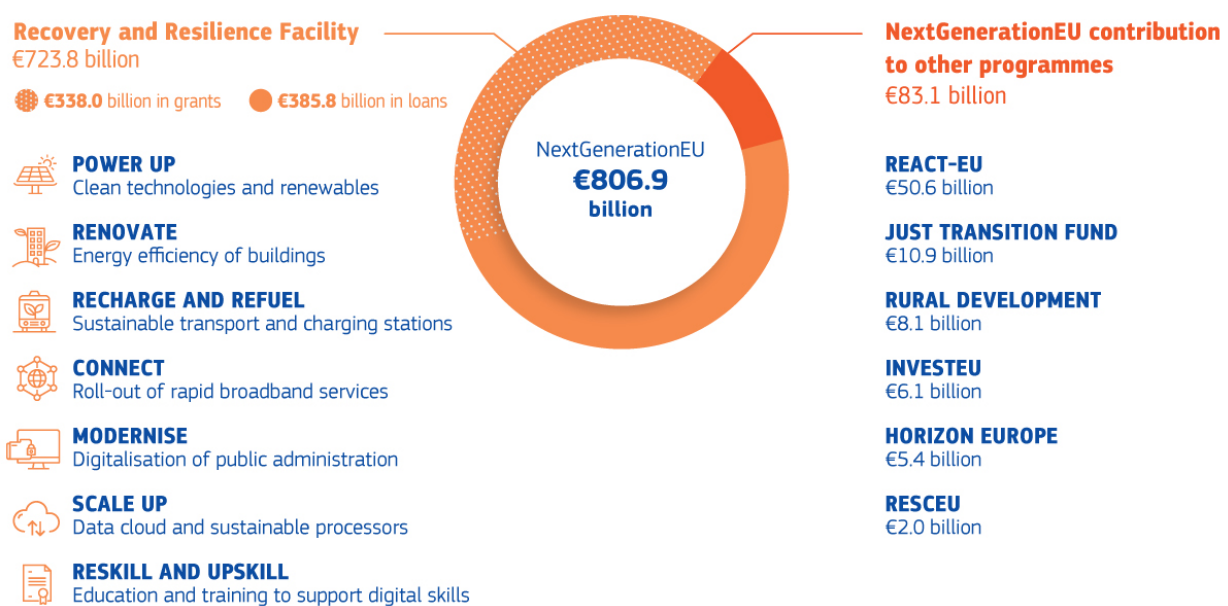
EU (NGEU) initiative in July 2020, which is a more than €800 billion temporary recovery tool designed to help repair the immediate economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic (European Commission, Recovery plan for Europe, 2021).

The funds for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the program's most essential component, are raised via the issuing of EU bonds; this financing complements a funding that has been in place since September 2020 to support the Support to Mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) initiative. The NGEU program provides large resources to member states that, although having per capita income levels comparable to the EU average, have recently experienced low economic growth and high unemployment (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, 2021).

According to the EU, the NGEU aims to promote a robust recovery of the European economy in the name of ecological transition, digitalization, competitiveness, training and social, territorial and gender inclusion (Figure 1) (European Commission, 2021).

For the EU, the pandemic has triggered an economic and social crisis, which it proposes to address through the aforementioned plan. While acknowledging in part that the sustainability of its model was not withstanding even the pre-pandemic reality, the EU does not make an analysis in terms of structural change and denies the systemic nature of the crisis.

Figure 1: NGEU money conditionality



(European Commission, 2021)

Section 1.4: Critical positions

The available literature does not show a notable presence of dissenting pronouncements regarding the idea that the crisis was produced by the pandemic. However, it is possible to find some critical positions. The most significant opinions for the purposes of this thesis are presented in the following paragraphs.

Several authors point out that there is a crisis of the capitalist system. In this sense, the Uruguayan political economists Gabriella Cultelli and Cabrera Tajam state that:

"...this is not the crisis of the "coronavirus" or an "econdemic" as it has been called, but the result of a specific form of development that has reached its crudest manifestations in the face of the almost total paralysis of the economies caused by the pandemic" (Cultelli & Tajam, 2021, p. 3).

In their opinion, it is *"... a crisis that was already under way and that worsened with the paralysis of economies due to the pandemic and health crisis of the coronavirus. This crisis brought with it harsher and more pressing forms of domination at the global level" (Cultelli & Tajam, 2021, p. 3).*

Focusing on the capitalist system and the global problems of development, Ernesto Molina expresses:

"This system has created global problems that endanger the destinies of humanity. A whole system of crises: energy, technological, environmental, food, financial and health. Among these global problems we must include the concentration and polarization of science at the service of capital" (Molina, 2021, p. 11)

In this regard, he emphasizes the difficulty of accessing high-tech goods for developing countries; the high fixed cost of research and development, which is scarcely refundable in those national markets; he expresses that as long as we live in an era of coexistence between global capitalism and certain processes of Southern economies' transformations, cooperation, solidarity and complementarity will be fundamental within countries (Molina, 2021).

Miguel Díaz-Canel and Jorge Núñez (2020) pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic context has highlighted how capitalist powers, which produce knowledge and have great technological capabilities, face numerous challenges in dealing with the epidemiological situation, with significant social and even economic consequences for a large portion of their population. The logic of capital has triumphed in health policy; health, rather than being a universal human right, has become merely another commercial item, tradable on the market. In this sense, they state: *"the global medical-pharmaceutical industry, largely in the hands of a group of transnational corporations, define their research and development agendas based on profitability and profit objectives" (Díaz-Canel &*

Núñez, 2020, p. 3). Elements related to health and welfare of the population are not in the focus of their policies. The monopolization of knowledge by these large companies contributes to the pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector benefiting from this crisis.

Costas Lapavitsas, professor of economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, argued that the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed numerous structural flaws of capitalism and that it did not undermine neoliberalism. In this regard, he stated that:

“There is no question that the pandemic shock represents a tremendous crisis of global capitalism, but I would urge strong caution regarding the collapse of neoliberalism. The Great Crisis of 2007-2009 was overcome by the state deploying its massive strength to defend financialized capitalism and globalization. What followed was a decade of low growth, poor investment, weak productivity growth, sustained inequality and partially revived profits. Economic performance was poor in core countries, providing further evidence of the failure of neoliberalism. The Golden Era of financialization is well and truly over, despite the sustained rise of stock markets in the previous decade. When Covid-19 struck, it became crystal clear that contemporary capitalism is entirely dependent on massive state intervention. It is a misunderstanding that neoliberalism necessarily means marginalizing the state and imposing austerity. Rather, it is about using the state selectively to defend the interests of a small elite, an oligarchy, associated with big business and the financial sector. When the pandemic shock threatened the foundations of class rule, austerity and forbearing from direct economic intervention were abandoned in the blink of an eye. The neoliberal ideologists rapidly adapted to the new reality.” (Lapavitsas, 2021)

Moreover, this critical author observes that there is widespread dissatisfaction with capitalism, especially since the destruction of the environment and global warming have sparked increasing concerns among the youth; nonetheless, this has not resulted in a broad-based mobilization around new ideas and politics.

Noam Chomsky agrees with epidemiologist Rob Wallace, who noted that profit-driven capitalist logic has compromised the wildlife ecosystem, that human-animal conflicts have increased, and that this opens the door for viruses to spread to people. According to Chomsky, the crisis of capitalism has been exposed in the form of a health crisis. He affirmed that:

“Destruction of habitat and unsustainable land-use are raising the threat of such spillovers, [which is] apparently what happened with [the new coronavirus]. The suicidal tendencies of unbridled capitalism [have been] exposed in many other ways by the health

crisis. After the SARS epidemic in 2003, scientists warned that another coronavirus epidemic was likely, and urged that we prepare for it. Who could do so? The huge and super-wealthy drug companies have the resources to do so, but they are blocked by normal capitalist logic. It is not profitable. The government could step in, but that is blocked by the neoliberal plague, which demands that the government cannot intervene in the world controlled by private power – except, of course, to rescue the rich and corporate sector from the crises they create, as is happening again now.” (Chomsky, 2020)

For Luciano Vasapollo, we are facing a structural crisis of global capitalism and its neoliberal form. This crisis has only been accelerated by the Covid-19. About that, he highlighted that:

"The Covid-19 pandemic catalyzes and accelerates a series of trends that had developed as a part of the crisis in world order. Some of these trends are the emergence of the Asia Pacific region and China in particular, as well as the relative decline of the geopolitical West, the Global North, and the great power of the 20th century: the United States. We are experiencing the configuration of a multipolar world with bipolar characteristics coupled with growing contradictions between the global North and South. The Covid-19 crisis challenges the supposed rationality and primacy of the Western consensus principles of "individual freedom" as the supreme value and "free enterprise" as the mean to achieve it. The consensus on neoliberal austerity, a truly ironclad approach to the management of the budget and the scope of public policy, has been temporarily suspended in the EU, with a return date of 2023/2024." (Vasapollo, 2021)

This Italian author also points out that, in the European context, the crisis is also to be found in the policies that were implemented by the European Union in the years preceding the pandemic. These policies effectively dismantled the social rights that were part of the European countries' constitutions in the name of balanced budgets. This only increased the depth of the crisis we are experiencing.

Other authors have adopted similar positions, but with a more explicit emphasis on the neoliberal model. In this case, Vázquez (2021) is noteworthy; she expressed:

"The alarming effects of the pandemic - which began to affect humanity at the end of 2019 - together with the vulnerability revealed at the political and social level to face it, have highlighted the need to change the prevailing neoliberal development model in most of the countries of the world. However, to achieve this end, there are significant obstacles. In this sense, the concentration of political power that is expressed through the concentration of

income and wealth in the capitalist class, as well as the social and governmental intervention that has been promoted by ideological means to serve their interests, become important limitations both in the present and in the future to change the neoliberal model." (Vázquez, 2021, p. 1)

Along the same vein, the author herself emphasizes that the shift from the concentration of wealth to the concentration of political power is one of the most important results of the application of the neoliberal model, which has made societies and States throughout the world unable to cope with the pandemic.

For Josef Stiglitz, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics, the crisis revealed a structural problem that we have been dragging along for years. He argues that the pandemic crisis was part of several crises that the world was already experiencing, as a consequence of the application of neoliberal precepts. He argues that not just policies, but also the framework within which they are developed, must be changed: we did not have a system that could withstand the pandemic crisis because our development and economic models were not sustainable.

"Neoliberalism had argued that deregulation and financial liberalization would unleash unprecedented economic growth, and what they brought about was unprecedented economic instability. The models underpinning neoliberalism are fallacious; they told us that the economy has always been on a path of equilibrium, despite crises, such as the one that occurred in 2008. The world also has to face the climate crisis, which highlights the need for action by States and international solidarity. Another crisis is that of inequality: the pandemic has deepened it both within and between countries. The poor and the neediest are the ones who suffer the most from the consequences of Covid, especially in societies where there is no universal access to a health system, or where there are deficient systems of social protection. Another crisis is the geopolitical one: there is an increase in authoritarianism, the United States is moving away from the most basic norms of international law, and a new cold war is underway." (Stiglitz, 2021a)

According to him, the main lesson of these crises - that already existed and were deepened by the pandemic - is that problems cannot be solved by markets alone, they have to be addressed through collective action. For Stiglitz, the balance between the state and the market, the importance of the development of science, social security, solidarity and equality represent the solution for these crises and the profound uncertainty we are facing. To achieve world development, policies and development

models must be redesigned. He thinks that *"The pandemic has demonstrated the consequences of 40 years of neoliberalism, of denigrating the importance of collective action"* (Stiglitz, 2021b).

Ian Andrew Goldin, professor of Globalization and Development at the University of Oxford in England, argued that Covid-19 has uncovered and exacerbated existing disparities in income, race, gender, age, education, and geographical location. In his book *"Rescue: From Global Crisis to a Better World"* he explains ways people, corporations, and governments may spark change to reduce inequality, which was increasing in both Europe and the United States prior to Covid-19. He pointed out that, after being relatively steady in the decades after WWII, the labor share of total income in the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom has been declining since the 1980s. This is primarily due to the tide of liberalization unleashed in by Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States, who lowered taxes, attacked trade unions, all of which allowed for greater concentration and strength of employers. According to him:

"The pandemic increased both economic and health inequalities due to a range of intersecting factors, which compounded each other. The wealthy were not only able to keep their well-paid jobs but also benefited from soaring stock markets and rising house prices. Low-paid workers were, in contrast, more likely to have jobs in the sectors that suspended activities, including hospitality and tourism. Covid-19, by exacerbating and further revealing the extent of inequality and discrimination, has made the case for addressing these injustices more compelling than ever." (Goldin, 2021)

Other authors focus their analysis on global inequality. Venezuelan economist Pascualina Curcio expressed her opinion in this regard; for her, inequality is both cause and consequence of the pandemic.

"If, on the one hand, the inequalities generated by the capitalist system have become evident with the coronavirus, on the other, the pandemic is a producer of inequality, with tragic consequences, such as the increase in hunger and poverty in the world, as well as limited access to health care." (Curcio, 2021)

In this context, the author identifies that there is a global reordering, characterized by the decline of the United States and the emergence of a new trade model, which, however, will not imply a real transformation of the current mode of production.

The Paris-based “Global Inequality Lab”, founded by French economist Thomas Piketty has a similar perspective. About 2750 billionaires control 3.5 per cent of the world’s wealth, they said in The World Inequality Report published in Dec. 2021 (Piketty Lab, 2021) ⁹. During the Covid-19 crisis, millionaires acquired a record percentage of global wealth. According to Chancel, these pandemic patterns are the result of decades of policies that were frequently directed toward the top. He noted that during this crisis, billionaires accumulated €3.6 trillion of wealth while some 100 million people were falling into extreme poverty (Piketty, 2020).

Section 1.5: Partial conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic has shaped an international context apparently marked by a health crisis of unprecedented scope. However, it has been the expression and catalyst that synthesizes the multiple dimensions of a much broader, deeper and more complex crisis.

Pandemic and development are linked in a causal relationship. The pandemic creates a favorable scenario for the deepening of the problems of world development, which provides a propitious context for the expansion of the pandemic.

Though with a certain diversity of emphasis, international organizations generally agree in considering that the crisis is the result of the pandemic. However, there are critical and isolated voices that focus their analysis on the essence of the capitalist system and its contradictory character, or on the neoliberal development model and its weaknesses.

⁹ This publication is the culmination of more than four years of study by more than 100 scholars from across the world. The report was co-ordinated by Lucas Chancel, co-director of the Inequality Lab, and longtime inequality specialists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman of the University of California, Berkeley, and Thomas Piketty of the Paris School of Economics.

CHAPTER II. World development crisis and Covid-19 pandemic.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the pandemic and world development by analyzing the pre-pandemic context and its impact through the main socioeconomic indicators. The analysis is divided into two important dimensions of the development process: the economic and the social one.

Section 2.1: Economic dimension of the development process

• World Trade and Global Growth

Before the pandemic, world trade was already in deep crisis. In this regard, in late 2019, an OECD report noted that long-term growth was undermined by trade and investment weakness: global GDP growth rate in 2019 was 2.6 percent, the lowest since the 2008-2009 financial crisis (OECD, 2019a). Laurence Boone, OECD Chief Economist, indicated that this is a structural crisis: *"It would be a mistake to think that these changes are temporary factors that can be addressed through monetary or fiscal policy: these are structural problems"* (OECD, 2019b). International trade patterns have been defined by a particular trend during the past 10 years, with weak growth in 2012-2014, a slowdown in 2015 and 2016, a partial recovery in 2017 (UNCTAD, 2019, p. 1), and again low growth levels since that year (Figure 1).

Figure 1



(World Bank, 2022a)

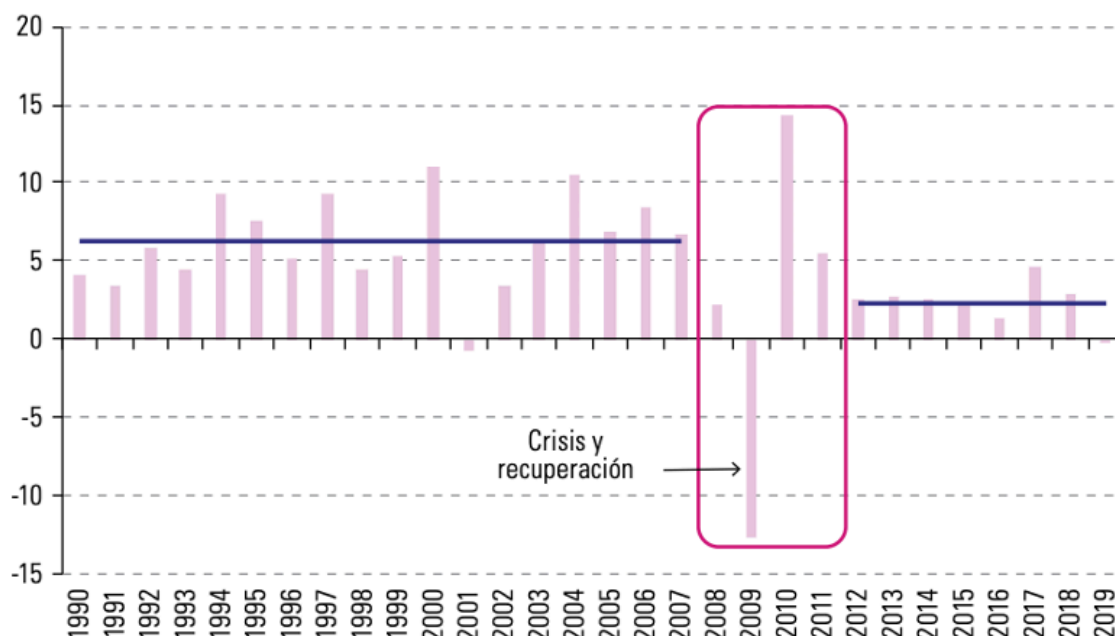
Covid-19 emerged in such a context of global trade slowdown that has persisted since the 2008-2009 financial crisis. In this regard, CEPAL affirmed that:

“While between 1990 and 2007 the volume of trade in goods expanded at an average rate of 6.2% per year, between 2012 and 2019 it expanded at only 2.3% per year. Likewise, the share of exports of goods and services in world GDP, which reached its historical peak of 31% in 2008, has been around 28% since 2015” (CEPAL, 2020d, p. 1) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Rate of change in the volume of world trade in goods, 1990-2019 (in percentages)

Blue line: average variation.

Pink columns: annual variation.



(CEPAL, 2020d, p. 1)

Covid-19’s fast spreading and government responses have had major economic effects throughout the world. Many productive operations have been hampered, initially in Asia, then in Europe, North America, and the rest of the planet.

The volume of international merchandise trade decreased -5.1 percent in 2020, very close to the -4.0 percent reduction in world GDP occurred during the same year (World Trade Organization, 2021). The impact of the pandemic on the sectoral composition of international trade in goods has been differentiated, according to the specific characteristics of each subsector. The most affected goods in

terms of volume were manufactures (-6.3 percent), followed by fuels and mining products (-3.1 percent), and agricultural products (-2.3 percent). The reduction in manufacturing trade had a strong impact on total merchandise trade, considering that the former represents 71 percent of the latter (World Trade Organization, 2021).

Automotive products recorded the largest decline (-16.4 percent) among all manufacturing categories. This outcome was influenced by the weakness of demand and the abrupt break in production lines. Trade in other manufacturing groups, such as textiles (16 percent), which include personal protective equipment, and office and telecommunications equipment (3.9 percent), performed relatively better (World Trade Organization, 2021). In general, countries invested resources to improve the availability of computer equipment and information technology infrastructure - mainly through imports - to meet the need for greater use of teleworking and distance education (Hidalgo, 2021).

The volume of trade in fuels and mining products decreased -3.1 percent in 2020. The reduction in demand for transportation services, both for goods and people, had an impact on this result. Trade in agricultural products also declined, but to a lesser extent (-2.3 percent): food products, even in mass confinement periods, maintained significant levels of demand.

In relation to world market prices, agricultural products were less affected than minerals and oil. In the second half of 2020, the prices of agricultural goods showed a slight recovery, above that of other products. The sharpest drop occurred in oil prices, estimated at -34 percent, on average for the whole of 2020 (World Bank Group, 2021).

This trend in world trade is influenced by the pre-pandemic behavior of global value chains (GVCs), which were already showing signs of fragility. As a matter of fact, in some cases there was a setback or stagnation in their operations. In addition, for some years now, the global production process has incorporated an intense and accelerated digitalization component (Hidalgo, 2021).

In relation to the latter, it is worth mentioning the 4IR, which leads to the automation and digitalization of production processes and services. In this regard, it should be noted that a large part of the commercial activities was carried out through transnational companies. The following are examples that illustrate the behavior of a small number of transnational companies with broad market power (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Leading online companies ranked by revenue from 2017 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)

Characteristic	2017	2018	2019	2020
Amazon.com	177.87	232.89	280.52	386.06
Apple	229.23	265.6	260.17	274.52
Google	109.65	136.22	160.74	181.69
Alibaba	22.99	56.15	71.99	109.48
Facebook	40.65	55.84	70.7	85.97

(Various sources (Company filings), 2021)

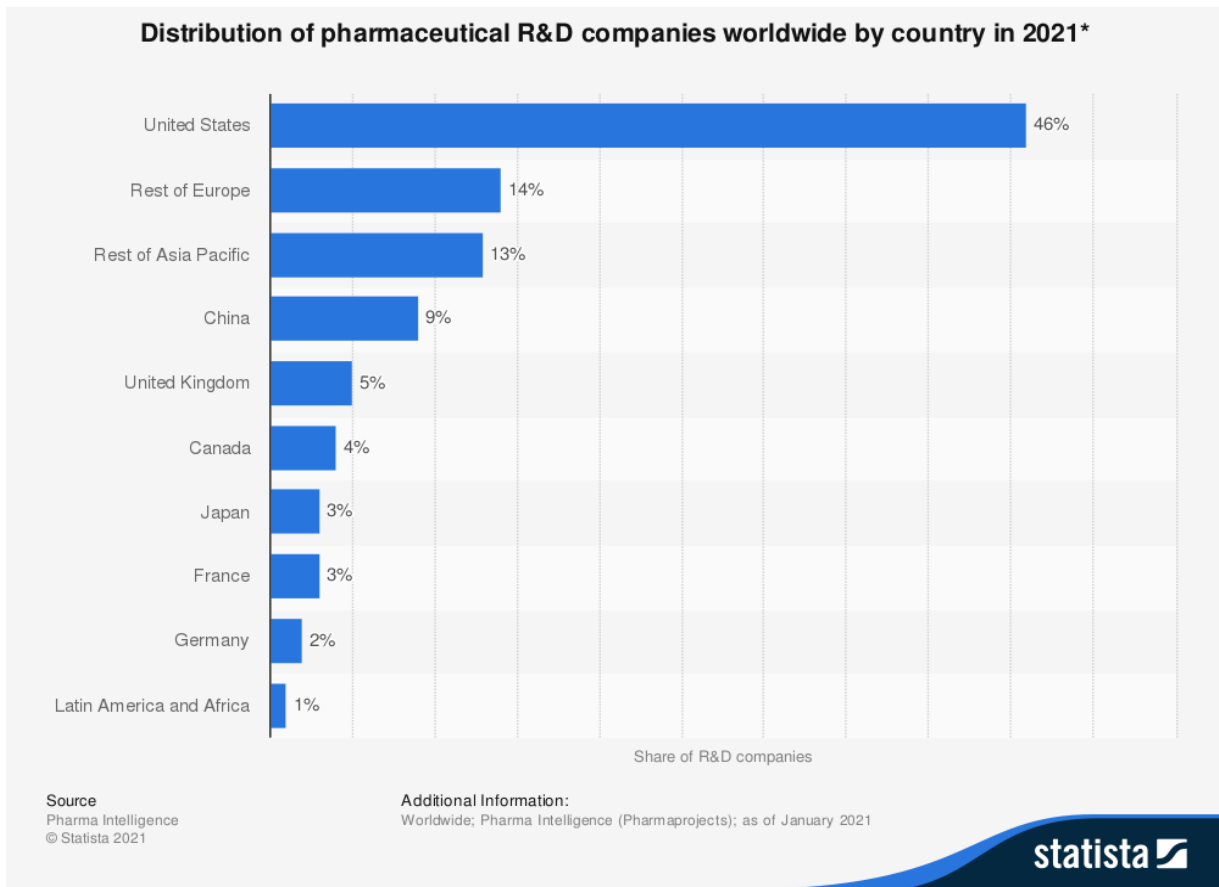
Amazon's global net revenue in 2019 exceeded 280.52 billion USD, in 2020 it was 386.06 billion USD, representing a 37.62 percent increase. Apple's global revenue in 2019 was approximately 260.17 billion USD, in 2020 it reached 274.52 billion USD. Facebook's worldwide revenues amounted to more than 70.7 billion USD before the pandemic, and in one year this company managed to collect 85.97 billion USD. Alibaba's revenue was 71.99 billion USD in 2019 and 109.48 billion USD in 2020.

- Monopolization of knowledge

Although the pandemic was a catalyst for digital commerce, it must be understood in a growing process marked by the monopolization of knowledge for the purpose of capital accumulation. It is remarkable the existing international gap in terms of investment in R&D (Annex 1), export of high-tech products (Annex 2), scientific publications in high impact journals (Annex 3), and number of patents (Annex 4), among others. The leading players in these sectors are China, the United States, Japan and the European region, in particular Germany.

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution by country of the main pharmaceutical companies in 2021 and Figure 5 shows the main companies that monopolize the biopharmaceutical and biotech market in the world, according to their revenues. Although they found in the pandemic a propitious context, it should be noted that prior to this situation they already had an expansive trend, as they were leading the international market.

Figure 4



(Pharma Intelligence, 2021)

Figure 5: The top 10 pharma companies by revenue (in billion U.S. dollars)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Johnson & Johnson	\$81.6	\$82.1	\$82.6	\$91.45
Roche	\$58.76	\$63.54	\$62.05	\$65.23
Pfizer	\$53.64	\$51.75	\$41.9	\$55.52
AbbVie	\$32.75	\$33.27	\$45.80	\$53.73
Novartis	\$44.75	\$47.45	\$48.66	\$51.56
Bayer	\$28.39	\$26.59	\$25.71	\$48.56
Merck & Co.	\$42.29	\$46.84	\$48.00	\$47.10

Glaxo Smith Kline	\$40.96	\$43.26	\$43.77	\$45.24
Bristol Myers Squibb	\$22.56	\$22.56	\$42.52	\$44.38
Sanofi	\$38.59	\$40.46	\$41.08	\$43.74

Compilation based on information supplied by (Fierce Pharma, Special Reports The top 20 pharma companies by 2019 revenue, 2020) (Fierce Pharma, 2021) (Financial Times, 2021)

It is remarkable to note that for these companies - and in particular Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer and Bayer - the pandemic has represented an opportunity to maximize profits as never before.

- Tourism

Among the disruption of economic activities, one of the most visibly affected sectors was tourism, which is a transnational activity that integrates almost all productive and service sectors (energy, health services, digital infrastructure, food goods, hotel goods, transportation, etc.). This situation was caused by the travel restrictions applied as a measure to contain the virus and by a decline in demand due to economic solvency difficulties and fear of being infected with Covid-19 (López, 2021).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) considered 2020 to be the worst year in the history of tourism, due to its -74 percent drop compared to the previous year (to give an example of the magnitude of the problem, the decline recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis was -4 percent) (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2021). International tourist arrivals declined from January 2020 onwards, with a sharp drop in March of the same year. Consequently, the devastating impact of the health crisis resulted in an estimated loss of 1.3 billion USD in export revenues, more than eleven times the losses recorded during the 2008-2009 global economic crisis.

Tourism accounts for a high percentage of income at the international level, being in many countries - especially underdeveloped ones - the main source of accumulation. Covid-19 has endangered between 100 and 120 million direct tourism jobs, and there is a risk that they will be permanently lost. A large part of these jobs belongs to small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent 80 percent of all tourism sector companies.

All regions of the world have been affected. Asia and the Pacific, which was the first region to suffer the effects of the health emergency and maintains the strictest travel restrictions, recorded the largest decline in travel arrivals, with 84 percent (300 million fewer), while the Middle East and Africa both recorded a 75 percent drop (López, 2021).

Europe reported a 70 percent drop in arrivals, despite a small and brief rebound in the summer of 2020, interrupted by continued outbreaks. The region suffered the biggest drop in absolute terms, with a decline of more than 500 million tourists in 2020. The Americas recorded a 69 percent drop in international arrivals, with slightly better results in the last quarter of that year.

The UNWTO ninth report on travel restrictions notes that as of early February 2021, of the 217 global destinations, 69 were completely closed to international tourism, with Asia-Pacific and Europe being the most cautious in this sense. The top ten source markets, which in 2018 generated 44 percent of international arrivals, discouraged non-essential travel abroad for their citizens (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2021)

The crisis is still far from over, so the extended scenarios for 2021-2024, indicate that international tourism could take between two and a half and four years, to return to 2019 levels.

- Financing for development and the problem of global debt

In the face of a situation of considerable international economic impact, financial rescue policies have been promoted.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased global debt levels, both in advanced economies and Emerging Market and Developing Economies (EMDEs). It is important to underline that, although the debt problem increased in this period, it was already a major concern of the underdeveloped world before Covid-19 outbreak.

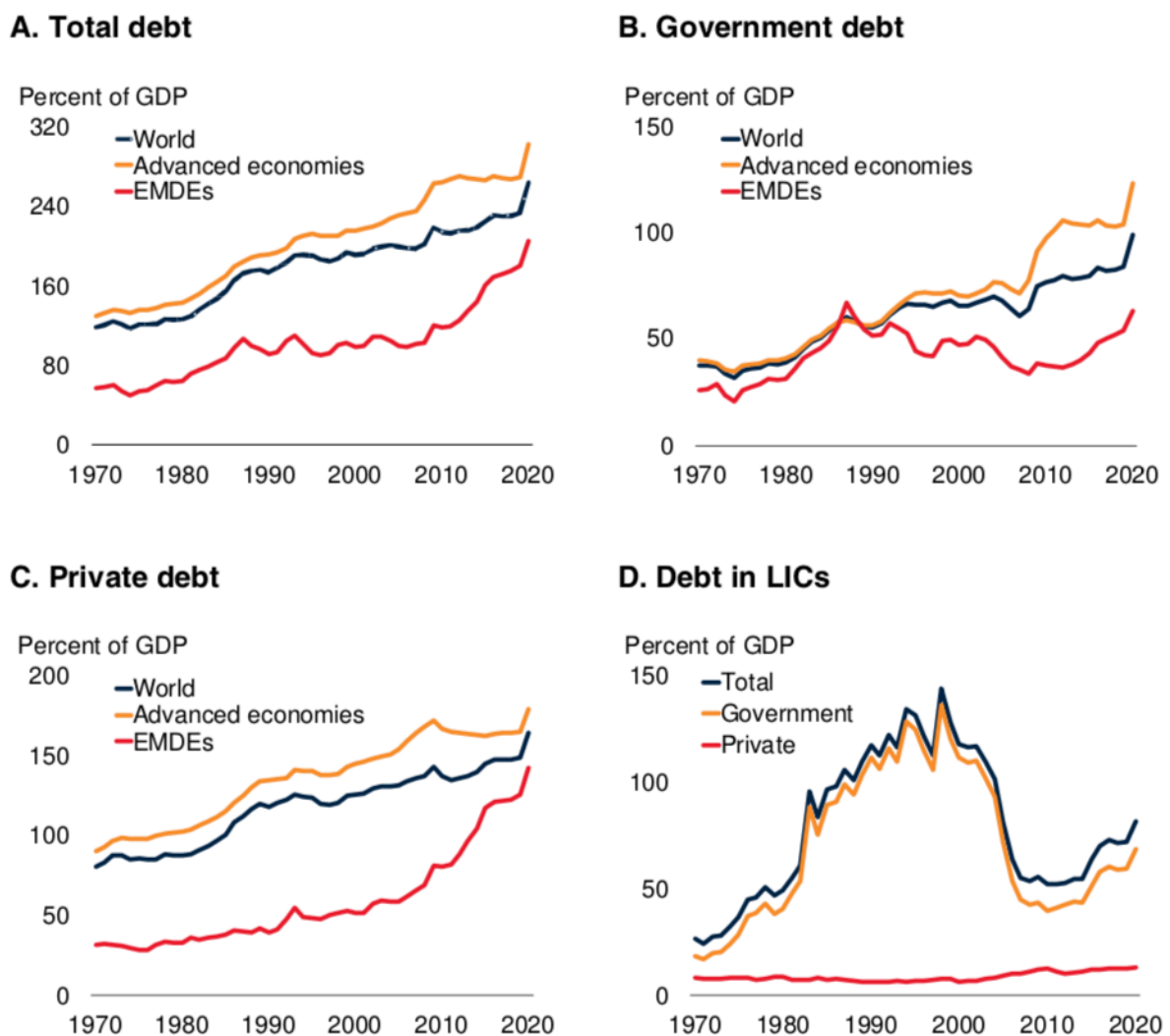
“In 2020 total global debt reached 263 percent of GDP, its highest level in half a century. The buildup has been broad based, with rapid growth in both government and private debt; advanced-economy and emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) debt; and external and domestic debt” (World Bank Group, 2022, p. 49).

In EMDEs, the growth in government debt is of special relevance. Government debt in these nations increased by 9 percentage (63 percent of GDP) in 2020. In the last three decades, this has been the fastest one-year growth (Melecky, 2021).

The increase in debt that occurred as a result of the pandemic emergency must be seen in a context in which for the past 10 years the debt of EMDEs has been growing and the growth of their GDP has been decreasing. Moreover, government loans and loan guarantee schemes facilitated business borrowing, resulting in a rise in private debt; also, government debt in Low-income countries (LICs) significantly increased too (Figure 6). About this problem, the World Bank Group affirmed that:

“Debt vulnerabilities have risen: more than one-half of low-income countries are in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress; some countries have already defaulted on their debt; and debt restructurings have been completed in some, or are underway in others” (World Bank Group, 2022, p. 49).

Figure 6: Debt



(World Bank Group, 2022, p. 50)

Using the fight against Covid-19 socioeconomic consequences as a pretext, the World Bank has played an important role in the increase in global debt. This can be seen from a careful reading of what this international institution itself declared:

"Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Bank Group has provided more than US\$157 billion to combat its health, economic and social impacts, representing the fastest and largest response to a crisis in the Bank's history. The financing is helping more than 100 countries strengthen pandemic preparedness, protect the poor and safeguard jobs, and jump-start a climate-friendly recovery. The Bank is also assisting more than 50 low- and middle-income countries, more than half of which are in Africa, in the purchase and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines and is making US\$20 billion in financing available for this purpose through the end of 2022" (World Bank, 2021c).

The essential issue of financing for development, although necessary in the context of a pandemic, should not respond to a short-term, circumstantial solution. Historically, it has been a problem to be considered in relation to world development. Although several international conferences on financing for development have been held, with specific achievements and limitations, in general there are substantial problems yet to be solved. The commitments reached on each occasion are insufficient to guarantee substantive actions to face the contemporary challenges for the achievement of development.

Prior to Covid-19, there were already financing problems. According to Pérez Rodríguez (2017, p. 79) it has not yet been achieved:

- To propose ways to carry out structural reforms that would allow underdeveloped countries to generate the necessary internal financial resources for their development and for the achievement of internationally agreed objectives.
- To find inclusive, transparent, and universal solutions to the issue of international tax cooperation and other problems such as tax evasion, fraud, tax havens and illicit financial flows.
- To establish commitments to align business interests with development objectives under criteria of responsibility and to design mechanisms for the control of speculative capital flows.

- To establish precise timetables for the implementation of historically unfulfilled official development assistance (ODA) commitments.
- To critically evaluate current trade regimes and their contribution to development, establishing mechanisms to eliminate unfair trade practices.
- To propose a comprehensive and definitive solution to the problem of the external indebtedness of underdeveloped countries.
- To promote, from the United Nations, a profound reform of the international monetary, financial and commercial architecture, which would allow its operation to be adapted to the interests of all nations and to the development objectives established at the global level.

• Unemployment

Another variable that is fundamental to analyze in this context is unemployment, which has been one of the most impacted during the pandemic (Figure 7); however, its trend has historically been associated with the international process of capital accumulation and the ways in which productive processes are organized, as well as the development models adopted in the different nations, particularly, the neoliberal one. Prior to the pandemic, in 2018, in the world there were approximately 172 million unemployed people, equivalent to a 5.0 percent unemployment rate. Between 2008 and 2009, the worldwide unemployment rate rose from 5.0 percent to 5.6 percent, and the return to pre-crisis levels has taken nine years (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Figure 7

	Unemployment rate (percentages)					Unemployment (millions)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
World	5.4	6.6	6.2	5.9	5.7	186	224	214	207	203
Low-income countries	4.9	5.6	5.9	6.0	5.7	12	14	15	16	16
Lower-middle-income countries	5.1	6.6	5.9	5.6	5.4	64	81	74	72	72
Upper-middle-income countries	6.0	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.3	80	88	90	88	85
High-income countries	4.8	6.5	5.6	4.9	4.7	29	40	35	31	29

(International Labour Organization, 2022, p. 23)

Worldwide, the labor force participation rate fell by over 2 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 and is only partly expected to recover by 2023, to 59.4 percent; however, the latter figure is more than one point lower than 60.5 percent, associated with 2019.

With employment recovery projected to be even slower than labor force recovery, the global unemployment rate is predicted to remain above its 2019 level until at least 2023. The total number of the unemployed is expected to decline in both 2022 and 2023. Additionally, employment recovery is estimated to be slower than labor force recovery; the ILO projects that worldwide unemployment will stay persistently higher than its 2019 level of 186 million until at least 2023. Furthermore, unemployment recovery will take place mainly in high-income countries, despite the fact that these contain only 18 percent of the global labor force (International Labour Organization, 2022).

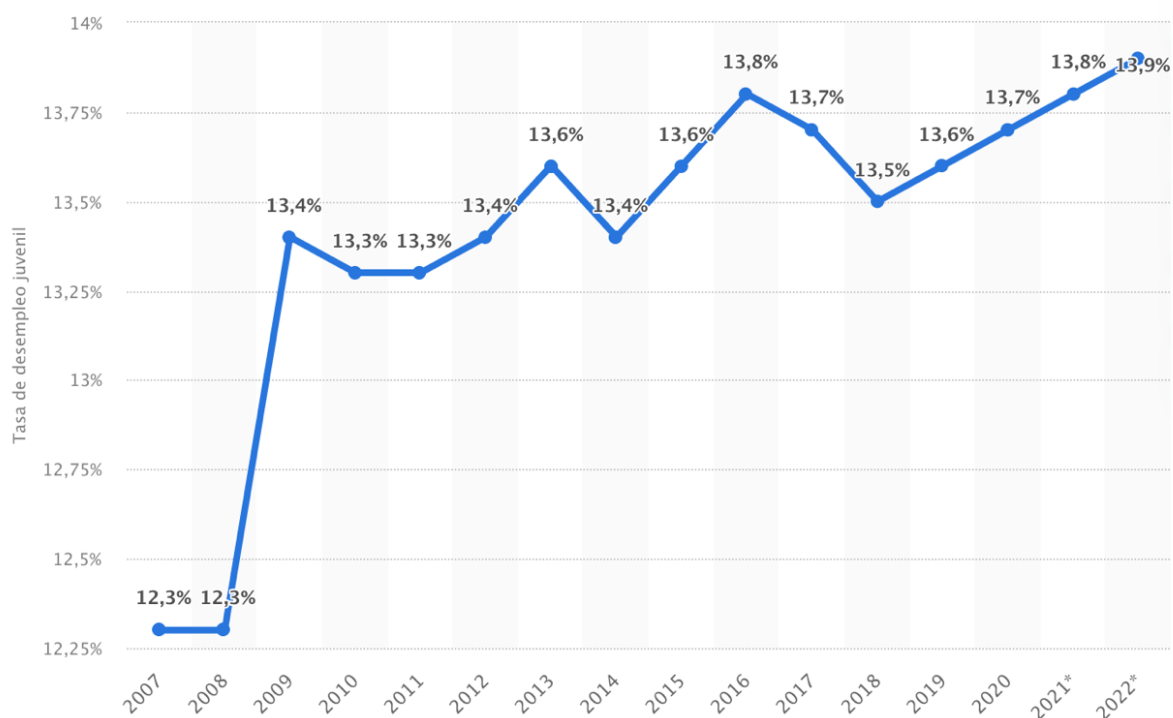
The ILO has highlighted the devastating effect the pandemic has had on the work of women and young people. Although the percentage point difference in the employment-to-population ratio (EPR) between men and women in 2020 is nearly equivalent, women had a far lower employment rate as a starting point¹⁰. As a result, the relative reduction in women's EPR has been greater than that of males, and this is expected to continue in the future years (International Labour Organization, 2022).

In addition, Covid-19 procured that young people between the ages of 18 and 29 were increasingly excluded from the workforce. In this regard, one of every six workers in that age group has stopped working since the pandemic began (Figure 8); also, youth report about a 23-hour reduction in work hours and about a 42 percent reduction in earnings. In this regard, ILO noted that:

“Young people living in lower-income countries were more likely to experience reductions in their work hours and a contraction in their earnings and self-assessed productivity. Furthermore, immediate government responses aimed at mitigating the impact of labor market shocks were more likely to reach young people who were still working after the onset of the pandemic, compared to those who had stopped working” (International Labour Organization, 2020, p. 15-20).

¹⁰ Even in non-crisis times, decent work deficits are more pronounced among women. They tend to receive lower remuneration for the same work and frequently endure poorer working conditions than their male counterparts (International Labour Organization, 2022, p. 23-25).

Figure 8: Global youth unemployment rate from 2007 to 2020



(Statista, 2021a)

It can be deduced from the above that the pandemic occurs in an international context marked by a multidimensional structural crisis, with notable gaps in terms of economic development, characterized by indebtedness, unemployment, low levels of growth, etc. All of this is linked to a growing monopolization of productive and commercial activity that has even reached the point of dominating knowledge. The pandemic accentuated the already existing problems and highlighted the unsustainability of capitalism.

Section 2.2: Social dimension of the development process

Inequality and poverty

Prior to the pandemic, global inequality was already a cause for concern, as reflected in numerous publications by internationally recognized institutions and personalities, including ECLAC, Oxfam, Joseph Stiglitz and Thomas Piketty.

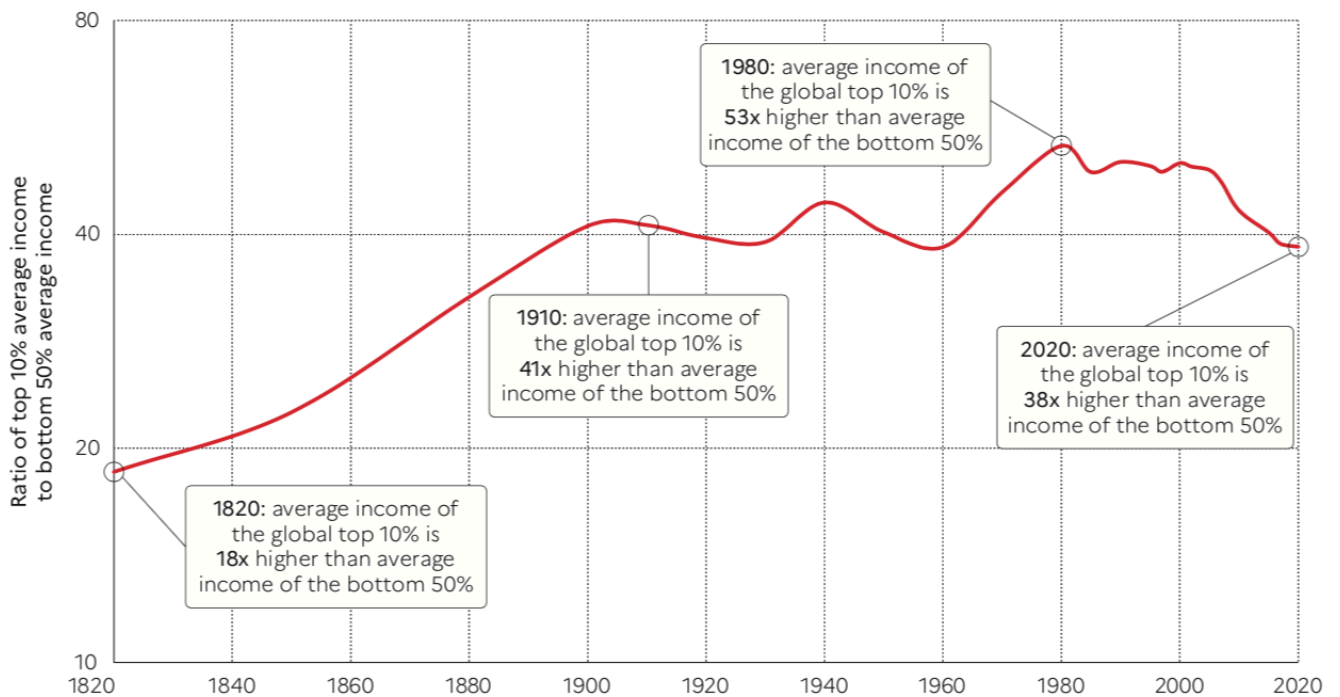
In this respect, Oxfam (2016) had warned about the growing gap between rich and poor: already in 2015, the richest 1 percent of the world's population accumulated more wealth than the remaining 99 percent. In that year alone, 62 people owned the same wealth as 3.6 billion, equivalent to the poorest

half of humanity; an alarming figure considering that in 2010, that wealth was concentrated by 388 people.

"Since the beginning of this century, the poorest half of the world's population has only received 1% of the total increase in global wealth, while 50% of this "new wealth" has gone into the pockets of the richest 1%. The average annual income of the poorest 10% of the world's population, in whom poverty, hunger and exclusion are concentrated, has increased by less than three dollars a year in almost a quarter of a century. Their daily incomes have risen by less than a cent a year." (Oxfam, 2016, p. 2).

As shown in Figure 9, there is a historical trend of increasing inequality worldwide. In 2020, the 10 percent of the population with the highest income received 38 times that of the poorest 50 percent. Global inequality was reflected in a Gini index of 0.67, 32 percent of which is based on inequality between countries.

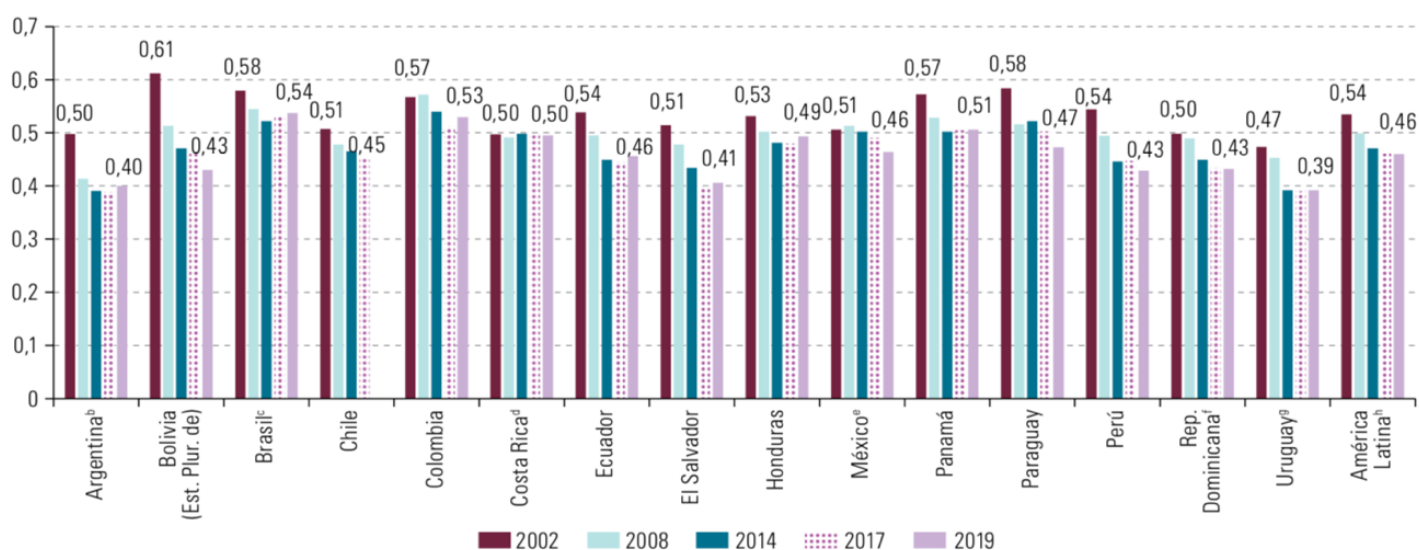
Figure 9: Global income inequality. 1820 – 2020.



(Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2022, p. 55)

Latin America is the most unequal region on the planet. This is illustrated in ECLAC publications, which show the historical behavior of the income Gini in this area (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Gini index in Latin America. 2002 – 2019.



(CEPAL, 2021, p. 66)

It can be deduced from the above that the pandemic appears in an international scenario previously marked by great inequalities both between and within countries. However, it has become a deepening element of this situation. This has been pointed out by institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, Credit Suisse, and the World Economic Forum (Oxfam, 2022).

As reported by Oxfam, during the pandemic the ten richest men in the world have doubled their fortunes¹¹ while, according to estimates, more than 160 million people have fallen into poverty and the income of 99 percent of humanity has reportedly deteriorated. Meanwhile, some 17 million people have died from this disease. This is an unprecedented number of deaths since World War II. In this regard, this institution notes that:

"These problems are part of the same, even deeper disease: the inequalities that fragment our societies and lives, and the violence embedded in our economic models. Inequalities have made the coronavirus pandemic more lethal, more protracted and more destructive for people's livelihoods. Income inequality is more decisive than age in estimating whether someone will lose their life to Covid-19. Millions of people would still be alive if they had received a vaccine, but they were denied that opportunity; meanwhile, large pharmaceutical companies continue to retain a monopoly on these technologies. This vaccine apartheid is claiming lives and fueling inequalities around the world (...) People living in low- and middle-income countries

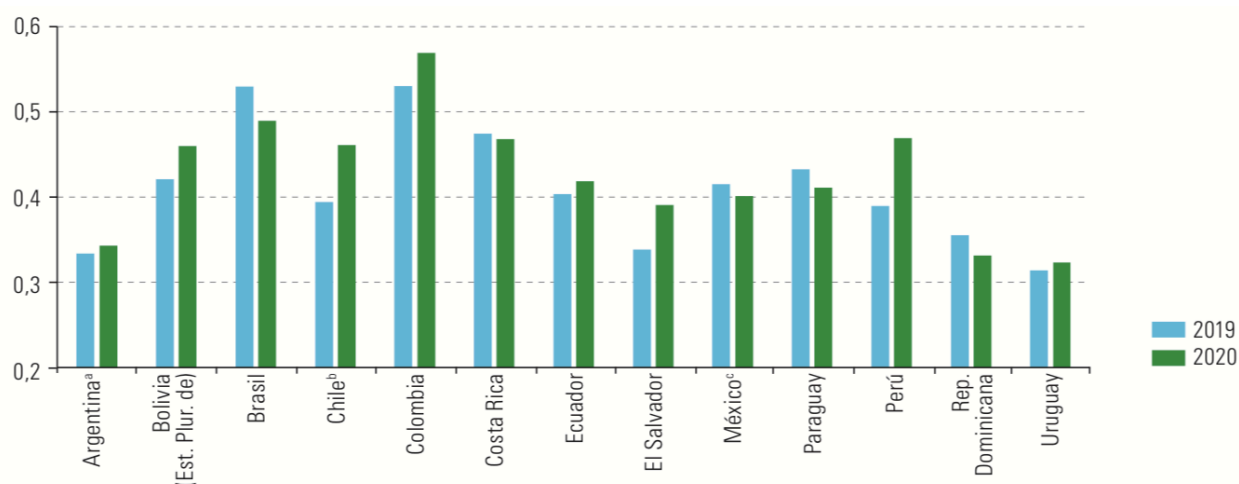
¹¹ Based on the information available, this wealth has been associated in many cases with economic sectors that have benefited during the pandemic context, such as IT and e-commerce.

are about twice as likely to die from Covid-19 as those in wealthy countries” (Oxfam, 2022, p. 8).

Furthermore, as a result of the pandemic, at least 73 nations may face IMF-backed austerity measures, which would exacerbate regional and intra-national inequalities. In this context, the wealth of 2.755 billionaires grew more than during the 14 years preceding the crisis, constituting the largest annual increase in their wealth since records have been kept (Oxfam, 2022). Oxfam attributes this rise to “soaring stock market prices, the rise of unregulated entities, the rise of monopoly power and privatization, along with the erosion of regulations, personal and corporate tax rates and labor rights and wages” (Oxfam, 2022, p. 10).

In the case of Latin America, the impact has also been polarizing. According to Alicia Bárcena, “the economic ‘recovery’ of 2021 has not been enough to mitigate the profound social and labor effects of the pandemic, closely linked to income and gender inequality, poverty, informality and the vulnerability in which the population is living” (CEPAL, 2022a). The Gini Coefficient increased by 0.7 percentage points for the regional average between 2019 and 2020. Figure 11 shows how the Atkinson index¹² evolved in this region between 2019 y 2020.

Figure 11: Atkinson index ($e = 1.5$) in Latin America. 2019 - 2020.



(CEPAL, 2022b, p. 52)

¹² “It is a measure of income inequality. Define the equally distributed equivalent income, M_{EDE} , as the level of income that if given to all households generates the same level of social welfare as the current income distribution” (Oxford Reference).

Latin America and the Caribbean is the world's most vulnerable region to Covid-19 according to ECLAC; as of December 3, 2021, it has the highest number of Covid deaths in the world (1,562,845), equating to 28.8 percent of the global deaths caused by this illness. Given that the Latin American population represents only 8.4 percent of the world total, the figure gives the idea of the impact of the pandemic on this region. Furthermore only 62.3 percent of this region's population have concluded their vaccination schedule as of January 26, 2022; for this reason, ECLAC made a call to increase efforts to vaccinate 70 percent of the population in all countries of the region by mid-2022 (CEPAL, 2022a).

In contrast, while this is happening, Forbes indicates that in 2021 there are 104 billionaires in the region, with a total wealth of 446.6 billion dollars. This represents approximately 11 percent of the GDP projected by ECLAC for the seven countries in which they live in 2021, with Chile, Brazil and Mexico standing out (CEPAL, 2022b, p. 63).

As can be seen, there is a dialectical relationship between the pandemic and global inequality; there is a mutual conditioning between them. Economic inequalities created favorable conditions for the deepening and spreading of the effects of the pandemic; at the same time, they were accentuated as a result of the pandemic. In this regard, Oxfam pointed out that *"growing economic inequality hurts everyone, as it undermines growth and social cohesion. But it is the poorest people who suffer the worst consequences"* (Oxfam, 2016, p. 2). It should also be noted that ECLAC had in the past warned about the inefficiency of inequality and is now pointing out that without controlling the health crisis, economic recovery will not be sustainable.

In addition, and strictly related to the above-mentioned issues, there is also the problem of poverty. In 2016, more than 700 million people in the world were living with less than 1.90 USD (PPP: purchasing power parity) per day (the threshold of extreme poverty), and more than half of the world's population was at the bottom of the economic pyramid with less than 8 USD per day (UNDP, 2016).

According to information obtained from the Human Development Report, published by the UNDP (2020, p. 406), before the pandemic outbreak, out of a group of 82 underdeveloped countries, 36 of them have more than 30 percent of their population living at the threshold of poverty, and 16 of them have more than 50 percent of their population living in poverty. Considering multidimensional poverty, the same source reports 26 countries that have more than 20 percent of their population in a situation of multidimensional extreme poverty and 8 that have more than 40 percent of their population in this condition.

As for the Latin American region, poverty had returned to increase in 2015, had stabilized between 2016 and 2018, and had risen again in 2019 (0.7 percent compared to 2018). Prior to the pandemic, 30.5 percent of Latin American population was in income poverty (about 187 million people) and 11,3 percent in extreme poverty (about 70 million people). In turn, the extreme poverty rate increased by 0.9 percentage points in 2019 compared to 2018, continuing a steady upward trend that began in 2015; since then, it had been rising by 0.7 percentage points every year (CEPAL, 2021) ¹³.

According to the World Bank, nearly 100 million additional people are living in poverty as a result of the pandemic (World Bank, 2021d).

The number of fatalities caused by the Covid-19 is disproportionately high among the world's poorest individuals and racialized groups. In certain nations, the poorest people are almost four times more likely than the richest to die from this disease; for instance, during the second wave of the pandemic, in England people of Bangladesh descent were 5 times more likely to die than the English white population (Oxfam, 2022).

Poverty, as an expression of inequity, has had a direct relationship with the pandemic. On the one hand, the population living in poverty is the most vulnerable to the spread of the diseases and is in the worst economic conditions to cope with them; on the other hand, the economic effects of the pandemic (increased unemployment, higher debt levels, weak economic growth, etc.), directly contribute to the deepening of poverty.

- Food security

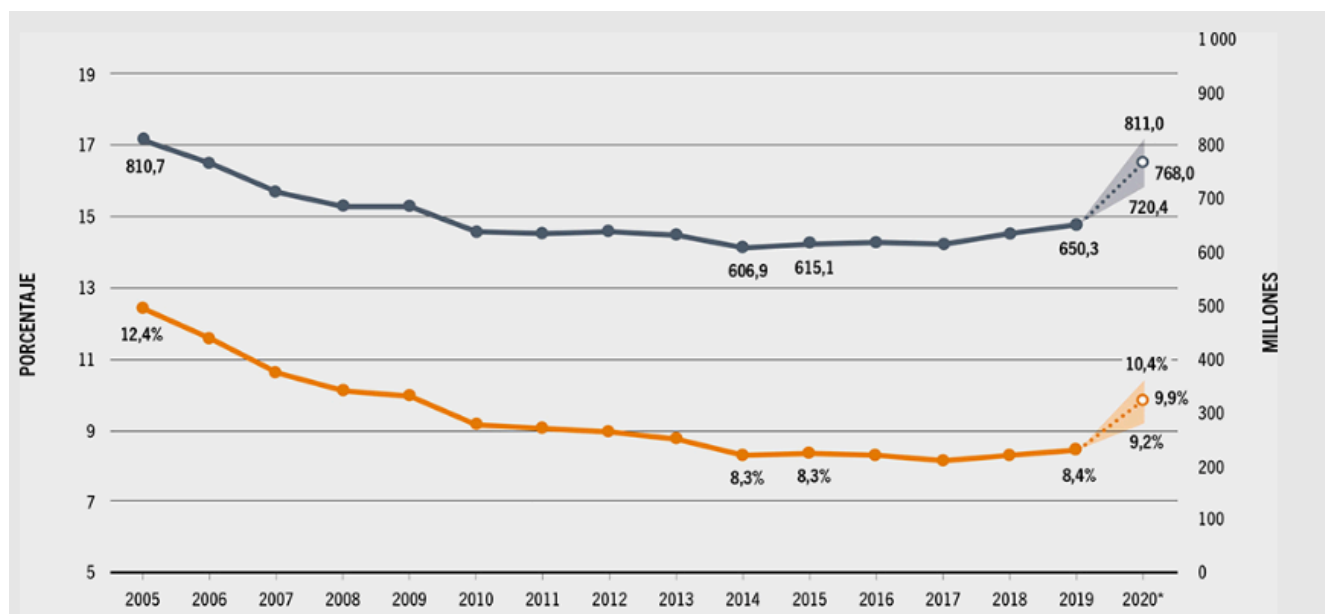
The problem of food security is directly related with social problems. Prior to the pandemic, the trend in global hunger, as measured by the prevalence of undernourishment, reversed in 2015 and remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019 (Figure 12); meanwhile, the number of hungry people has increased since 2015: more than 650.3 million people in the world were hungry in 2019 (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019). The FAO itself acknowledged "*the immense challenge of achieving the goal of zero hunger by 2030*" (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019, p. VII).

¹³ Poverty and extreme poverty are more common among working-age women, in rural regions, among indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, children and adolescents, people with less years of education, and single-parent and extended families (CEPAL, 2021).

Figure 12: Undernourished people in the world

Orange line: prevalence of undernourishment (percentage)

Blue line: number of undernourished (millions)



(FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2021, p. 169)

Hunger increased in practically all African sub-regions in 2018, making Africa the region with the greatest incidence of undernourishment (20 percent). Hunger was also gradually growing throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, where it was estimated to affect roughly 7 percent of the population. In Asia, undernourishment affected 7.9 percent of the population; the western part of this continent shows an increase in the number of undernourished people since 2010. In 2018, over 12 percent of its population was in such situation (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019).

If we examine the total number of individuals impacted by moderate levels of food insecurity and those experiencing hunger worldwide, more than 2 billion people lacked access to safe, nutritious, and adequate food in that year.

In 2015, 20.5 million children worldwide, had low birth weight and there has been no progress in reducing it since 2012. In contrast, the number of children under five affected by stunting worldwide has decreased by 10 percent between 2013 and 2018. However, there are 149 million children still stunted, and FAO warned that *"progress is too slow to reach the target of halving the number of children affected by this condition by 2030"* (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019, p. XIV).

Overweight and obesity continued to increase in all regions, especially among school-aged children and adults. In this regard FAO noted that:

“In 2016, 131 million children aged five to nine years, 207 million adolescents and 2 billion adults suffered from overweight. Nearly one-third of adolescents and adults and 44% of children aged five to nine years who were also overweight, were obese; in addition, 2018 data show that 40 million children under the age of five were overweight” (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019, p. XIV)

Furthermore, food insecurity played a significant role in 2018 as a defining factor of several forms of malnutrition; in particular, living in a household affected by food insecurity is a predictor of obesity in adults, adolescents, and school-aged children in upper middle-income and high-income countries.

FAO (2019) noted that following the global financial crisis of 2008 - 2009, the uneven pace of economic recovery and consistently weak economic performance in many countries has hampered attempts to combat hunger and malnutrition. An unclear global economic outlook is exacerbated by episodes of financial turmoil, rising trade tensions, and tightening financial conditions.

In this sense, it stated: *“Hunger has increased in many countries where the economy has slowed or contracted, particularly in middle-income ones. In addition, economic shocks are leading to prolonged and worsening food crises caused primarily by conflict and climatic shocks”* (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2019, p. XV).

Since the pandemic outbreak, the food problem has been the focus analysis of many international institutions, in addition to FAO. This institution (2021) estimated that 720 to 811 million people went hungry in 2020 and that high costs and poor affordability also prevented billions of people from achieving healthy or nutritious diets. The continent with the greatest number of hungry people is currently Asia (418 million), but this social problem is growing very rapidly in Africa, where there are 282 million hungry people. According to estimates by the United Nations, Covid-19 could result in 660 million people still being undernourished in 2030 (Naciones Unidas).

Hunger currently affects 21 percent of the population in Africa, 9 percent in Asia, and 9.1 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. In relation to 2019, there are 46 million more hungry people in Africa, 57 in Asia, and 14 in Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2021).

Since 2014, the worldwide prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity has been steadily increasing, with the growth in 2020 equaling the preceding five years. In that year, over one-third of the world's population (2.37 billion) lacked access to appropriate food, a 320 million-person rise in a

single year. In 2020, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa had the greatest growth in moderate to severe food insecurity. Half of the 2.37 billion people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity live in Asia, one-third in Africa, and the 11 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to FAO, in 2020, over 12 percent of the global population, or 928 million people, were extremely food insecure, 148 million more than in 2019 (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2021).

In relation to the above, it should be considered that the FAO Food Price Index (FPI) recorded in 2021 a growth of 28.1 percent compared to 2020, the highest in the last ten years. In this regard, cereals stand out with their highest price index since 2012 and a 27.2 percent index increase; at the same time, corn price index increased by 44.1 percent, wheat price by 31.3 percent, and dairy price by 16.9 percent (TeleSur, 2022).

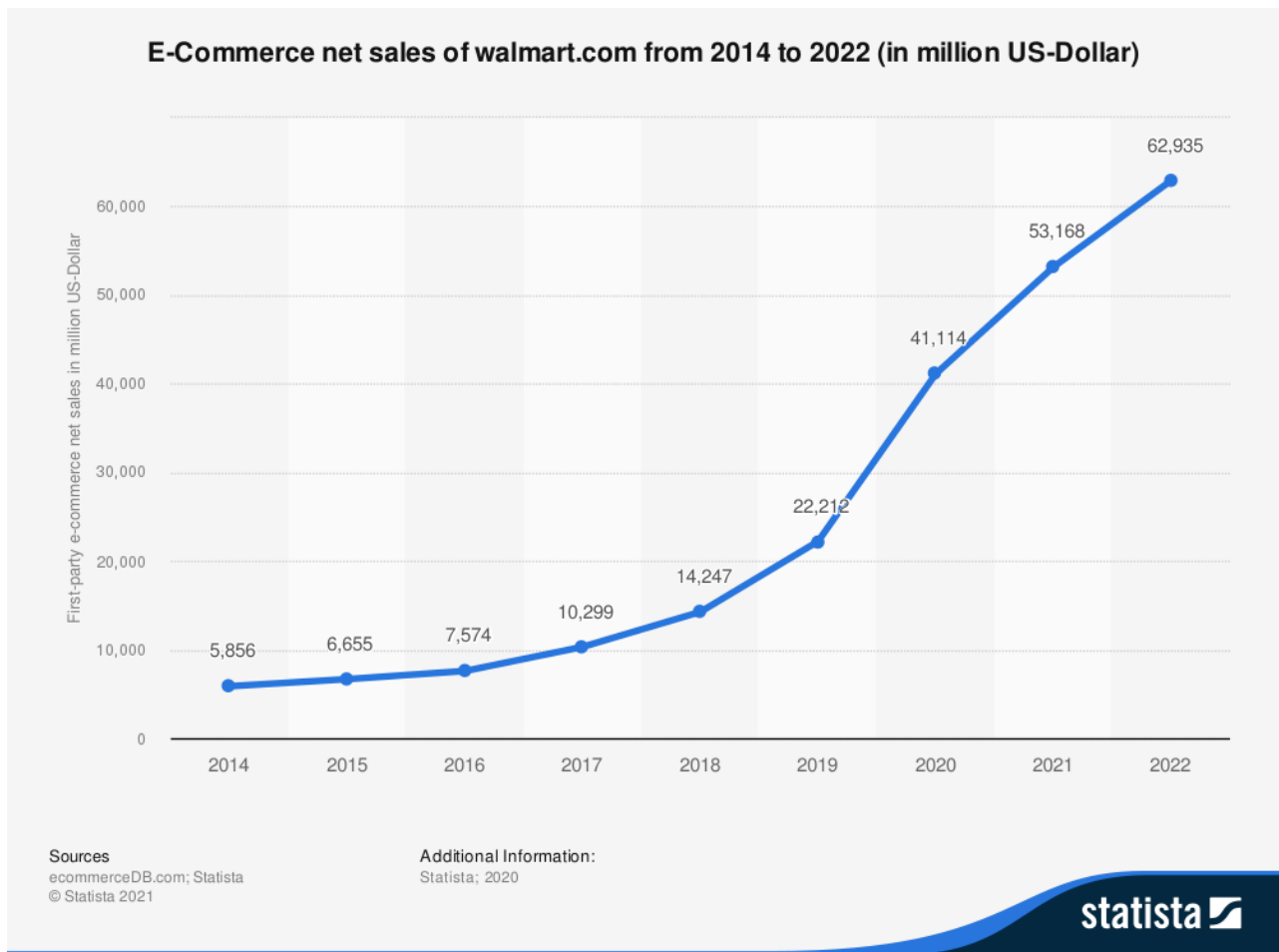
While this is happening, the big transnational food traders increased their revenues. Walmart is the leading company in this sector (Statista, 2021b) and, according to the data shown in Figure 13, has maintained a strong trend of revenue growth since 2016 with a large increase between 2020 and 2021. As for its e-commerce (Figure 14), since 2014 it had growing trend in net sales, with a very accentuated increase from 2018; only between 2019 and 2020 this indicator has almost doubled.

Figure 13



(Walmart, 2021)

Figure 14



(EcommerceDB.com, 2021)

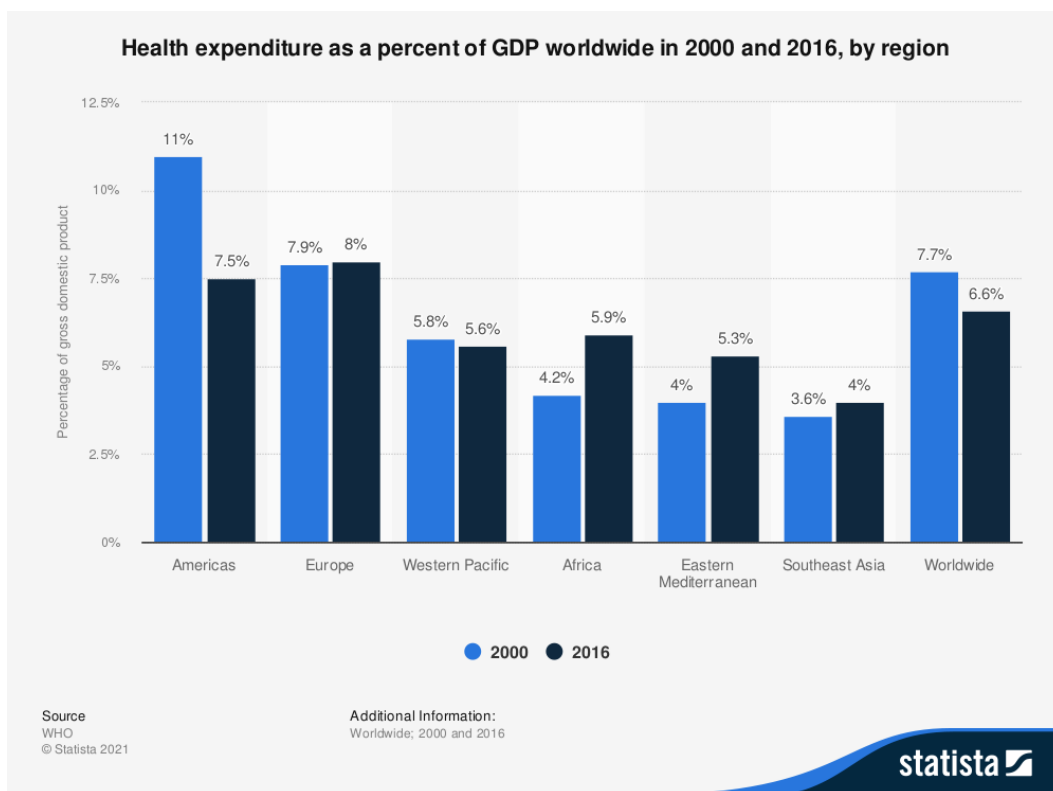
As evidenced, food insecurity is a structural problem of international scope. Its most visible representations are malnutrition and undernourishment, the latter expressed both in overweight and obesity. These are comorbidities that contribute to a favorable scenario for greater transmissibility and lethality of the new coronavirus. At the same time, the pandemic crisis has accentuated existing problems related to food insecurity; economic restrictions, sanitary isolation, fragmentation of value chains and great social inequity make access to safe and even basic food more difficult. In this regard, FAO noted that *"although the Covid-19 pandemic was a determining factor, the changes observed between 2019 and 2020 cannot be attributed to it alone"* (FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF, 2021, p. 173) adding that other factors, such as the intensification of conflicts and climate change, are also contributing to food insecurity.

- Health

Health has a heterogeneous behavior at the international level. To a certain extent, this is related to the levels of development of societies and is expressed in notable gaps between the various associated indicators.

A relevant figure is the percentage of GDP allocated to health in the world; before the outbreak of the pandemic, this had a decreasing trend: Between 2000 and 2016 it had lowered from 7.7 percent to 6.6 percent (Figure 15). Moreover, only 21 countries out of 212 considered invested more than 10 percent of their GDP in health in 2018 (World Bank, 2018b). During that year, the only country in Latin America that invested more than 10 percent in health was Cuba (Annex 5).

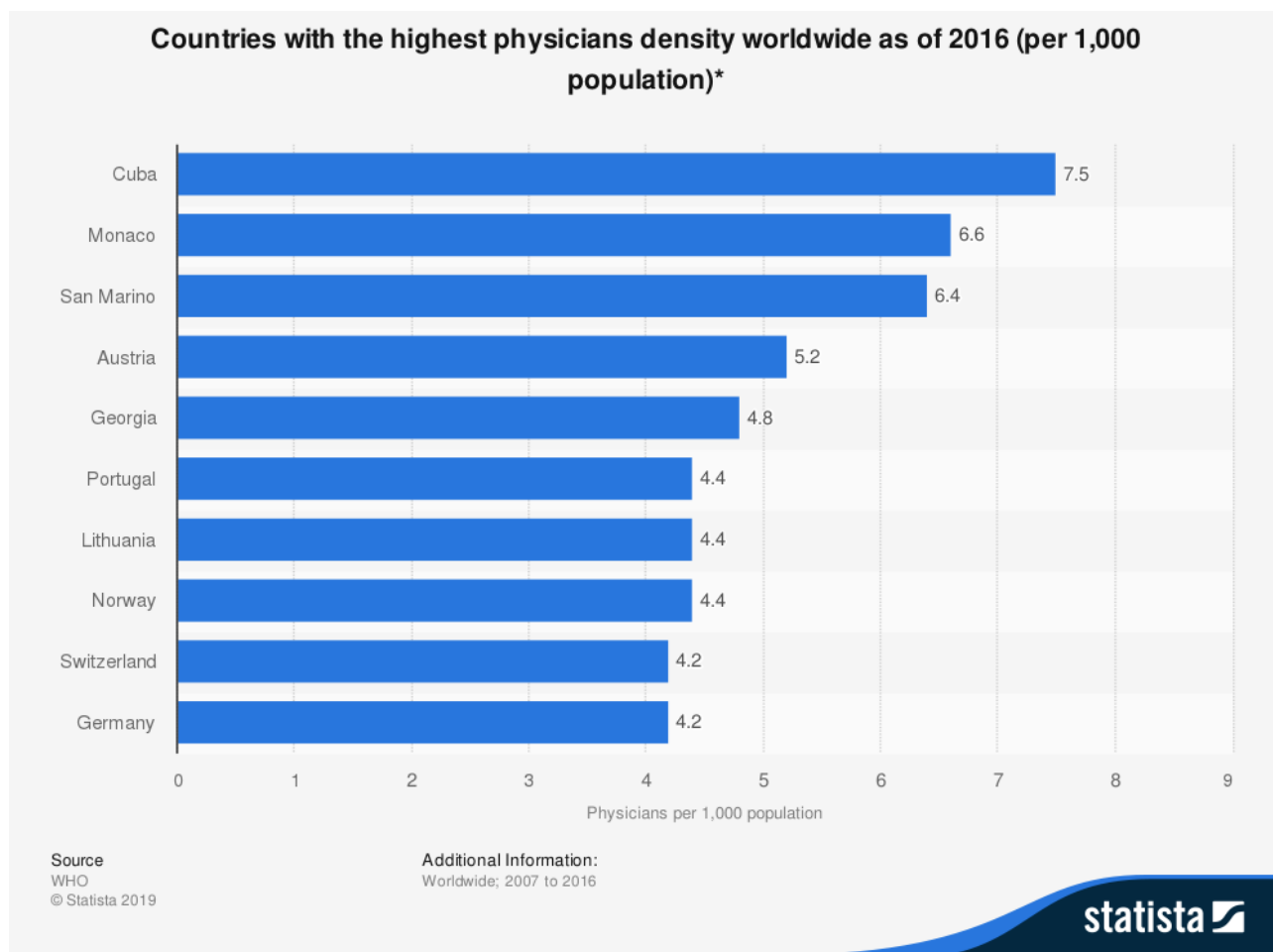
Figure 15



(WHO, 2019)

With regard to life expectancy, in 2019 there were still 58 countries - all underdeveloped - where this indicator did not reach 70 years (World Bank, 2019). The situation of health personnel was also worrying before the pandemic; only 45 countries out of 195 analyzed had more than 3 physicians per 1000 inhabitants (UNDP, 2020, p. 410) (Figure 16).

Figure 16



(WHO, 2018a)

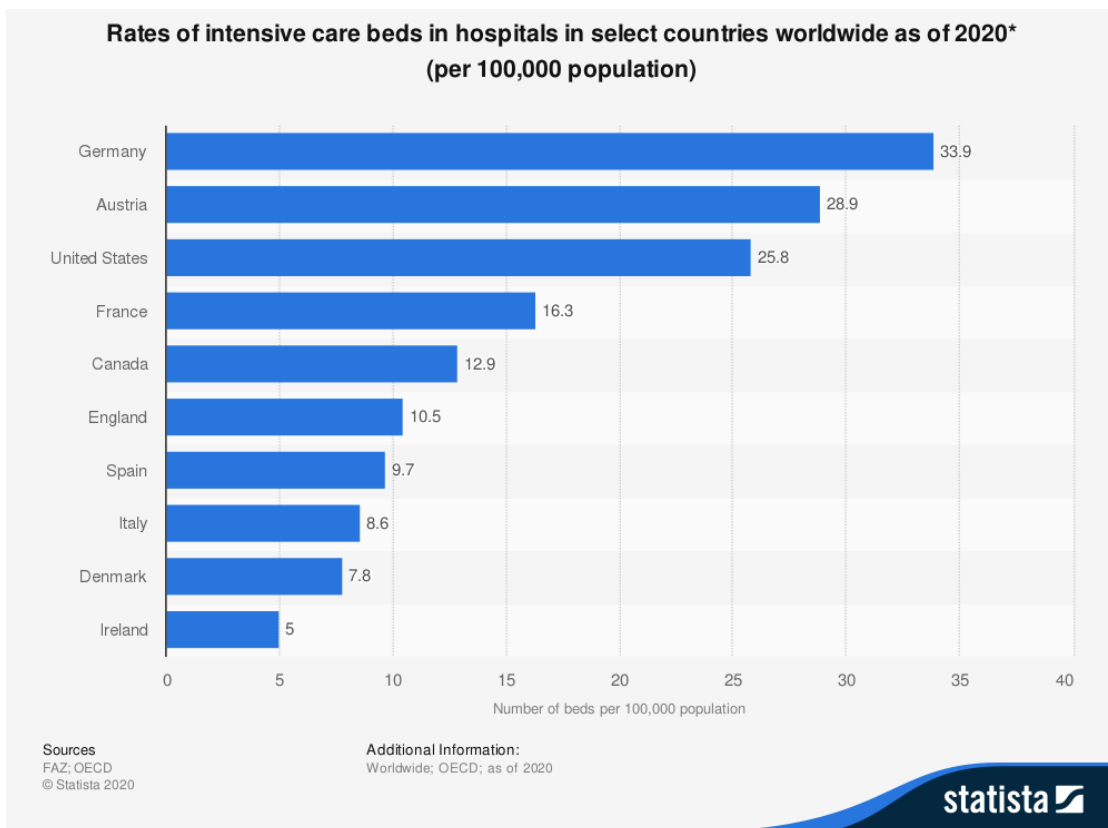
In relation to this, hospitals are a cornerstone of an efficient health system. The ability and performance of hospitals may be an accurate indication of a society's general health, regardless of the fact that their overall relevance within a health system may differ (Statista, Hospitals, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the relevance and limitations of hospitals throughout the globe were brought to light.

Hospital bed density is a crucial indication of a country's overall healthcare system, as well as an essential indicator of hospital capacity in a given location¹⁴. Only 62 out of 195 countries have more than 3 hospital beds per 1,000 people (UNDP, 2020, p. 412). A classification in this regard can be seen in Annex 6.

¹⁴ In both general and specialized hospitals, bed density often comprises curative (or acute) beds as well as intensive care unit (ICU) or critical care beds (CCB).

Intensive care beds are meant to help patients who have serious or life-threatening injuries or illnesses. Although not as prevalent as curative beds, they are critical in nations with elderly populations or during emergencies like Covid-19. The situation in these selected developed countries in 2020 was certainly looking critical, and it was even more difficult in much of the underdeveloped world (Figure 17).

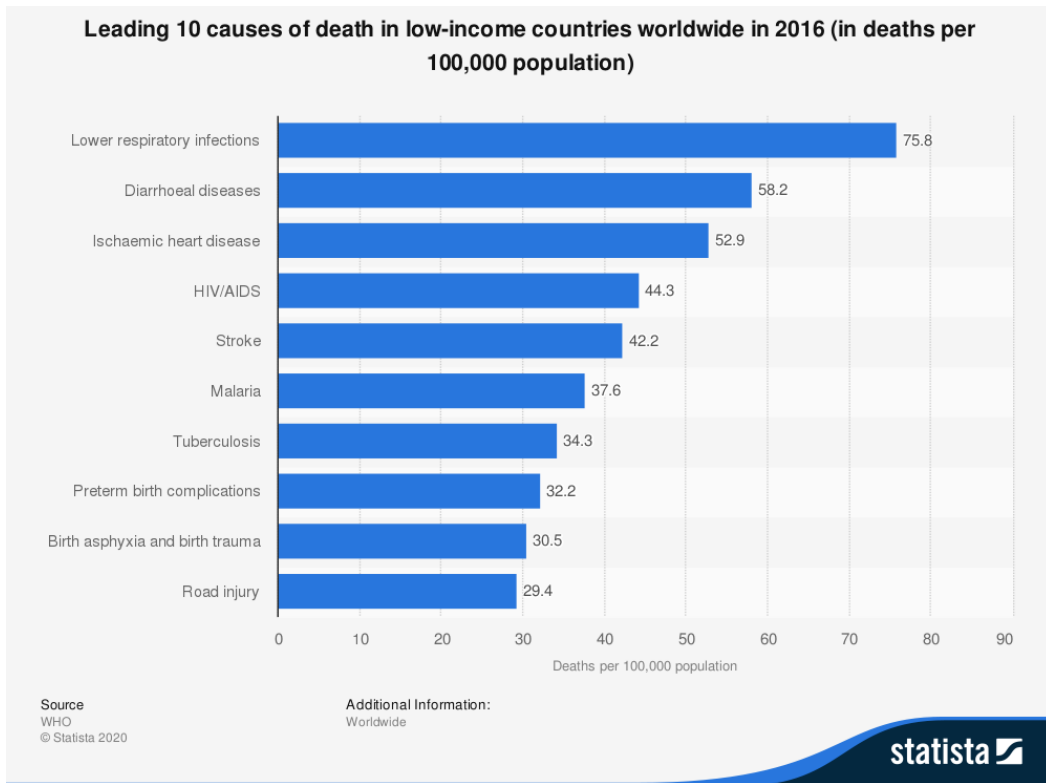
Figure 17



(FAZ, 2020)

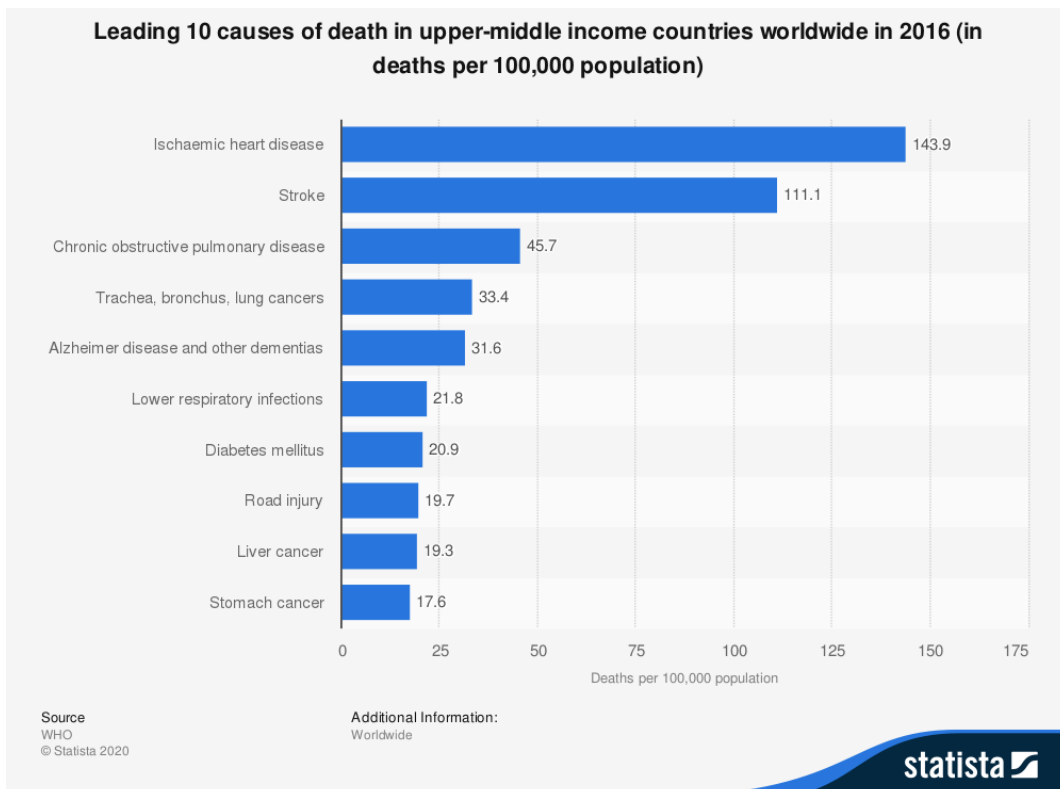
The situation of health systems worldwide is also evidenced by the fact that in many countries there were very high levels of chronic diseases (Annex 7), such as cancers, cardiovascular problems, diabetes and chronic lung diseases. When they do not lead to the death of the patient, they very frequently cause a sharp deterioration in living conditions, being particularly disabling; 77 percent of all deaths from chronic diseases occur in low- and middle-income countries (Enfea Salute, 2021). In low-income countries, the leading cause of death in 2016 was lower respiratory infections (Figure 18) and in upper-middle-income countries it was chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (Figure 19), both comorbidities that greatly increase the risk of death from Covid-19.

Figure 18



(WHO, 2018b)

Figure 19



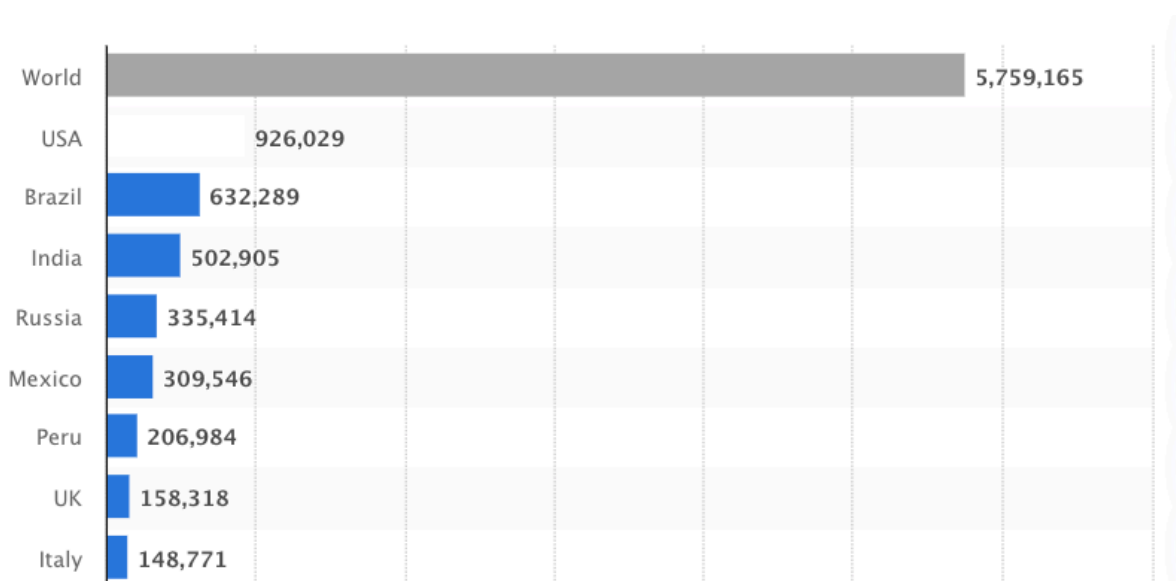
(WHO, 2018c)

Closely linked to health issues are access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. According to information published by the UNDP (2020, p. 410), in 2017, out of 87 countries with available information on safely managed drinking water supply services, only 51 guarantee this service for more than 75 percent of their population and 27 only guarantee it for less than 50 percent of their population. Regarding safe access to drinking water, out of 94 countries with published information, 32 of them do not guarantee coverage for 75 percent of their population.

As shown above, prior to the pandemic, there was a notable international gap in relation to the most significant health-related indicators, which presented more favorable conditions in developed countries, with exceptions among underdeveloped ones. It is in this heterogeneous context that the pandemic has come to put health systems under severe pressure.

The high number of Covid-19 related deaths and infections show that there is no direct relation between the levels of development of the countries and the effects of the pandemic, even though from the material point of view, the highly developed countries had better start conditions to deal with it. This can be seen in Figure 20, which illustrates high figures corresponding to developed countries such as the United States, UK, Italy, etc. Although their material conditions could have constituted a solid basis for Covid-19 fighting, other elements must also be considered, among which the way the pandemic was managed; this was largely determined by political systems and economic models.

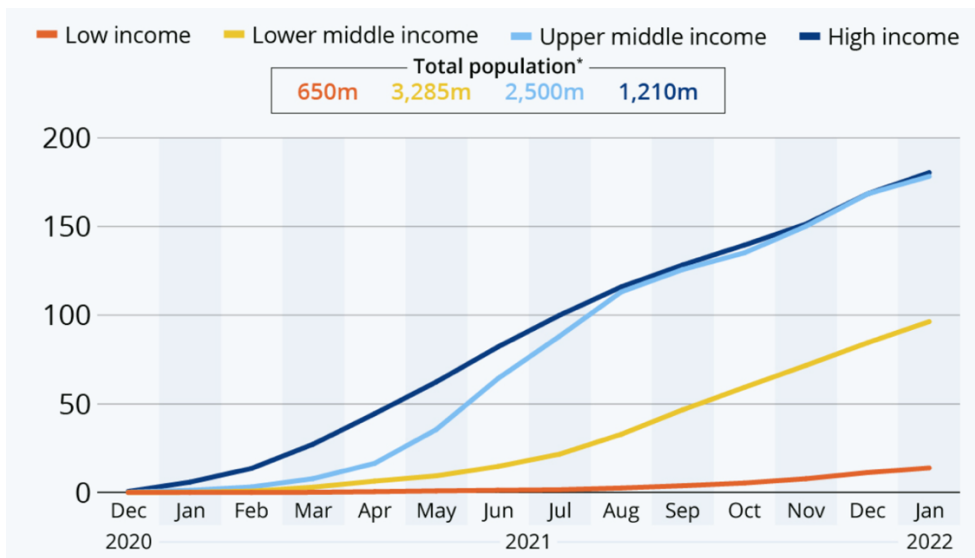
Figure 20: Number of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) deaths worldwide as of February 7, 2022, by country.



(Worldometer, 2022)

An expression of the above is the performance of vaccination as a response to Covid-19, corresponding to groups of countries with different income levels, whose gap is increasing (Figure 21).

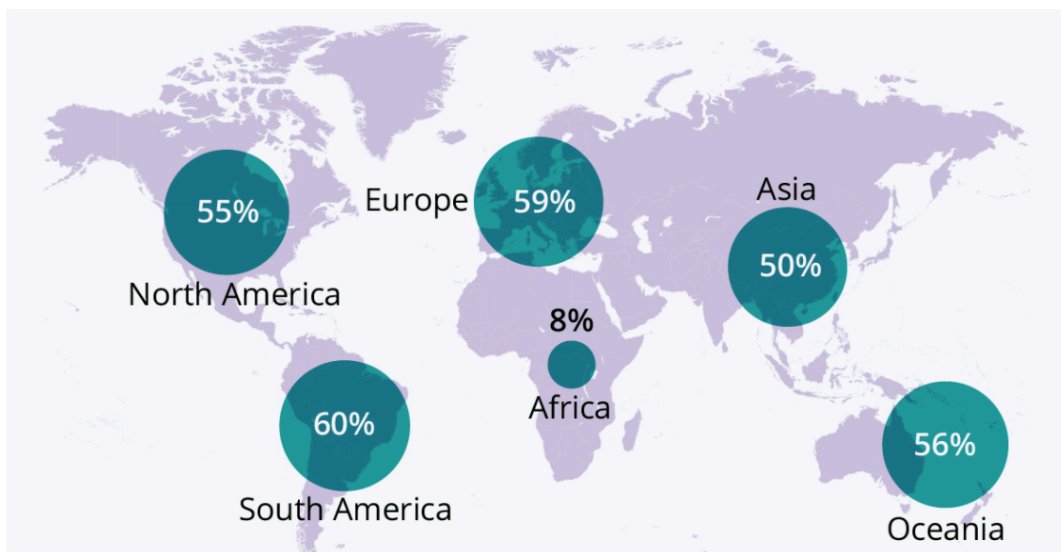
Figure 21: Covid-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people at the end of the respective month, by country income group.



(Richter, 2022)

However, information on the fully vaccinated population does not show a very positive result even in highly developed countries (Figure 22), where the problem does not necessarily correspond to limits in access to vaccines.

Figure 22: Share of world population fully vaccinated against Covid-19, by region, as of December 6, 2021



(Armstrong, 2021)

Section 2.3: Partial conclusions

The international scenario in which the Covid-19 pandemic took place was previously characterized by global problems; therefore, there were favorable conditions for its contagiousness and lethality.

The number of people infected and deceased by Covid-19 reveals that there is no direct relationship between the level of development of the countries and the results of their response to the pandemic.

There is an interrelation between the pandemic and global inequality. Socioeconomic inequalities created favorable conditions for the intensification and propagation of the effects of the pandemic, with the poor population being the most vulnerable. At the same time, the economic effects of the pandemic contribute directly to the deepening of poverty and social polarization.

Food insecurity is a structural problem of international scope. Its most visible expressions are malnutrition and undernourishment, the latter expressed both in overweight and obesity. These are comorbidities that contribute to a favorable scenario for increased transmissibility and lethality of the coronavirus.

The pandemic context is marked by a crisis, which is not only a health crisis caused by Covid-19. The pandemic erupted in a world scenario marked by a structural, multidimensional crisis, with significant gaps in terms of economic and social development. Covid-19 accentuated existing problems and revealed the unsustainability of capitalism.

CHAPTER III. Responses to the pandemic in selected countries: Cuba and Italy.

This chapter presents a comparison between two countries: Cuba and Italy. For this purpose, elements that characterize the socioeconomic situation of each country prior to the pandemic, its impact and the way in which it has been managed will be considered.

Section 3.1: Cuba's socioeconomic situation prior to the pandemic

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the economic situation in Cuba was adverse. Despite a 4.4 percent increase in GDP in 2015, the Cuban economy's average growth rate from 2016 to 2019 was just 1.3 percent, and it had only a rate of 1 percent predicted for 2020 (Rodríguez, 2020). Figure 1 shows the evolution of the basic indicators between 2018 and the projections for 2020.

Figure 1: Basic indicators about the evolution of the Cuban economy. 2018 – 2020.

(P): Projections

(E): Estimate

	2018	2019	2020P
GDP	2,2% (*)	0,5%	1,0%/-8,1% (E)
Agriculture	2,6	1,9 (E)	-2,5 (E)
Industry	0,9	-0,5 (E)	-3,5 (E)
Sugar production (millions of metric tons)	1100 (E)	1516 (P) / 1327 (E)	1360 (E)/1100 (E)
Construction	9,3	4,5 (E)	--
Investments (millions of pesos)	9300	9801	12000 (E)
Tourists (thousands)	4712	5100 P / 4276	4500/1300 (E)
Tourism revenues (millions of dollars)	2192	2185	1385/1585 (E)
Oil production (millions of metric tons)	3500 (E)	3500 (E)	3000 (E)
Fiscal deficit/GDP	-9,0%	-6,5% (P) -7,1% (E)	-9,5% (E)
Average salary (pesos)	777	879	989
Productivity	1937 (E)	1,9% (P)	0,6%
Balance of trade (millions of dollars)	1937 (E)	946 (E)	654 (E)

(Rodríguez, 2020, p. 259)

As Rodríguez (2020) pointed out, there were several factors that determined this economic situation. They can be summarized as follows: the intensification of the blockade against Cuba, the economic crisis in Venezuela, the shortage of foreign currency in the country and the 2019 fuel crisis.

The drop recorded in the economic results during 2019 largely reflect the major impact of the aggression towards Cuba that Donald Trump's administration has been increasing, reaching the number of 86 additional punitive measures adopted only in 2019.

According to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX):

“Between April 2019 and March 2020, the US government tightened the blockade against Cuba to unprecedented levels of aggressiveness. In particular, the extraterritorial dimension of this policy has been brutally intensified with the full implementation of the Helms-Burton Act since May 2019. This legislation constitutes an affront to the principles of international law and international trade rules, as it establishes actions of economic pressure which are harmful to the sovereignty of Cuba and third countries. Among the measures implemented to attack the Cuban economy and people during this period are the increased persecution of Cuban financial and commercial transactions, the siege to deprive the country of fuel supplies, the prohibition of flights from the U.S. to Cuban provinces outside Havana, and the campaign to discredit Cuban medical cooperation programs” (MINREX, 2020, p. 58).

From April 2019 to March 2020, the blockade has caused losses to Cuba in the range of 5 billion 570.3 million USD. This implies an increase of approximately 1,226 million dollars with regard to the previous period. For the first time, the number of losses produced by this policy in one year crosses the barrier of 5 billion dollars, which demonstrates the extent to which the blockade has intensified at this stage. The estimated damages do not include the activities of the U.S. government in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, since they exceed the end of the period analyzed (MINREX, 2020).

55 of the 243 measures taken against Cuba in the past five years were imposed in 2020, during the most severe peak of the pandemic in this country, and none of them were lifted by the present Joe Biden administration, despite the fact that it was one of his campaign promises (MINREX, 2022).

At current prices, the accumulated damages during almost six decades of application of this policy amount to 144 billion 413.4 million USD. Taking into account the depreciation of the dollar against

the value of gold on the international market, the blockade has caused quantifiable damages of more than 1 trillion 98 billion USD (Granma, 2020).

To understand the difficult economic situation in Cuba before the pandemic, it should also be mentioned that the economic crisis in Venezuela, which is one of the Island's main trading partners, is still ongoing. (CEPAL, 2020e).

Additionally, Cuba had financial difficulties, exacerbated by the country's shortage of foreign currency. In 2019, a notable effort continued to be made to comply with the payment of the renegotiated debt service, with 70 million USD being disbursed to settle debts with member countries of the Paris Club. Debt service payments totaled approximately 1,931 million USD in 2019, despite reported delays in the payment of renegotiated debt. On the other hand, at the end of December 2019, was filed from international banks a claim for outstanding payments worth 2,091 million USD (Rodríguez, 2020).

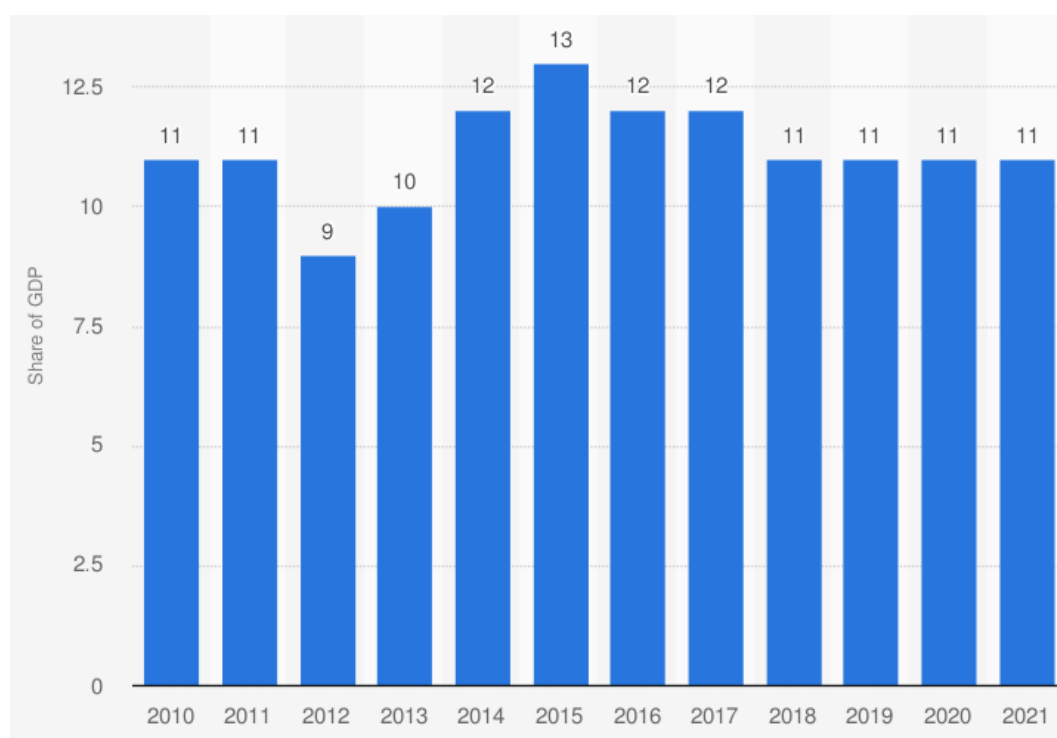
Foreign currency shortages were also accentuated by the decline of tourism. International tourism had declined by 9.3 percent in 2019 and at the close of February 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country, was recorded a cumulative decrease of 14.1 percent in international tourism, compared to the same period of the previous year (Herrera, 2020).

The loss of export markets for medical services also negatively influenced the economic performance. In this sense, it is worth pointing out that by the end of 2019, net exports of these services had already fallen by 28.2 percent compared to 2015.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Cuban economy had experienced a very tense moment between September and February 2019, when it came to operate with only 50 percent of its fuel, due to the US harassment against oil shipments sent from Venezuela (Rodríguez, 2020).

Despite its complex economic situation, in 2019 Cuba continued to enjoy considerable health care achievements accomplished during the Revolutionary period. This has been supported by a percentage of GDP invested in health, among the highest in the world (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Forecast of the current health expenditure share of GDP in Cuba from 2010 to 2021



(Statista, 2021)

Life expectancy at birth in 2019 was 78.8 years according to UNDP (2020). Also, between 2014 and 2019 there was a growing trend in the number of medical staff (Figure 3), health care units (Figure 4) and beds in health care units (5.33 per 1000 inhabitants in 2017) (Figure 5 and Annex 8); between 1958 and 2019 increased considerably the number of inhabitants per physician (Annex 9) and, from 2010 to 2021, the number of physicians per 1000 inhabitants (Figure 6).

Figure 3: Medical staff from the Ministry of Public Health

PERSONAL	Unidad					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	293 386	295 443	296 590	296 858	295 667	294 723
Médicos	85 563	87 982	90 161	92 084	95 487	97 202
De ello: Médicos de familia en la comunidad	12 842	12 883	12 883	13 131	13 070	26 173
Estomatólogos ^(a)	16 630	17 542	16 852	18 675	18 910	19 825
Licenciados en Farmacia	3 392	2 927	3 099	3 060	3 005	2 913
Personal de enfermería ^(b)	90 765	89 999	89 072	87 637	85 732	84 220
Técnicos medios y básicos de la salud ^(c)	40 968	35 702	35 492	33 834	31 911	29 245
Tecnólogos y otros licenciados de la salud ^(c)	56 068	61 291	61 914	61 568	60 622	61 318

(ONEI, 2020, p. 388)

Figure 4: Health Care Units of the Ministry of Public Health

	Unidad					
UNIDADES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	12 318	12 400	12 409	12 509	12 527	12 958

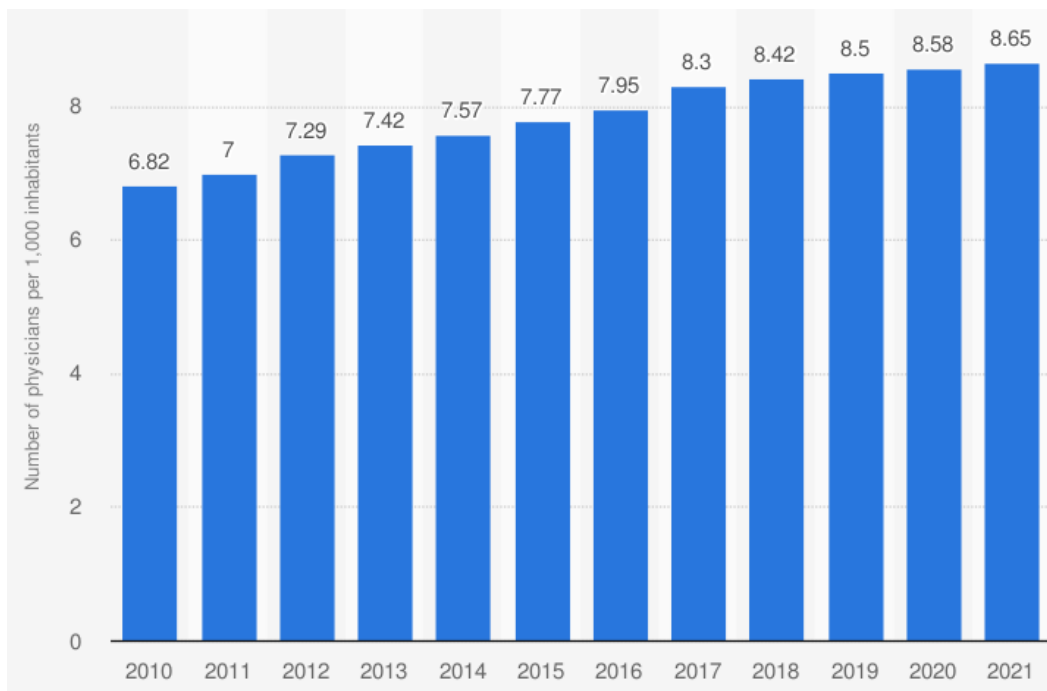
(ONEI, 2020, p. 391)

Figure 5: Regular number of beds in health care units

	Unidad					
UNIDADES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total de camas	58 995	60 060	61 041	61 225	61 814	62 049

(ONEI, 2020, p. 394)

Figure 6: Forecast of the average number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants in Cuba from 2010 to 2021



(Statista, 2021)

It is also worth mentioning the very low maternal (Annex 10) and infant (Annex 11) mortality between 2014 and 2019. This is due, among other factors, to the high number of vaccines administered to the population ¹⁵ (Annex 12).

One of the most important achievements related to health in Cuba is the development of the biopharmaceutical industry. The Cuban health system has an important supplement in this sector, which has been created 35 years ago under the initiative of Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz. This industry has been one of the cornerstones in the fight against the pandemic in this country.

Cuba integrated itself into this sector and established its own model of science and innovation whose results have been recognized by the international community. Among the fundamental centers are the Immunoassay Center (CIE), the Molecular Immunology Center (CIM), the Finlay Vaccine Institute (IFV), the National Center for Scientific Research (CNIC), the Biological Research Center (CIB), the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB), and other institutions that in 1992 formed the Havana Scientific Pole, which has more than 10,000 workers (Martínez, Pérez, Herrera, Lage, & Castellanos, 2020).

The first success of the Cuban biotechnology was the vaccine against meningococcal meningitis type B, followed by others such as the recombinant vaccine against hepatitis B virus, the treatment with recombinant erythropoietin to all patients with chronic renal failure, the development of Heberprot-P drug (the only existing therapy for effective healing of diabetic foot ulcers), the introduction of monoclonal antibodies for the treatment of cancer, etc.

In 2012, BioCubaFarma, the Cuban organization of Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Industries, grouped together the companies operating in the sector. It supplies more than 800 products to the health system, owns 182 patented products, carries out more than 100 simultaneous clinical trials in 200 clinical sites and exports its products to more than 50 countries (Martínez, Pérez, Herrera, Lage, & Castellanos, 2020).

Section 3.2: Cuba: management of the pandemic and its impact

Cuba's strategy was recently discussed in an article co-authored by President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Professor Jorge Núñez. The main factors that played a key role in containing the pandemic can be summarized as it follows: methodical approach by the government, prompt response, integration of

¹⁵ Infectious diseases mortality is less than 1 percent in Cuba, even during Covid-19. Cuba currently immunizes against 13 diseases using 11 vaccines, eight of which are produced in the country. Six diseases have been eradicated as a result of vaccination campaigns (LSE, 2021).

the activities of many agencies and sectors of society, strong partnership between scientists and the government, social communication, and citizen participation.

The management of the pandemic was built on the strengths of its social system, the country's high degree of equity and solidarity, and the Cuba's socialized, free, and universally accessible health system. With more than 8.65 physicians per 1,000 citizens, this country has the world's highest physician density per million inhabitants (Figure 6) (Martínez, Pérez, Herrera, Lage, & Castellanos, 2020).

The Cuban approach to combat Covid-19 included active population screening, hospitalization of all positive cases, isolation of all contacts, and early treatment of asymptomatic infected persons.

Authorities developed a coordination and control mechanism, which comprised the formation of a National Temporary Group (GTN), led by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. The GTN meets daily and incorporates on a weekly basis experts and analysts, who examine the findings of scientific research. The process also includes the Provincial Defense Councils¹⁶, which have vast expertise and demonstrated results in responding to hurricanes and other natural disasters.

To fight Covid-19, the Ministry of Public Health established a National Technical Group (GTN). Before the first case was diagnosed in Cuba, the GTN approved the National Prevention and Control Plan in January 2020. In February, the Science Group (GS) was formed, coordinated by the Science and Innovation Directorates of the Ministry of Public Health and BioCubaFarma. The GS established four working subgroups: the Innovation Committee (CI), the Clinical Experts Group (GEC), the Modeling and Epidemiology Group (GME), and the Psychology and Scientific Information Group (GPIC) (Martínez, Pérez, Herrera, Lage, & Castellanos, 2020).

BioCubaFarma, got accurate information about the outbreak in Wuhan and on the measures that China was implementing, through its representatives in that Asian country. This information, together with WHO reports and recommendations, generated significant scientific debate activated an intense process of elaboration of proposals for research and development projects.

The Cuban strategy is characterized by the direct participation of the biopharmaceutical industry and the introduction of novel biotechnology products. One of its assets is a state-owned national industry, with production and scientific research capabilities: this has had an impact on obtaining results in a

¹⁶ The National Defense Council is constituted and prepared from peacetime to lead the country in the conditions of state of war, general mobilization or state of emergency.

short period of time, providing an effective response to the health system's requests in dealing with Covid-19.

One of the first task of this sector was to produce the drugs included in the National Research Action Protocol (PANI) approved for Covid-19 (MINSAP, 2020), such as the recombinant interferon alfa2b, generic drugs and products of natural origin. (Castellanos Serra, 2020).

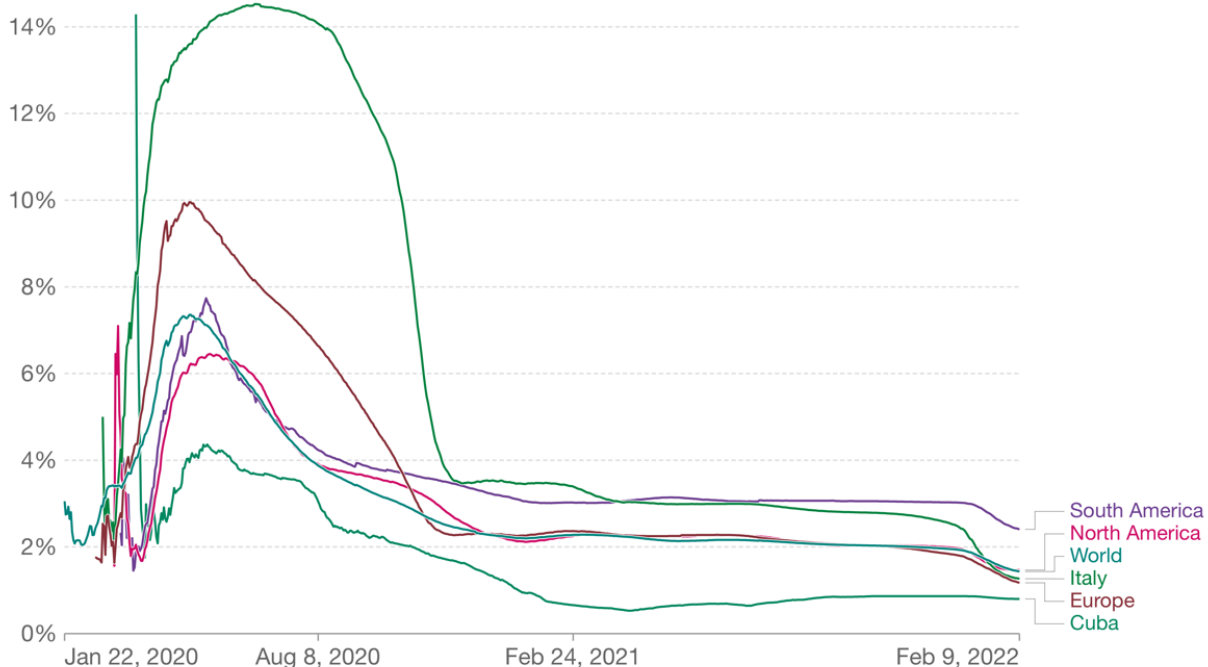
Facemasks and sanitizing goods, such as medicinal soaps, hypochlorite and hydroalcoholic solutions, were also produced by firms belonging to the BioCubaFarma group. In addition, the medical equipment and device factories repaired intensive care unit equipment and made individual protective gear, such as respirator masks with filters, visors, goggles, and suits, in collaboration with other enterprises in the country and independent workers. With limited resources, BioCubaFarma's firms developed five vaccine candidates against Covid-19, three of which - Soberana 02, SoberanaPlus, and Abdala - have already been registered as vaccines (Granma, 2022).

With a 0.8 percent fatality rate associated with Covid-19, Cuba has the lowest indicator of this type in the Americas (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Case fatality rate of COVID-19

The case fatality rate (CFR) is the ratio between confirmed deaths and confirmed cases. The CFR can be a poor measure of the mortality risk of the disease. We explain this in detail at [OurWorldInData.org/mortality-risk-covid](https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid)



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

CC BY

(Johns Hopkins University, 2022)

As of February 7, 2022, 34,588,070 doses of the Cuban vaccines Soberana 02, Soberana Plus and Abdala had been administered in the country. To date, 10,583,276 people have received at least one dose of these three vaccines. Of these, 9,356,394 people have already received a second dose and 9,029,400 people have received a third dose. A total of 9,846,370 people have been fully vaccinated, which represents 87.9 percent of the Cuban population, and a total of 5,618,814 people have received booster doses (MINSAP, 2022).

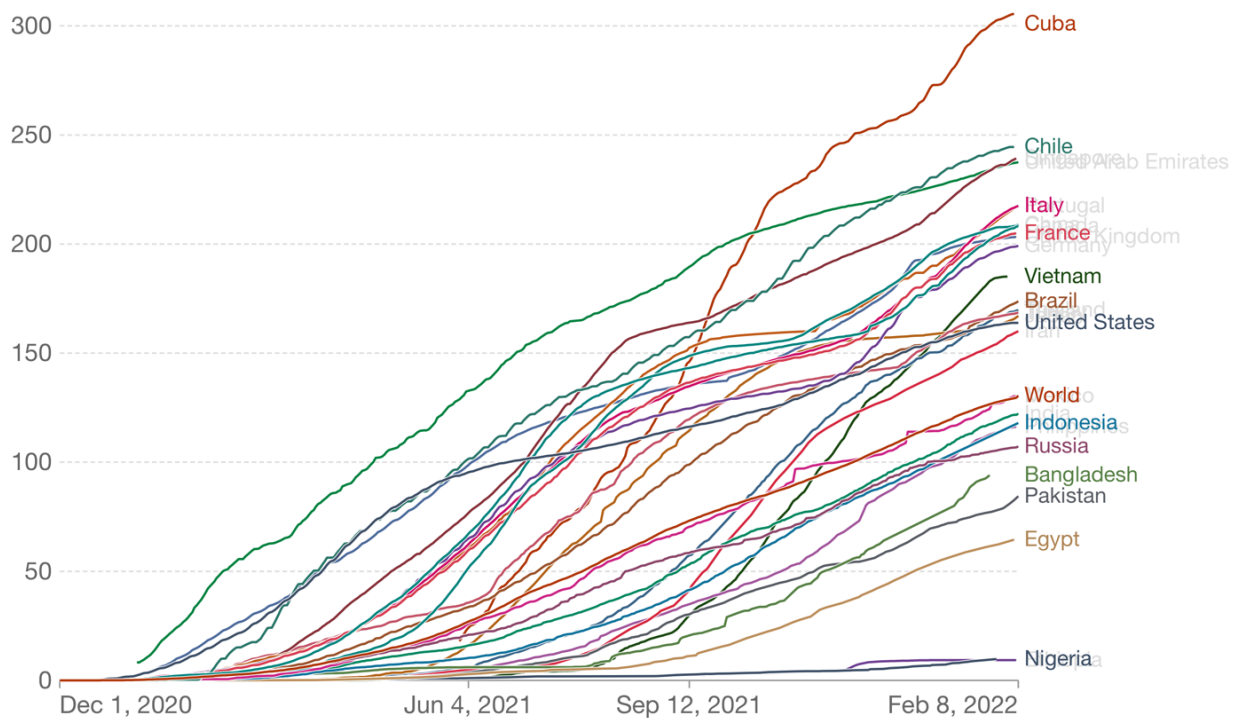
Furthermore, Cuba is the only country in the world that vaccinated very young children against Covid-19, with more than 95 percent of the population aged 2 to 18 years immunized. High vaccination coverage among children has been crucial for massively containing the spread of the Omicron variant wave (Intini, 2022).

Cuba is first in the world in terms of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people (Figure 8) and third in terms of immunization against the infection, surpassed only by the United Arab Emirates and Portugal (Annex 13).

Figure 8

COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people

Total number of doses administered, divided by the total population of the country. All doses, including boosters, are counted individually.



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data

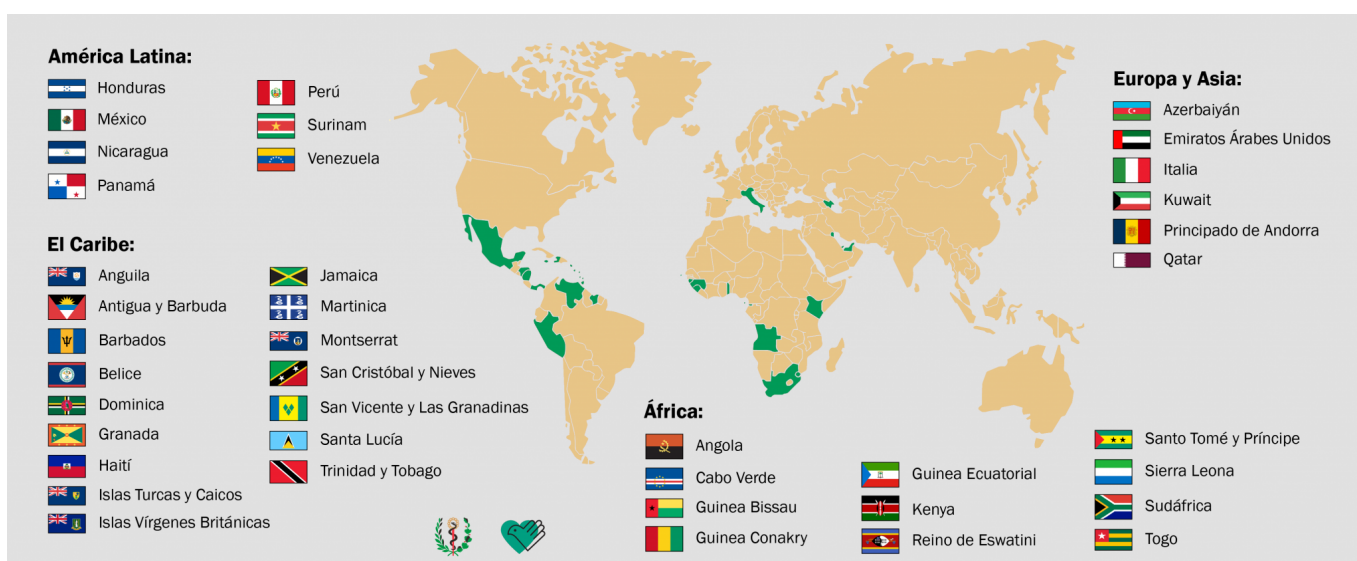
CC BY

(Our World in Data, 2022)

“Despite being an underdeveloped nation, Cuba has managed to insert itself in the biotechnological and pharmaceutical sector and obtain results comparable to those exhibited by developed countries in the areas in which it competes, thanks to the quality of its education system and the talent of its researchers; but also because the health sector has been focused on raising the life expectancy of the Cuban population by means of prevention, health promotion and the strengthening of primary health care [...]; in short, by conceiving health as a right of the people. This may explain why the island has been able to successfully face the pandemic unleashed in 2020 and even collaborate with other countries” (Molina, 2021, p. 12).

Moreover, out of its own decision and in response to the United Nations Secretary General's call, Cuba has made all its national experience available to the international community. It has shared its expertise in forums of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), among others (Arias, 2020). Also, thousands of medical professionals, organized in 57 brigades of the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster and Severe Epidemic Situations, have helped 40 nations to provide adequate health care to their citizens amid the pandemic (Figure 9) (MINSAP, 2021). The Contingent arrived for the first time in Europe: they offered their medical services in the Italian region of Lombardy - at that time the hardest hit by the health emergency - and in the city of Turin, in Piedmont (MINSAP, Un tercio de la humanidad ha recibido la mano de los profesionales cubanos de la salud, 2021).

Figure 9: Henry Reeve Brigades involved in the fight against Covid-19



(MINSAP, 2021)

As for the workers' protection measures, the first ones were approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security on April 1, 2020. Among these emerges the call made to employers to establish the modality of teleworking in those companies where conditions were suitable for it.

In addition, protection for all workers in vulnerable situations was introduced, either due to health issues or for being over 65 years old. Labor relations were also suspended for mothers, fathers, or anyone in charge of minor children who, as a result of the closure of the educational institutions, had to stay home to take care of the child.

The extension of unpaid maternity leave for working mothers, as well as unpaid leave for workers who were outside the country for personal reasons, were also authorized. Likewise, workers who, by order of the state health authority, were in preventive isolation, in home quarantine or had restrictions of movement, received 100 percent of their basic salary during that period.

It was established the obligation to give a wage guarantee to employers who decided to stop work, in order to economically protect the workers, who would continue to receive an income during the stoppage. This guarantee consisted of 100 percent of their basic salary during the first month of suspension and 60 percent of it during the time the pandemic lasts. It was also decided that if the company's funds were not sufficient to pay the workers' wages, the money would be obtained from the State budget (Lam, 2021).

As a result of the existence of a strong public health system and effective management of the pandemic, coordinated by the government, the country was able to mitigate the direct effects of Covid-19, namely contagions and deaths. However, there are effects that cannot be managed - although they can be mitigated - by a single country, which are the economic ones. As a small, open, and blockaded economy, the economic effects of the pandemic have been severely felt.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Planning (MEP), Alejandro Gil Fernandez explained that the Cuban economy lost 13 percent of its GDP between 2020 and October 2021, which is equivalent to more than 3 billion dollars.

At the end of September 2021, only 60 percent of the income plan was achieved, which amounts to about 2 billion dollars. Exports were quantified at some 1,344 million dollars of goods, representing 68.7 percent of the plan; this trend was influenced by non-fulfillment in the sales of two of Cuba's major exportable items, tobacco (91 percent of the plan) and rum (86 percent of the plan). In the tobacco industry, problems related to Covid-19 paralyzed several factories; similarly, in the case of

rum, worldwide market demand problems affected production (Ministerio de Economía y Planificación, 2021).

The export of services only reached 67 percent of the plan due to the impact of the pandemic on tourism, a key sector in the Cuban economy.

Imports amounted to approximately 5.8 billion USD, 65 percent of the planned amount. In that year, a total of 1,348 million USD was spent on purchasing food and ensuring the population's access to basic foodstuffs. Behind this lies the growth of prices on the international market, together with the increase in fuel prices and freight rates (Ministerio de Economía y Planificación, 2021).

Section 3.3: Italy's socioeconomic situation prior to the pandemic

Prior to the pandemic, Italy was already dealing with long-standing social and economic problems. In 2018, material living standards, as measured by GDP per capita, were roughly the same as in 2000; absolute youth poverty rates, which soared after the 2008-2009 financial crisis, remained elevated; despite the fact that the employment rate had increased, it stood among the weakest in the OECD; productivity growth had been slow or negative for the preceding 20 years, there was a significant mismatch between people's occupations and their skills, and the amount of investment was just 80 percent of the average between 2005 and 2008 (OECD, 2019c).

Furthermore, major regional disparities persisted in Italy. Large regional inequalities in GDP per capita and employment have increased further over the previous 20 years; on the other hand, poverty rates have risen in northern areas too.

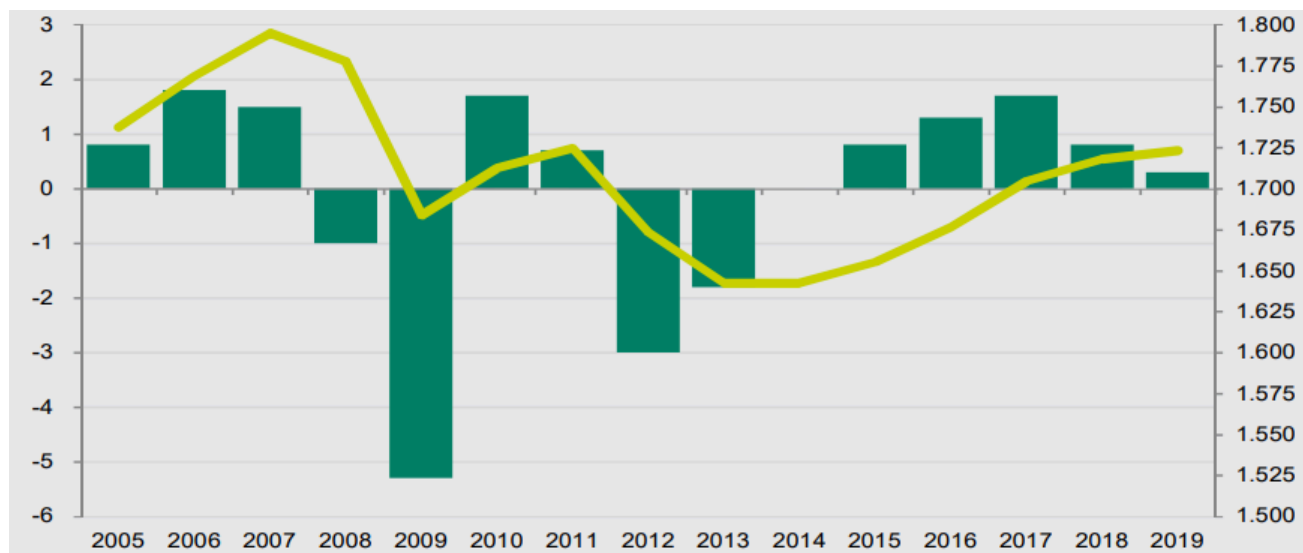
The health emergency occurred at a time when Italy's economy was experiencing prolonged slow growth. In 2019, GDP increased by just 0.3 percent, failing to recover from the collapse occurred due to the financial crisis, and remaining 0.1 percent lower than in 2011 (ISTAT, 2020) (Figure 10).

Exports have been severely hampered by declining external demand and uncertainty about global trade agreements, at the same time, there was a downward trend in job gains and real wages for workers; this mitigated the growth in private consumption. In 2018, the quality of work in Italy was low and the unemployment rate was high (particularly among women and young people), consumer price inflation was rising and household purchasing power was falling (OECD, 2019c). The OECD (2019c) also reported that wages for workers employed in the private sector remained below consumer price inflation.

Figure 10: GDP volume trend. Years 2005-2019 (chained values in millions of euros, base year 2015; annual percentage changes)

Green columns: percentage variations

Yellow line: level (billions of euros)



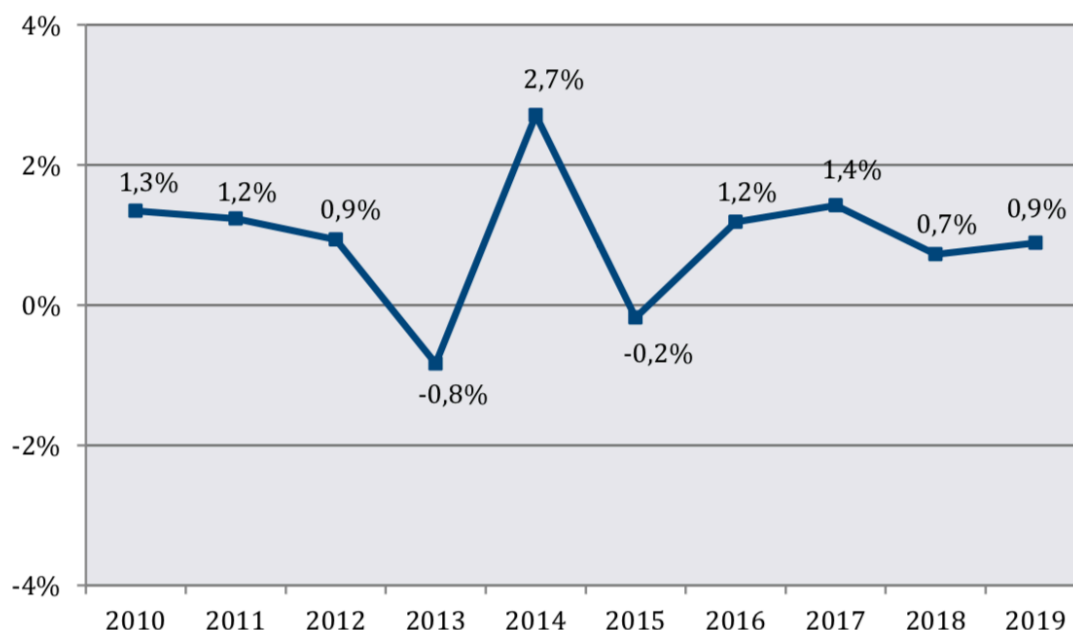
(ISTAT, 2020, p. 23)

ISTAT in 2019 alerted that *"Italy's economic and social framework is characterized by persisting uncertainties about short-term developments in the economy and structural problems that affect the country's growth potential and medium- and long-term sustainability conditions"* (ISTAT, 2019, p. 15).

The health emergency resulted from a wide-ranging pandemic event, but it occurred in a context in which the Italian health system was suffering from structural deficiencies and shortcomings due to its reorganization, which has been underway for about 30 years, and whose distinctive features are privatization, cutting of funds, and opening of the public sector to the private one.

Only in the period 2010-2019, cuts and defunding have subtracted approximately € 37 billion from the National Health System (SSN), while the National Health Requirement (FSN) has increased by only € 8.8 billion, growing at a rate of 0.9 percent per year on average, well below the 1.07 percent annual inflation rate (Osservatorio GIMBE, 2019). The increase in the FSN over the last decade has therefore not even been sufficient to maintain purchasing power (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Public funding of the NHS: percentage changes. 2010 – 2019.

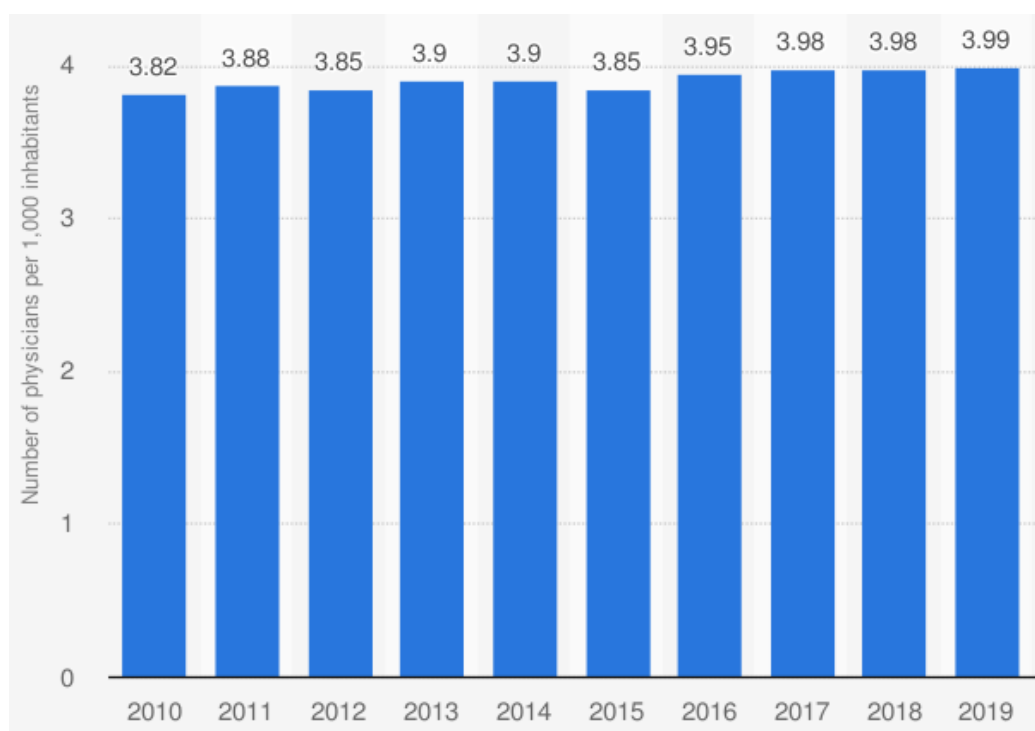


(Osservatorio GIMBE, 2019, p. 3)

Various financial resources have been subtracted from the National Health Service at the expense of the hospital network, beds, health personnel and medical services offered to the population. There has also been a lowering in the investment expenditure in Health Authorities: this budget item has been reduced from 2.4 billion in 2013 to just over 1.4 billion in 2018. A price that public health has paid due to austerity and reforms in a neoliberal sense has also been that of failing to ensure uniformity of health and opportunities for access to care throughout the country and for all social categories (ISTAT, 2020).

In 2019, in Italy, spending on health as a percentage of GDP amounted to 8.7 percent and over the period from 2005 to 2019, this indicator fluctuated between 8.1 percent and 9.0 percent (Annex 14). In the health sector, about 691 thousand units of staff were working in 2018, including almost 648 thousand permanent employees and more than 43 thousand with flexible employment relationships. Physicians (16.6 percent) and nursing staff (41.1 percent) together accounted for more than half of the employed in this sector. Compared to 2012, there was a decrease of 4.9 percent, which also affected physicians (-3.5 percent) and nurses (-3.0 percent). During the period 2012-2018, the workforce in the health sector decreased by 25,808 (-3.8 percent). The number of physicians fell from 109 thousand to 106 thousand (-2.3 percent), nursing staff from 272 thousand to 268 thousand (-1.6 percent) (ISTAT, 2020). In 2019, the amount of physicians per 1,000 population in Italy was 3.99 (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Forecast of the average number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants in Italy from 2010 to 2019



(Statista, 2021)

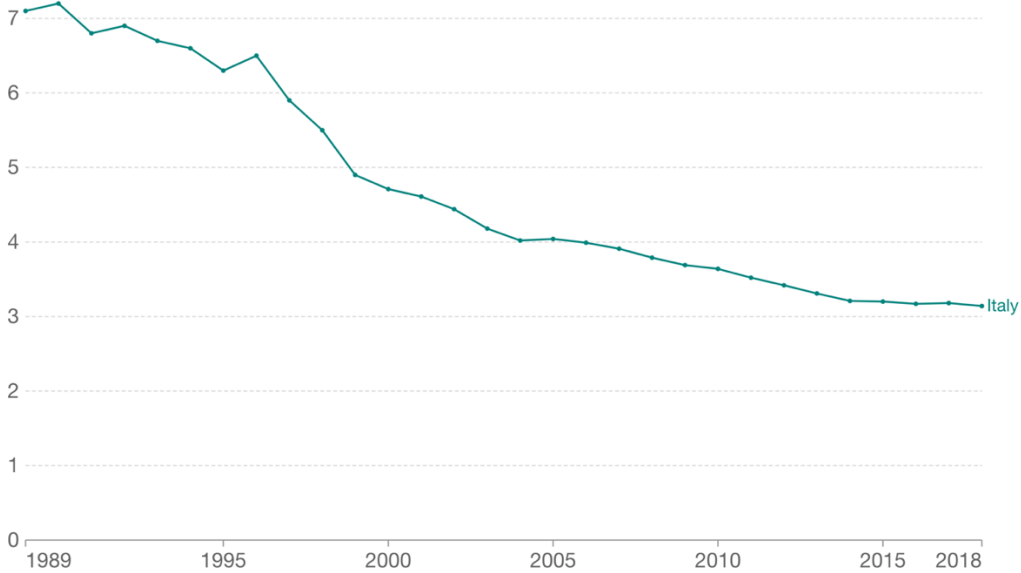
In terms of hospital supply, in 1995, there were 356 thousand hospital beds, or 6.3 per 1,000 population. From 2010 to 2018, the number of beds decreased by an average of 1.8 percent per year, following a tendency that began in the mid-1990s; it declined from 244,000 beds in 2010 to 211,000 in 2018; in the latter year, the allocation stood at 3.14 beds per 1,000 inhabitants (ISTAT, 2020) (Figure 13). In this regard, it should be noted how Italians' spending on health care increased over time (Annex 15) and that the number of public hospitals in this country has also declined considerably (Figure 14). Moreover, the number of intensive care units (ICU) in Italy significantly diminished since 2012. As Figure 15 shows, the number of ICUs per 100,000 population stood at 12.5 in 2012 and decreased to 8.58 as of February 2020.

This situation has had a decisive influence on the impact of the pandemic in Italy. This can be seen, for example, in its fatality rate, currently at 1.26 percent, which has remained above the European average since the beginning of the pandemic (Annex 16).

Figure 13

Hospital beds per 1,000 people, 1989 to 2018

Hospital beds include inpatient beds available in public, private, general, and specialized hospitals and rehabilitation centers. In most cases beds for both acute and chronic care are included.



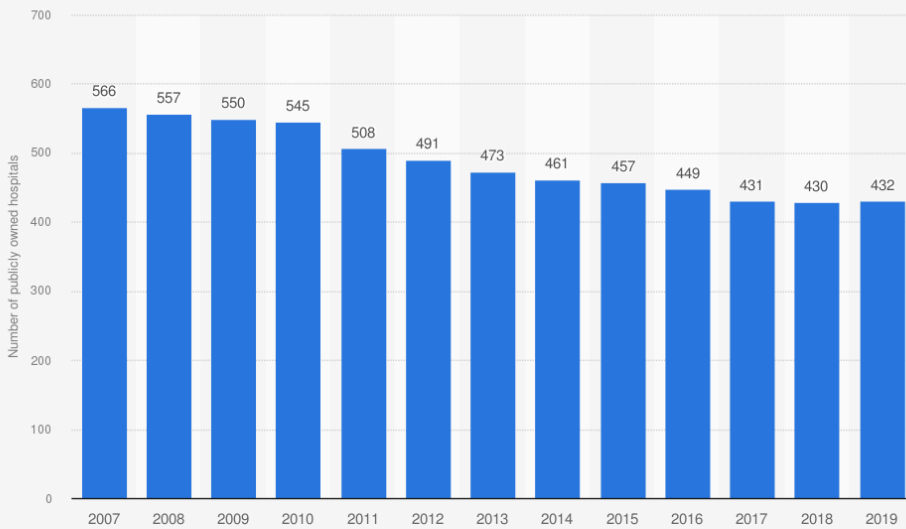
Source: World Health Organization via the World Bank

CC BY

(World Health Organization, 2021)

Figure 14

Number of publicly owned hospitals in Italy from 2007 to 2019



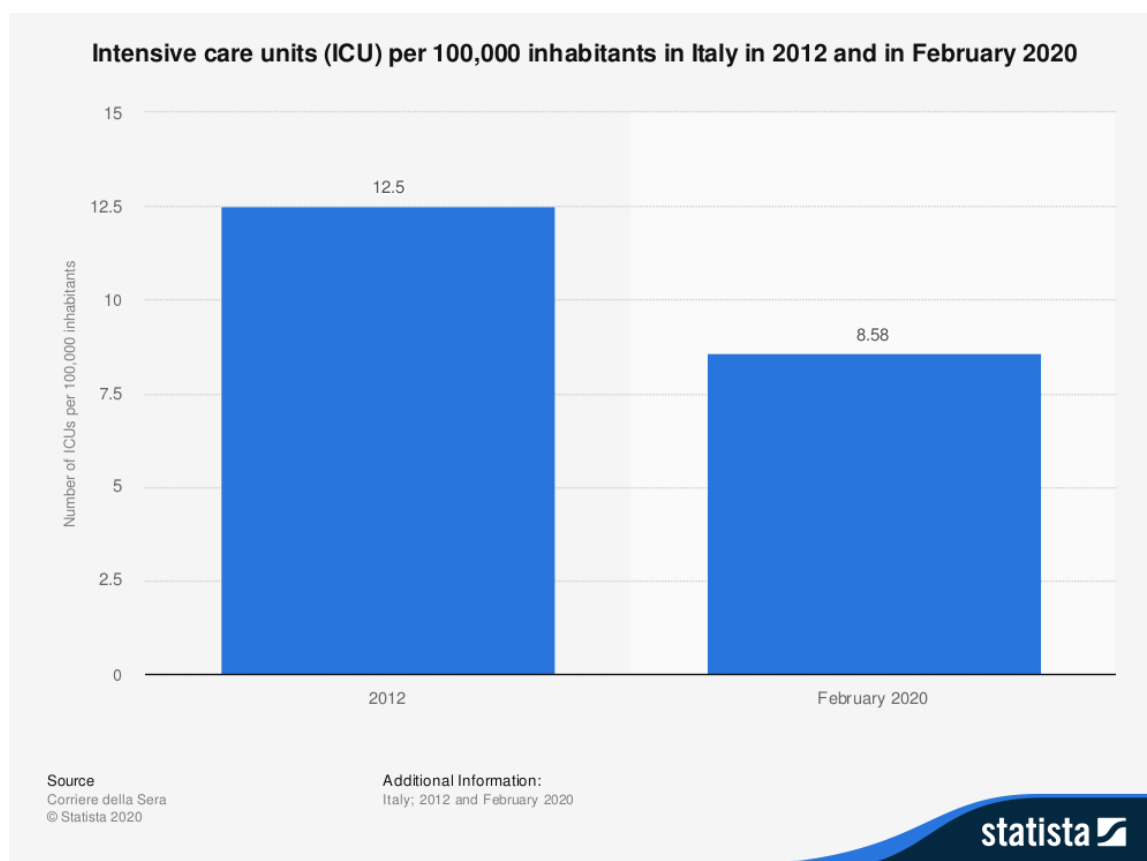
Source: OECD © Statista 2021

Additional Information: Italy; 2007 to 2019



(OECD, 2021)

Figure 15



(Corriere della Sera, 2020)

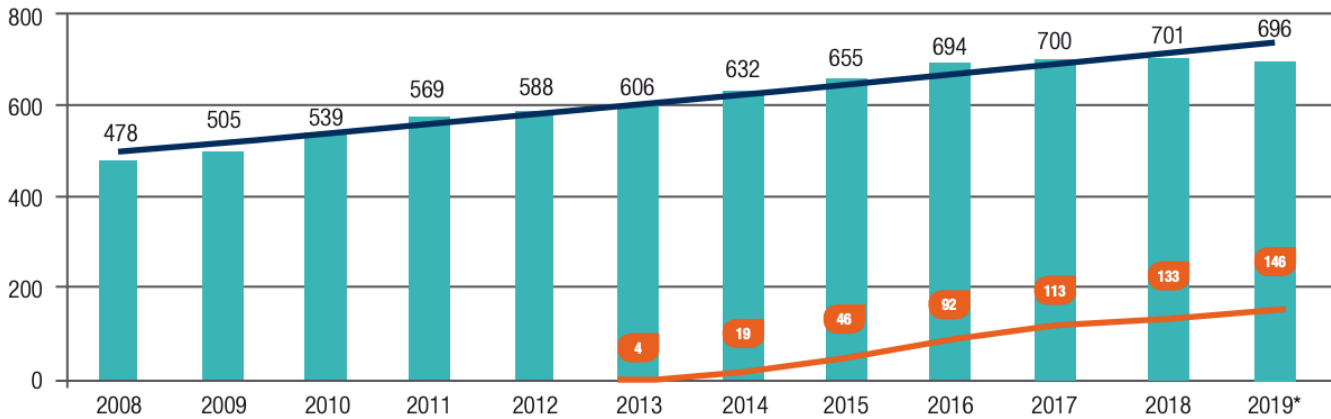
As for the biotechnology sector, there were 696 companies active in this field in Italy at the end of 2019 (Figure 16). Total biotech turnover exceeded €12 billion with an average annual increase between 2014 and 2018 of about 5 percent. There were more than 13 thousand biotech employees in Italy, 34 percent of whom were employed in R&D activities. In 2019, biotech R&D investments exceeded €770 million, representing a growth of more than 7 percent compared to 2016 and 25 percent compared to 2014 (Assobiotec, BioInItaly Report 2020, 2020a). Despite the great development of the sector, currently no vaccine created by the Italian biotech industry has been approved¹⁷. This has not prevented Italy from achieving very good levels of immunized population, with an 84 percent of the citizenry vaccinated against Covid-19 through imported vaccines, as of February 8, 2022.

¹⁷ It is also interesting to note that during the pandemic, only 7 percent of Italian biopharmaceutical companies were engaged in R&D on a Covid-19 vaccine (Annex 17).

Figure 16: Biotech companies in Italy

In water green: Biotech companies.

In orange: Biotech startups.



(Assobiotec, 2020a, p. 12)

Section 3.4: Italy: management of the pandemic and its impact

When Covid-19 reached Italy, this country lacked an updated pandemic plan. Following the reform of the International Health Regulations ¹⁸, Italy had revised the 2002 “Italian multiphase pandemic influenza plan” and in 2006, in accordance with WHO requests, it issued as a replacement the “National Plan for Preparedness and Response to an Influenza Pandemic” (Ministero della Salute, 2006). The Plan is outdated and does not take into account what has emerged from the epidemics and pandemics of recent years (De Maria, 2020). Ranieri de Maria considers that:

“An outdated National Plan is only partially useful because it cannot be really effective if it does not consider the nature of the danger, i.e., from which specific pathogen the pandemic risk arises, and its characteristics - for example, contagiousness or mode of contagion. It is easy to understand this necessity if we consider that a pandemic plan also includes the classes of drugs to be used, which with different pathogens could be useless (...) the Italian authorities did not consider it necessary to update the Plan, nor to provide additional guidelines that would be useful to ensure an adequate application of it. This implies that, even if it had been

¹⁸ The 58th World Health Assembly of WHO updated the text of the International Health Regulations (IHR) in May 2005.

fully and correctly implemented, it would still have proved insufficient” (De Maria, 2020, p. 13 - 16).

In this context, the pandemic response in the short term has been managed through several Decrees of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM) and the creation of a Scientific Technical Committee (CTS). Four main decrees contain the socioeconomic measures: "Cura Italia", "Liquidità", "Rilancio" and "Decreto Agosto" (Ceron, Palermo, & Salpietro, 2020).

The Italian government responded to the economic emergency with substantial funding for the private sector in order to avoid the collapse of the economic system, while reserving a much smaller amount of funds for social purposes. The measures concerned various areas: support for businesses and taxation (56.1 billion euros), employment (29.7 billion euros), measures for local authorities (10.8 billion euros), strengthening of the health care system (8.2 billion euros), interventions in favor of families and social policies (6.2 billion euros) (ISTAT, 2021).

The main measures to support businesses include suspensions and extensions of tax and social security contribution obligations for 2020 (about 15.4 billion euros), the cancellation of the Regional Tax on Productive Activities (IRAP) for 2019 and for the first advance payment of 2020 (3.9 billion in 2020), moratoriums on loan and house mortgage payments, tax relief (4 billion), reduction in the cost of bills and tax credits, guarantees for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (Ceron, Palermo, & Salpietro, 2020).

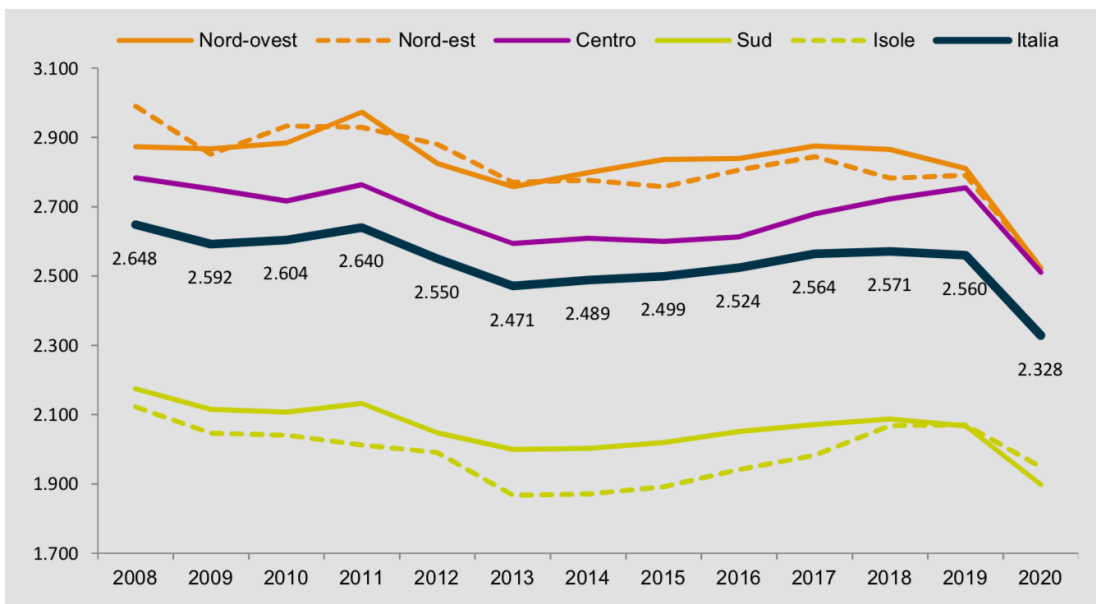
In the labor sector, the measures are described by the Ministry of Economy and Finance as it follows:

"Special provisions have been introduced to allow the use of salary integration treatments, through the institutions of the ordinary and extraordinary redundancy fund, the fund with causal Covid-19, ordinary and alternative solidarity funds and unemployment treatments NASPI and DIS-COLL (18.5 billion in 2020 and 1.3 billion in 2021). It has also been established that one-off allowances totaling 9.2 billion euros will be granted in 2020 in favor of self-employed workers, employees in the tourism sector, agricultural workers who meet specific requirements, professionals with VAT registration, workers enrolled in the entertainment pension fund and domestic workers. In order to encourage the employment of fixed-term and permanent workers for certain productive sectors or employed in disadvantaged areas of the country, exemption from social security contributions has been provided (a total of 1.8 billion in 2020, 0.7 billion in 2021 and 0.25 billion in 2023)" (Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze, 2021, p. 139).

These include funding aimed at ensuring childcare following the closure of childcare facilities and schools, protecting workers during periods spent in quarantine, and guaranteeing assistance to family members of workers suffering from disabilities (3 billion euros in 2020). In 2020, an emergency income fund of limited economic scope (0.9 billion) was established, and food solidarity interventions provided by municipalities to vulnerable individuals (0.8 billion) were also financed (Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze, 2021).

The measures to protect work and families have been useful in stopping a social collapse in the country in the short term, but they were not conceived from a logic that puts the protection of the human being at the heart of the strategy to solve the crisis. They worked, for some sectors, as a “shock absorbers”, but the social impact of the crisis has been hard; Cristina Freguja, ISTAT's central Director for social statistics and welfare, confirms such a complex social situation in an interview conducted for the purpose of this thesis (Annex 18). This is reflected, for example, in the enormous reduction in consumer spending and the increase in absolute poverty. Consumer spending in 2020 has collapsed: the estimated average monthly household expenditure is 2,328 euros per month in current values, down 9.0 percent from 2019 (Figure 17). This drop brings the average current expenditure figure per household back to the 2000 level. (ISTAT, 2021).

Figure 17: Average monthly household expenditure by geographical location (all values in euro). 2008 - 2020.



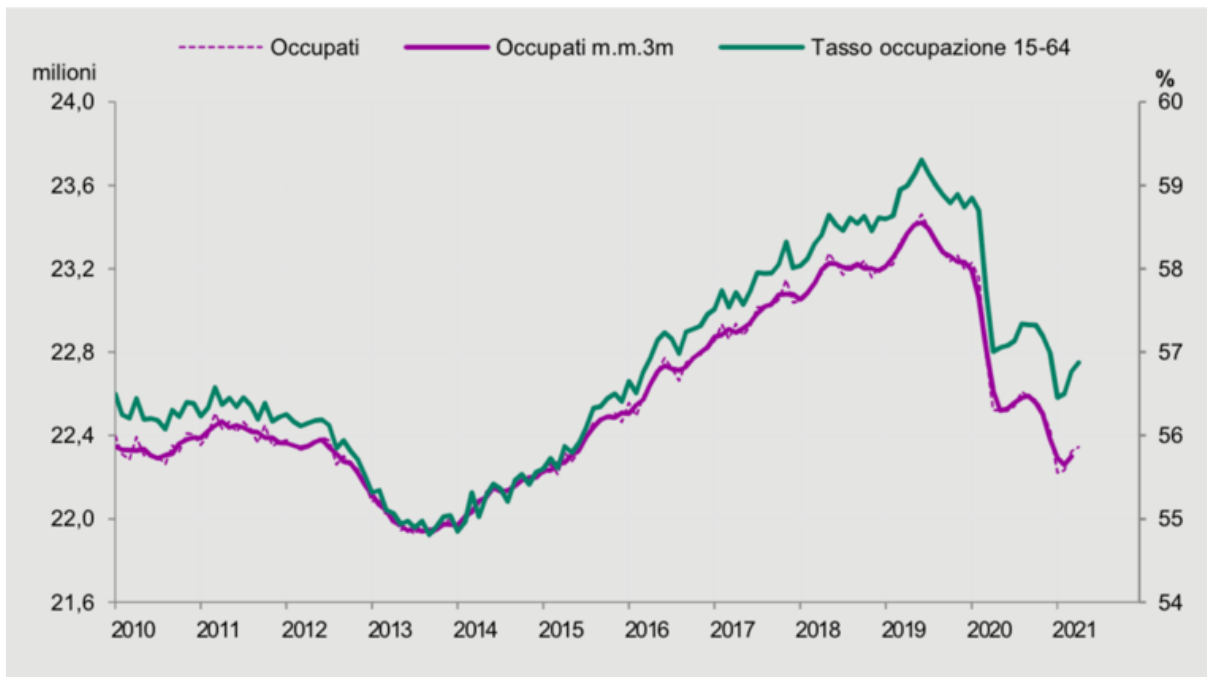
(ISTAT, 2021, p. 47)

The incidence of absolute poverty also appears to be rising sharply. In 2020, there were more than 2 million households in absolute poverty, with an incidence of 7.7 percent (6.4 percent in 2019),

representing more than 5.6 million people (9.4 percent, 7.7 percent in 2019). The incidence of this indicator is particularly high among the unemployed (19.7 percent) and blue-collar workers (13.7 percent) (ISTAT, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic crisis also affected employment, which fell sharply in 2020 (Figure 18). The decline in employment initially affected mainly temporary employees and the self-employed, then also permanent workers. As of April 2021, compared to before the emergency, the number of employed (22.34 million) remained 3.5 percent lower (814 thousand). The number of unemployed increased by 174 thousand and reached 2 million 670 thousand; the number of inactive increased by 415, representing 13 million 758 thousand people. The activity rate of people between 15 and 64 years old fell to 61.7 percent in April 2020, the lowest level since June 2011; in April 2021 the value of this indicator was 63.8 percent (ISTAT, 2021).

Figure 18: Employment trends in Italy. People employed (millions, left scale) and employment rate (percentage values, right scale). 2010 - 2021.

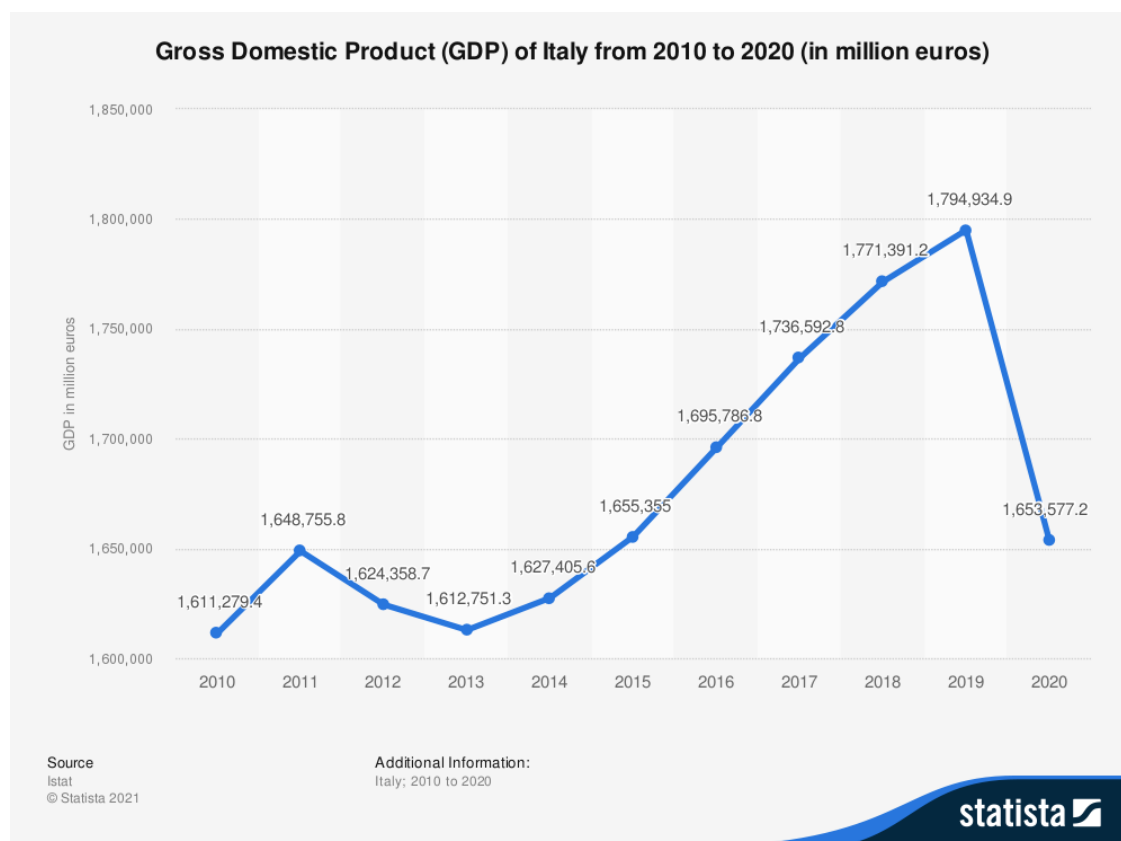


(ISTAT, 2021, p. 27)

What has been said so far is to be framed in the severe deterioration of the Italian economic situation following the pandemic (Figure 19). In 2020, the Italian economy contracted by 8.9 percent, a fall of unprecedented magnitude since the Second World War, bringing GDP back to its 1998 level. In this regard, ISTAT stated that:

“The recession can be attributed above all to the vertical drop in domestic demand: consumption by households and private social institutions at their service (PSIs) and gross investment fell by 10.7 and 10.8 percent, respectively. Collective consumption, which grew by 1.6 percent, mitigated the downturn in domestic demand, but only by 3 tenths of a point” (ISTAT, 2021, p. 20).

Figure 19



(ISTAT, 2021)

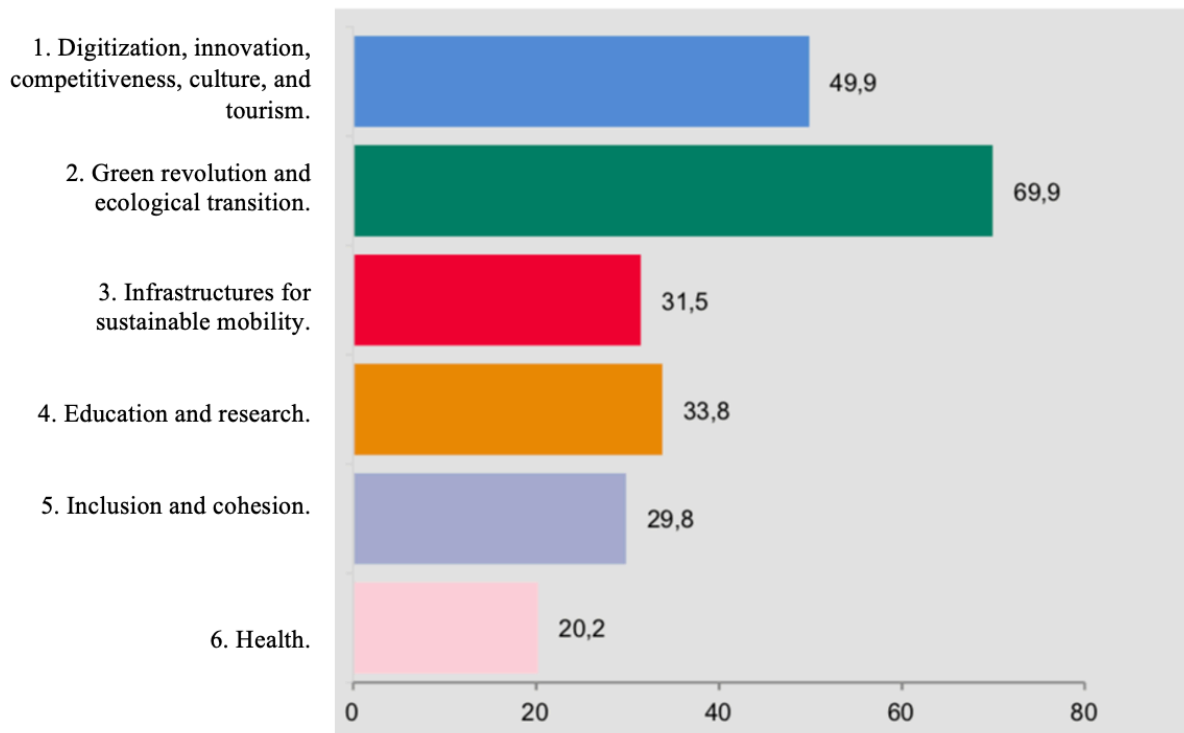
As a long-term response to the crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, Italy has joined the Next Generation EU (NG-EU) Program. To receive the funds provided by this initiative promoted by the European Union, each State must prepare a National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

At the end of April 2021, the government sent its national version to the European Commission, outlining the programming of the European funds secured for Italy by the Recovery and Resilience Facility (191.5 billion, of which 122.6 billion in loans) and the React-EU Program (13.5 billion in grants), as well as the resources allocated by the government in a Complementary Fund (30.6 billion), for a total of 235.6 billion (ISTAT, 2021).

As indicated by the Commission, the PNRR intervenes on digitalization and innovation, ecological transition, social inclusion, gender equality, youth and southern Italy.

Figure 20 shows the focus areas and their related funding; it is possible to see that social policies play a minor role in the plan and that instead it focuses on the productive system.

Figure 20: PNRR focus areas and related funding (billion euros)



(ISTAT, 2021, p. 205)

Section 3.5: Partial conclusions

The comparative analysis between Cuba and Italy shows two very different realities in terms of the development-pandemic relationship. It reveals that the levels of development of the countries, although they may constitute a good basis for fighting the pandemic, have not been decisive.

Cuba is a small country, blockaded for 60 years, with economic problems, but with social indicators at first world level. Its greatest strength in the context of Covid-19 has been the centralized management of the pandemic, coordinated by the main authorities of the country, with the participation of scientists from various fields of knowledge and the people in general. Behind this lies a socioeconomic model that has placed man at the center of its development process and science at the heart of this approach.

Although Italy is a developed country, the pandemic behavior has shown the fragilities of a model in which wealth creation prevails over the human being. The decentralization of decision making, the regional heterogeneity, and the lack of an updated plan are distinctive elements of the Italian management and, therefore, of the impact of the pandemic in this country.

Conclusions

In the international debate there is a certain tendency to identify the ongoing crisis as a result of the pandemic; in this sense, the criteria of international institutions stand out, albeit with some differences among them. However, there are critical opinions which, although isolated, focus their analysis on the essence of the capitalist system and its contradictory nature, or on the neoliberal development model and its weaknesses.

Covid-19 emerged in an international scenario characterized by the existence of global problems affecting world development. The development gaps constitute propitious conditions for the growing contagiousness and lethality of Covid-19, as well as for the deepening of the pandemic's effects, especially among the poorest population. At the same time, the pandemic contributes to the intensification of world development problems, especially those related to socioeconomic gaps.

The very high number of people infected and deceased due to Covid-19 shows that there is no automatic relationship between the level of development of the countries and the results of their response to the pandemic. The comparison between two essentially different countries shows that a decisive factor was the way in which the pandemic was managed, and the development model adopted by each of them.

The health emergency occurred in Italy in a context characterized by structural inadequacies in the health system, characterized by privatization, funding cuts and the opening of the public sector to the private one.

Cuba, a small, blockaded country, was able to control the pandemic because of its solid public health system, its centralized crisis management coordinated by the country's main authorities, and for placing science at the service of human beings, one of the main objectives of its development model.

The world is not simply affected by a health crisis caused by Covid-19. The pandemic has been the expression and catalyst of a structural crisis of multiple dimensions, much broader, deeper and more complex: it accentuated existing problems and revealed the unsustainability of capitalism.

Recommendations

- To continue the study on the relationship between the pandemic and world development with an emphasis on the predominant international development models.
- To continue the investigation by incorporating other countries that may be significant in the pandemic management analysis.

Bibliography

- Acosta, A. (2021). La economía en su laberinto. Colapso climático y capitaloceno: una visión desde América Latina y el Caribe. In *El mundo poscovid-19: ¿cambio de paradigma?* Retrieved January, 3 2022 from <https://www.biodiversidadla.org/Documentos/La-economia-en-su-laberinto-colapso-climatico-y-capitaloceno>
- Arias, M. L. (2020, October - December). Strategic perspective in the management of the COVID-19 in Cuba. *Politica Internacional*(8), 144 - 152.
- Armstrong, M. (2021, December 8). *The Uneven Covid-19 Vaccine Rollout*. Retrieved January 3, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/chart/25832/share-fully-vaccinated-covid-by-world-region/>
- Assobiotec. (2020a). *BioInItaly Report 2020*. Milano: Federchimica.
- Assobiotec. (2020b, May 28). *Share of biotech companies in Italy active in COVID-19 R&D as of May 2020, by product type*. Retrieved February 6, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1181958/biotech-firms-active-in-research-or-production-against-covid-19-in-italy-by-field/>
- Bárcena, A. (2020, July 7). *La respuesta a la crisis del COVID-19 requiere de un nuevo pacto social por un régimen de bienestar más inclusivo: Alicia Bárcena*. Retrieved February 1 2022 from CEPAL: <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/la-respuesta-la-crisis-covid-19-requiere-un-nuevo-pacto-social-un-regimen-bienestar-mas>
- Bárcena, A. (2020, June 1). *Pandemia del COVID-19 pone en riesgo la integralidad de la Agenda 2030 debido al dispar avance de los ODS, advierte Alicia Bárcena*. Retrieved January 10, 2022 from CEPAL: <https://www.cepal.org/es/noticias/pandemia-covid-19-pone-riesgo-la-integralidad-la-agenda-2030-debido-al-dispar-avance-ods>
- Bárcena, A. (2021, October 19). *Autoridades reconocen y relevan el rol del Estado en la recuperación pospandemia e instan a construir instituciones resilientes para enfrentar los desafíos del desarrollo*. Retrieved January 10, 2022 from CEPAL: [cepal.org/es/comunicados/autoridades-reconocen-relevant-rol-estado-la-recuperacion-pospandemia-instan-construir](https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/autoridades-reconocen-relevant-rol-estado-la-recuperacion-pospandemia-instan-construir)
- Baró, S. (2006). El desarrollo mundial como problema global. In M. G. Rabelo, *Teorías del subdesarrollo y el desarrollo. Una visión crítica*. (p. 228-248). Ciudad de La Habana: Editorial Félix Varela.
- Bravo, E., & Magis, C. (2020, April 27). La respuesta mundial a la epidemia del COVID-19: los primeros tres meses. *Salud Pública*, 1(1).
- Castellanos Serra, L. (2020, April 12). Bringing Cuban Biotech Research to Bear on COVID-19: All Hands and Minds on Deck. *Medicc Review*, 22(1).
- CEPAL. (2020a). *América Latina y el Caribe ante la pandemia del COVID-19. Efectos económicos y sociales*. ECLAC.

- CEPAL. (2020b). *El desafío social en tiempos del COVID-19*.
- CEPAL. (2020c, May 12). *CEPAL propone avanzar hacia un ingreso básico para ayudar a la población más vulnerable a superar los efectos del coronavirus*. Retrieved December 9, 2021 da <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/cepal-propone-avanzar-un-ingreso-basico-ayudar-la-poblacion-mas-vulnerable-superar>
- CEPAL. (2020d, August). Los efectos del COVID-19 en el comercio internacional y la logística.
- CEPAL. (2020e). *Dimensionar los efectos del COVID-19 para pensar en la reactivación*. Santiago de Chile: CEPAL.
- CEPAL. (2021). *Panorama Social de América Latina, 2020*. Santiago de Chile: CEPAL.
- CEPAL. (2022a, January 25). *Pobreza extrema en la región sube a 86 millones en 2021 como consecuencia de la profundización de la crisis social y sanitaria derivada de la pandemia de COVID-19*. Retrieved January 14, 2022 from <https://www.cepal.org/es/comunicados/pobreza-extrema-la-region-sube-86-millones-2021-como-consecuencia-la-profundizacion-la>
- CEPAL. (2022b). *Panorama Social de América Latina, 2021*. Santiago de Chile.
- Ceron, M., Palermo, C. M., & Salpietro, V. (2020, May - August). Limiti e prospettive della gestione europea durante la pandemia da Covid-19. 2(228).
- Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (2022). *World Inequality Report 2022*. World Inequality Lab.
- Chomsky, N. (2020, May 18). *The Pandemic Has Only Exposed the Suicidal Tendencies of Capitalism: Noam Chomsky*. Retrieved January 12, 2022 from <https://thewire.in/world/noam-chomsky-interview-covid-19-pandemic-capitalism-neoliberalism-us-hegemony>
- Corriere della Sera. (2020, March 31). *Intensive care units (ICU) per 100,000 inhabitants in Italy in 2012 and in February 2020*. Retrieved February 3, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1125018/intensive-care-units-icu-per-hundred-thousand-inhabitants-in-italy/>
- Cultelli, G., & Tajam, C. (2021). Chronicle of an Announced Crisis. *Economia y desarrollo*, 165(1).
- Curcio, P. (2021). Pandemia y desigualdad en América Latina. *Boletín del Grupo de Trabajo Estudios Sociales para la Salud*, 22.
- De Maria, R. (2020, February). Caratteristiche ed errori della gestione sanitaria della pandemia da COVID-19 in Italia: una défaillance di sistema. *Rivista Trimestrale di Scienza dell'Amministrazione. Studi di teoria e ricerca sociale*.
- Díaz-Canel, M., & Núñez, J. (2020). Government management and Cuban science in the confrontation with COVID-19. *Anales de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba*, 10(2).

- EcommerceDB.com. (2021, September 21). *E-Commerce net sales of walmart.com from 2014 to 2022 (in million US-Dollar)*. Retrieved January 23, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1218322/walmart-revenue-development-ecommercedb>
- Elsevier, & Lancet. (2020, February 13). *Prevalence rates for chronic kidney disease in select countries worldwide in 2017 (per 100,000 population)*. Retrieved January 26, 2022 from [statista.com/statistics/1105641/chronic-kidney-disease-prevalence-rates-by-country-worldwide/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1105641/chronic-kidney-disease-prevalence-rates-by-country-worldwide/)
- Enfea Salute. (2021, September 24). *Cosa e quali sono le malattie croniche*. Retrieved January 2022 from Fondo Sanitario Integrativo PMI: <https://www.enfeasalute.it/malattie-croniche/>
- Epstein, G. A. (2005). *Financialization and the World Economy*. Northampton, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- European Commission. (2021). *A modernised EU long-term budget, powered by NextGenerationEU*. Retrieved January 2, 2022 from https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027/whats-new_en
- European Commission. (2021). *Recovery plan for Europe*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en
- EUROsociAL+, P. (2021, March 11). Retrieved January 4, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKjw0isJeyw&ab_channel=EUROsociAL
- FAO. (2020, April 7). *COVID-19: Nuestras comunidades más hambrientas y vulnerables se enfrentan a “una crisis dentro de una crisis”*. Retrieved January 6, 2022 from <https://www.fao.org/news/story/pt/item/1269779/icode/>
- FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF. (2019). *El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2019. Protegerse frente a la desaceleración y el debilitamiento de la economía*. Roma: FAO.
- FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF. (2020). *El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición del mundo*. Roma: FAO.
- FAO, FIDA, OMS, PMA, & UNICEF. (2021). *El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2021. Transformación de los sistemas alimentarios en aras de la seguridad alimentaria, una nutrición mejorada y dietas asequibles y saludables para todos*. Roma: FAO.
- FAZ. (2020, April 2). *Rates of intensive care beds in hospitals in select countries worldwide as of 2020* (per 100,000 population)*. Retrieved January 5, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1115999/intensive-care-bed-rates-hospitals-select-countries-worldwide/>
- Fierce Pharma. (2020, April 20). *Special Reports The top 20 pharma companies by 2019 revenue*. Retrieved 2022 January 15, 2022 from <https://www.fiercepharma.com/special-report/top-20-pharma-companies-by-2019-revenue>

- Fierce Pharma. (2021, March 29). *The top 20 pharma companies by 2020 revenue*. Retrieved January 15, 2022 from <https://www.fiercepharma.com/special-report/top-20-pharma-companies-by-2020-revenue>
- Financial Times. (2021, October 25). *2021 ranking of the global top 10 biotech and pharmaceutical companies based on revenue (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved January 9, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272717/top-global-biotech-and-pharmaceutical-companies-based-on-revenue/>
- Friedrich, T. (2021). Retrieved from FAO – Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura: <http://www.nu.org.bo/agencia/organizacion-de-las-naciones-unidas-para-la-agricultura-y-la-alimentacion/>
- Goldin, I. (2021, May 20). *COVID-19: how rising inequalities unfolded and why we cannot afford to ignore it*. Retrieved January 17, 2022 from <https://theconversation.com/covid-19-how-rising-inequalities-unfolded-and-why-we-cannot-afford-to-ignore-it-161132>
- González-Tablas, Á. M. (2007). *Economía política mundial*. Editorial Ariel.
- Granma. (2020, October 22). *Informe sobre las afectaciones del Bloqueo a Cuba en el año 2020*. Retrieved January 25, 2022 from <https://www.granma.cu/cuba/2020-10-22/informe-sobre-las-afectaciones-del-bloqueo-a-cuba-del-ano-2020-22-10-2020-11-10-55>
- Granma. (2022, February 7). *La ciencia y la innovación son pilares de nuestra gestión gubernamental*. Retrieved February, 5 2022 from <https://www.granma.cu/cuba/2022-02-07/destaca-diaz-canel-a-la-ciencia-y-la-innovacion-como-pilar-en-la-estrategia-cubana-de-desarrollo-video-07-02-2022-13-02-24>
- Guerra, D. (2006, July/Dec.). El neoliberalismo como amenaza para el acceso a la salud de los colombianos. *Rev. Fac. Nac. Salud Pública*, 24(2), 142-146.
- Herrera, H. (2020, June 19). *Los impactos en el turismo hasta abril del 2020 en Cuba*. Retrieved February 2022 da Cuba y economía: <https://cubayeconomia.blogspot.com/2020/06/por-humberto-herrera-carles-la-oficina.html>
- Hidalgo, R. (2021). What has changed in the international trade of goods with the current context of Covid-19? *Economía y desarrollo*.
- International Labour Organization. (2019). *World Employment Social Outlook 2019*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- International Labour Organization. (2020). *Los Jóvenes y la Covid-19: efectos en los empleos, la educación, los derechos y el bienestar mental*.
- International Labour Organization. (2022). *World Employment and Social Outlook 2022*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Intini, E. (2022, February 7). *Vaccini anti-covid made in Cuba: una storia di successo*. Retrieved February 12, 2022 from Focus: <https://www.focus.it/scienza/salute/vaccini-anti-covid-cuba-successo>

- IRI. (2021, February 22). *Leading countries by gross research and development (R&D) expenditure worldwide in 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved January 19, 2022 from Statista.: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/732247/worldwide-research-and-development-gross-expenditure-top-countries/>
- ISTAT. (2019). *Rapporto annuale 2019. La situazione del Paese*. Roma.
- ISTAT. (2020). *Rapporto Annuale 2020. La Situazione del Paese*. Roma.
- ISTAT. (2021, October 4). *Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Italy from 2010 to 2020 (in million euros)*. Retrieved February 3, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201202/gdp-italy-current-prices/>
- ISTAT. (2021, September 8). *Household expenditure on health care in Italy from 2012 to 2019 (in million euros)*. Retrieved February 7, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/794120/household-expenditure-on-health-in-italy/>
- ISTAT. (2021). *Rapporto annuale 2021. La situazione del Paese*. Roma.
- Johns Hopkins University. (2022, February 9). *COVID-19 Data Repository by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University*. Retrieved from Our World In Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>
- Lage, A. (2001). Propiedad y expropiación en la economía del conocimiento. *Ciencia, Innovación y Desarrollo*, 6(4).
- Lam, R. (2021, January - April). Labor Rights and COVID-19. The Experience of Cuba. *Estudios del Desarrollo Social: Cuba y América Latina*, 9(1), 329-339.
- Lapavitsas, C. (2021, October 14). *Chomsky, Pollin and Lapavitsas: Are We Witnessing the Demise of Neoliberalism?* Retrieved January 27, 2022 from <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/14/10/2021/chomsky-pollin-and-lapavitsas-are-we-witnessing-demise-neoliberalism>
- López, M. (2021). *2020: año devastador para el turismo*. CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES DE LA ECONOMÍA MUNDIAL. La Habana: CIEM.
- Martínez, E., Pérez, R., Herrera, L., Lage, A., & Castellanos, L. (2020). The cuban biopharmaceutical industry in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. *Anales de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba*, 10(2).
- Medialdea, B. (2013). La financiarización de la economía mundial: hacia una caracterización. *Revista de Economía Mundial*(33), 195-227.
- Medina, Z. (2018). Disclosing the Reasons for the Emphasis on «Combating Poverty» Nowadays. *Economía y desarrollo*, 160(2).
- Medina, Z. (2021). Development Theories: Alternative or Reform? *Economía y Desarrollo*, 165(1).
- Medina, Z. (2022). The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the System of Capitalist Contradictions. *Economía y Desarrollo*, 166(1).

- Melecky, M. (2021). *Hidden Debt: Solutions to Avert the Next Financial Crisis in South Asia*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.
- Ministerio de Economía y Planificación. (2021, October 27). *Alejandro Gil: Economía cubana ha perdido 13% de su PIB entre el 2020 y lo que va de 2021*. Retrieved February 2022 from <https://www.mep.gob.cu/es/noticia/alejandrogil-economia-cubana-ha-perdido-13-de-su-pib-entre-el-2020-y-lo-que-va-de-2021>
- Ministero della Salute. (2006). *Piano nazionale di preparazione e risposta ad una pandemia influenzale*.
- Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze. (2021). *Documento di Economia e Finanza*.
- MINREX. (2020). *Necesidad de poner fin al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto por los Estados Unidos de América contra Cuba*. La Habana.
- MINREX. (2022, February 2). *Gobierno de EEUU utilizó la Covid-19 para recrudecer bloqueo a Cuba*. Retrieved February 10, 2022 from <http://misiones.minrex.gob.cu/es/articulo/gobierno-de-eeuu-utilizo-la-covid-19-para-recrudecer-bloqueo-cuba>
- MINSAP. (2020). *PROTOCOLO DE ACTUACIÓN NACIONAL PARA LA COVID-19*. La Habana.
- MINSAP. (2021, August 20). *Ministro de Salud: “Los médicos de la “Henry Reeve” son médicos del mundo, pero son, ante todo, médicos de Cuba”*. Retrieved February 10, 2022 from <https://salud.msp.gob.cu/ministro-de-salud-los-medicos-de-la-henry-reeve-son-medicos-del-mundo-pero-son-ante-todo-medicos-de-cuba/>
- MINSAP. (2021, February 21). *Un tercio de la humanidad ha recibido la mano de los profesionales cubanos de la salud*. Retrieved February 10, 2022 from <https://salud.msp.gob.cu/un-tercio-de-la-humanidad-ha-recibido-la-mano-de-los-medicos-cubanos/>
- MINSAP. (2022, February 7). *ACTUALIZACIÓN DE LA ESTRATEGIA PARA EL DESARROLLO DE LAS VACUNAS CUBANAS*. Retrieved February 11, 2022 from <https://salud.msp.gob.cu/actualizacion-de-la-vacunacion-en-el-marco-de-los-estudios-de-los-candidatos-vacunales-cubanos-y-la-intervencion-sanitaria/>
- Molina, E. (2021). The Post-Pandemic Economic Program, Political Economy and Prospective. *Economía y desarrollo*, 1(165).
- Munster, B. (2006). El desarrollo social. In M. García Rabelo, *Teorías del subdesarrollo y el desarrollo. Una visión crítica* (p. 157-180). Ciudad de La Habana: Editorial Félix Varela.
- Munster, B. (2018). The Post-2015 Development Agenda: a Real Change, or More of the Same? *Economía y Desarrollo*, 160(2).
- Núñez, J. (2009). La cuestión de la democratización de la ciencia como asunto epistemológico, ético y político. *Universidad & sociedad*, 1(1).

- Naciones Unidas. (s.d.). *Alimentación*. Retrieved 2022 January from <https://www.un.org/es/global-issues/food>
- NCSES. (2020, January 23). *Exports of high research and development (R&D) intensive products from 2005 to 2018, by country (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved January 8, 2022 from Statista: . <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1102728/exports-high-research-development-intensive-products-country/>
- OECD. (2019). *Number of Patents in the Biotechnology Sector*. Retrieved January 9, 2022 from Nation Master: <https://www.nationmaster.com/nmx/ranking/number-of-patents-in-the-biotechnology-sector>
- OECD. (2019). OECD Economic Outlook . 2019(2), 16.
- OECD. (2019a). OECD Economic Outlook. 2019(2).
- OECD. (2019b, November 21). *Perspectivas Económicas: La debilidad del comercio y la inversión amenazan el crecimiento a largo plazo*. Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.oecd.org/economy/perspectivas-economicas-la-debilidad-del-comercio-y-la-inversion-amenazan-el-crecimiento-a-largo-plazo.htm>
- OECD. (2019c). *OECD Economic Surveys Italy 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2021, September 29). *Hospital bed density in select countries as of 2019 (per 1,000 population)*. Retrieved January 24, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283273/oecd-countries--hospital-bed-density/>
- OECD. (2021, September 8). *Number of publicly owned hospitals in Italy from 2007 to 2019*. Retrieved February 5, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/557207/publicly-owned-hospitals-in-italy/>
- OECD. (2021, September 8). *Total health expenditure as share of GDP in Italy from 2005 to 2020*. Retrieved February 7, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788691/share-of-gdp-on-health-expenditure-in-italy/>
- ONEI. (2020). *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2019*. La Habana, Cuba.
- Osservatorio GIMBE. (2019, September). *Il defianziamento 2010-2019 del Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*. Bologna: Fondazione GIMBE.
- Our World in Data. (2022, February 8). *COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people*. Retrieved February 8, 2022 from <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>
- Our World in Data. (2022, February 8). *Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19, Feb 8, 2022*. Retrieved February 8, 2022 from <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>
- Oxfam. (2016). *Una economía al servicio del 1%. Acabar con los privilegios y la concentración de poder para frenar la desigualdad extrema*. Oxford: Oxfam Internacional.
- Oxfam. (2022). *Las desigualdades matan*. Oxford Internacional: Oxfam.

- Pérez, V. (2017). *La agenda internacional de financiación para el desarrollo: una mirada crítica y propositiva*. La Habana, Cuba.
- Petras, J. (2000). Globalización e imperialismo. In *Globaloney. El lenguaje imperial, los intelectuales y la izquierda*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Antidoto.
- Pharma Intelligence. (2021, May 10). *Distribution of pharmaceutical R&D companies worldwide by country in 2021**. Retrieved January 9, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788274/regional-distribution-of-pharma-randd-companies/>
- Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza. (2021, April 23). Retrieved from <https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/PNRR.pdf>
- Piketty Lab. (2021, December 7). *Pandemic has been great for billionaires, says Piketty Lab*. Retrieved January 3, 2022 from <https://www.afr.com/wealth/investing/pandemic-has-been-great-for-billionaires-piketty-lab-says-20211207-p59fnm>
- Piketty, T. (2020, May 19). *Capital and Ideology: Inequality, COVID-19 and Beyond*. Retrieved January 3, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FQ6c1iqnTs>
- Richter, F. (2022, January 27). *Vaccine Inequality Persists*. Retrieved February 2, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/chart/26362/covid-19-vaccine-distribution-by-income-group/>
- Rodríguez, J. L. (2020, November). Cuba: el enfrentamiento a la COVID-19. La dimensión socioeconómica. *Temas de Economía Mundial*(38), 256-282.
- Schütze, R. (2009). *From Dual to Cooperative Federalism. The Changing Structure of European Law*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.
- Statista. (2019, December 20). *The Countries Leading The World In Scientific Publications*. Retrieved January 4, 2022 from <https://www.statista.com/chart/20347/science-and-engineering-articles-published/>
- Statista. (2020). *Hospitals*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/study/81886/hospitals/>
- Statista. (2021, May 25). *Forecast of the average number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants in Cuba from 2010 to 2025*. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1148273/physician-density-forecast-in-cuba>
- Statista. (2021, May 25). *Forecast of the average number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants in Italy from 2010 to 2025*. Retrieved February 5, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1148200/physician-density-forecast-in-italy>
- Statista. (2021, May 25). *Forecast of the current health expenditure share of GDP in Cuba from 2010 to 2025*. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1141681/health-expenditure-gdp-share-forecast-in-cuba>

- Statista. (2021a, June 2). Retrieved from <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/600375/tasa-global-de-desempleo-juvenil/>
- Statista. (2021b, May). *Top 100 Food companies*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/study/40547/top-100-food-companies-global/>
- Stiglitz, J. (2021a, February 10). *Capítulo 131: Joseph Stiglitz sobre la relación entre la pandemia y la crisis económica*. Retrieved January 11, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmEXuD9XT_c
- Stiglitz, J. (2021b, January 21). *Premio Nobel de Economía Joseph Stiglitz: "la pandemia ha demostrado las consecuencias de 40 años de neoliberalismo"*. Retrieved January 11, 2022 from <https://www.elmostrador.cl/cultura/2021/01/21/premio-nobel-de-economia-joseph-stiglitz-la-pandemia-ha-demostrado-las-consecuencias-de-40-anos-de-neoliberalismo/>
- Suarez, A. (2002). Soberanía Alimentaria o esclavitud. *I Congreso Nacional por el Derecho a No tener hambre*. Santa Rosa de Cabal.
- TeleSur. (2022, January 7). *Índice Mundial de Precios de los alimentos crece 28,1 % en 2021*. Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/fao-informa-alza-precios-alimentos-20220106-0034.html>
- Unceta, K. (2009, April). Desarrollo, subdesarrollo, maldesarrollo y postdesarrollo. *Carta Latinoamericana*(7).
- UNCTAD. (2019). *Key statistics and trends in international trade 2019. International trade slump*. Geneva: United Nations.
- UNDP. (2016). *Apoyo del PNUD a la implementación del objetivo de desarrollo sostenible 1: reducción de la pobreza*. New York: Organización de Naciones Unidas (ONU).
- UNDP. (2020). *Covid - 19: respuesta integrada del PNUD*. UNDP.
- UNDP. (2020). *Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano 2020*. New York: Organización de Naciones Unidas (ONU).
- UNDP. (s.d.). *Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio*. Retrieved January 6, 2022 from www.undp.org: https://www1.undp.org/content/undp/es/home/sdgoverview/mdg_goals.html
- UNHCR. (2021). *El papel central del Estado en la respuesta a pandemias y otras emergencias sanitarias, y las consecuencias socioeconómicas de estas en la promoción del desarrollo sostenible y la efectividad de todos los derechos humanos*. UN HRC.
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2021, January 28). *2020: el peor año de la historia del turismo, con mil millones menos de llegadas internacionales*. Retrieved January 8, 2022 from <https://www.unwto.org/es/news/2020-el-peor-ano-de-la-historia-del-turismo-con-mil-millones-menos-de-llegadas-internacionales>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2021, March 8). *Noveno informe de la Organización Mundial del Turismo (OMT) sobre las restricciones de viajes*. Retrieved January 8, 2022 from <https://www.unwto.org/es/news/unas-restricciones-de-viaje-mas-estrictas-acentuan>

- Vázquez, Y. (2021, January 21). Socioeconomic Polarization, Politics, Ideology and Obstacles to Development in a Post-pandemic World. *Economía y desarrollo*, 165(1).
- Various sources (Company filings). (2021, July 12). *Leading online companies ranked by revenue from 2017 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved January 19, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/277123/internet-companies-revenue/>
- Vasapollo, L. (2021, April 1). Retrieved January 17, 2022 from La crisi del coronavirus all'interno della crisi sistemica del modo di produzione capitalistico: <https://www.farodiroma.it/la-crisi-del-coronavirus-allinterno-della-crisi-sistemica-del-modo-di-produzione-capitalistico-se-ne-esce-solo-con-lalternativa-socialista-di-luciano-vasapollo/>
- Walmart. (2021, March 19). *Revenue of Walmart worldwide from fiscal year 2012 to 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved January 29, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/555334/total-revenue-of-walmart-worldwide/>
- WHO. (2018a, May 17). *Countries with the highest physicians density worldwide as of 2016 (per 1,000 population)*. Retrieved January 30, 2022 from Statista: WHO. "Countries with the highest physicians density <https://www.statista.com/statistics/280152/countries-with-the-highest-physicians-density-worldwide/>
- WHO. (2018b, May 24). *Leading 10 causes of death in low-income countries worldwide in 2016 (in deaths per 100,000 population)*. Retrieved January 30, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/311934/top-ten-causes-of-death-in-low-income-countries/>
- WHO. (2018c, May 24). *Leading 10 causes of death in upper-middle income countries worldwide in 2016 (in deaths per 100,000 population)*. Retrieved January 30, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/311939/top-ten-causes-of-death-in-upper-middle-income-countries/>
- WHO. (2019, April 4). *Health expenditure as a percent of GDP worldwide in 2000 and 2016, by region*. Retrieved January 30, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/280197/health-expenditure-as-a-percent-of-gdp-worldwide-by-region/>
- WHO. (2020). *Actualización de la estrategia frente a la COVID-19*.
- WHO. (2021, March 17). *Healthcare expenditure as percentage of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2018, by country*. Retrieved January 29, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/899278/latin-america-health-expenditure-share-gdp-country/>
- WIPO. (2021, November 8). *Ranking of the 20 national patent offices with the most patents in force in 2020*. Retrieved January 28, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/257172/ranking-of-the-20-countries-with-the-most-patents-in-force/>
- World Bank. (2018a, October 17). *Hacer más de lo esperado para poner fin a la pobreza. Nuevas formas de medir la pobreza aclaran los desafíos futuros*. Retrieved from

<https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/immersive-story/2018/10/17/going-above-and-beyond-to-end-poverty-new-ways-of-measuring-poverty-shed-new-light-on-the-challenges-ahead>

- World Bank. (2018b). *Current health expenditure (% of GDP)*. Retrieved January 16, 2022 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS?most_recent_value_desc=false
- World Bank. (2019). *Life expectancy at birth, total (years)*. Retrieved January 16, 2022 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?most_recent_value_desc=false
- World Bank. (2020a, February 11). *Versión actualizada de la declaración del Banco Mundial sobre el COVID-19 (coronavirus), 11 de febrero*. Retrieved from Banco Mundial: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/statement/2020/02/11/updated-world-bank-statement-on-covid-19-coronavirus---february-11>
- World Bank. (2020b). *Poverty and shared prosperity 2020*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank. (2021a). *Apoyo del Grupo Banco Mundial a los países durante la crisis de la COVID 19*. Retrieved from <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/about/annual-report/covid-response>
- World Bank. (2021b, June 30). *El financiamiento del Banco Mundial para la distribución de vacunas contra la COVID-19 supera los USD 4000 millones para 50 países*. Retrieved from <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2021/06/30/world-bank-financing-for-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-exceeds-4-billion-for-50-countries>
- World Bank. (2021c, October 1). *El Banco Mundial refuerza con US\$500 millones el plan de vacunación contra la COVID-19 en Argentina*. Retrieved January 4, 2022 da <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2021/10/01/el-banco-mundial-refuerza-con-us-500-millones-el-plan-de-vacunaci-n-contra-la-covid-19-en-argentina>
- World Bank. (2021d, October 14). *Poverty*. Retrieved January 11, 2022 from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1>
- World Bank. (2022a, January 5). *Growth in GDP and trade volume worldwide from 2007 to 2023*. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1032199/global-growth-gdp-trade/>
- World Bank Group. (2020). *Saving Lives, Scaling-up Impact and Getting Back on Track*. World Bank Group COVID-19 Crisis Response Approach Paper.
- World Bank Group. (2021, January). *Global Economic Prospects*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank Group. (2022). *Global Economic Prospects*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.
- World Health Organization. (2021, August 8). *Hospital beds per 1,000 people, 1989 to 2018*. Retrieved February 5, 2022 from Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/hospital-beds-per-1000-people?tab=chart&time=1989..latest&country=~ITA>

World Health Organization. (2021, August 8). *Hospital beds per 1,000 people, 1990 to 2017*. Retrieved February 5, 2022 from Our World in Data:
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/hospital-beds-per-1000-people?tab=chart&time=1990..latest&country=~CUB>

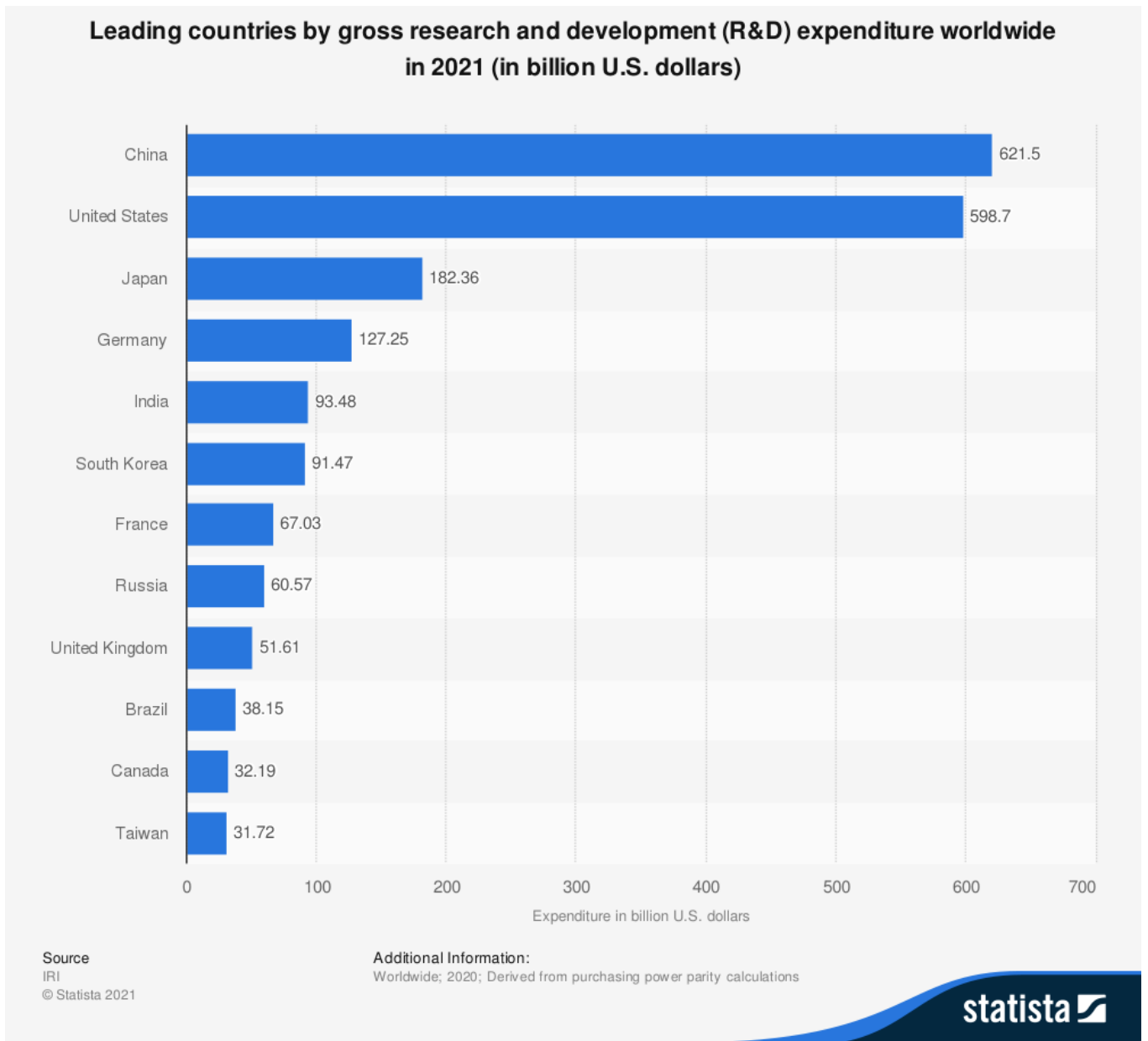
World Trade Organization. (2021, July 12). Debates estructurados sobre la facilitación de inversiones para el desarrollo en la OMC. Resumen de los debates preparado por el coordinador.

Worldometer. (2022, February 7). *Number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths worldwide as of February 7, 2022, by country*. Retrieved February 7, 2022 from Statista:
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1093256/novel-coronavirus-2019ncov-deaths-worldwide-by-country/>

List of Annexes

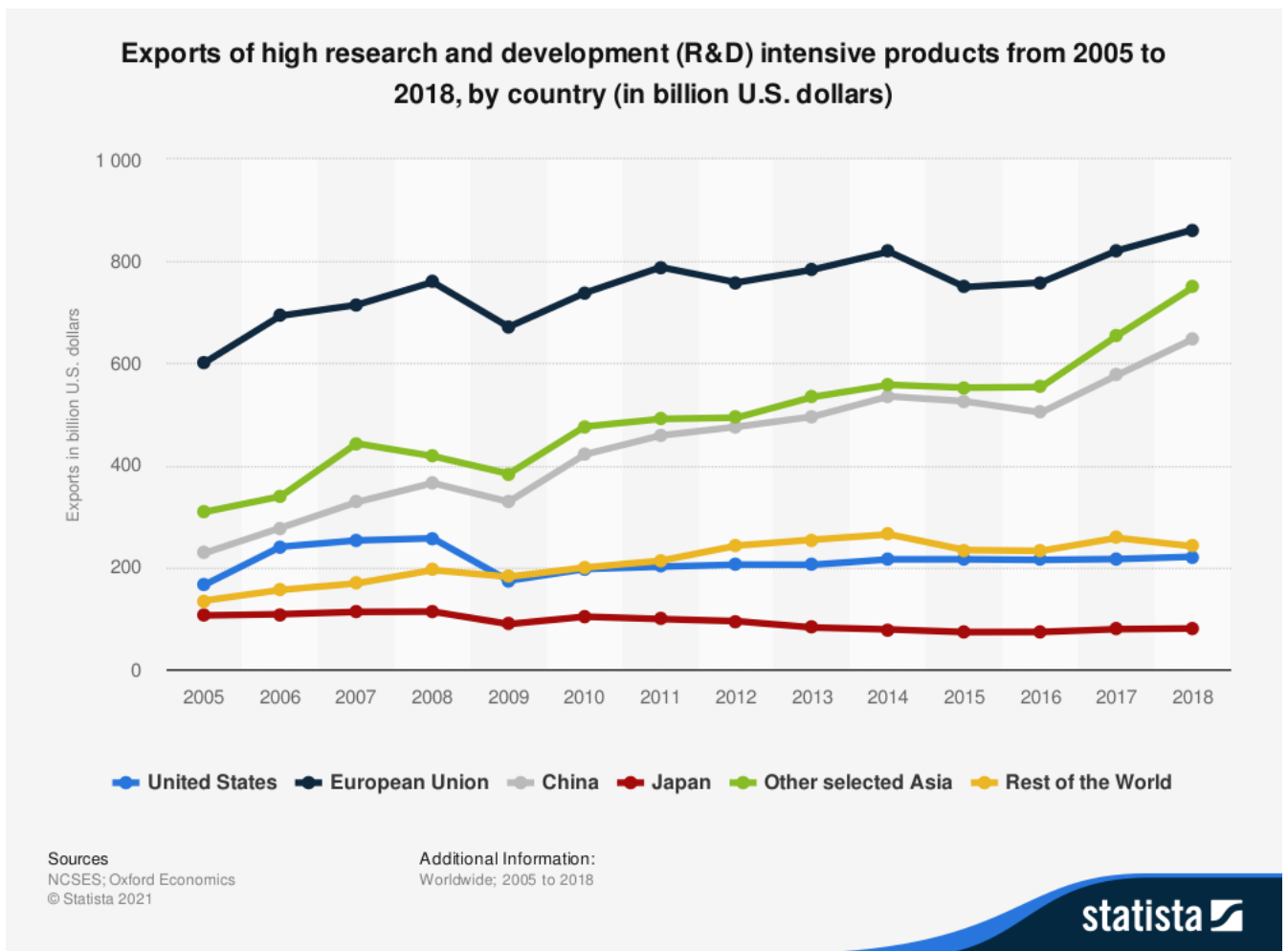
1. Leading countries by gross research and development (R&D) expenditure worldwide in 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars).
2. Exports of high research and development (R&D) intensive products from 2005 to 2018, by country (in billion U.S. dollars).
3. The Countries Leading The World In Scientific Publications.
4. Ranking of the 20 national patent offices with the most patents in force in 2020.
5. Healthcare expenditure as percentage of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2018, by country.
6. Hospital bed density in select countries as of 2019 (per 1,000 population)
7. Prevalence rates for chronic kidney disease in select countries worldwide in 2017.
8. Hospital beds per 1,000 people, 1990 to 2017.
9. Cuba. Number of inhabitants per physician.
10. Cuba. Immunization per type of vaccines.
11. Cuba. Maternal mortality rate per province.
12. Cuba. Infant mortality rate per province.
13. Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19, Feb 8, 2022.
14. Total health expenditure as share of GDP in Italy from 2005 to 2019.
15. Household expenditure on health care in Italy from 2012 to 2019 (in million euros).
16. Italy, Europe, Cuba. Case fatality rate of COVID-19.
17. Share of biotech companies in Italy active in COVID-19 R&D as of May 2020, by product type.
18. Interview with Cristina Freguja, ISTAT Central Director for Social Statistics and Welfare.

Annex 1



(IRI, 2021)

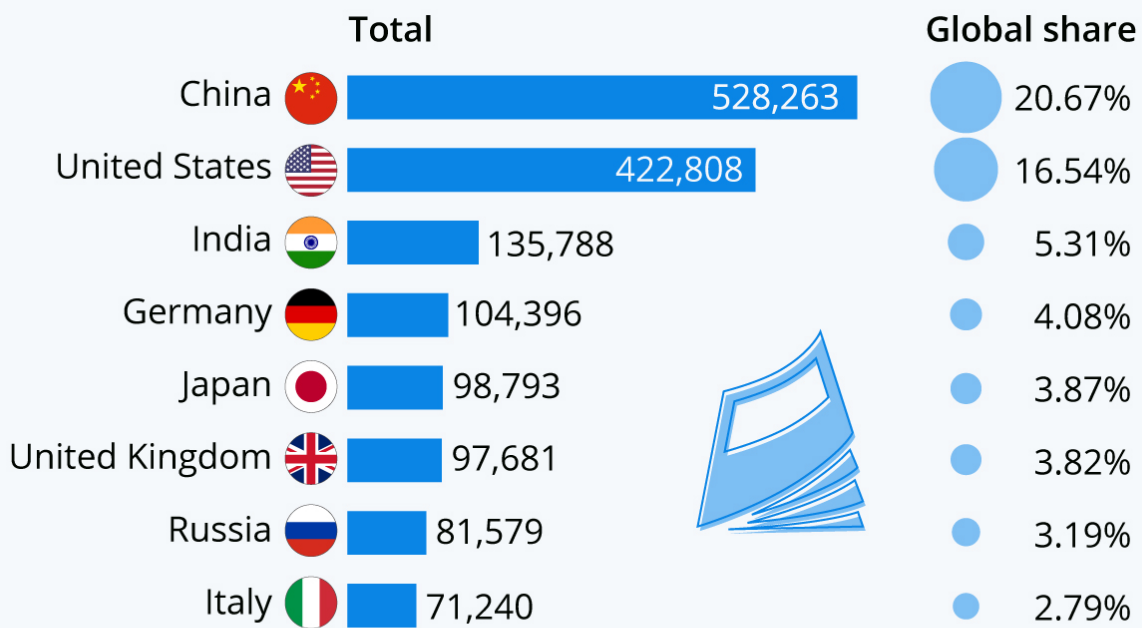
Annex 2



(NCSES, 2020)

The Countries Leading The World In Scientific Publications

Number of science & engineering articles published in peer-reviewed journals in 2018

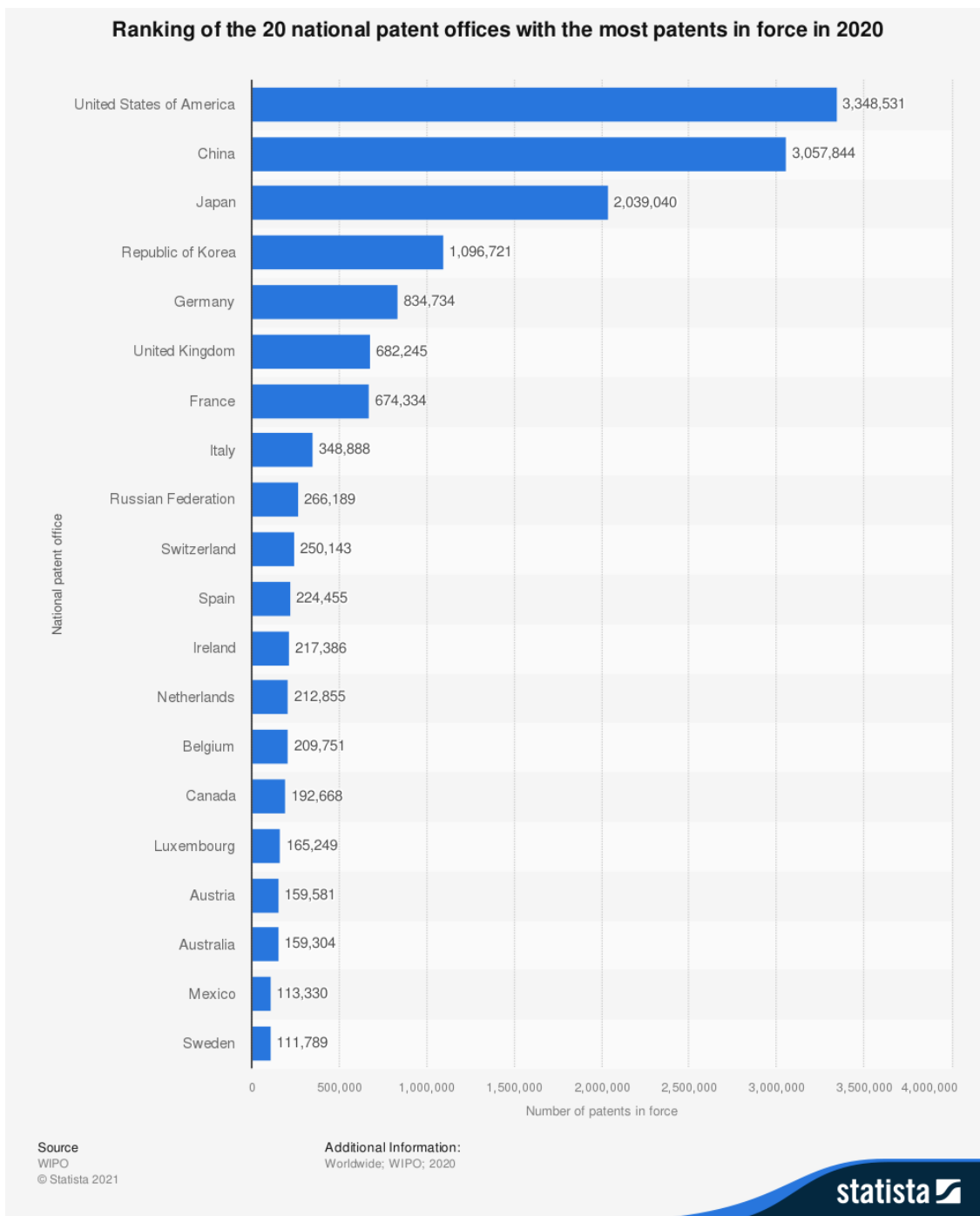


Source: National Science Foundation



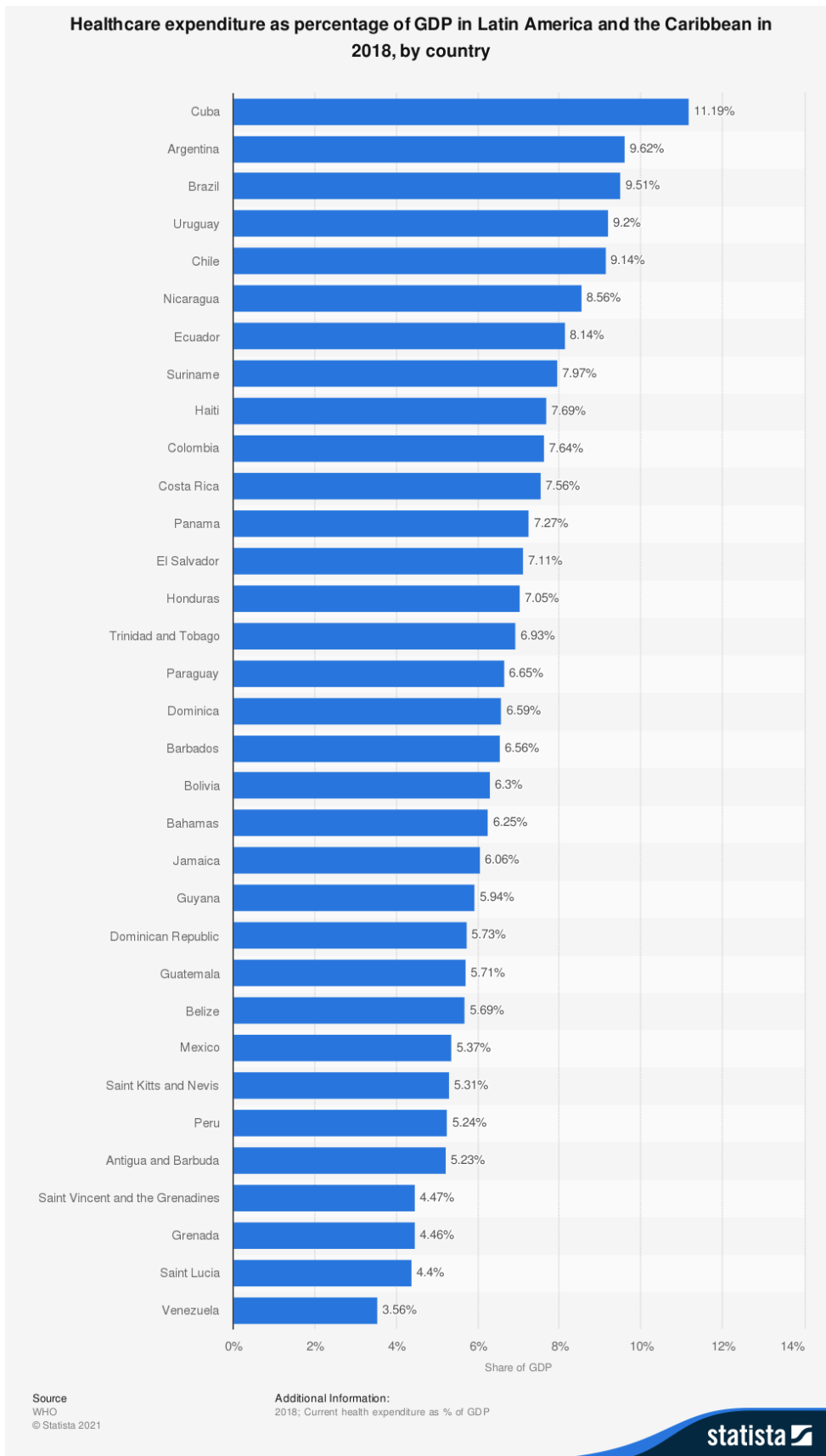
(Statista, The Countries Leading The World In Scientific Publications, 2019)

Annex 4



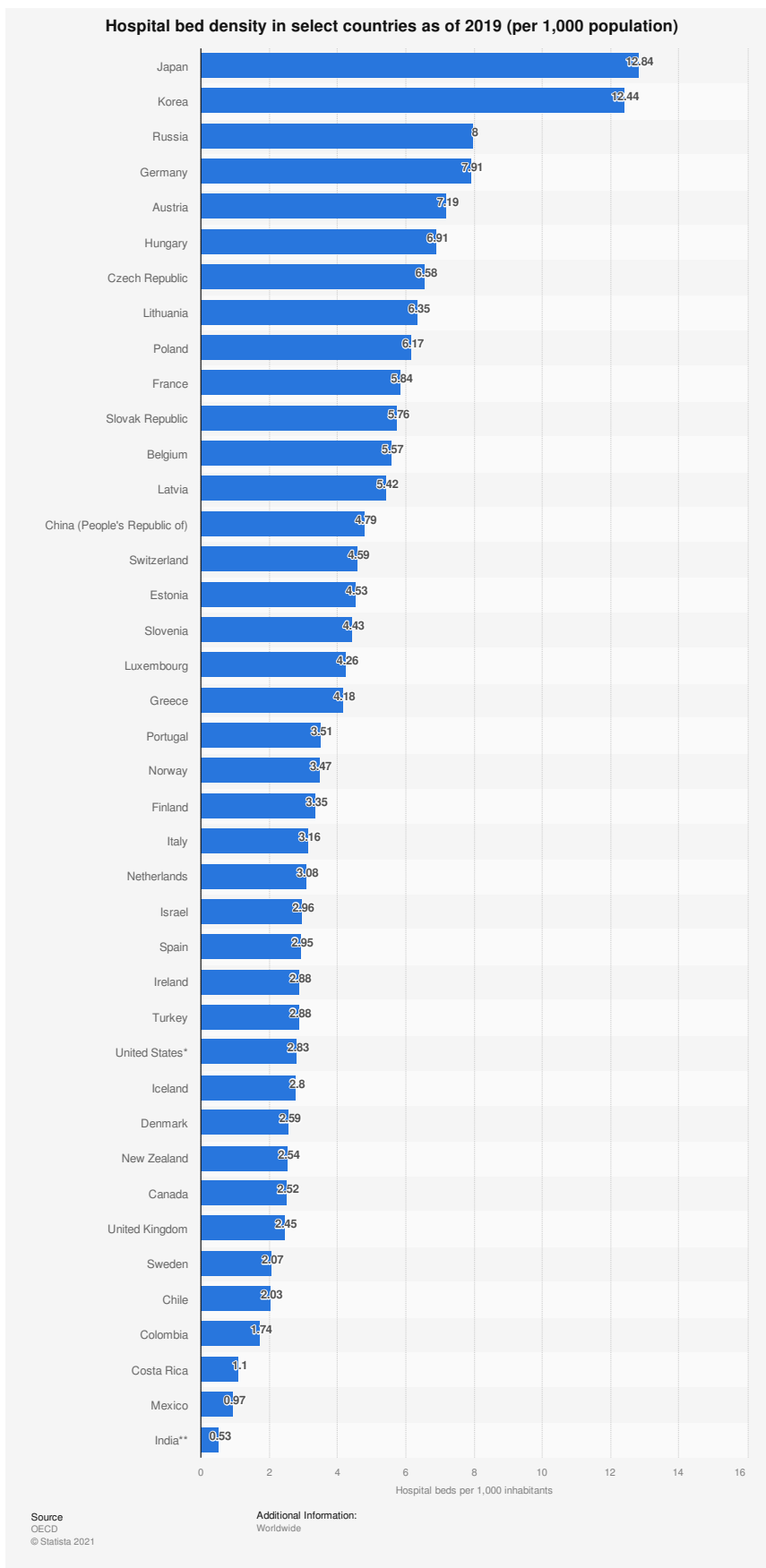
(WIPO, 2021)

Annex 5



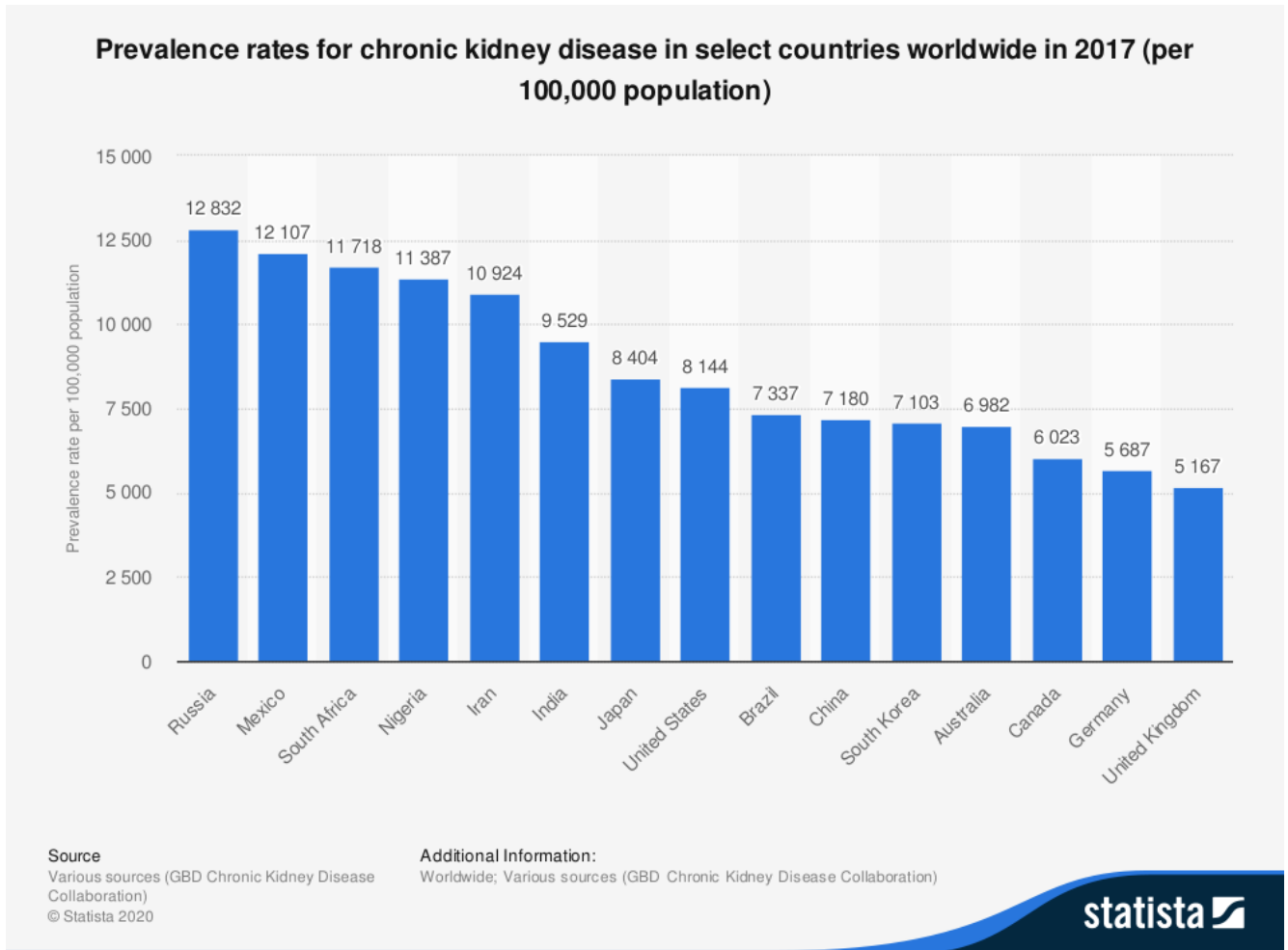
(WHO, 2021)

Annex 6



(OECD, 2021)

Annex 7



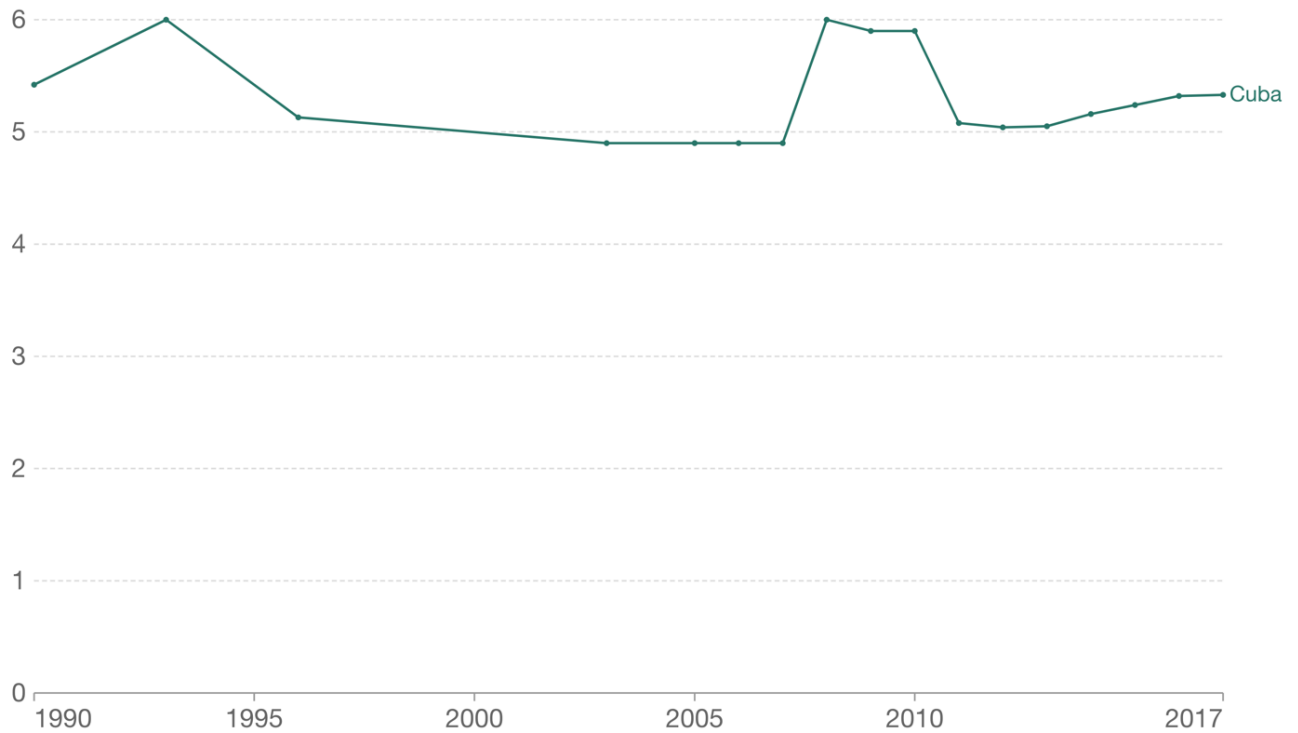
(Elsevier & Lancet, 2020)

Annex 8

Hospital beds per 1,000 people, 1990 to 2017

Hospital beds include inpatient beds available in public, private, general, and specialized hospitals and rehabilitation centers. In most cases beds for both acute and chronic care are included.

Our World
in Data



(World Health Organization, 2021)

Annex 9

AÑOS	Médicos	
	Total	Habitantes por médico
1958	6 286	1 076
1965	6 238	1 252
1970	6 152	1 393
1975	9 328	996
1980	15 247	641
1985	22 910	439
1990	38 690	274
1995	56 836	193
2000	65 997	170
2005	70 594	159
2007	72 416	155
2008	74 552	151
2009	74 880	150
2010	76 506	147
2011	78 622	143
2012	82 065	137
2013	83 698	133
2014	85 563	130
2015	87 982	128
2016	90 161	125
2017	92 084	122
2018	95 487	118
2019	97 202	116

(ONEI, 2020, p. 380)

Annex 10

19.19 - Tasas de mortalidad materna por provincias / Maternal mortality rate per province

CUBA/PROVINCIAS	Por 100 000 nacidos vivos					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cuba	35,1	41,6	41,9	39,1	43,8	37,4
Pinar del Río	15,4	29,8	16,0	-	15,7	-
Artemisa	17,5	34,4	18,1	-	36,0	18,3
La Habana	26,1	45,4	58,0	48,6	65,6	36,5
Mayabeque	-	49,4	54,2	-	25,3	-
Matanzas	13,7	66,8	55,1	55,4	54,7	29,5
Villa Clara	38,3	63,6	27,2	27,3	13,4	-
Cienfuegos	46,9	45,5	23,4	72,7	-	26,7
Sancti Spíritus	19,6	40,1	21,4	21,7	135,2	95,9
Ciego de Ávila	42,5	-	42,9	63,9	82,9	48,7
Camagüey	60,2	56,9	63,7	37,1	64,0	101,3
Las Tunas	47,2	75,5	-	33,8	-	56,9
Holguín	44,9	44,1	46,6	38,4	28,0	19,7
Granma	28,8	9,6	31,3	32,9	33,0	32,5
Santiago de Cuba	57,9	29,5	32,2	57,1	24,8	61,6
Guantánamo	42,9	40,4	103,4	60,5	83,0	35,2
Isla de la Juventud	-	-	-	-	-	-

(ONEI, 2020, p. 404)

Annex 11

19.21 - Tasas de mortalidad Infantil por provincias / Infant mortality rate per province

	Por 1 000 nacidos vivos					
CUBA/PROVINCIAS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cuba	4,2	4,3	4,3	4,0	4,0	5,0
Pinar del Río	3,1	3,4	2,1	2,1	3,0	4,6
Artemisa	6,1	5,8	5,4	3,7	4,0	5,7
La Habana	4,1	4,1	5,0	4,4	4,9	6,1
Mayabeque	4,2	4,4	5,4	5,3	6,3	5,5
Matanzas	5,2	4,5	5,0	5,7	4,1	5,2
Villa Clara	3,2	4,1	3,1	4,6	3,5	4,6
Cienfuegos	3,0	3,9	2,8	4,4	2,7	3,5
Sancti Spíritus	3,5	4,2	3,4	2,0	2,9	3,6
Ciego de Ávila	6,2	5,0	4,3	3,8	4,4	6,1
Camagüey	4,7	4,1	4,3	3,0	2,6	3,9
Las Tunas	4,6	5,0	4,1	4,2	3,8	4,7
Holguín	3,4	3,8	3,8	3,3	3,7	5,0
Granma	4,8	3,8	3,5	4,7	2,7	4,4
Santiago de Cuba	3,8	4,1	4,4	4,0	3,6	4,8
Guantánamo	4,1	5,0	6,2	4,7	7,3	6,2
Isla de la Juventud	3,0	6,0	2,1	4,7	2,1	2,3

(ONEI, 2020, p. 406)

Annex 12

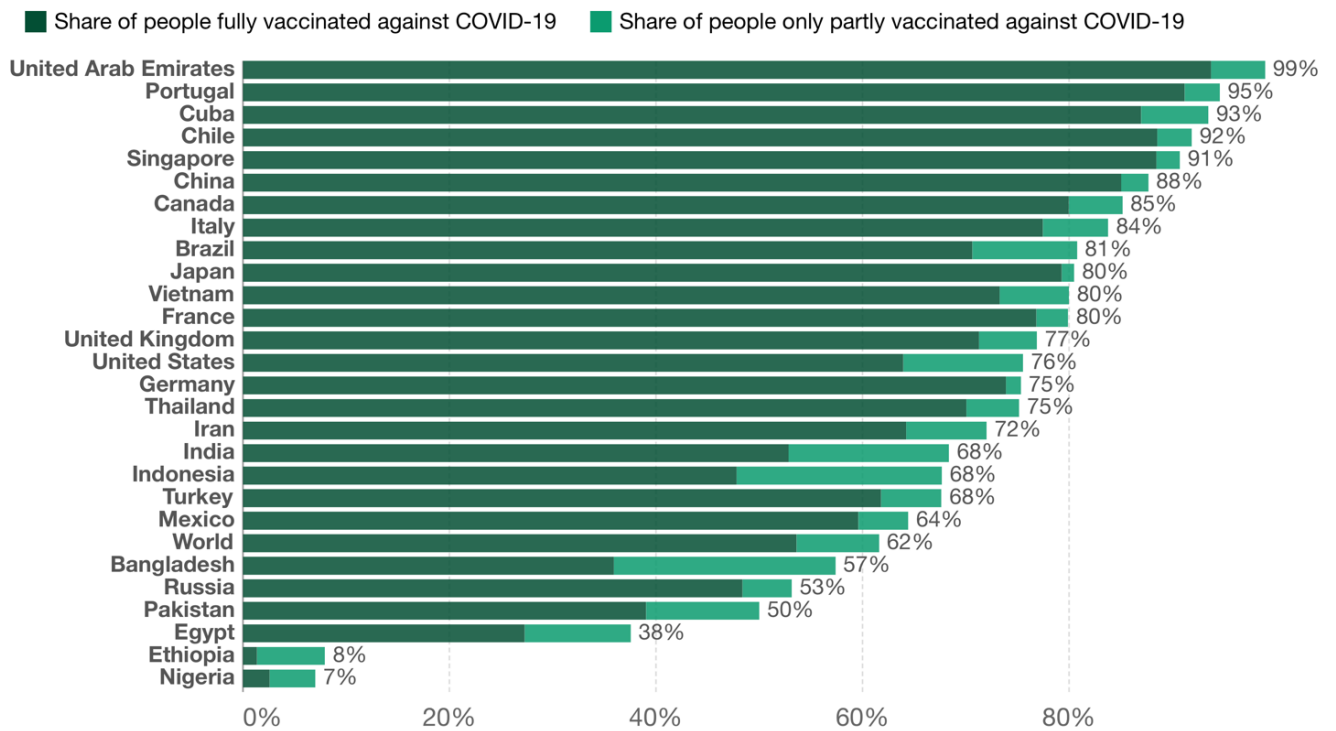
19.14 - Inmunizaciones por tipo de vacunas / Immunization per type of vaccines

TIPOS DE VACUNAS	Unidad					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Antipoliomielítica (OPV)	906 924	857 464	848 247	829 875	834 869	471 869
Total BCG (menores de 1 año)	121 621	123 801	115 600	113 941	115 586	108 765
Triple bacteriana (DPT)	126 550	119 732	120 199	123 869	43 188	559
Duple (DT)	124 626	109 537	136 903	93 704	129 519	92 016
Toxoide tetánico (TT)	1 438 990	1 278 015	1 253 952	1 275 413	1 277 968	982 222
Antitífídica (AT)	622 036	562 292	557 450	399 597	634 495	381 203
Triple viral (PRS) ^(a)	262 653	245 268	277 469	236 593	234 634	208 872
Hepatitis B (HBV)	284 959	592 339	427 976	268 835	316 701	283 900
Haemophilus influenzae (Hib)	127 368	127 520	124 203	123 745	43 516	500
Antimeningocócica (Tipo B)	280 023	271 444	259 318	249 797	248 564	242 318
Pentavalente DPT + HB + Hib	378 972	372 043	364 358	347 563	423 376	452 161

(ONEI, 2020, p. 401)

Annex 13

Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19, Feb 8, 2022



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data

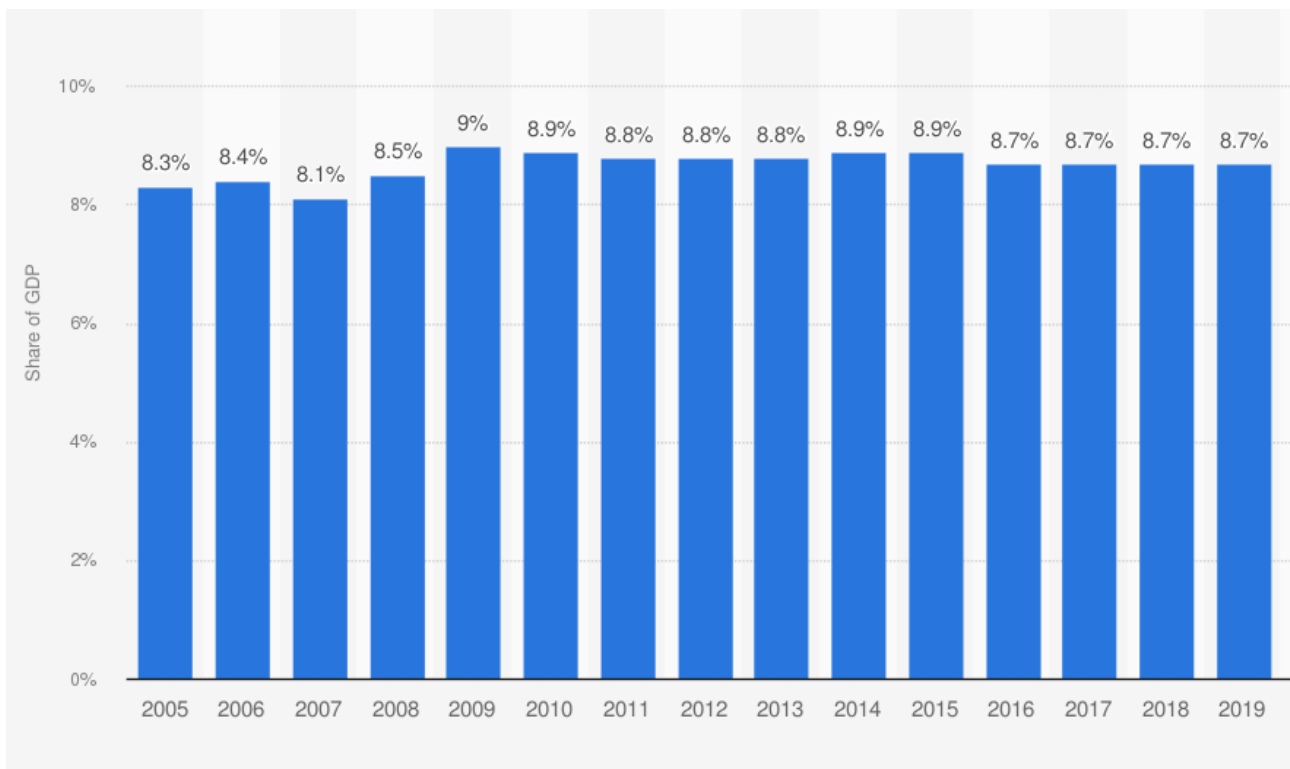
CC BY

Note: Alternative definitions of a full vaccination, e.g. having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and having 1 dose of a 2-dose protocol, are ignored to maximize comparability between countries.

(Our World in Data, 2022)

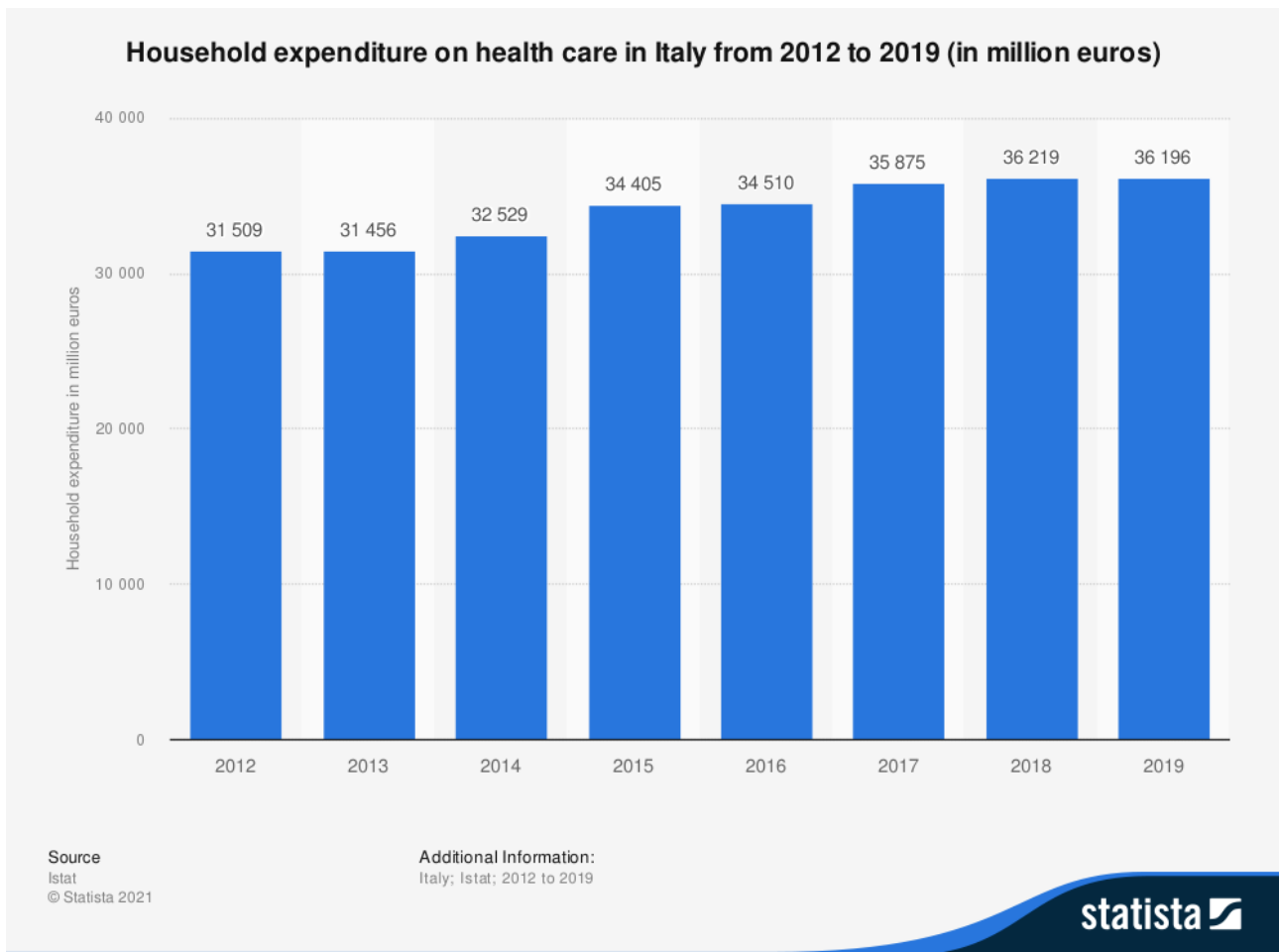
Annex 14

Total health expenditure as share of GDP in Italy from 2005 to 2019



(OECD, 2021)

Annex 15

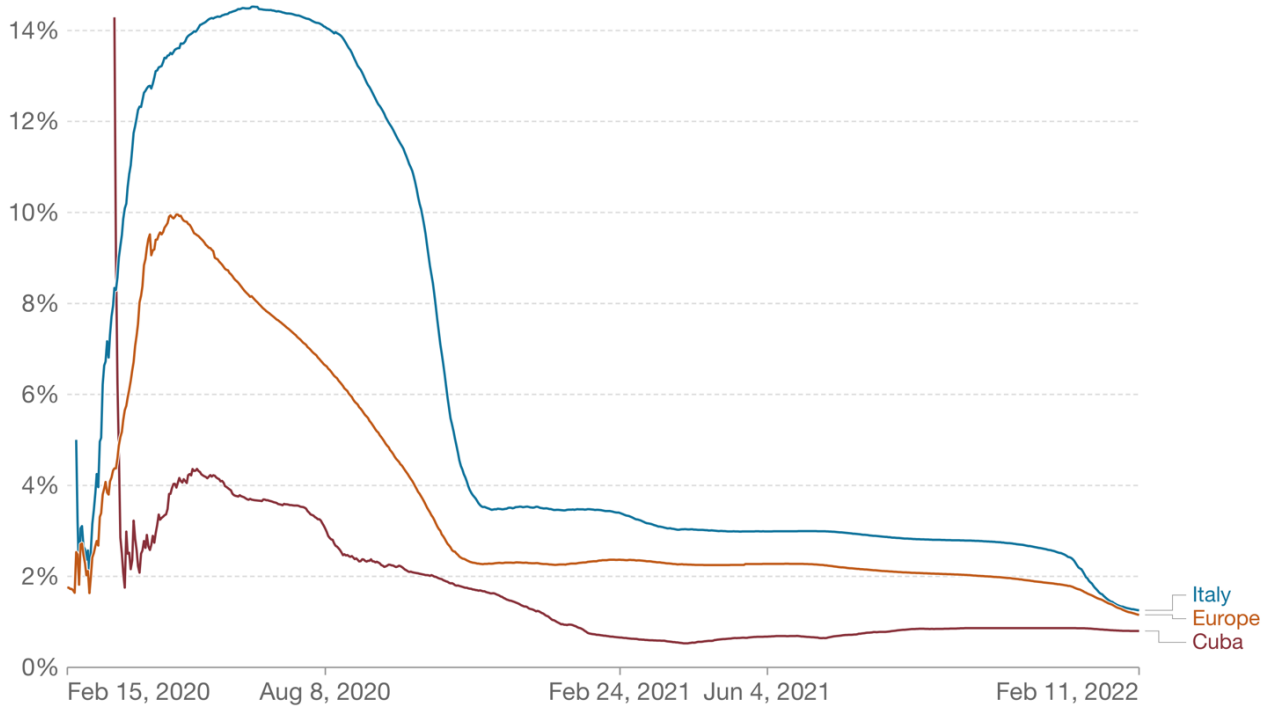


(ISTAT, 2021)

Annex 16

Case fatality rate of COVID-19

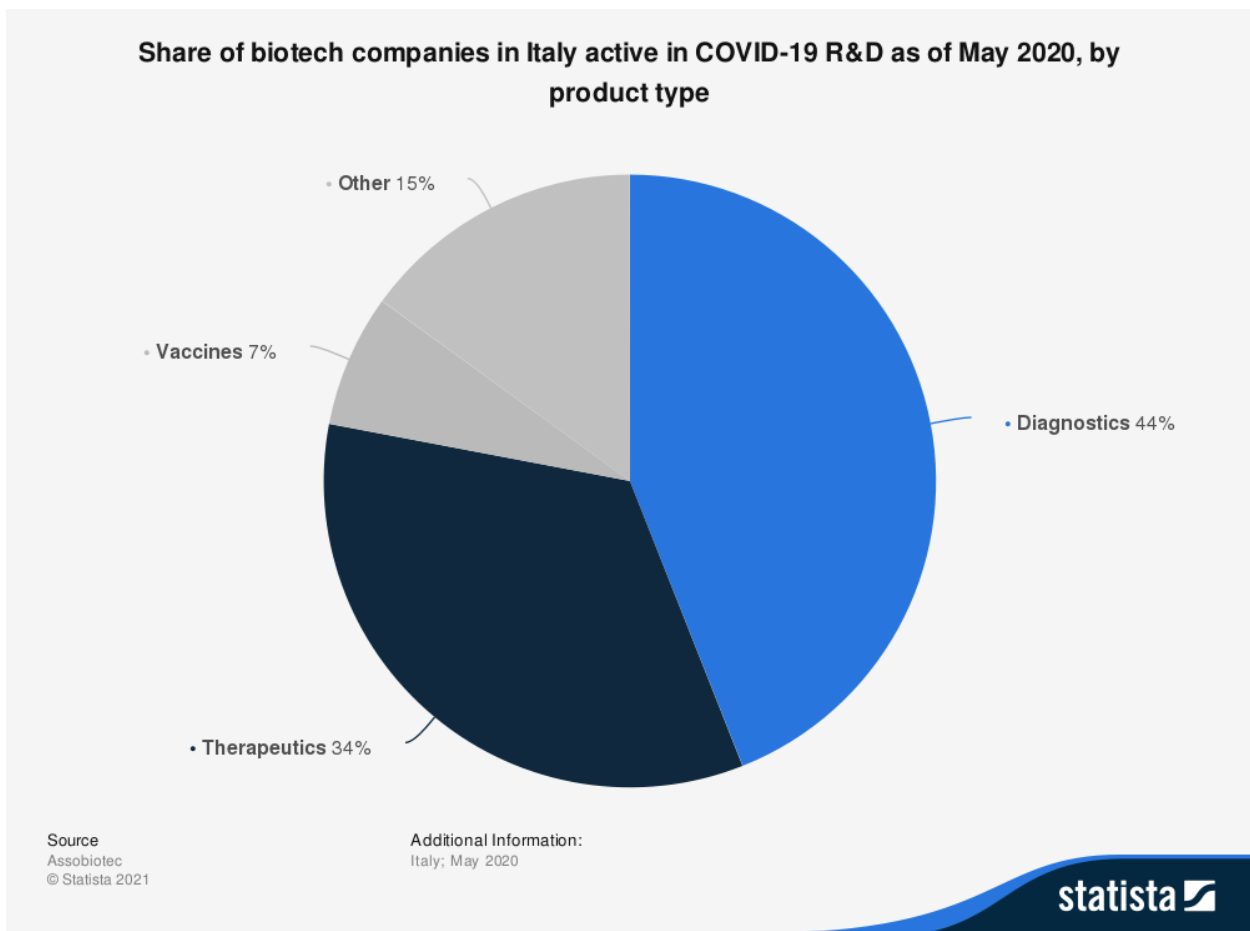
The case fatality rate (CFR) is the ratio between confirmed deaths and confirmed cases. The CFR can be a poor measure of the mortality risk of the disease. We explain this in detail at [OurWorldInData.org/mortality-risk-covid](https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid)



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

CC BY

Annex 17



(Assobiotec, 2020b)

Annex 18: Interview with Cristina Freguja, ISTAT Central Director for Social Statistics and Welfare.

Prior to the pandemic, how was the social situation in Italy?

"At the threshold of the health emergency, in our country strong inequalities in well-being conditions persist, linked not only to the area in which one resides, but also to the level of education, gender and generation to which one belongs. The disadvantages of women with respect to the labor market and the quality of employment are still considerable. Youth employment is stagnant, and Italy ranks last in Europe in terms of the employment rate of young people between the ages of 25 and 34, with strong gender differences and with the South of the country concentrating the worst values of this indicator.

Despite the improvements achieved in the last decade, it is still not possible to offer all young people the same opportunities for an adequate education. The level of education and skills that young people manage to achieve still depends largely on the social background and socio-economic context in which they live; in 2019, 18.2 percent of young people between 18 and 24 years of age have not obtained a secondary school diploma and are not attending courses of study or training.

Education is the main element on which to build participation in the labor market and in the social and cultural life of a nation and, in our country, the gender differential in the share of young graduates is largely in favor of women: one young man in three has a degree, while only one young woman in five has one, an advantage higher than the European average. Nevertheless, the level reached by young residents in Italy is still far from that of their counterparts in Europe and is not reflected in the employment results, placing us in second-to-last place in the European ranking in terms of employment rate, just above Greece. There is also still a strong female disadvantage in technical-scientific degrees, the so-called STEM degrees (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), which generally stand out for their greater employability. In 2019, 37.3 percent of men graduates have a STEM degree compared to 16.2 percent of women graduates. Explaining women's disadvantage in the labor market is above all the strong commitment to care activities and the difficulties in reconciling work and life times. A few numbers are enough to prove it: in 2019, even before the crisis hit us, the employment rate of childless women between the ages of 25 and 49 was 71.9 percent. This value dropped to 53.4 percent in the presence of a child of pre-school age and reached 34.1 percent among women in the South.

This situation is combined with increased economic vulnerability of households. Although the 2019 data showed a reduction in absolute poverty (6.4 percent of households and 7.7 percent of individuals, against 7.0 percent and 8.4 percent respectively in the previous year), we are still far from the incidence of the phenomenon that was recorded at the beginning of the economic crisis: in 2007, only 3.5 percent of households and 3.1 percent of individuals were in absolute poverty. The phenomenon is much more widespread among minors, with an incidence of 11.4 percent compared with 4.8 percent among the elderly.

Over time, Italy remains one of the most long-lived countries in the international context. Compared to the most recent Eurostat data on life expectancy at birth, in 2019, our country is confirmed in second place among the 27 EU countries, with 83.6 years, after Spain (with a value of 84 years) and with an expected life expectancy advantage of +2.3 years compared to the EU27 average (equal to 81.3 years).

Since 2014, a reduction has been observed in the proportion of elderly with severe limitations or in conditions of multiconicity (they were about 54 percent in 2013) due to the general improvement in the health conditions of the population, but levels among the elderly population still remain high. This reduction was observed to a greater extent among women (-5.8 percentage points) than among men (-3.2 percentage points).

The proportion of elderly people in poor health is lower among those with at least a high school diploma (35.5 percent among men and 45.7 percent among women), while it increases among those with at most an elementary school diploma (44 percent among men and 59.5 percent among women). Particular attention should also be paid to the problem of demographic aging due both to the increase in life expectancy and the drop in births. In Italy, the average number of children per woman has continued to decrease since the generations of the first decades of the last century, leading to a steady decline in the number of births. In addition, the current natural dynamic is largely the result of the demographic structure. The large baby-boom generations have, in fact, exited the reproductive interval and are entering third age. This means that the birth rate is not only falling due to a tendency to have fewer children and to postpone the reproductive calendar, but above all due to the effect of the reduction in the contingent of women of childbearing age (15-49 years).

Faced with a steadily decreasing fertility rate, which is accompanied by a higher propensity to have children in regions with greater socio-economic development, the ideal fertility model shows, however, a significant gap between what is desired and what can actually be achieved. In fact, with

no particular differences at territorial level, 46.0 percent of Italians would like to have two children and 21.9 percent would like three or more. Only 5.5 percent would like to have one, testifying to the existence of a social and economic context that hinders the realization of reproductive projects of the generations of childbearing age, distinguished by the scarcity of resources invested in favor of minors and the insufficiency of policies for reconciling work and family.

The age structure of our country's population, which increasingly resembles an inverted pyramid, is even more worrying when looking at the condition of the younger generations. An increasing number of inactive people and people with limited personal autonomy, in the face of a progressive reduction of people of active age, can only push up the levels of public spending in health, welfare and assistance, with negative repercussions on the resources destined to families with children and on the already low intergenerational social mobility that characterizes our country."

What has been the impact of the pandemic on social indicators?

"On the employment front, we see that in March 2020, despite the COVID-19 emergency was already underway, employment had held up substantially, thanks in part to the decrees for the defense of labor and incomes. Already in April, however, the effect of the emergency on the labor market was decidedly more pronounced: employment recorded a decrease of almost 300 thousand units, leading in two months to an overall drop of 400 thousand employed. Not even in the worst moments of the previous economic crisis had such dramatic dynamics been recorded, which, among other things, proved worse for women, with a greater drop in employment and a higher increase in inactivity. The female inactivity rate in April alone rose by 2.3 percentage points compared with the previous month, while for men the increase was 1.6 points. On the contrary, during the economic crisis from which we were emerging when the health emergency hit, the drop in employment had affected men more decisively because sectors such as industry and construction had been hit hardest. Women, who are traditionally more involved in services, had also lost employment, but to a lesser extent. The employment crisis linked to the pandemic, on the other hand, is very different: among the sectors most affected are precisely those where women most often work: hotels, catering and tourism. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that women are more often employed in precarious jobs and, during the pandemic, those who had fixed-term employment lost their jobs when their contracts expired. It must be said, however, that even with the same sector of activity or type of contract, women's employment still showed more marked decreases than men's, indicating how women hold more vulnerable positions in times of crisis. In summary, the workers most at risk are the many self-

employed workers compared to salaried workers (at least those on permanent contracts) and, among salaried workers, more those in the private sector than in the public sector, to which must be added those who work only in the informal economy.

Thus, it was a difficult phase in the labor market that lasted for many months. Only in December 2021, compared to the pre-pandemic period (February 2020), the employment rate returned to the same level (59.0 percent) while the unemployment rate, at 9.0 percent, was still 0.6 points lower, and the inactivity rate rose from 34.6 percent to 35.1 percent. With particular regard to the unemployment rate, it is interesting to note that, in the worst months of the pandemic crisis, there was a drop in this indicator of several percentage points (from January to April 2020 it went from 9.4 percent to 6.3 percent).

To be classified as unemployed or seeking employment, in fact, an individual must have taken at least one active job search action in the past four weeks and be available for work (or self-employment) within the next two weeks. During the lockdown phases, many of those who would have looked for work did not do so because of the difficulty of performing search actions, discouraged by the general situation or by problems related to caring for children, home from school, and the elderly. It should also be noted that, in contrast, in the other countries of the EU, the monthly unemployment rate in the hardest months of the pandemic showed higher values everywhere.

In fact, it should be pointed out that the indicator is not perfectly comparable at the European level. Monthly unemployment estimates are produced by the various countries on the basis of a gentlemen's agreement and a certain flexibility is allowed in the choice of method for producing the monthly estimates. While in Italy the estimate is provided on the basis of the results of the sample survey on the labor force, and thus always and only on the basis of statements made by the individuals interviewed, in the other countries data from administrative sources are also used. Thus, for example, receipt of unemployment benefits or administrative signals of the same type cause the individual to be classified among the unemployed even in the absence of search actions.

After the improvement in 2019, in the year of the pandemic, absolute poverty increases, reaching the highest level since 2005 (year of the beginning of the historical series). In 2020, just over two million households (7.7 percent of the total from 6.4 percent in 2019) and over 5.6 million individuals (9.4 percent from 7.7 percent) are in absolute poverty.

The value of absolute poverty intensity-which measures in percentage terms how much the monthly spending of poor households is on average below the poverty line (i.e., "how poor are the poor")-records a reduction (from 20.3 percent to 18.7 percent) in all geographic breakdowns. This dynamic is also the result of the measures put in place to support citizens (citizenship income, emergency income, extension of the Wage Guarantee Fund, etc.) that have enabled families in economic difficulty - both those that slipped below the poverty line in 2020 and those that were already poor - to maintain consumer spending not far from the poverty line. The incidence of households in absolute poverty remains highest in the South (9.4 percent, up from 8.6 percent), but the largest growth is in the North where household poverty rises to 7.6 percent from 5.8 percent in 2019.

In 2020, absolute poverty in Italy affects 1 million 337 thousand minors (13.5 percent, compared to 9.4 percent of individuals nationwide). The incidence varies from 9.5 percent in the Centre to 14.5 percent in the South. Compared to 2019, the conditions of minors worsen at the national level (from 11.4 percent to 13.5 percent) and in particular in the North (from 10.7 percent to 14.4 percent) and in the Center (from 7.2 percent to 9.5 percent).

Particularly affected by the crisis linked to the spread of COVID-19 are families with at least one foreigner; in this case, the incidence of absolute poverty is 25.3 percent (22.0 percent in 2019) and rises to 26.7 percent for families composed exclusively of foreigners (24.4 percent in 2019), compared with 6.0 percent for families of only Italians (from 4.9 percent in 2019).

Data on absolute poverty for 2021 will be released shortly, but the recent trend in inflation, with the greater impact it appears to have on the poorest households, raises suspicions that the economic recovery will only partially positively impact poverty indicators.

After years of very low inflation, the strong acceleration we are facing is due, first and foremost, to the rapid reopening of economic activity. Citizens are using up some of the money they had been unable to spend during the lockdown, and when an economy grows at current rates, businesses are struggling to keep up with the rapid increase in demand, having to rebuild supply chains that were hard hit by the pandemic. In this type of environment, businesses are more likely to be able to raise prices without losing customers.

It should be added that the marked rise in general inflation, which has been positive again since the beginning of 2021, has been determined almost entirely by the dynamics of the prices of goods and,

in particular, by that of energy goods. The prices of services have also risen, but to a much lesser extent than those of goods, and since it is mainly goods that have a greater impact on the spending of less affluent households (conversely, services have a greater impact on the budgets of more affluent households), the rise in inflation is higher for poorer households. Finally, it should be considered that the inflationary impact is relatively greater for households with lower levels of spending, partly because these households are accustomed to allocating a greater share of their budget (12.8 percent) to the purchase of energy products than households with higher levels of consumer spending (6.0 percent).

This issue is at the center of attention of the European Central Bank - which has stated that monetary policy must remain flexible and open to all options in order to ensure that inflation stabilizes on the 2 percent target in the medium term - but also of national governments that will have to intervene with measures to support businesses and families in order to prevent inflation from holding back the recovery."

Summary

The difficulties that world development has been presenting have led it to be catalogued as a global problem. World development is distinguished by enormous contradictions and conflicts at the planetary level and by disproportions, imbalances and inequalities at both regional and international levels; if these world development trends continue, the world might be led to a catastrophe of global scope and origin, and this could affect the survival of human beings and of the planet itself.

The Coronavirus pandemic (Covid - 19) is occurring in a world scenario characterized by huge problems. In such case, that is the current defining global health problem, and it is the world's biggest challenge since World War II. The pandemic, however, is more than simply a health problem; it is also tied to a global socioeconomic and political crisis.

In isolation and on the surface, the pandemic could be classified as a worldwide crisis in the sense of a health disaster. This is the perspective that dominates the literature from many fields of knowledge; a positivist approach focused on the manifestations of the pandemic and the consequences it has had on national economies prevails. The objective circumstances in which it happens, as well as the true sources of the problems that it exacerbates, are not considered.

However, it is a much more complex phenomenon. If the pandemic is analyzed with a holistic, systemic approach, it is possible to understand its link to a global socio-economic and political crisis. In this sense, it is essential to investigate the dialectical relationship between the pandemic and world development problems in order to understand the urgent need to build viable alternative development strategies.

Based on the above, the following scientific problem emerges: what are the elements that determine the dialectic relationship between the pandemic and world development as a global problem?

In order to answer this question, the general objective of the thesis is defined as follows: to address the relationship between the pandemic and world development as a global problem, considering theoretical positions and practical reactions. In addition, the following specific objectives were determined: to systematize the main ideas regarding the relationship between the pandemic and the development of the nations; to characterize the global context in which the pandemic - world development relationship takes place; to compare the pandemic - development relationship in selected countries: Cuba and Italy.

With respect to the methodology, this thesis is presented via analysis and synthesis, after processing the selected bibliography and synthesizing those concepts that reflect the key views at world level about the pandemic and its connection with the global crisis scenario. In this regard, were used bibliography from official sources and scientific publications of internationally renowned.

By means of the logical and historical analysis, the general elements that determine the international context marked by world development problems, in which the Covid - 19 pandemic is taking place, are presented. Analysing from the general to the particular, leads to the identification of those essential aspects that distinguish the interrelation between the pandemic and the problems of world development, as well as their concrete expression in a selected region.

To fulfill the overall objective, this thesis is structured in the following way: in the first chapter "Covid-19 pandemic and world development as global problems", general aspects of world development problems are presented; the official views of international and regional institutions in relation to the pandemic and the crisis are summarized, as well as opinions of some academics with critical positions. In the second chapter "World development crisis and Covid - 19 pandemic" are presented data that quantify the Pandemic - World development relationship as a global problem; finally, in the third chapter "Responses to the pandemic in selected countries: Cuba and Italy", a comparative analysis between these two countries is carried out using a number of selected variables.

Disease and death are the direct and most visible effects of this pandemic. However, it also has an impact on the process of expanded capital accumulation, with notable repercussions at the material and social levels.

The current world crisis has given rise to pronouncements aimed at alleviating the existing situation, from international and regional organizations and institutions. For the purposes of this thesis, the approaches of the following institutions have been considered: World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the European Union (EU).

However, their approaches are generally focused on the health crisis and possible solutions to it. Behind this lies a short-term vision based on analyses carried out using a positivist method that overlooks the structural problems existing in the different regions of the planet and within societies, both developed and underdeveloped; therefore, they also overlook the existence of problems linked to world development as an expression of contradictions inherent in the very logic of capitalist

accumulation. However, there are critical and isolated voices that relate the pandemic to an already existing crisis or at least to certain pre-existing social gaps; they focus their analysis on the essence of the capitalist system and its contradictory character, or on the neoliberal development model and its weaknesses.

The notion of global problem proposed by Silvio Baró is used as a starting point for this research investigation. According to this author, a global problem are those phenomena or processes that pose significant threats to human existence and the preservation of the planet itself.

Global problems have been a feature of the world since the late 20th century. Since the 1970s and 1980s, their multidimensional character has been recognized, covering worldwide environmental, economic, social, political-military, legal-institutional, educational and cultural, scientific-technical, and ethical issues. Global problems have been analyzed using a variety of criteria, ranging from the most superficial, which categorize them as catastrophes, to those that view them as contradictions or conflicts that arise in specific spheres of human activity, to those that perceive them as imbalances and disproportions

Since the 1990s, world development has been considered a global problem because economic difficulties have reached an enormous level in terms of depth, geographical scope and multidimensionality; this happens in a context of globalization where there is a strong interdependence among nations. Development problems, previously identified only with underdeveloped countries, began to have significant and concrete expressions in the developed pole.

In particular, world development process is a global problem because there are complex situations that can be summarized as it follows: imbalance in the distribution of world wealth; imbalance in world power and in decision-making; contradiction between capitalist rationality and the planet rationality; contradiction between scientific-technical potentialities and the level of solutions to humanity's problems; contradiction between human resources and marginalized areas of the planet; threats to human survival because of an high level of environmental contamination and an irrational use of natural resources.

World economy is experiencing a period of great uncertainty. This is not only due to the serious global economic problems occurring at the world level, but also to the multifaceted consequences that these problems generate; in this regard, the social impacts are the most visible ones, among which the persistence of poverty and social polarization stand out. This makes world development itself one

of the most important global problems facing mankind today.

In this sense, this thesis analyzes some significant variables in relation to world development: technological development and monopolization of knowledge, financialization of economic activity, unemployment, poverty, food security, health.

In this context - marked by the deepening of socio-economic gaps as an expression of the existing crisis occurring at the international level - the pandemic appears. It constitutes a global problem in itself, but by interacting with each of the problems of development, it creates an unfavorable scenario for world development; this in turn fosters a favorable scenario for the spread of Covid – 19.

The analysis of the main socioeconomic indicators in the pre-pandemic period and during the pandemic supports the position assumed in this thesis: Covid -19 arises in an international context marked by a structural, multidimensional crisis. To conduct this investigation, two important dimensions of the international development process are analyzed: the economic and the social one. This is carried out on the basis of the following variables: world trade and global growth, monopolization of knowledge, financing for development and global debt, unemployment, inequality and poverty, food security, and health.

Before the pandemic, world trade was already in deep crisis. In this regard, in late 2019, an OECD report noted long-term growth was undermined by trade and investment weakness: global GDP growth rate in 2019 was 2.6 percent, the lowest since the 2008-2009 financial crisis. COVID-19's fast spreading and government responses have had major economic effects throughout the world. The volume of international merchandise trade decreased -5.1 percent in 2020, very close to the -4.0 percent reduction in world GDP occurred during the same year. The impact of the pandemic on the sectoral composition of international trade in goods has been differentiated, according to the specific characteristics of each subsector. The most affected goods in terms of volume were manufactures (-6.3 percent), followed by fuels and mining products (-3.1 percent), and agricultural products (-2.3 percent). The reduction in manufacturing trade had a strong impact on total merchandise trade, considering that the former represents 71 percent of the latter.

Although the pandemic was a catalyst for digital commerce, it must be understood in a growing process marked by the monopolization of knowledge for the purpose of capital accumulation. It is remarkable the existing international gap in terms of investment in R&D, export of high-tech

products, scientific publications in high impact journals, and number of patents, among others. The leading players in these sectors are China, the United States, Japan, the European region (in particular Germany), and transnational corporations.

Financing for development and the global debt problem are issues that are increasingly emerging in the context of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic raised global debt levels, both in advanced economies and Emerging Market and Developing Economies (EMDEs). It is important to underline that, although the debt problem increased in this period, it was already a major concern of the underdeveloped world before Covid – 19 outbreak. Prior to the pandemic, financing for development problems had not been solved, and in this context it is unlikely that this will be achieved; however, the World Bank continues to focus its policies on this issue.

Unemployment is of a structural nature. Prior to the pandemic, in 2018, in the world there were approximately 172 million unemployed people, equivalent to a 5.0 percent unemployment rate. Worldwide, the labor force participation rate fell by over 2 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 and is only partly expected to recover by 2023, to 59.4 percent; however, the latter figure is more than one point lower than 60.5 percent, associated with 2019.

There is an interrelation between the pandemic and global inequality. Socioeconomic inequalities created favorable conditions for the intensification and propagation of the effects of the pandemic, with the poor population being the most vulnerable. At the same time, the economic effects of the pandemic contribute directly to the deepening of poverty and social polarization.

Prior to the pandemic, global inequality was already a cause for concern, as reflected in numerous publications by internationally recognized institutions and personalities, including ECLAC, Oxfam, Joseph Stiglitz and Thomas Piketty. In 2020, the 10 percent of the population with the highest income received 38 times that of the poorest 50 percent. Global inequality was reflected in a Gini index of 0.67, 32 percent of which is based on inequality between countries. As reported by Oxfam, during the pandemic the ten richest men in the world have doubled their fortunes while, according to estimates, more than 160 million people have fallen into poverty and the income of 99 percent of humanity has reportedly deteriorated. Meanwhile, some 17 million people have died from this disease. This is an unprecedented number of deaths since World War II.

To the problems presented so far it is necessary to add that of food security. Its most visible representations are malnutrition and undernourishment, the latter expressed both in overweight and

obesity. These are comorbidities that contribute to a favorable scenario for greater transmissibility and lethality of the new coronavirus. Prior to the pandemic, the number of hungry people has increased since 2015: more than 650.3 million people in the world were hungry in 2019. Since the pandemic outbreak, the food issue has been the focus analysis of many international institutions; it is estimated that 720 to 811 million people went hungry in 2020. Hunger currently affects 21 percent of the population in Africa, 9 percent in Asia, and 9.1 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The continent with the greatest number of hungry people is currently Asia (418 million), but this social problem is growing very rapidly in Africa, where there are 282 million hungry people. In relation to 2019, there are 46 million more hungry people in Africa, 57 in Asia, and 14 in Latin America and the Caribbean. In connection with the above, it should be considered that the FAO Food Price Index (FPI) recorded in 2021 a growth of 28.1 percent compared to 2020, the highest in the last ten years. While this is happening, the big transnational food traders increased their revenues. Walmart is the leading company in this sector and has maintained a strong trend of revenue growth since 2016 with a large increase between 2020 and 2021.

As regards health, before the pandemic, there was a notable gap at the international level, which is expressed in asymmetric behaviors in relation to various indicators, such as: percentage of GDP allocated to health, life expectancy, number of physicians per capita, density of hospital beds, rates of intensive care beds, etc. All this shows the fragility of the health systems to cope with the pandemic.

The analysis of statistical information published by official sources shows that the international scenario in which the COVID-19 pandemic took place was previously characterized by global problems; therefore, there were favorable conditions for its contagiousness and lethality. The number of people infected and deceased by COVID-19 reveals that there is no direct relationship between the level of development of the countries and the results of their response to the pandemic.

Moving from the general to the particular, after analyzing the overall aspects of the pandemic - world development relationship, this thesis focuses on a comparison between two countries: Cuba and Italy. For this purpose, elements that characterize the socioeconomic situation of each country prior to the pandemic, its impact and the way in which it has been managed are considered.

The comparative analysis between Cuba and Italy shows two very different realities in terms of the development-pandemic relationship. It reveals that the levels of development of the countries, although they may constitute a good material basis for confronting the pandemic, have not been enough. The decisive factor was the way it was managed.

Cuba is a small country, blockaded for 60 years. At current prices, the accumulated damages during almost six decades of application of this policy amount to 144 billion 413.4 million USD. Taking into account the depreciation of the dollar against the value of gold on the international market, the blockade has caused quantifiable damages of more than 1 trillion 98 billion USD.

Although with economic problems, it has social indicators at first world level. In 2019, Cuba continued to enjoy considerable health care achievements accomplished during the Revolutionary period. This has been supported by a percentage of GDP invested in health among the highest in the world, which exceeds 10 percent of national GDP. Life expectancy at birth was 78.8 years and there was a growing trend in the number of medical staff, health care units, beds in health care units and number of inhabitants per physician. Also, it is worth mentioning the very low maternal and infant mortality rate and the high number of vaccines administered to the population.

One of the most important achievements related to health in Cuba is the development of the biopharmaceutical industry, which has played a leading role in the fight against Covid - 19.

With limited resources, BioCubaFarma's firms developed five vaccine candidates against Covid-19, three of which - Soberana 02, SoberanaPlus, and Abdala - have already been registered as vaccines and have allowed 87.9 percent of the population to be immunized with a complete scheme.

With a 0.8 percent fatality rate associated with COVID-19, Cuba has the lowest indicator of this type in the Americas. All of this was achieved in a in a situation marked by blockade tightening: 55 of the 243 measures taken against Cuba in the past five years were imposed in 2020, during the most severe peak of the pandemic in this country, and none of them were lifted by the present Joe Biden administration, despite the fact that it was one of his campaign promises.

Its greatest strength in the context of COVID-19 has been the centralized management of the pandemic, coordinated by the main authorities of the country, with the participation of scientists from various fields of knowledge and the people in general. Behind this lies a socioeconomic model that has placed man at the center of its development process and science at the heart of this approach.

Out of its own decision and in response to the United Nations Secretary General's call, Cuba has made all of its national experience available to the international community. Also, thousands of medical professionals, organized in 57 brigades of the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster and Severe Epidemic Situations, have helped 40 nations – including Italy - to provide adequate health care to their citizens in the midst of the pandemic.

Italy is a developed country, however, the pandemic behavior has shown the fragilities of a model in which wealth creation prevails over the human being. The decentralization of decision making, the regional heterogeneity, and the lack of an updated plan are distinctive elements of the Italian management and, therefore, of the impact of the pandemic in this country.

The health emergency occurred at a time when Italy's economy was experiencing prolonged slow growth. In 2019, GDP increased by just 0.3 percent, failing to recover from the collapse occurred due to the financial crisis, and remaining 0.1 percent lower than in 2011.

The health emergency resulted from a wide-ranging pandemic event, but it took place in a context in which the Italian health system was suffering from structural deficiencies and shortcomings due to its reorganization, which has been underway for about 30 years, and whose distinctive features are privatization, cutting of funds, and opening of the public sector to the private one.

Only in the period 2010-2019, cuts and defunding have subtracted approximately € 37 billion from the National Health System (SSN), while the National Health Requirement (FSN) has increased by only € 8.8 billion, growing at a rate of 0.9 percent per year on average, well below the 1.07 percent annual inflation rate. The increase in the FSN over the last decade has therefore not even been sufficient to maintain purchasing power

During the period 2012-2018, the workforce in the health sector decreased by 25,808 (-3.8 percent). Physicians fell from 109 thousand to 106 thousand (-2.3 percent), nursing staff from 272 thousand to 268 thousand (-1.6 percent).

In terms of hospital supply, in 1995, there were 356 thousand hospital beds, or 6.3 per 1,000 population. From 2010 to 2018, the number of beds decreased by an average of 1.8 percent per year, following a tendency that began in the mid-1990s; it declined from 244,000 beds in 2010 to 211,000 in 2018; in the latter year, the allocation stood at 3.14 beds per 1,000 inhabitants. In this regard, it should be noted that Italians' spending on health care increased over time, while the number of public hospitals in this country declined considerably. Moreover, the number of intensive care units (ICU) in Italy significantly diminished since 2012: the number of ICUs per 100,000 population stood at 12.5 in 2012 and decreased to 8.58 as of February 2020.

As for the biotechnology sector, there were 696 companies active in this field in Italy at the end of 2019. Total biotech turnover exceeded €12 billion with an average annual increase between 2014 and 2018 of about 5 percent. Despite the great development of the sector, currently no vaccine created by

the Italian biotech industry has been approved. This has not prevented Italy from achieving very good levels of immunized population, with an 84 percent of people vaccinated against Covid – 19 through imported vaccines, as of February 8, 2022.

When Covid-19 reached Italy, this country lacked an updated pandemic plan. Following the reform of the International Health Regulations, Italy had revised the 2002 “Italian multiphase pandemic influenza plan” and in 2006, in accordance with WHO requests, it issued as a replacement the “National Plan for Preparedness and Response to an Influenza Pandemic” (Ministero della Salute, 2006). The Plan is outdated and does not take into account what has emerged from the epidemics and pandemics of recent years.

The pandemic response in the short term has been managed through several Decrees of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM) and the creation of a Scientific Technical Committee (CTS).

The Italian government responded to the economic emergency with substantial funding for the private sector in order to avoid the collapse of the economic system, while reserving a much smaller amount of funds for social purposes. The measures concerned various areas: support for businesses and taxation (56.1 billion euros), employment (29.7 billion euros), measures for local authorities (10.8 billion euros), strengthening of the health care system (8.2 billion euros), interventions in favor of families and social policies (6.2 billion euros).

The main findings obtained as a result of the research carried out are explained in the following paragraphs.

In the international debate there is a certain tendency to identify the ongoing crisis as a result of the pandemic; in this sense, the criteria of international institutions stand out, albeit with some differences among them. However, there are critical opinions which, although isolated, focus their analysis on the essence of the capitalist system and its contradictory nature, or on the neoliberal development model and its weaknesses.

COVID-19 emerged in an international scenario characterized by the existence of global problems affecting world development. The development gaps constitute propitious conditions for the growing contagiousness and lethality of COVID-19, as well as for the deepening of the pandemic's effects, especially among the poorest population. At the same time, the pandemic contributes to the intensification of world development problems, especially those related to socioeconomic gaps.

The very high number of people infected and deceased due to COVID-19 shows that there is no automatic relationship between the level of development of the countries and the results of their response to the pandemic. The comparison between two essentially different countries shows that a decisive factor was the way in which the pandemic was managed, and the development model adopted by each of them.

The health emergency occurred in Italy in a context characterized by structural inadequacies in the health system, characterized by privatization, funding cuts and the opening of the public sector to the private one.

Cuba, a small, blockaded country, was able to control the pandemic because of its solid public health system, its centralized crisis management coordinated by the country's main authorities, and for placing science at the service of human beings, one of the main objectives of its development model.

The world is not simply affected by a health crisis caused by Covid – 19. The pandemic has been the expression and catalyst of a structural crisis of multiple dimensions, much broader, deeper and more complex; it accentuated existing problems and revealed the unsustainability of capitalism.