

# LEVELS AND TRENDS IN CHILD MALNUTRITION

UNICEF / WHO / World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates

Key findings of the 2020 edition



**STUNTING**  
**144 million**

Stunting affected an estimated 21.3 per cent or 144.0 million children under 5 globally in 2019.



**WASTING**  
**47 million**

In 2019, wasting continued to threaten the lives of an estimated 6.9 per cent or 47.0 million children under 5 globally.



**OVERWEIGHT**  
**38 million**

An estimated 5.6 per cent or 38.3 million children under 5 around the world were overweight in 2019.

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



# The ultimate aim is for all children to be free of malnutrition in all its forms

**Good nutrition allows children to survive, grow, develop, learn, play, participate and contribute** – while malnutrition robs children of their futures and leaves young lives hanging in the balance.

Stunting is the devastating result of poor nutrition in-utero and early childhood. Children suffering from stunting may never attain their full possible height and their brains may never develop to their full cognitive potential. Globally, 144.0 million children under 5 suffer from stunting. These children begin their lives at a marked disadvantage: they face learning difficulties in school, earn less as adults, and face barriers to participation in their communities.

Wasting in children is the life-threatening result of poor nutrient intake and/or disease. Children suffering from wasting have weakened immunity, are susceptible to long term developmental delays, and face an increased risk of death, particularly when wasting is severe. These children require urgent feeding, treatment and care to survive. In 2019, 47.0 million children under 5 were wasted of which 14.3 million were severely wasted.

There is also an emerging face of malnutrition: childhood overweight and obesity. There are now 38.3 million overweight children globally, an increase of 8 million since 2000. The emergence of overweight and obesity has been shaped, at least in part, by industry marketing and greater

access to processed foods, along with lower levels of physical activity.

While malnutrition can manifest in multiple ways, the path to prevention is virtually identical: adequate maternal nutrition before and during pregnancy and lactation; optimal breastfeeding in the first two years of life; nutritious, diverse and safe foods in early childhood; and a healthy environment, including access to basic health, water, hygiene and sanitation services and opportunities for safe physical activity. These key ingredients can deliver a world where children are free from all forms of malnutrition.

Despite this opportunity, the UNICEF, WHO, World Bank global and regional child malnutrition estimates reveal that we are still far from a world without malnutrition. The joint estimates, published in March 2020, cover indicators of stunting, wasting, severe wasting and overweight among children under 5, and reveal insufficient progress to reach the World Health Assembly targets set for 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030.

Improving children's nutrition requires effective and sustained multi-sectoral nutrition programming over the long term, and many countries are moving in the right direction. Regular data collection is critical to monitor and analyse country, regional and global progress going forward.

## Forms of malnutrition\* highlighted in this key findings report



**Stunting** refers to a child who is too short for his or her age. These children can suffer severe irreversible physical and cognitive damage that accompanies stunted growth. The devastating effects of stunting can last a lifetime and even affect the next generation.



**Overweight** refers to a child who is too heavy for his or her height. This form of malnutrition results from energy intakes from food and beverages that exceed children's energy requirements. Overweight increases the risk of diet-related noncommunicable diseases later in life.



**Wasting** refers to a child who is too thin for his or her height. Wasting 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**

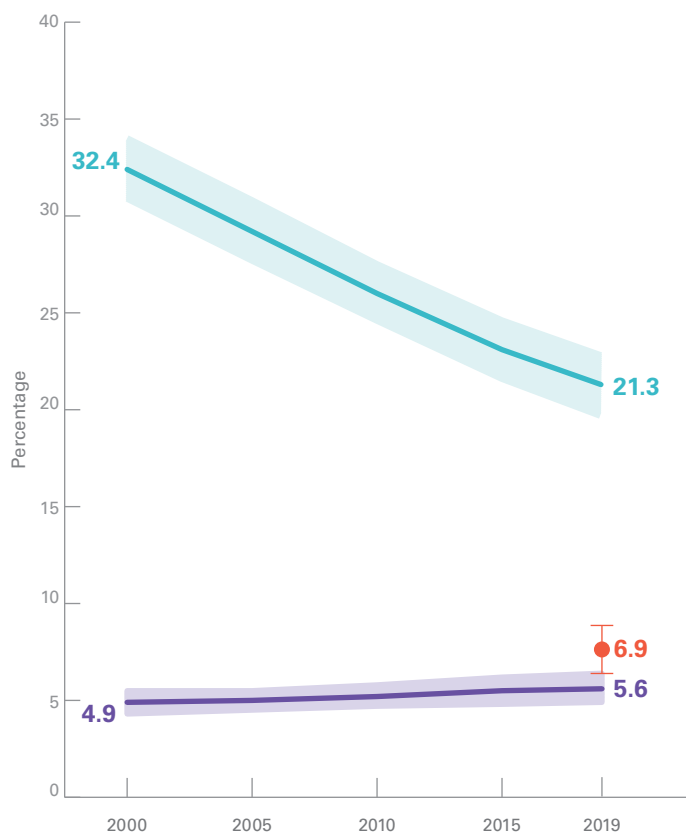
\* Some children suffer from more than one form of malnutrition – such as **stunting and overweight** or **stunting and wasting**. There are currently no joint global or regional estimates for these combined conditions.



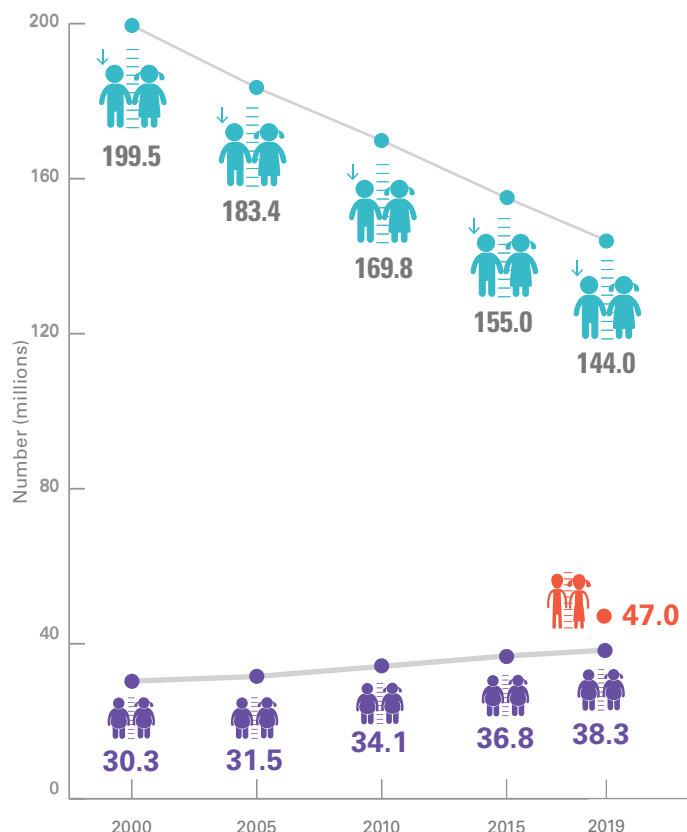
# GLOBAL OVERVIEW

**Malnutrition rates remain alarming. Stunting is declining too slowly while wasting still impacts the lives of far too many young children**

↓ stunting   ↓ wasting   ↓ overweight   95% confidence interval



Percentage of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, global, 2000–2019



Number (millions) of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, global, 2000–2019

Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. See Notes on Data on page 14 on why only one time point is presented for wasting on the graphs above.

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



In 2019, more than half of all **stunted** children under 5 lived in Asia and two out of five lived in Africa.



In 2019, more than two thirds of all **wasted** children under 5 lived in Asia and more than one quarter lived in Africa.



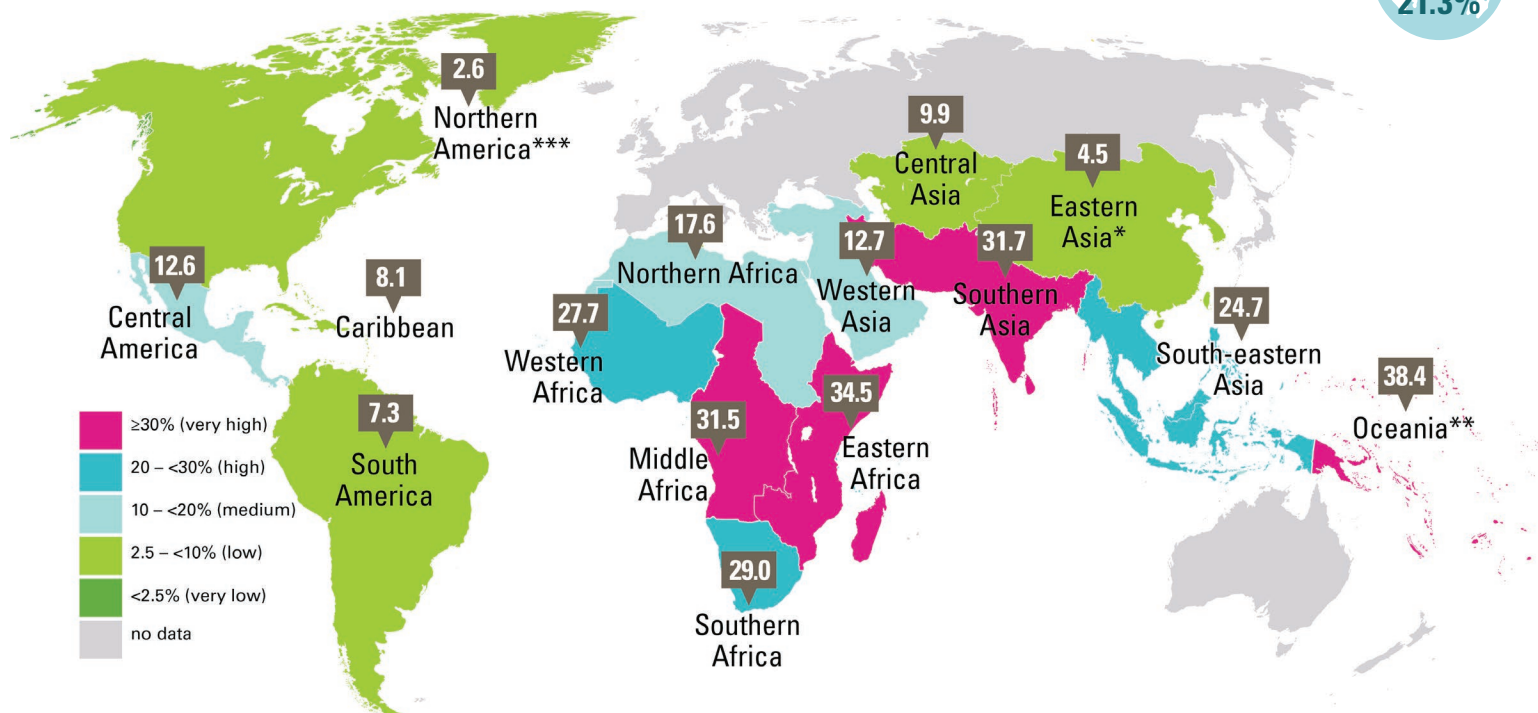
In 2019, almost half of all **overweight** children under 5 lived in Asia and one quarter lived in Africa.

# **Stunting** **PREVALENCE**

## Seven sub-regions have a high or very high stunting prevalence

Percentage of stunted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019

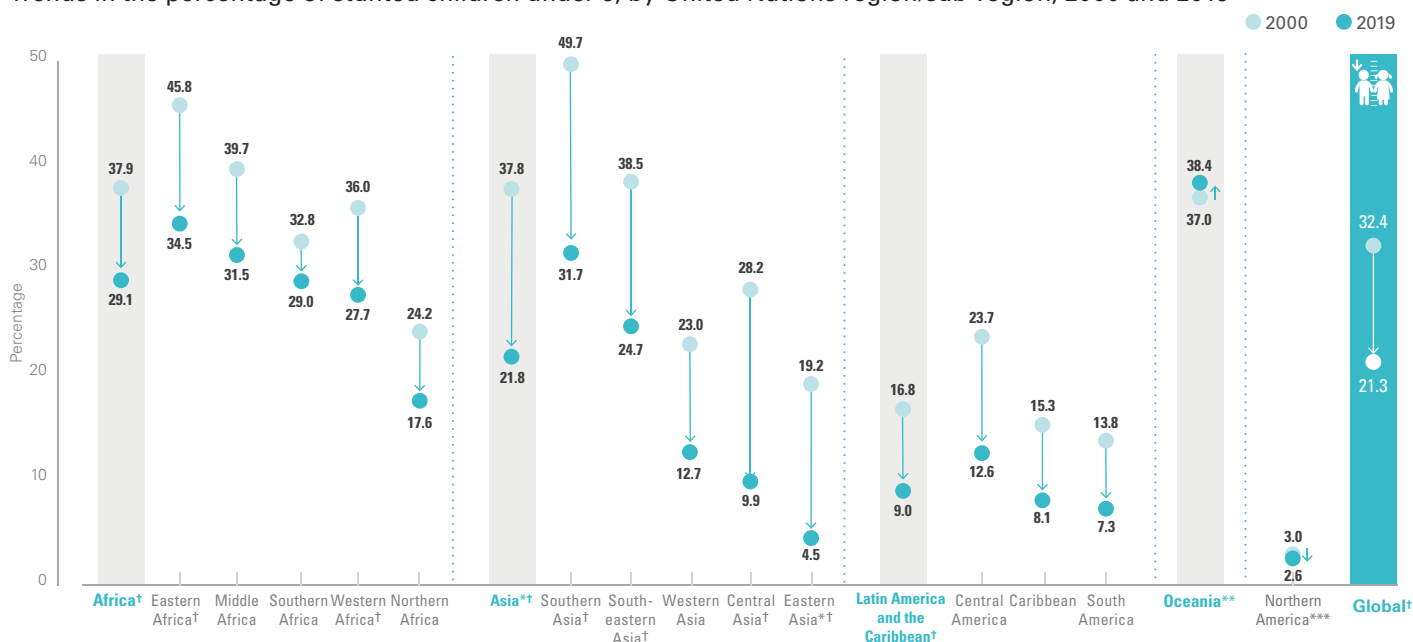
**GLOBAL**  
21.3%



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional estimate based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. 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.

## Large disparities in stunting reduction exist within regions/between sub-regions

Trends in the percentage of stunted children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 and 2019



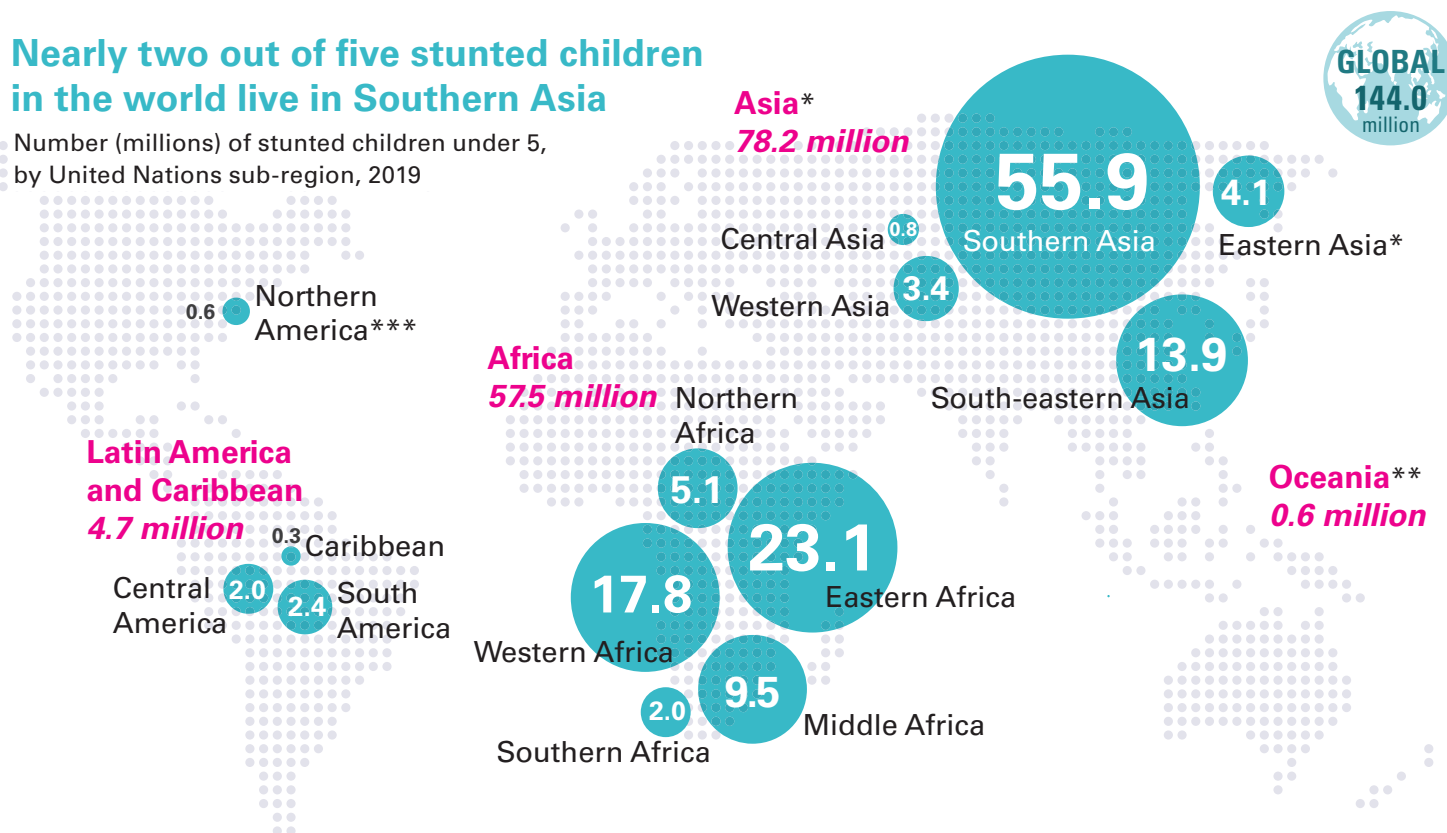
Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Asia and Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional estimates based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region or for sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. †represents regions/sub-regions where the change has been statistically significant; see page 12 for the 95% confidence intervals for graphed estimates.

## Stunting

# NUMBERS AFFECTED

## Nearly two out of five stunted children in the world live in Southern Asia

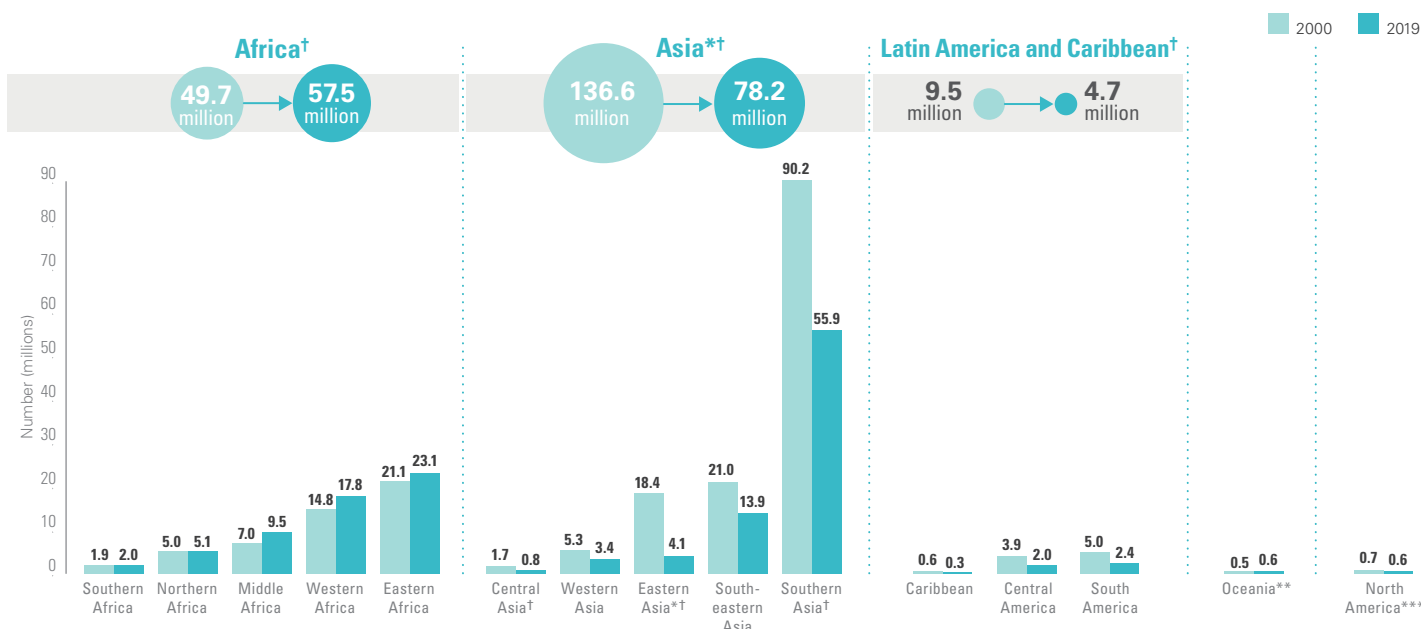
Number (millions) of stunted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*The Northern America sub-regional estimate based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region or for sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. Aggregates may not add up due to rounding and/or lack of estimates for the More Developed Region.

## Africa is the only region where the number of stunted children has risen

Trends in the number (millions) of stunted children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 and 2019



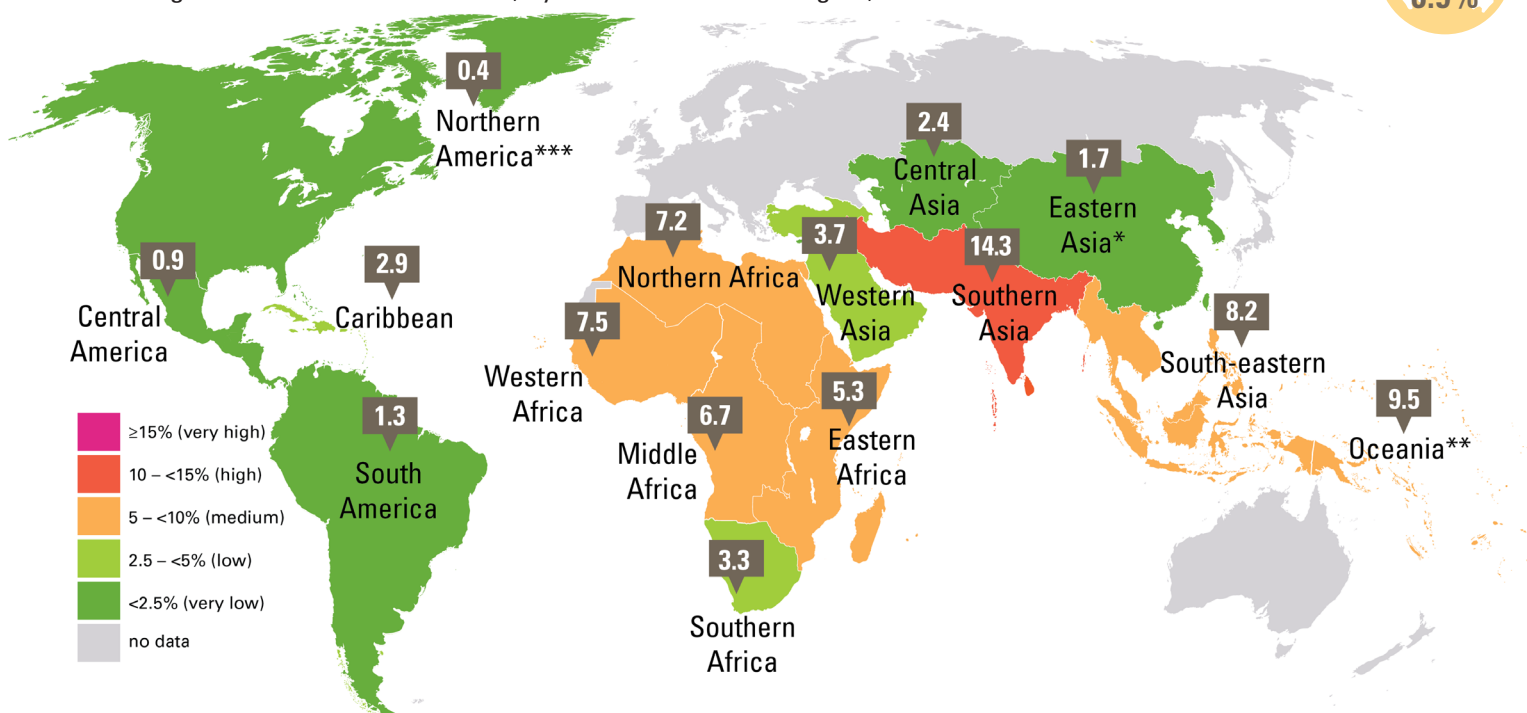
Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Asia and Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional estimates based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region or for sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. †represents regions/sub-regions where the change has been statistically significant; see page 13 for the 95% confidence intervals for graphed estimates.



# Wasting PREVALENCE

## Southern Asia is the sub-region with the highest wasting prevalence in the world

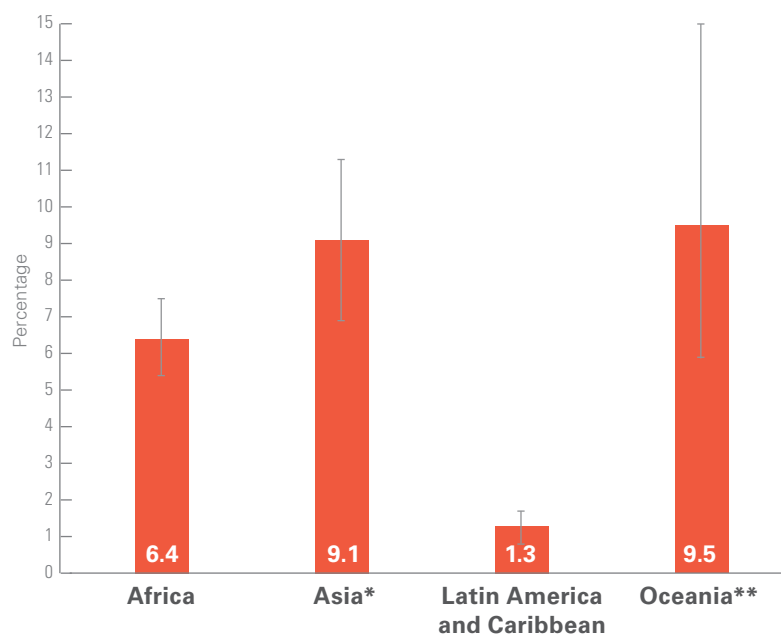
Percentage of wasted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional estimate based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. 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. The legend contains a category for  $\geq 15$  per cent (pink) but there is no sub-region with a prevalence this high.

## Millions of young lives are in jeopardy around the globe due to wasting

Percentage of wasted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2019



In Asia and Oceania,  
wasting is putting nearly  
**one in ten**  
children under 5 at  
increased risk of death

Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Includes 95% confidence interval. Note: \*Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region due to insufficient population coverage.



## Wasting

# NUMBERS AFFECTED

### More than half of all wasted children in the world live in Southern Asia

Number (millions) of wasted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019

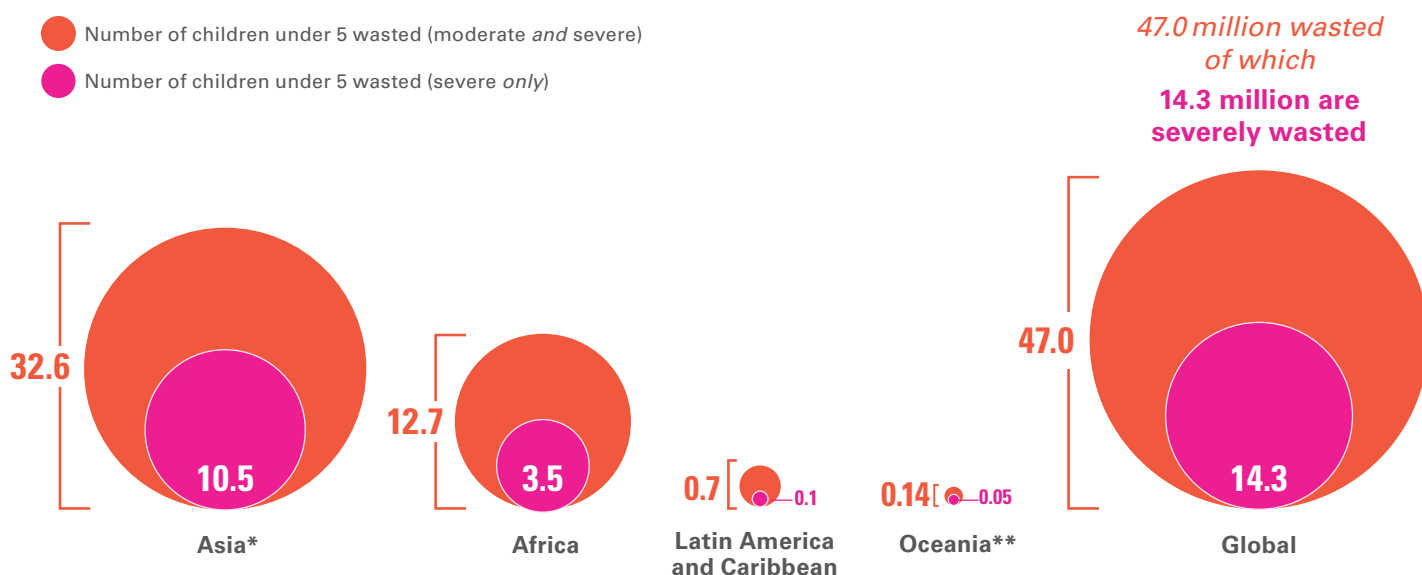


Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*The Northern America sub-regional estimate based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region or for sub-regions of Europe or Australia and New Zealand due to insufficient population coverage. Aggregates may not add up due to rounding and/or lack of estimates for the More Developed Region.

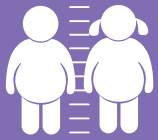
### Asia is home to the majority of children under 5 suffering from wasting and severe wasting

Number of wasted and severely wasted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2019

- Number of children under 5 wasted (moderate *and* severe)
- Number of children under 5 wasted (severe *only*)



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region due to insufficient population coverage. Aggregates may not add up due to rounding and/or lack of estimates for the More Developed Region.

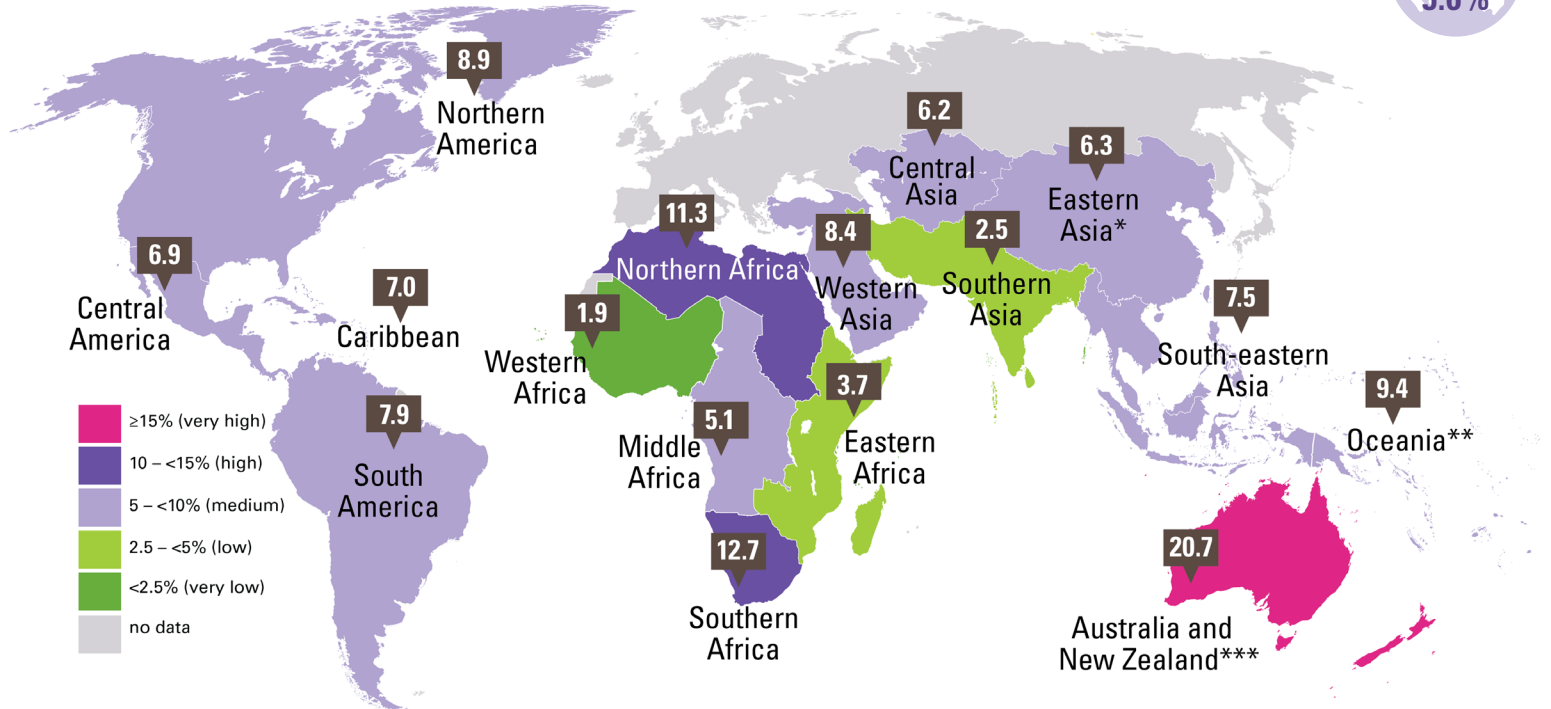


# Overweight PREVALENCE

## Overweight is a concern in almost all regions of the world

Percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2019

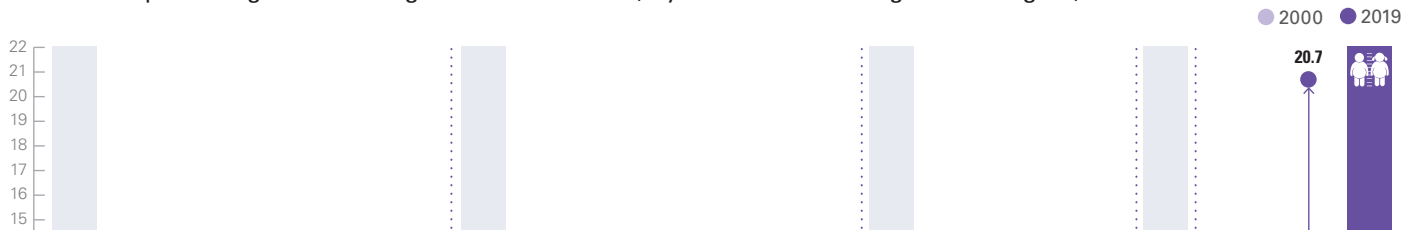
GLOBAL  
5.6%



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2020 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, \*\*\*The Australia and New Zealand sub-regional estimate is based only on Australia data. There is no estimate available for the sub-region of Europe due to insufficient population coverage. 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.

## There has been no progress to stem the rate of overweight in nearly 20 years

Trends in the percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 and 2019



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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_6039](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_6039)

