

Over One Billion People Living with Obesity



A global analysis published in *The Lancet* reveals that the number of people worldwide living with obesity has surpassed one billion. Over the years from 1990 to 2022, obesity rates among children and adolescents increased fourfold, while rates among adults more than doubled. Simultaneously, rates of underweight decreased across all age groups, making obesity the most prevalent form of malnutrition in numerous countries. Island nations in the Pacific and the Caribbean, along with countries in the Middle East and North Africa, reported the highest combined rates of underweight and obesity.

The study underscores the urgent need for significant changes in strategies to combat obesity, as well as policies aimed at further reducing underweight populations, particularly in the world's poorest regions.

The analysis, conducted by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), examined data from over 220 million individuals aged five and above across more than 190 countries. It revealed concerning trends in obesity and underweight from 1990 to 2022, highlighting the global health impact of these forms of malnutrition.

Professor Majid Ezzati of Imperial College London, the senior author, expressed alarm at the increasing rates of obesity among children and adolescents, mirroring the epidemic seen in adults since 1990. Prof Ezzati stressed the necessity of improving the availability and affordability of nutritious foods to address both forms of malnutrition effectively.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, emphasised the importance of early-life intervention and evidence-based policies to combat obesity. He called for collaboration between governments, communities, and the private sector to achieve global obesity targets.

Despite progress in some regions, the double burden of malnutrition, driven by rising obesity rates, remains a significant challenge. Major global issues such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and conflicts like the war in Ukraine pose additional threats to nutrition security, requiring comprehensive policy responses.

The study also highlighted notable regional disparities, with low-income and middle-income countries, particularly in Polynesia, Micronesia, the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa, experiencing the greatest rise in the double burden of malnutrition. This transition underscores the need for tailored interventions to address specific regional challenges.

Detailed country-level data revealed varying prevalence rates of obesity and underweight, with some nations experiencing alarming increases while others saw significant declines. The authors acknowledged limitations in the study, including variations in data availability and the use of BMI as a measure, but stressed its importance in understanding global malnutrition trends.

Source: [The Lancet](#)
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Published on : Tue, 5 Mar 2024