



Stunting affected an estimated 21.9 per cent or 149 million children under 5 globally in 2018.

**149 million**

# Levels and trends in child malnutrition

UNICEF / WHO / World Bank Group  
Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates

Key findings of the 2019 edition

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



In 2018, wasting continued to threaten the lives of an estimated 7.3 per cent or 49 million children under 5 globally.

**49 million**

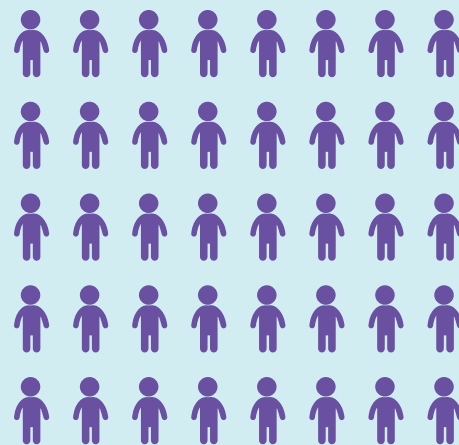


= 1 million  
children under 5

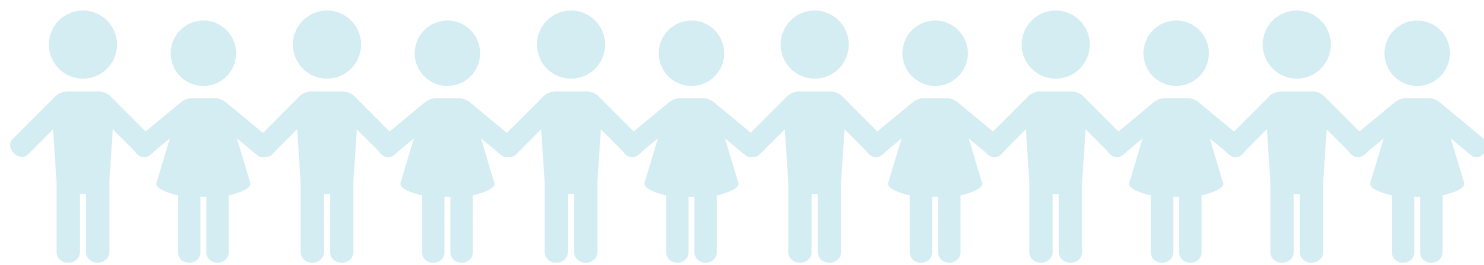


An estimated 5.9 per cent or 40 million children under 5 around the world were overweight in 2018.

**40 million**



# 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, approximately 149 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 2018, over 49 million children under 5 were wasted and nearly 17 million were severely wasted.

There is also an emerging face of malnutrition: childhood overweight and obesity. There are now over 40 million overweight children globally, an increase of 10 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 2019, 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**



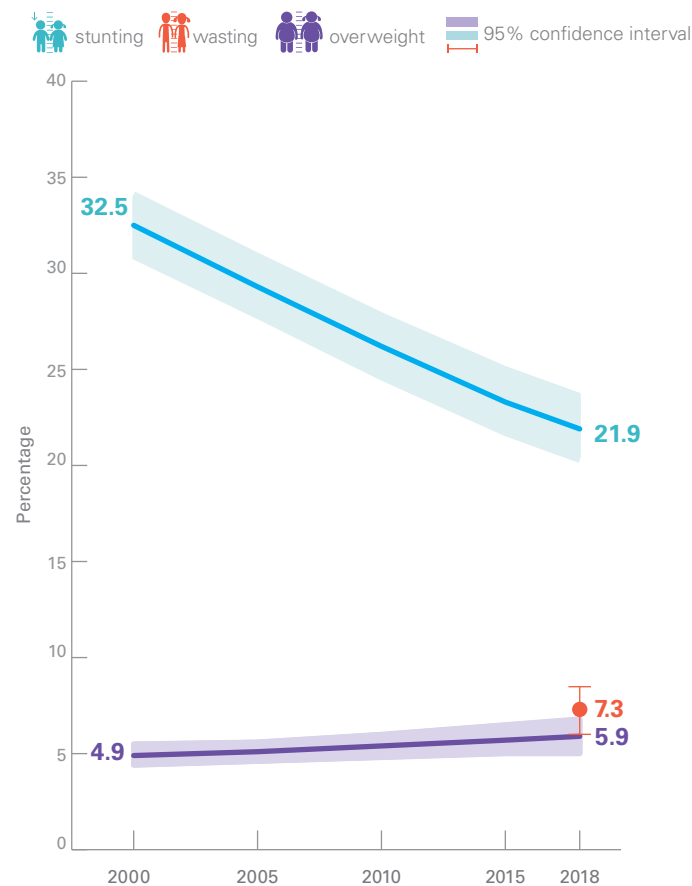
**Stunted and wasted**

\* 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.

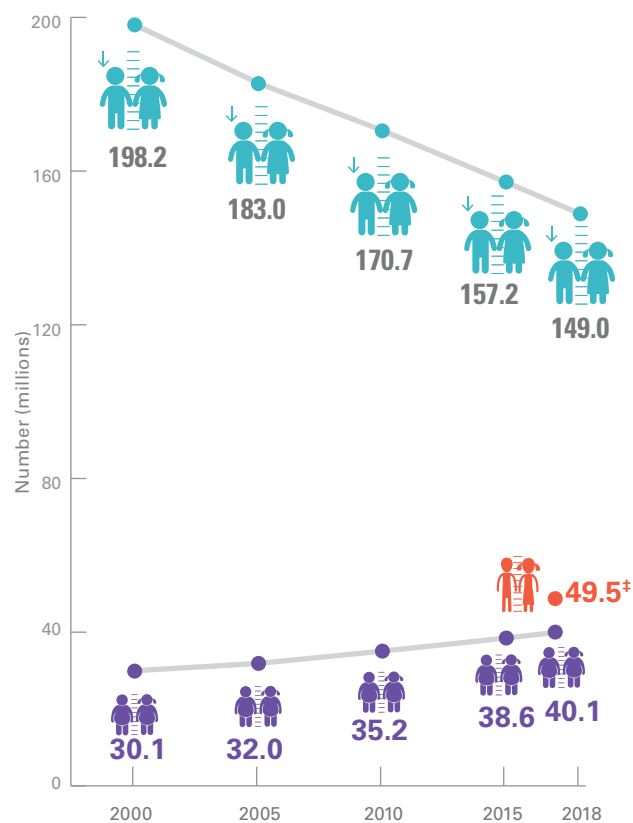
# GLOBAL OVERVIEW



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



Percentage of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, global, 2000–2018



Number (millions) of stunted, overweight and wasted children under 5, global, 2000–2018

Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. See Notes on Data on page 14 on why only one time point is presented for wasting on the graphs above. ‡ The total number of wasted children under 5 is 49.48 million; this becomes 49 million when rounded to the nearest integer (as on the cover page), and 49.5 million when rounded to the nearest tenth.

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



In 2018, more than half of all **stunted** children under 5 lived in Asia and more than one third lived in Africa.



In 2018, more than two thirds of all **wasted** children under 5 lived in Asia and more than one quarter lived in Africa.



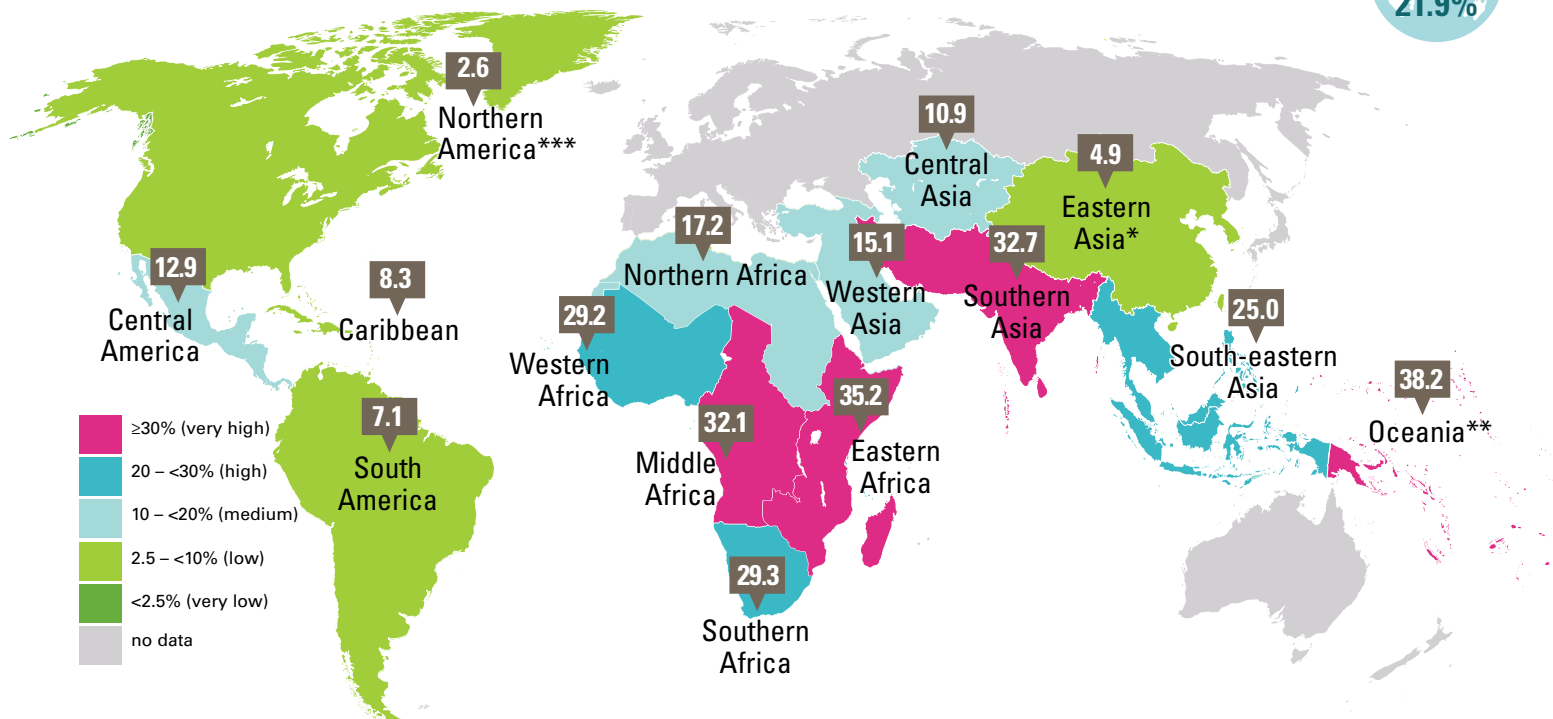
In 2018, almost half of all **overweight** children under 5 lived in Asia and one quarter lived in Africa.

# Stunting PREVALENCE

## In 7 sub-regions, at least one in every four children under 5 is stunted

Percentage of stunted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2018

GLOBAL  
21.9%



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional average 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 – 2018



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Asia and Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional average based on United States data only. 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/subregions where the change has been statistically significant; see page 12 for the 95% confidence intervals for graphed estimates.

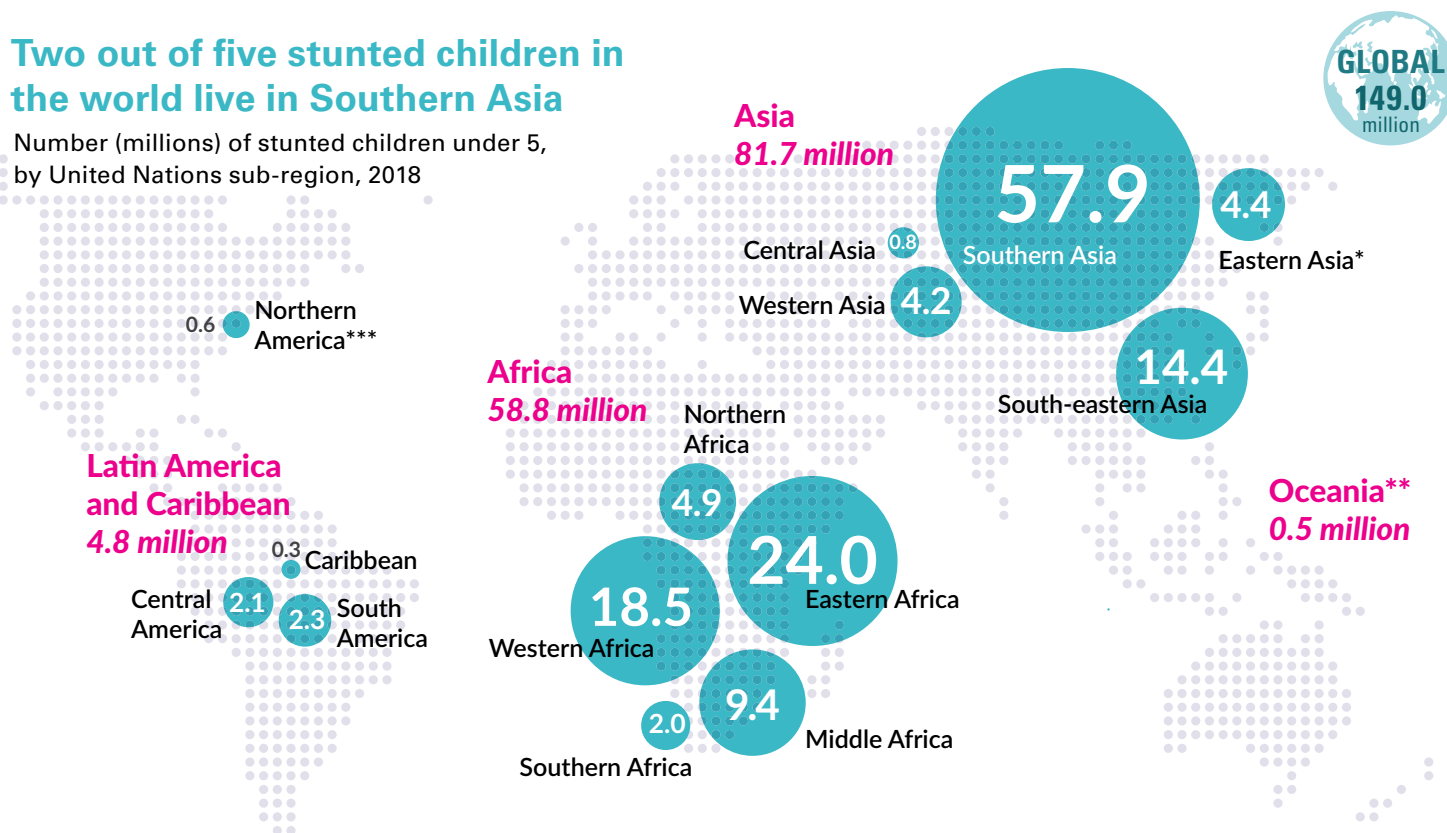


## Stunting

# NUMBERS AFFECTED

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

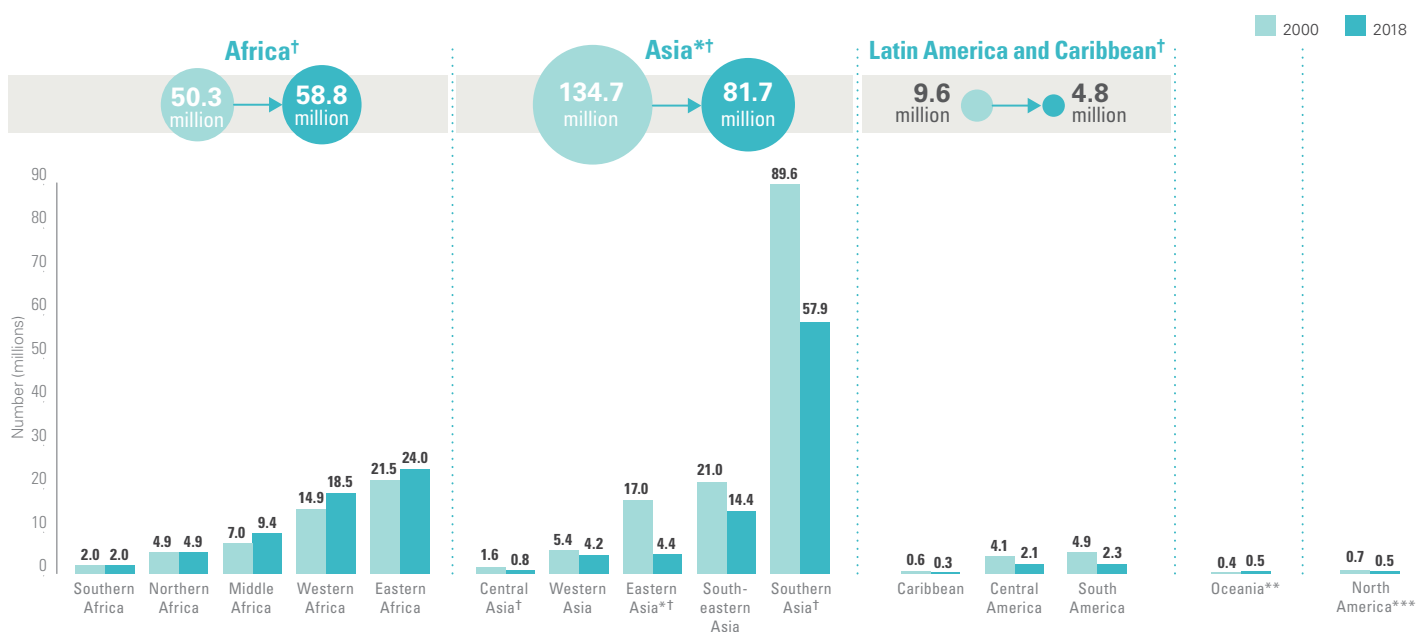
Number (millions) of stunted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2018



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*The Northern America sub-regional average 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 2018



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Asia and Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional average based on United States data only. 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/subregions where the change has been statistically significant; see page 13 for the 95% confidence intervals for graphed estimates.

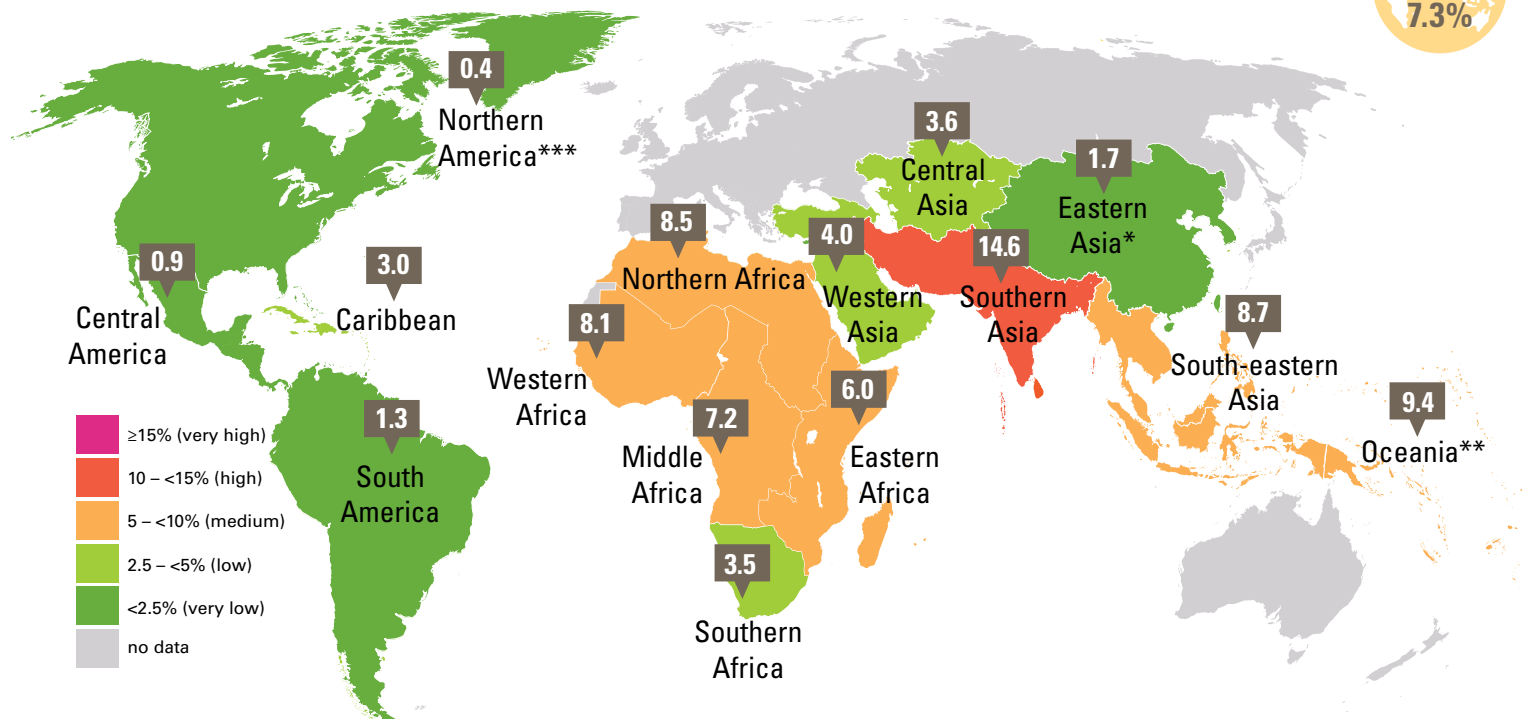


# Wasting PREVALENCE

## Southern Asia is the only region with a high wasting prevalence

Percentage of wasted children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2018

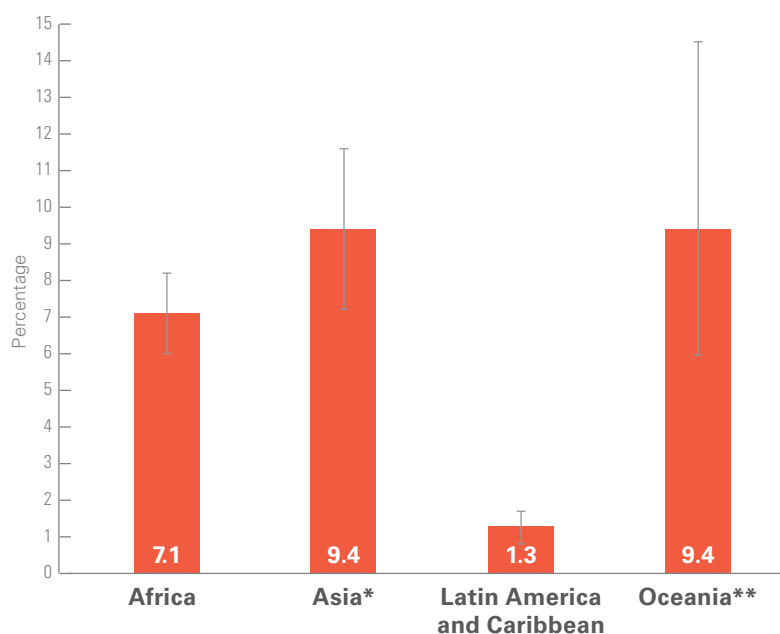
GLOBAL  
7.3%



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*Northern America sub-regional average 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 rate 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, 2018



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

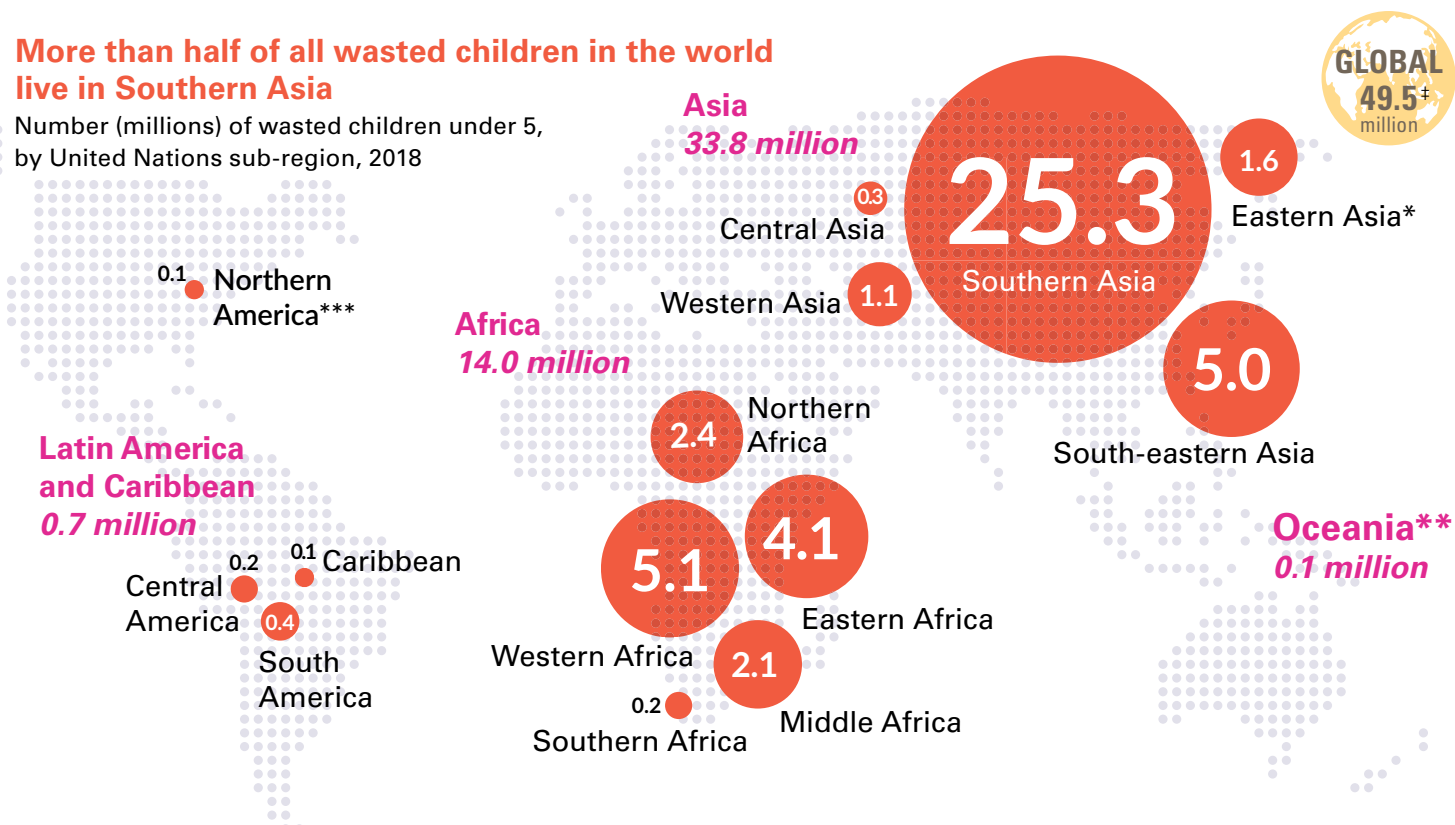
Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Includes 95% confidence interval. Note: \*Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region due to insufficient population coverage.

## 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, 2018

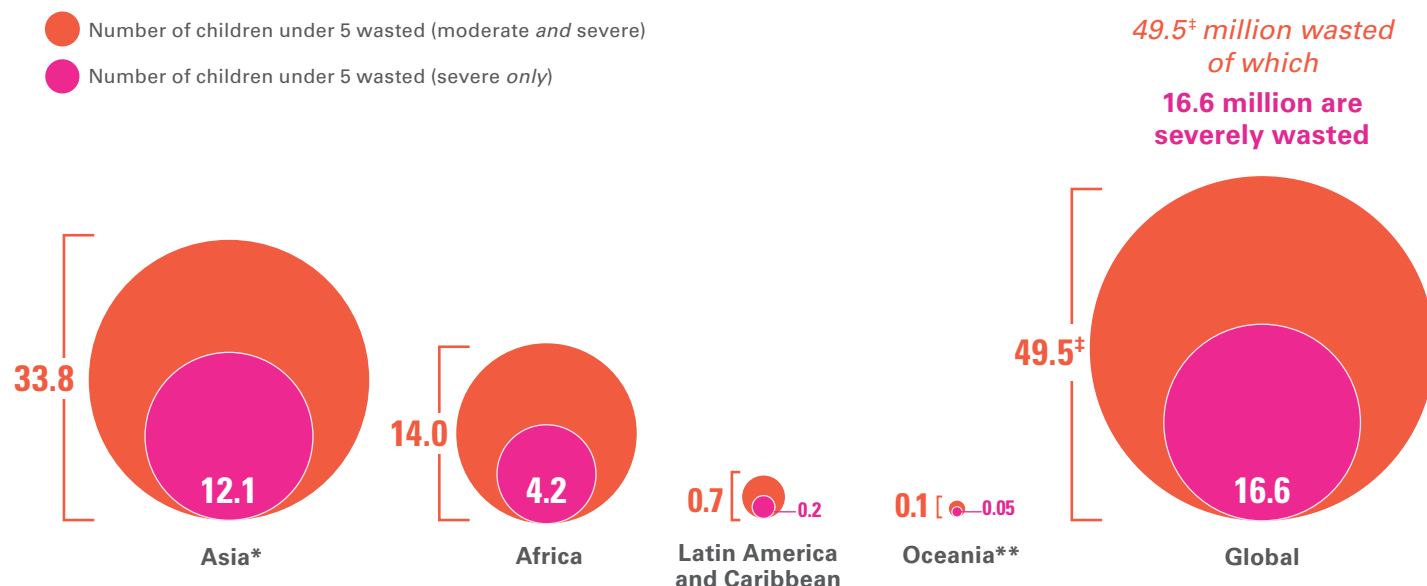


Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand; \*\*\*The Northern America sub-regional average based on United States data. There is no estimate available for the More Developed Region 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. ‡ The total number of wasted children under 5 is 49.48 million; this becomes 49 million when rounded to the nearest integer (as on the cover page), and 49.5 million when rounded to the nearest tenth.

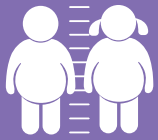
### Asia is home to the majority of children under 5 suffering from wasting and severe wasting

Number of wasted and severely wasted children under 5, by United Nations region, 2018

- 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, 2019 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. ‡ The total number of wasted children under 5 is 49.48 million; this becomes 49 million when rounded to the nearest integer (as on the cover page), and 49.5 million when rounded to the nearest tenth.

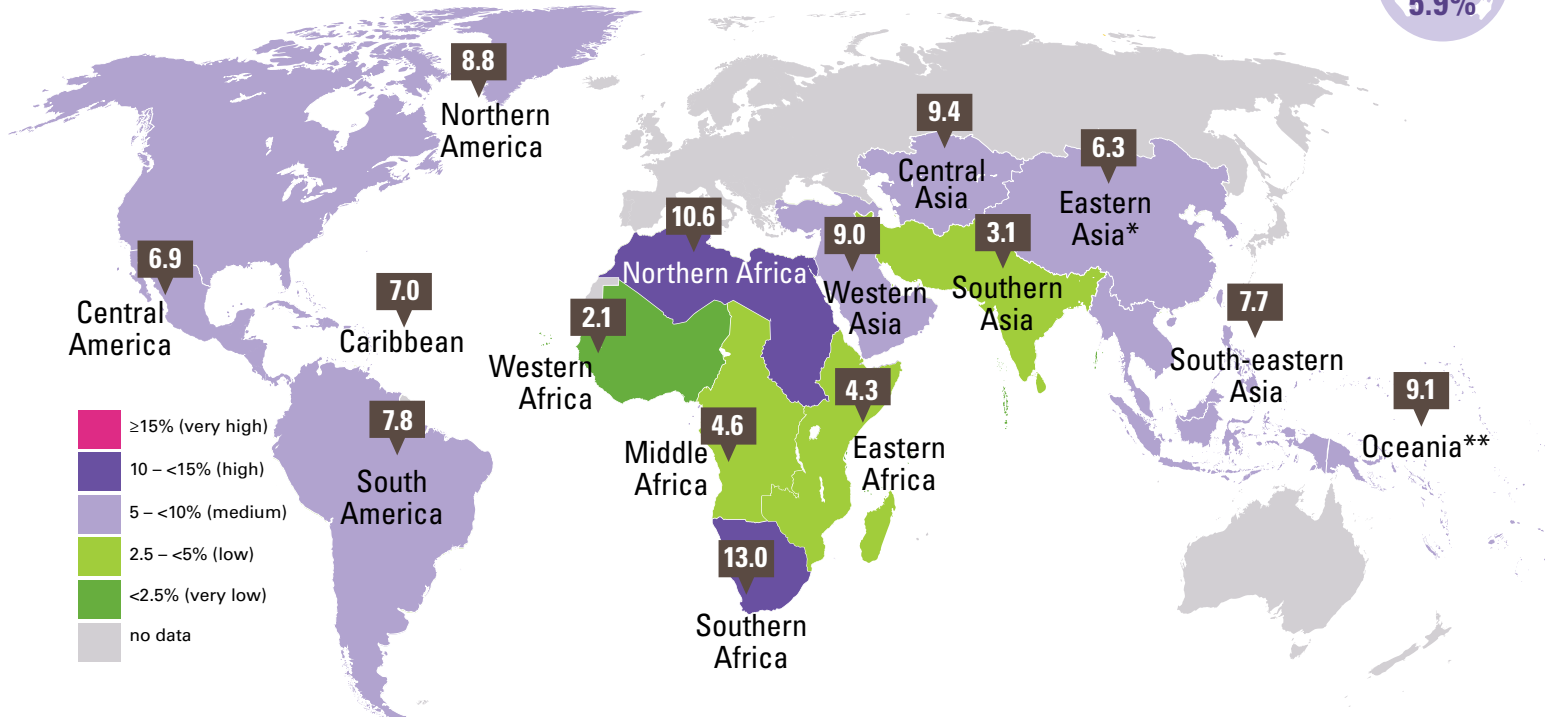


# Overweight PREVALENCE

## 11 out of 15 sub-regions have medium or high levels of overweight in children under 5

Percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations sub-region, 2018

GLOBAL  
5.9%



Source: UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group joint malnutrition estimates, 2019 edition. Note: \*Eastern Asia excluding Japan; \*\*Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand. 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 rate this high.

## There has been no progress to stem the rate of overweight in more than 15 years

Trends in the percentage of overweight children under 5, by United Nations region/sub-region, 2000 – 2018



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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_6087](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_6087)

