

Abstract

Background: The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program, launched in 1984, provides high-quality population health data that underpins a vast body of global health research. However, the scale and growth patterns of DHS-based publications remain underexplored, particularly as donor funding uncertainties threaten program sustainability. **Objective:** We examine temporal trends in DHS-based research output from 1984 to 2025, quantifying growth patterns and publication delays to inform understanding of the program's global research expansion. **Methods:** A systematic bibliometric review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Dimensions, Wiley, and CINAHL. Eligible peerreviewed articles using DHS data between 1984 and 2025 were identified. Annual publication counts were analyzed, segmented regression identified growth inflection points, and timeliness was assessed by calculating lag between survey completion and publication. **Results:** Over 10,000 DHS-based publications were identified. Annual output rose from isolated studies in the 1980s to several hundred annually by the 2010s. Segmentation analysis revealed two rapid growth phases: a 56-publications/year increase from 2004–2012, and a 71- publications/year increase from 2012 to 2024. Despite this growth, median lag from survey completion to publication remained approximately 5 years, with only a modest recent improvement (Kendall's $\tau = -0.623$, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** DHS data have fueled exponential growth in global health research over four decades, confirming their vital role in evidence generation. However, persistent publication delays highlight the need to shorten the pathway from data collection to dissemination through strengthened research capacity in low- and middle-income countries. Sustained funding is essential to maintain this critical evidence source.