

STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION -UN REPORT

NEWS: The ‘**State of Food and Nutrition in the World**’ (SOFI) 2025 report has been released by the **United Nations**

- Despite a 30% decline in undernourishment since 2006, the 2025 SOFI report shows India had the **highest rate of wasting** among children under five in the world in 2024, with other key indicators also raising concern.
- **Hunger** affected up to **720 million people** worldwide in 2024 — around 8.2 per cent of the global population.

WHAT’S IN THE NEWS?

About the SOFI Report

- **Prepared by Five UN Agencies:**
The SOFI report is a collaborative publication by five major UN agencies:
 - **FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)**
 - **IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development)**
 - **UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund)**
 - **WFP (World Food Programme)**
 - **WHO (World Health Organization)**
- **Mandate and Monitoring Goals:**
The report primarily tracks progress on **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2**, especially:
 - **SDG 2.1:** Ending hunger
 - **SDG 2.2:** Eliminating all forms of malnutrition
- **Key Focus Areas:**
The report examines **chronic hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition**, and also **agricultural productivity, dietary affordability**, and related **socioeconomic trends**.

Key Global Findings (2024)

- **Chronic Hunger:**
 - Estimated **720 million people** worldwide suffered from chronic hunger in 2024.
 - This accounts for **8.2% of the global population**, though slightly down from 2023 (8.5%).
- **Food Insecurity:**
 - Around **2.3 billion people** globally experienced **moderate or severe food insecurity**.
 - There has been a **335 million increase** in food-insecure people since 2019, and **683 million more** compared to 2015.

- **Post-2015 Reversal:**

Despite global development efforts, **hunger remains above pre-pandemic levels**, with **96 million more** people chronically hungry than in 2015 (the base year for the SDGs).



Regional Distribution and Trends

- **Asia:**
 - Home to the **largest number of undernourished individuals (323 million)**.
 - High figures are mainly due to **dense population clusters**.
- **Africa:**
 - Holds the **highest hunger prevalence rate globally: more than one in five people** are chronically hungry.
 - Total number of undernourished: **307 million**.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:**
 - **34 million** people are affected by undernourishment.
 - While absolute numbers are lower, the region faces rising obesity alongside hunger.
- **Improving Regions:**
 - **Hunger has declined** in **Southeast Asia, Southern Asia, and South America**.
 - However, food insecurity remains **persistent or has worsened** in parts of Africa.

Global Projections for 2030 (SDG Target Year)

- **Undernourishment Estimate:**
 - Projected **512 million people** (around **6% of the world's population**) may still remain chronically undernourished by 2030.

- **Slow Progress from 2015 Levels:**
 - Only a **65 million reduction** expected compared to 2015 levels (577 million), which is **far below the required trajectory** for SDG 2.
- **Regional Outlook:**
 - **Africa:** Expected to account for **60% of global undernourishment** in 2030; **17.6% of its population** may still be chronically hungry.
 - **Asia and Latin America:** Expected to reduce undernourishment below **5%** of their respective populations.

India's Nutrition Profile in 2024

A. Undernourishment

- **Decline in Absolute Numbers:**
 - Undernourished population declined from **243 million (2006)** to **172 million (2024)**.
 - Still, about **12% of India's population** remains undernourished.
- **International Ranking:**
 - India ranks **48th globally out of 204 countries**.
 - In Asia, it has the **7th highest proportion** of undernourished people — worse than **Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan**.

Child Nutrition Indicators

- **Wasting (Low weight-for-height):**
 - **18.7%** of Indian children under five suffer from wasting — **the highest rate globally**, affecting **over 21 million children**.
 - Indicates **acute undernutrition and disease burden**.
- **Stunting (Low height-for-age):**
 - **37.4 million children** under five are stunted in India.
 - Reflects **chronic undernutrition**, poor maternal health, and long-term poverty.
- **Overweight Children:**
 - Number of overweight children rose from **2.7 million (2012)** to **4.2 million (2024)**.
 - Suggests the emergence of a **dual burden** — undernutrition coexisting with rising childhood obesity.

Women's Health – Anaemia

- **High Anaemia Prevalence:**
 - **53.7% of Indian women (aged 15–49)** were anaemic in 2023 — the **highest in Asia**, and **4th-highest globally**.
- **Absolute Increase in Anaemic Women:**
 - The number rose from **164 million (2012)** to **203 million (2023)**, despite ongoing health initiatives.

- **Global Comparison:**
 - India trails only **Gabon, Mali, and Mauritania** in anaemia prevalence among women.
- **Anaemia Explained:**
 - A condition marked by **low haemoglobin levels**, impairing **oxygen delivery** to body tissues, leading to **fatigue, weakness, and poor physical performance**.

Nutrition Inequality and Structural Challenges

- **Key Barriers:**
 - High undernutrition rates are driven by **poverty, income inequality, food insecurity, lack of healthcare access, and inadequate education**, especially among **marginalised and rural communities**.
- **Corroboration from National Data (NFHS-5):**
 - **Stunting:** 35.5%
 - **Wasting:** 19.3%
 - Consistent with SOFI's findings and confirms **chronic nutritional issues** at the grassroots level.

Affordability of Healthy Diets in India

- **Diet Affordability Crisis (2024):**
 - **42.9% of Indians** could not afford a healthy diet.
 - Cost of a nutritious diet rose from **\$2.77 (PPP) in 2017** to **\$4.07 in 2024**.
- **Key Drivers:**
 - **High food prices, rising inequality, urban-rural divide, and limited access to fresh, diverse foods**.

Double Burden of Malnutrition in India

- **Rising Obesity Trend:**
 - **Obese adult population** in India doubled from **33.6 million (2012)** to **71.4 million (2024)**.
 - Often linked to **unhealthy diets, processed foods, and sedentary lifestyles**.
- **Simultaneous Presence of Undernutrition and Overnutrition:**
 - India faces a **double burden of malnutrition**, where **chronic hunger** and **rising obesity** exist side-by-side due to **economic disparities and dietary transitions**.

WHO Definitions: Malnutrition and its Forms

- **Malnutrition:**
 - Encompasses **deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances** in energy and nutrient intake.
- **Undernutrition (4 Forms):**
 - **Wasting:** Rapid weight loss; signals recent food shortage or illness.

- **Stunting:** Long-term poor nutrition; stunts growth and cognitive development.
- **Underweight:** Reflects a combination of stunting and wasting.
- **Micronutrient Deficiencies:** Shortages of iron, vitamin A, iodine, etc., which impair immunity and organ function.
- **Overnutrition/Obesity:**
 - Results from **excessive calorie intake**, processed food consumption, and low physical activity.
 - Increases risks of **diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and other NCDs**.
- **Diet-Related NCDs:**
 - Includes **heart disease, stroke, and hypertension**, often linked to **poor diets and lifestyle factors**.

Key Government Schemes Addressing Malnutrition

- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme:**
 - Provides **nutritious cooked meals** to schoolchildren to **improve attendance and nutritional levels**.
- **National Food Security Act, 2013:**
 - Ensures access to **subsidised food grains** for eligible beneficiaries across urban and rural areas.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan (2018):**
 - India's flagship **nutrition mission**, targeting reduction in **stunting, underweight, and anaemia** among women and children using a **convergent and technology-driven approach**.
- **Anganwadi Services (ICDS):**
 - Offers **supplementary nutrition, immunization, and health checkups** for children under 6 years, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):**
 - Provides **conditional cash transfers** to compensate for wage loss and promote **maternal health-seeking behaviour**.
- **Mission Poshan 2.0:**
 - An integrated scheme merging ICDS and POSHAN Abhiyaan, focusing on **community-based nutrition delivery**.
- **Anaemia Mukta Bharat (AMB):**
 - Aims to reduce anaemia through **Iron and Folic Acid supplementation, testing, and behaviour change communication**.
- **Poshan Vatika:**
 - Promotes **home/kitchen gardens** for growing organic fruits and vegetables to ensure **diet diversity** and family nutrition.

Source: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world-2025>