



## Growing Obesity in India

**For Prelims:** [World Health Organization](#), [Body Mass Index](#), **Obesity**, [Mission Poshan 2.0](#), [Mid-Day Meal Scheme](#), [Poshan Vatikas](#)

**For Mains:** Malnutrition, Steps to Tackle Malnutrition in India, Government Policies & Interventions

**Source:** TH

### Why in News?

A recent study published in **The Lancet** has shed light on the alarming increase in obesity rates among children, adolescents, and adults over the past few decades **worldwide**.

- This comprehensive analysis was conducted by the **NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC)** in collaboration with the [World Health Organization](#).
- The study looked at [body mass index \(BMI\)](#) to understand **how obesity and underweight** have changed worldwide from 1990 to 2022.

### Note

- NCD-RisC is a network of health scientists around the world that provides rigorous and timely data on major risk factors for [non-communicable diseases](#) for all of the world's countries.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- **India's Statistics:**
  - **Obesity:**
    - The **Lancet** revealed that in 2022, **12.5 million children** (7.3 million boys and 5.2 million girls) aged **between 5-19 years in India** were classified as **grossly overweight**, marking a significant increase from 0.4 million in 1990.
    - In the prevalence of obesity category for girls and boys, **India ranked 174<sup>th</sup> in the world in 2022**.
    - Among adults, in women, the obesity rate increased from 1.2% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2022 and men from 0.5% to 5.4% in the same period.
  - **Undernutrition:**
    - The prevalence of undernutrition has also remained high in India, as a result, India has become one of the countries with a **high "double burden,"** of [Malnutrition](#).
      - 13.7% of women and 12.5% of men were underweight.
    - **Thinness**, a measure of being underweight in children, in Indian girls is the highest in the world, with a prevalence of 20.3%.
      - It was the second highest in Indian boys, with a prevalence of 21.7%.

#### ▪ **Global:**

- The total number of children, adolescents and adults worldwide living with **obesity has surpassed one billion**.
  - In total, 159 million children and adolescents, and 879 million adults were obese in 2022.
- The **combined burden of underweight and obesity** has increased in most countries, driven by an increase in obesity, while **underweight and thinness remain prevalent in South Asia and parts of Africa**.
- In 2022, the **combined prevalence of underweight and obesity was highest in island nations** in the Caribbean Polynesia and Micronesia, and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.
- The countries with the **highest combined prevalence of thinness and obesity in 2022** were **Polynesia, Micronesia** and the **Caribbean** for both sexes and Chile and Qatar for boys.
  - Combined prevalence was also high in some countries in South Asia, such as India and Pakistan, where thinness remained prevalent despite having declined.

#### ▪ **Factors Contributing Obesity:**

- **Women are more prone to gaining weight** because they **often don't have time for exercise** and prioritise their family's nutrition over their own.
- They also tend to **get less sleep** due to household responsibilities.
- Additionally, **unhealthy junk food is cheaper and more readily available** than nutritious options, leading to increased obesity rates, even among those with lower incomes in places like Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Goa.

## What are Overweight, Thinness, and Obesity?

#### ▪ **Body Mass Index:**

- BMI is a measure of **weight-to-height** commonly used to classify underweight, overweight, and obesity in adults.
- It is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of height in meters ( $\text{kg/m}^2$ ).
  - For example, an adult weighing 58 kg and standing 1.70 m tall will have a BMI of 20.1 ( $\text{BMI} = 58 \text{ kg} / (1.70 \text{ m} * 1.70 \text{ m})$ ).

#### ▪ **Obesity and Overweight:**

- Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a health risk.
- **Overweight is a condition of excessive fat** deposits and **Obesity is a chronic disease** that occurs when the body stores excess calories as fat.
  - Obesity is a major risk factor for chronic diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, and certain **cancers**.
  - Childhood obesity is associated with serious health complications and an increased risk of premature onset of related illnesses.
- Obesity is one side of the **double burden of malnutrition**, and today **more people are obese than underweight** in every region except the South-East Asia Region.

#### ▪ **Thinness and Underweight:**

- Thinness and Underweight refers to having a **lower-than-normal body weight** relative to height. It is often associated with insufficient calorie intake or underlying health conditions.
- Underweight is **one of the four broad sub-forms of undernutrition**.
  - An adult is considered underweight if their **BMI is less than 18 kg/m<sup>2</sup>**. School-aged children and adolescents are considered underweight if their BMI is two standard deviations below the mean.
  - **Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: [wasting](#), [stunting](#), [Underweight](#), and [micronutrient deficiencies](#).**
- Being underweight can lead to various health problems, including osteoporosis, skin, hair, or teeth issues, frequent illnesses, fatigue, **anaemia, irregular periods, premature births, impaired growth, and increased mortality risk**.

## What are India's Initiatives Related to Nutrition?

- [Eat Right Mela](#)
- [Fit India Movement](#)
- [Eat Right Station Certification](#)
- [Mission Poshan 2.0](#)
- [Mid-Day Meal Scheme](#)
- [Poshan Vatikas](#)
- [Anganwadi](#)
- [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\) Scheme](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana \(PMMVY\)](#)

## Way Forward

- Obesity and underweight should not be considered in isolation, because the underweight-obesity transition **can occur rapidly**, leaving their combined burden unchanged or higher.
- The focus has to be on programmes **that enhance healthy nutrition**, such as **targeted cash transfers, food assistance** as subsidies or vouchers for healthy foods, **free healthy school meals**, and primary care-based nutritional interventions.
- There is an urgent **need for supporting weight loss in those with obesity**.
- Prevention and management are especially important because the age of onset of obesity has decreased, which increases the duration of exposure.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Which of the following is/are the indicators/ indicators used by IFPRI to compute the Global Hunger Index Report? (2016)**

1. Undernourishment
2. Child stunting
3. Child mortality

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1, 2 and 3  
(d) 1 and 3 only

**Ans: (c)**

**Q.2 With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidized food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 only

- (c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) 3 only

**Ans: (b)**

**Mains**

**Q.** How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India? **(2018)**

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