

LEVELS AND TRENDS IN CHILD MALNUTRITION

UNICEF / WHO / World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates

Key findings of the 2016 edition



156 MILLION

Stunting rates are dropping but 156 million children under 5 around the world were still affected in 2015.



42 MILLION

There were 42 million overweight children in the world in 2015 – an increase of about 11 million over the past 15 years.



50 MILLION

In 2015, wasting continued to threaten the lives of 50 million children under 5 globally.

These new estimates supersede former analyses and results published by UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank Group.

Notes on the 2016 edition of the joint malnutrition estimates

In September 2016, UNICEF, WHO and World Bank Group released joint child malnutrition estimates for the 1990 – 2015 period, representing the most recent global and regional figures.

This key findings report summarizes the new numbers and main messages. Additional materials, including (i) the latest country-level joint malnutrition dataset; and, (ii) interactive dashboards, which allow users to visualize and export the global and regional estimates, are available at the following websites:

UNICEF

<uni.cf/jmedashboard>

WHO

<www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates>

World Bank Group

<data.worldbank.org/child-malnutrition>

Forms of malnutrition* highlighted in this key findings report



Stunting refers to a child who is too short for his or her age. Stunting is the failure to grow both physically and cognitively and is the result of chronic or recurrent malnutrition. The devastating effects of stunting can last a lifetime.



Overweight refers to a child who is too heavy for his or her height. This form of malnutrition results from expending too few calories for the amount of food consumed and increases the risk of noncommunicable diseases later in life.



Wasting refers to a child who is too thin for his or her height. Wasting, or acute malnutrition, is the result of recent rapid weight loss or the failure to gain weight. A child who is moderately or severely wasted has an increased risk of death, but treatment is possible.



Overweight and stunted



Stunted and wasted

* Some children suffer from more than one form of malnutrition – such as stunting and overweight or stunting and wasting. There are currently no joint estimates for these combined conditions.

Strengths and weaknesses of malnutrition data



Prevalence estimates for stunting and overweight are relatively robust. It is therefore possible to track global and regional changes in these two conditions over time.



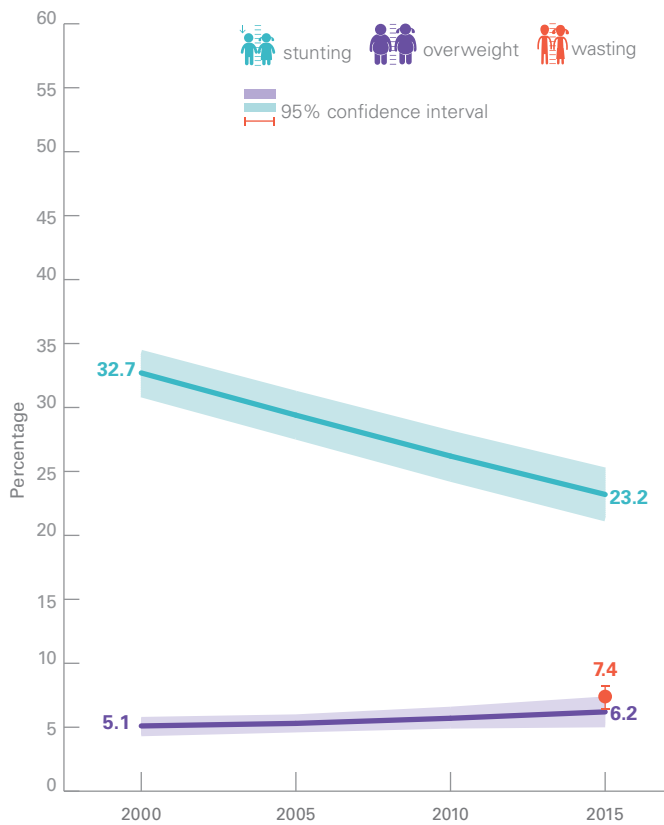
Wasting and severe wasting are acute conditions that can change frequently and rapidly. This makes it difficult to generate reliable trends over time, and as such, this report provides only most recent (2015) global and regional estimates.



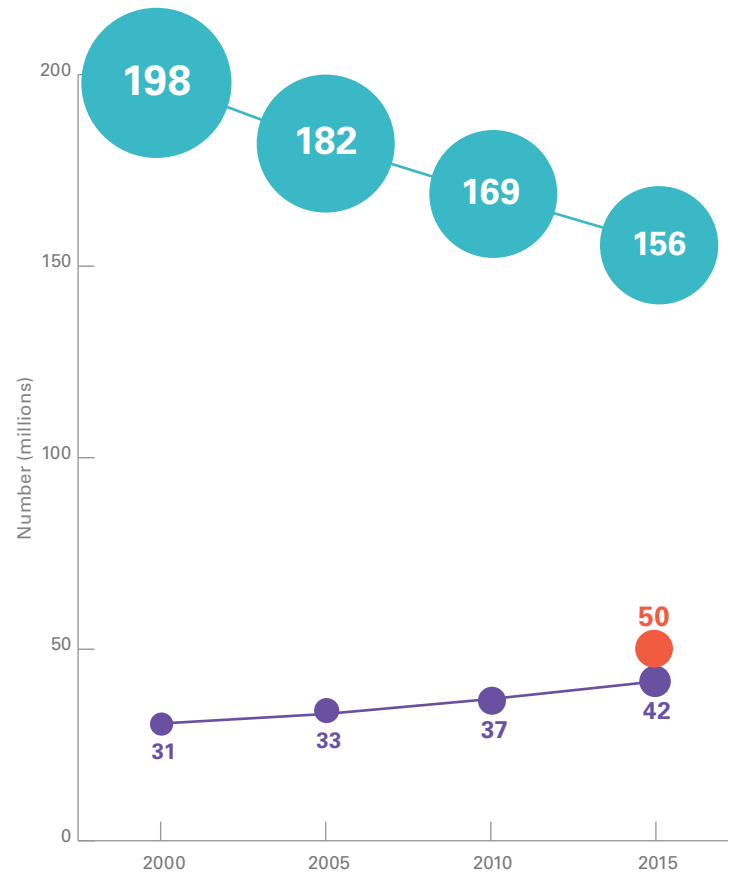
The global and regional estimates presented here are based on data from national household surveys. These data are collected infrequently and measure malnutrition at one point in time (e.g. during several months of field work), making it difficult to capture the rapid fluctuations in wasting that can occur over the course of a given year. Incidence data (i.e. the number of new cases that occur during the calendar year) would allow for better tracking of changes over time; however, these data currently do not exist.

Global overview

Malnutrition rates remain alarming: stunting is declining too slowly while overweight continues to rise



Percentage of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, global, 2000–2015



Number of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, in millions, global, 2000–2015

Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2016 edition.

Africa and Asia bear the greatest share of all forms of malnutrition



In 2015, more than half of all **stunted** children under 5 lived in Asia and more than one third lived in Africa.



In 2015, almost half of all **overweight** children under 5 lived in Asia and one quarter lived in Africa.

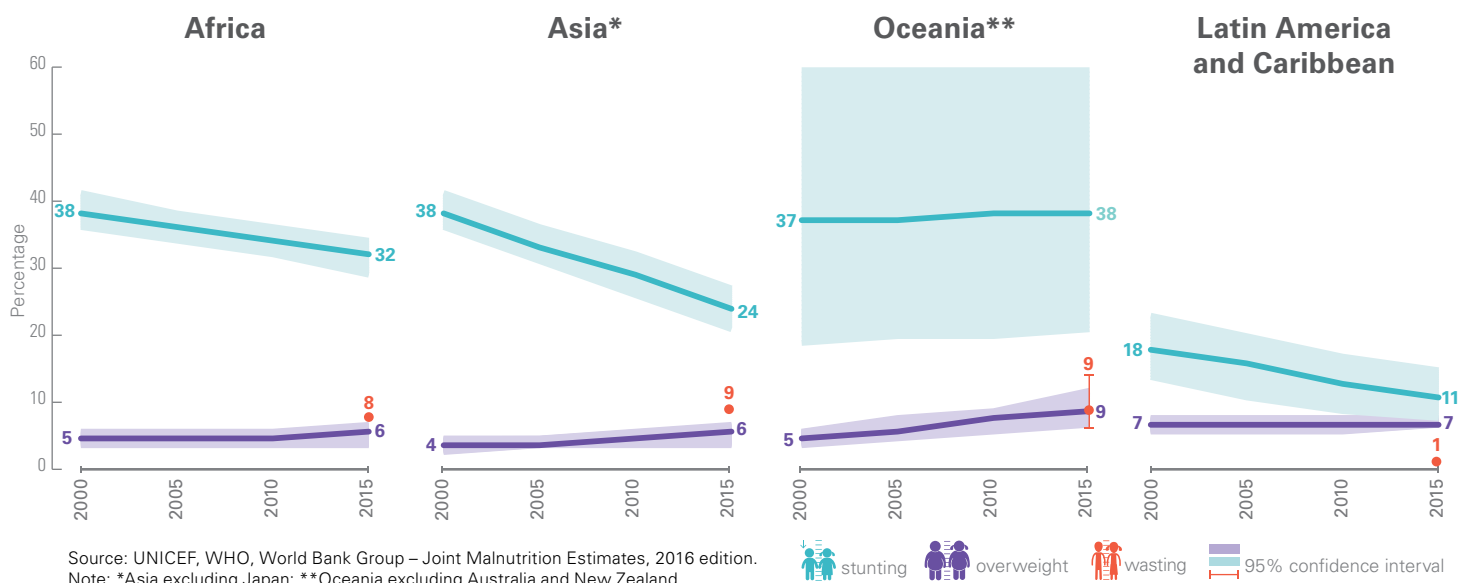


In 2015, more than two thirds of all **wasted** children under 5 lived in Asia and more than one quarter lived in Africa.

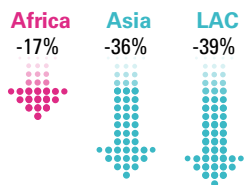
Regional overview: prevalence

Two out of four regions have experienced slow progress for stunting reductions

Percentage of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2000 – 2015



Africa has made only limited progress on stunting since 2000 compared with other regions



Both Asia and Latin America and Caribbean have cut stunting rates by over one third since 2000 while Africa saw a reduction of only one sixth during the same period.

Progress for stunting within Asia have been uneven since 2000



Stunting rates in Eastern Asia have dropped by more than two thirds since 2000, compared with Southern Asia, where stunting declined by less than one third during the same period.

More data are needed to generate reliable estimates for Oceania



Based on available data, stunting rates in Oceania have been stagnant for the past 15 years, while rates of overweight have nearly doubled. However, confidence intervals are very large.

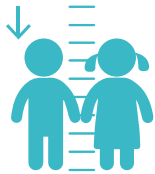
Progress in Latin America and Caribbean is aligned with global goals



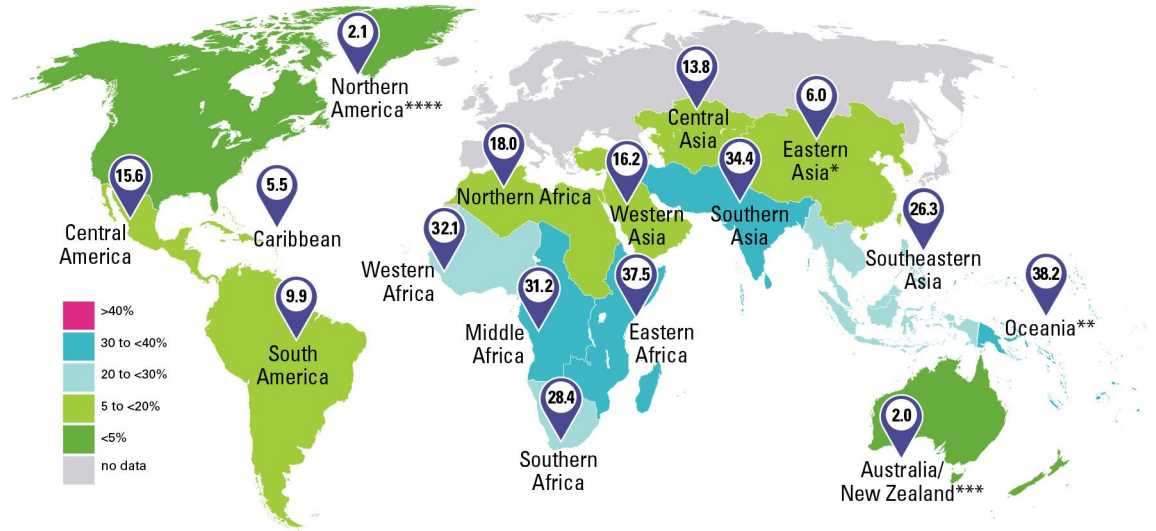
Improvements in malnutrition in the region are encouraging. Continued vigilance will be needed to maintain success and avoid an increase in child overweight.

Sub-regional overview: prevalence 2015

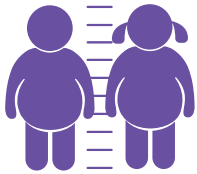
Five sub-regions have stunting rates that exceed 30 per cent



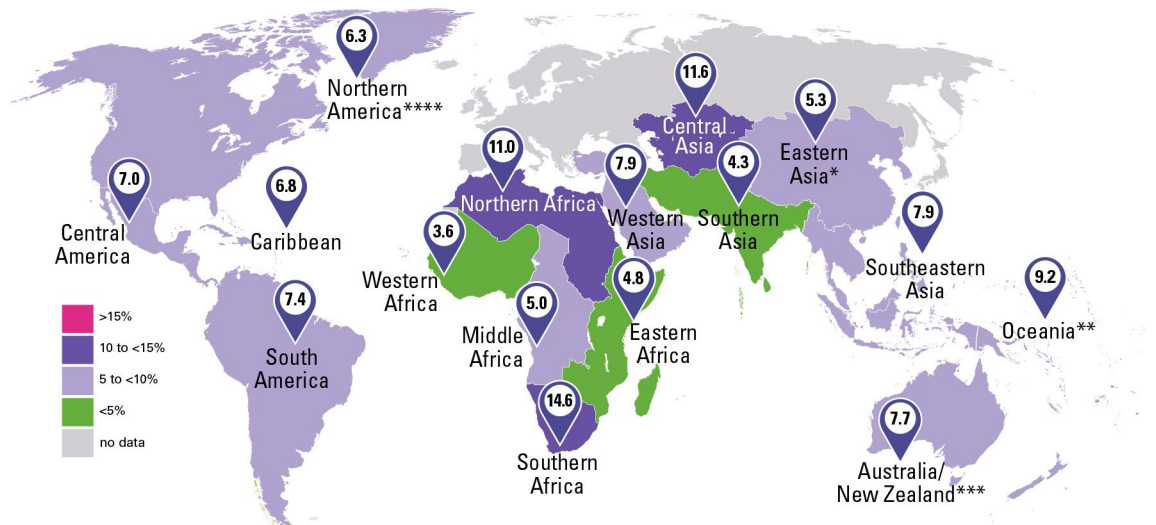
Percentage of stunted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2015



In three sub-regions more than 10 per cent of children under 5 are overweight



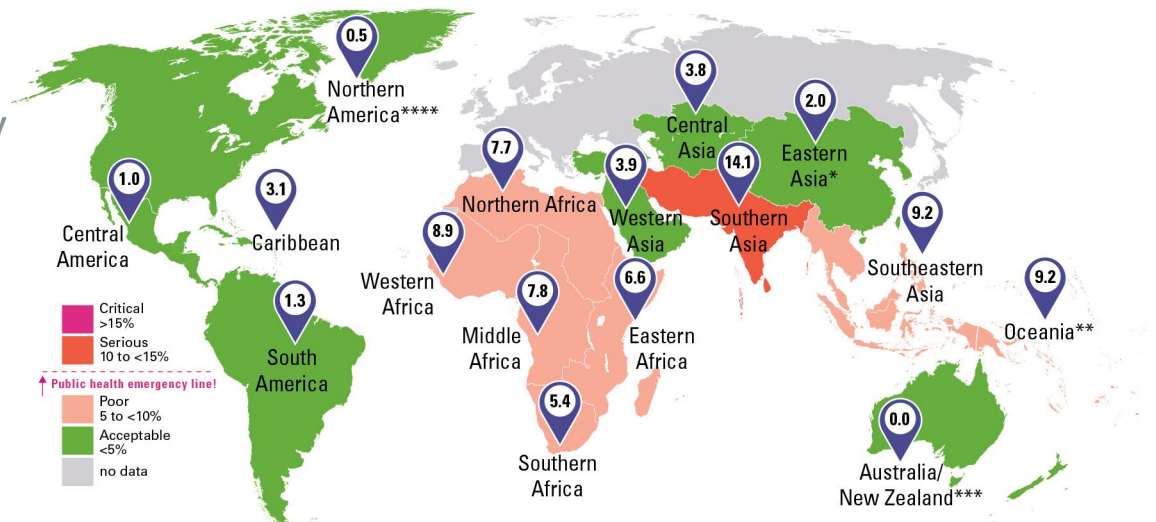
Percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2015



The wasting rate in Southern Asia is approaching a critical public health emergency



Percentage of wasted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2015



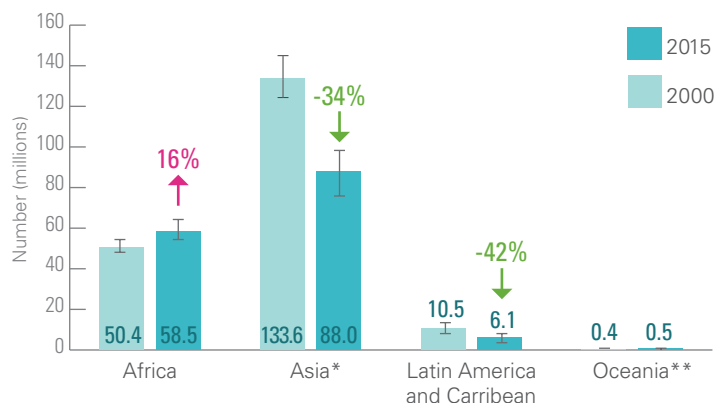
Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2016 edition.
 Note: *Eastern Asia excluding Japan; **Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, *** Australia and New Zealand, regional average based on Australian data, ****Northern America regional average based on United States data. These maps are stylized and not to scale and do not reflect a position by UNICEF, WHO or World Bank Group on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Regional overview: numbers affected



In Africa, the number of stunted children is rising

Number of stunted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2000 and 2015

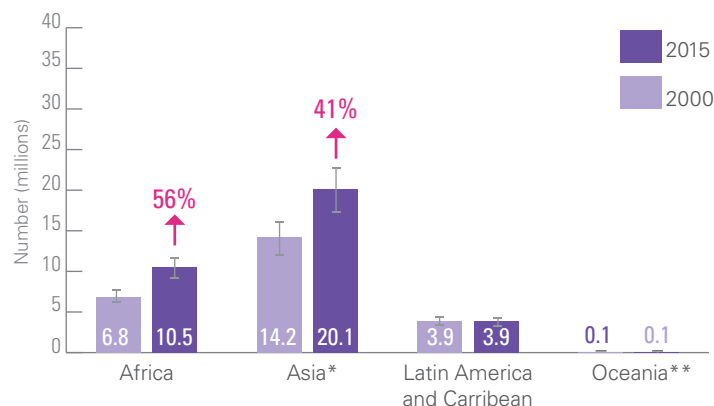


Western Africa accounts for half of the stunting increase in Africa; there were 4 million more stunted children in Western Africa in 2015 than in 2000



The number of overweight children is on the rise in Africa and Asia

Number of overweight children under 5, by United Nations region, 2000 and 2015

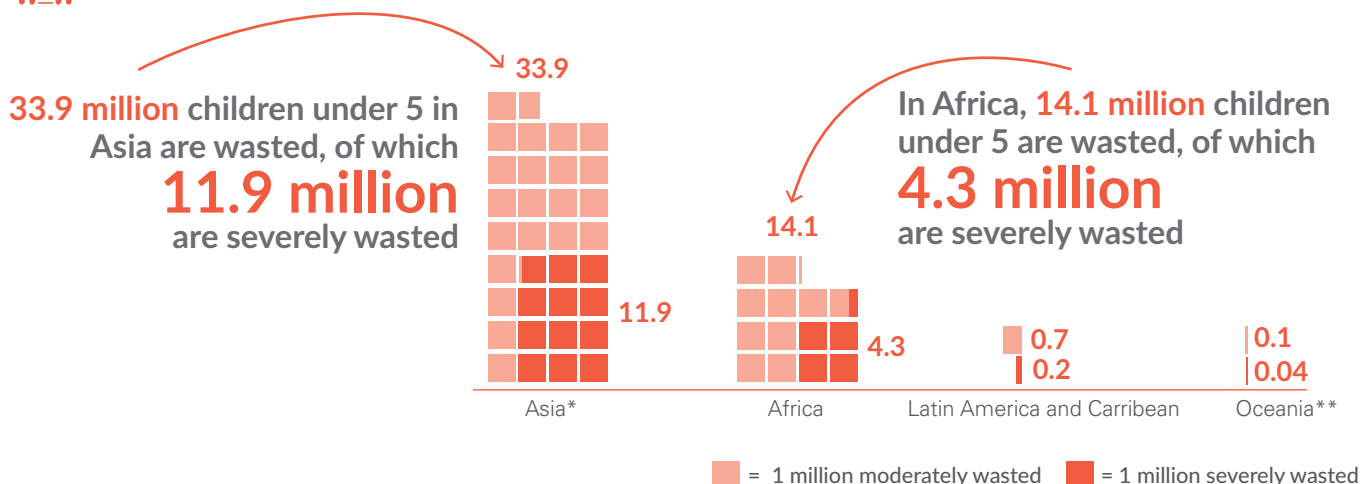


The number of overweight children under 5 in Africa has increased by more than 50 per cent since 2000



The majority of children under 5 suffering from wasting and severe wasting live in Asia

Number of wasted and severely wasted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2015

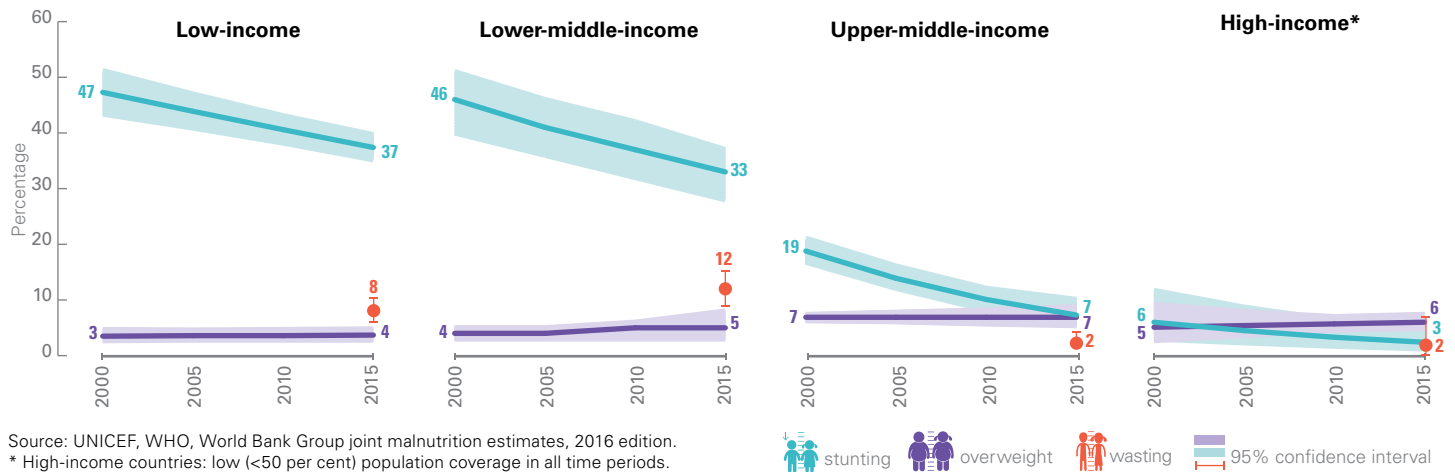


Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2016 edition. Note: *Asia excluding Japan; **Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Country income groupings overview

Upper-middle-income countries have more than halved their stunting rates since 2000

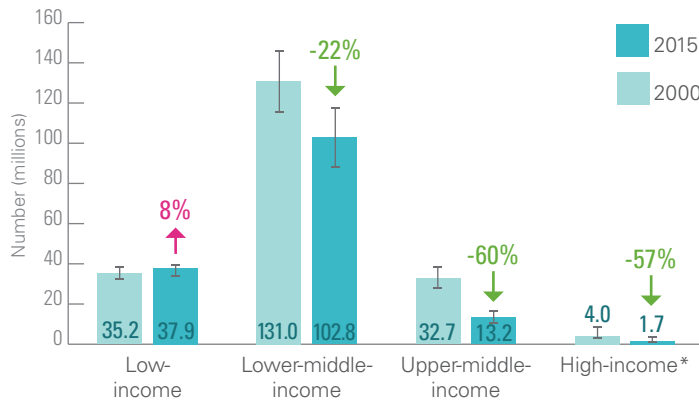
Percentage of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, by country income classification, 2000 – 2015



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2016 edition.
 * High-income countries: low (<50 per cent) population coverage in all time periods.
 Note: At the time of printing Argentina was not classified by the World Bank's income classification and was therefore not included in the estimates for any income group.

Low-income countries are the only group with more stunted children today than 15 years ago

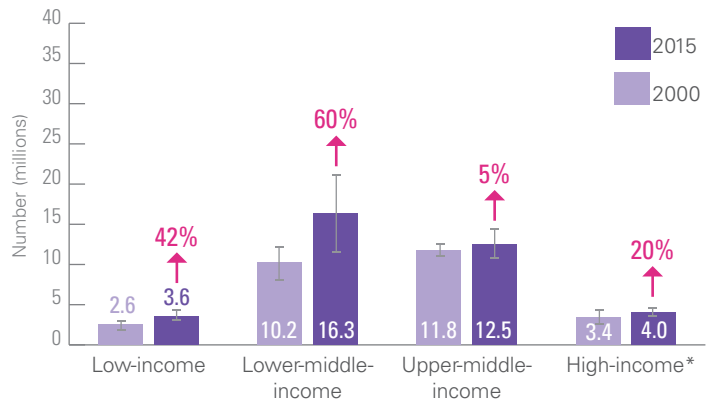
Number of stunted children under 5, by country income classification, 2000 and 2015



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2016 edition. *High-income countries: low (<50 per cent) population coverage in all time periods. Note: At the time of printing Argentina was not classified by the World Bank's income classification and was therefore not included in the estimates for any income group.

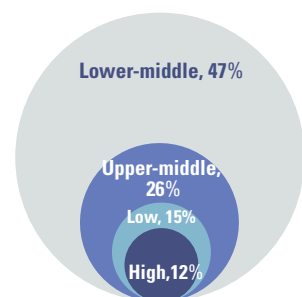
The number of overweight children has increased most rapidly in lower-middle-income countries

Number of overweight children under 5, by country income classification, 2000 and 2015

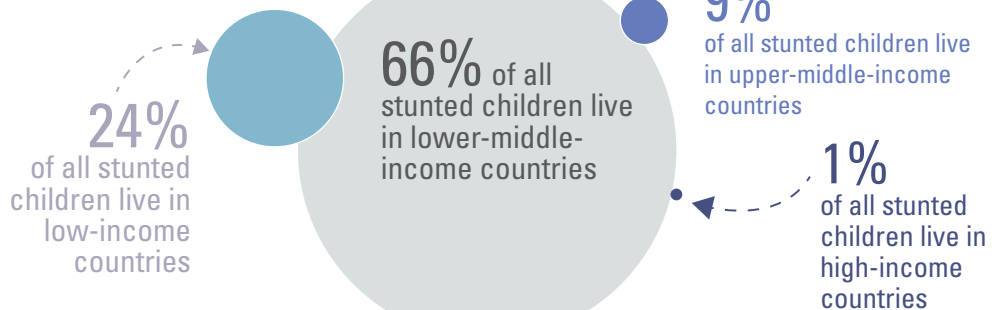


While less than half of all children under 5 live in lower-middle-income countries, two thirds of all stunted children live there

Share of under-5 population, by country income grouping, 2015



Share of stunted children under 5 in 2015



This brochure was prepared by: the Data and Analytics Section of the Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF New York; the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, WHO Geneva; and the Development Data Group of the World Bank, Washington DC. September 2016.

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