

GEM PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Endometriosis Through Time

Version 1.2 · Reviewed 13 September 2026

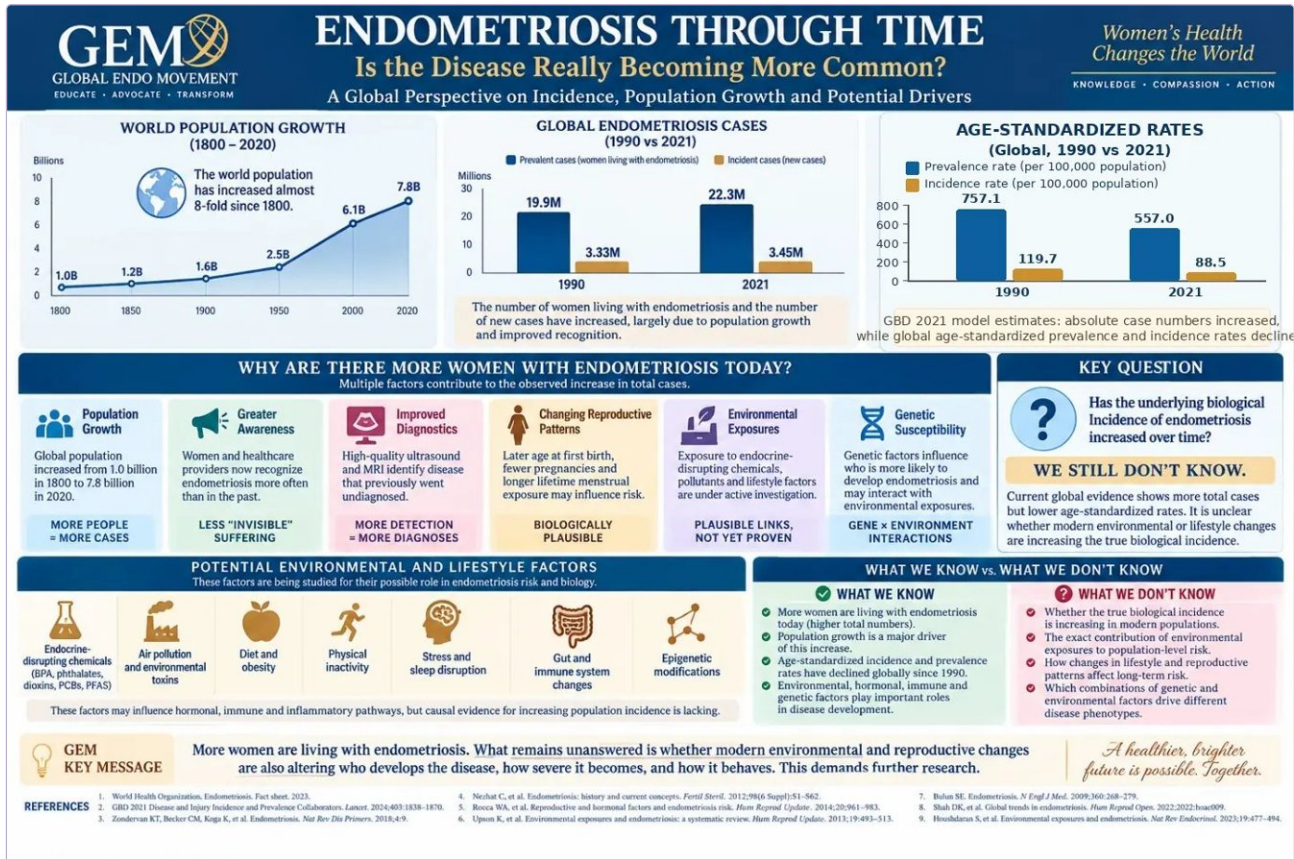
Is the Disease Really Becoming More Common?

WHAT CURRENT GLOBAL DATA SHOW

A GBD 2021 analysis modeled prevalent cases increasing from about 19.9 million in 1990 to 22.3 million in 2021, and annual incident cases from 3.33 to 3.45 million. Age-standardized rates declined. These are estimates, not a count of every diagnosed patient, and do not prove rising biological risk.

Read the chart's rate denominator as per 100,000 women: the source methods specify the female population, not both sexes combined.

The Global Picture at a Glance



GEM KEY MESSAGE

There are more women with diagnosed or estimated endometriosis today, but current population data do not prove that the underlying biological incidence is **rising**. The important unanswered question is whether changing reproductive patterns, lifestyle and environmental exposures are modifying disease risk, age of onset, phenotype or severity in susceptible women.

SCIENTIFIC CAUTION

Historical and modern burden estimates are strongly influenced by diagnostic criteria, access to care, imaging, surgical confirmation and statistical modeling. **An increase in recognized or modeled case numbers should not be interpreted by itself as proof that the biological incidence of endometriosis is increasing.**

Evidence & references

Endometriosis Through Time
Version 1.2 · Reviewed 13 September 2026

One source and an explicit population

Liu et al., Table 1: prevalent cases 19,869,195.64 to 22,275,015.21; incident cases 3,330,200.05 to 3,447,125.88 (1990 to 2021). Prevalence rates 757.10 to 556.98 and incidence rates 119.65 to 88.52 per 100,000. Methods specify female population; the prior all-population/both-sex interpretation was incorrect.

Model limits and comparison

The model's 95% uncertainty intervals are wide: prevalence about 13.59-27.69 million in 1990 and 15.52-30.41 million in 2021. These are not complete case counts. Age-standardized decline and increasing absolute counts do not by themselves establish biological incidence changes. WHO's approximately 190 million estimate uses a different framework; do not equate it with GBD.

Unchanged chart

The adjacent figure note clarifies the chart's abbreviated word population. Environmental/reproductive pathways in the image remain research hypotheses, not proof that they caused the modeled trend.

Full references

- **[RGBD]** Liu F, Yuan S, Yan Q et al. Global Trends in Endometriosis Burden, 1990–2021: A Sociodemographic Analysis Using GBD 2021 Data and Projections to 2036. *Int J Womens Health*. 2026;18:560463. doi:[10.2147/ijwh.s560463](https://doi.org/10.2147/ijwh.s560463). PMID [41835846](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41835846/). Freely available
- **[RGBD2]** Wang Z, Ouyang Y, Xue Z et al. Global, regional, and national burden and trends of endometriosis, 1990–2021: an analysis of the global burden of disease study 2021 and forecast to 2050. *BMC Womens Health*. 2025;25(1):519. doi:[10.1186/s12905-025-04043-0](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-025-04043-0). PMID [41152781](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41152781/). Freely available
- **[S13]** WHO. Endometriosis. Fact sheet, 15 October 2025. Freely available
- **[R23084567]** Nezhat C, Nezhat F, Nezhat C. Endometriosis: ancient disease, ancient treatments. *Fertil Steril*. 2012;98(6 Suppl):S1–62. doi:[10.1016/j.fertnstert.2012.08.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2012.08.001). PMID [23084567](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23084567/). Freely available
- **[RESHRE]** Becker CM, Bokor A, Heikinheimo O, et al. ESHRE guideline: endometriosis. *Human Reproduction Open*. 2022;2022(2):hoac009. doi:[10.1093/hropen/hoac009](https://doi.org/10.1093/hropen/hoac009). Freely available
- **[R33042729]** Upson K. Environmental risk factors for endometriosis: A critical evaluation of studies and recommendations from the epidemiologic perspective. *Curr Epidemiol Rep*. 2020;7(3):149–170. doi:[10.1007/s40471-020-00236-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40471-020-00236-3). PMID [33042729](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33042729/). Freely available
- **[R32903210]** Sirohi D, Al Ramadhani R, Knibbs LD. Environmental exposures to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and their role in endometriosis: a systematic literature review. *Rev Environ Health*. 2021;36(1):101–115. doi:[10.1515/reveh-2020-0046](https://doi.org/10.1515/reveh-2020-0046). PMID [32903210](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32903210/). Freely available

No listed institution endorses GEM.

Medical information

Do not delay care; seek emergency help for a suspected emergency.

This material is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice or create a clinician-patient relationship with GEM.

© 2026 Global Endometriosis Movement. All rights reserved.