

Central America

Subregional overview

Malnutrition burden

In the Central America subregion, there has been some progress towards achieving global nutrition targets. The global target for under-five wasting has four countries on course to meet it. The targets for under-five overweight, under-five stunting, and infant exclusive breastfeeding each have three countries on course. However, not a single country in the subregion is on course to meet the targets for anaemia in women of reproductive age, low birth weight, male diabetes, female diabetes, male obesity, and female obesity. Four countries in the subregion have insufficient data to comprehensively assess their progress towards these global targets.

Although it performs relatively well against other subregions, Central America still experiences a malnutrition burden among its under-five population. The average prevalence of overweight in under-fives is 6.9% - the lowest compared to other subregions in Latin America and the Caribbean. The prevalence of stunting in under-fives is 12.9%, this is less than the global average of 21.9%. The Central America subregion's prevalence of wasting in under-fives of 0.9% is also less than the global average of 7.3%.

Some 34% of infants under 6 months in the Central America subregion are exclusively breastfed, while the subregion's average low birth weight prevalence of 8.7% is less than the global average of 14.6%.

The Central America subregion's adult population also face a malnutrition burden. An average of 15.5% of women of reproductive age have anaemia, and 11.2% of adult women have diabetes, compared to 10.3% of men. Meanwhile, 31.4% of women and 22.2% of men have obesity.

Sources: UNICEF global databases Infant and Young Child Feeding, UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group: Joint child malnutrition estimates, UNICEF/WHO Low birthweight estimates, NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, WHO Global Health Observatory.

Notes: Data on the adult indicators are based on modelled estimates.

Progress against global nutrition targets 2019



Under-five stunting



3 On course
1 Off course
4 No data



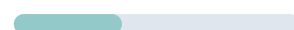
Under-five wasting



4 On course
0 Off course
4 No data



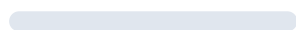
Under-five overweight



3 On course
1 Off course
4 No data



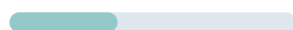
Low birthweight



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data



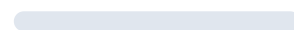
Exclusive breastfeeding



3 On course
1 Off course
4 No data



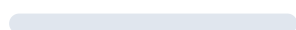
Adult female obesity



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data



Adult male obesity



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data



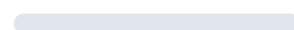
Adult female diabetes



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data



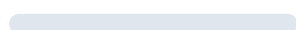
Adult male diabetes



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data



WRA anaemia



0 On course
8 Off course
0 No data

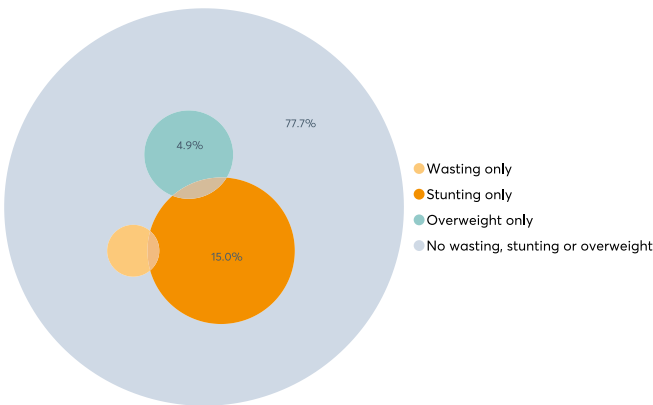
Sources: UNICEF global databases Infant and Young Child Feeding, UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group: Joint child malnutrition estimates, NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, WHO Global Health Observatory and Global Burden of Disease, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Notes: WRA = Women of a reproductive age; NA = not applicable. The methodologies for tracking differ between targets. Data on the adult indicators are based on modelled estimates.

Child (under-five) nutrition status

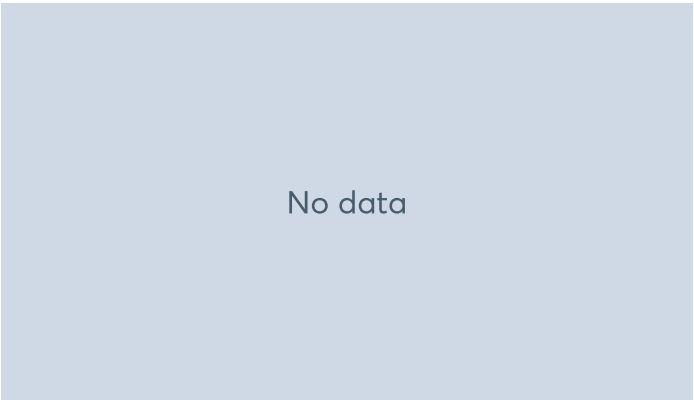
Coexistence of wasting, stunting and overweight

Low birth weight



Sources: UNICEF, Division of Data Research and Policy (2019). UNICEF Global Databases: Overlapping Stunting, Wasting and Overweight, January 2019, New York.

Notes: Percentage of children under-five years of age who experience different and overlapping forms of malnutrition.



Source: UNICEF/WHO Low birthweight estimates, 2019 edition.

Prevalence of under-five stunting

Stunting at subnational level

Stunting at 5km level

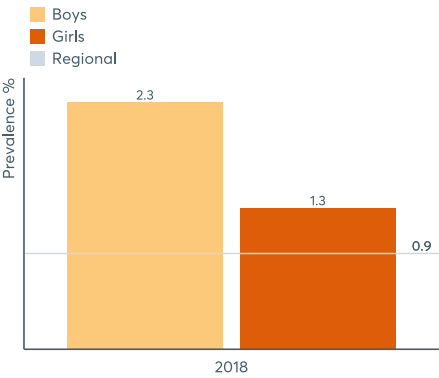


Source: Kinyoki, D.K. et al. Mapping child growth failure across low- and middle-income countries. Nature 577, 231–234 (2020) doi:10.1038/s41586-019-1878-8.

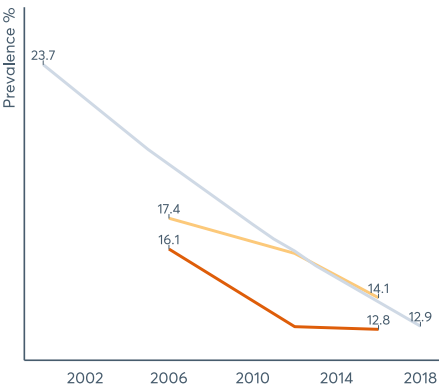
Notes: 5 km level map shows prevalence at the 5 x 5-km resolution. Prevalence is the 2017 estimated prevalence, based on a model using a range of surveys between 1998-2018. See source paper for full methods.

Child (under-five) nutrition status over time

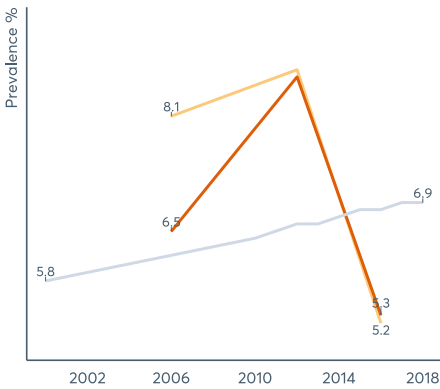
Wasting by gender



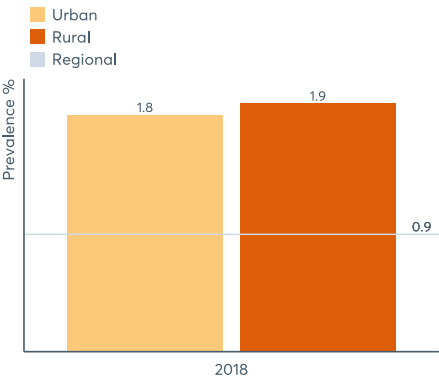
Stunting by gender



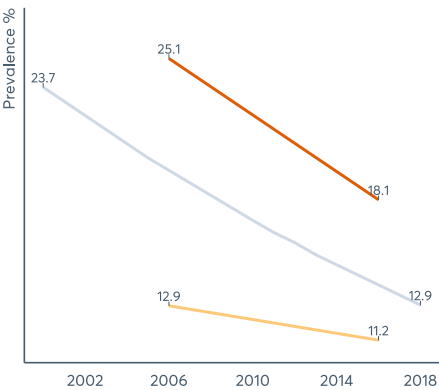
Overweight by gender



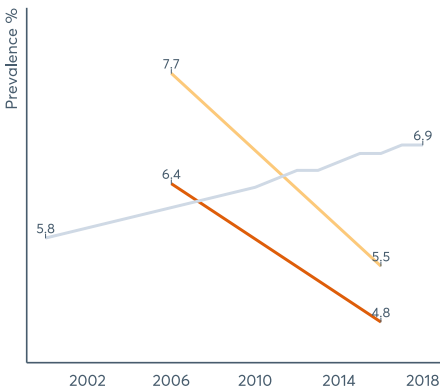
Wasting by location



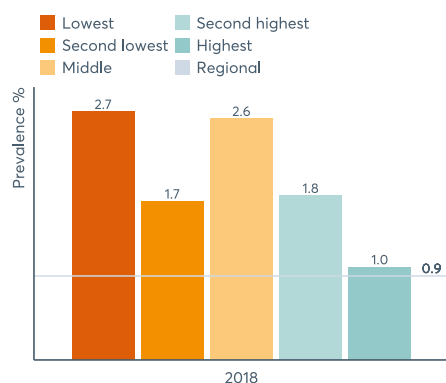
Stunting by location



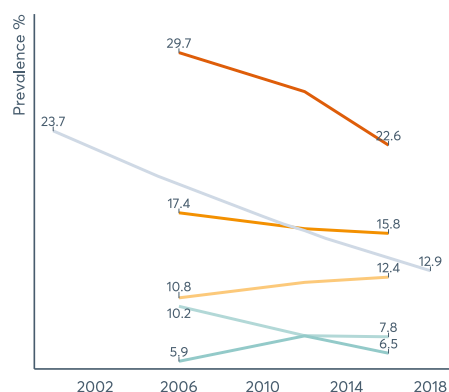
Overweight by location



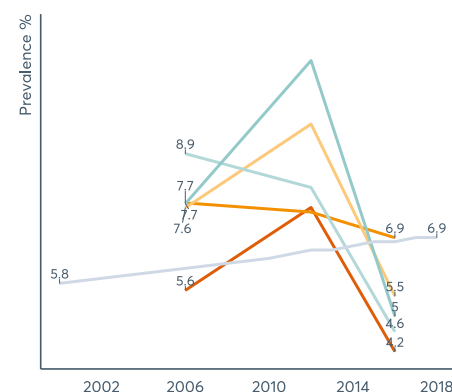
Wasting by income



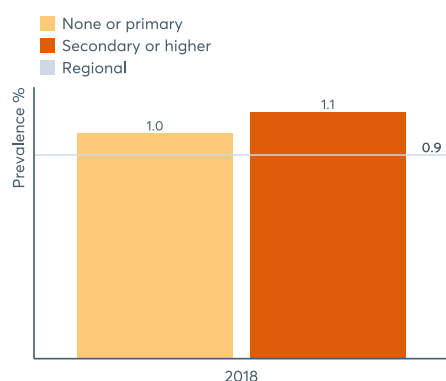
Stunting by income



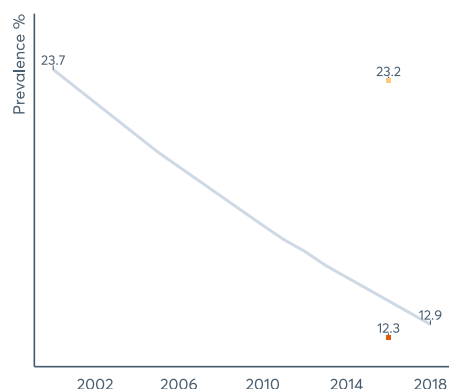
Overweight by income



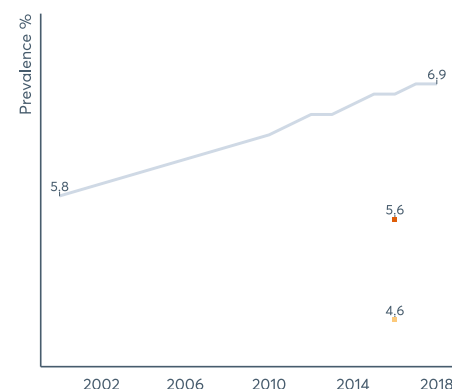
Wasting by mother's education



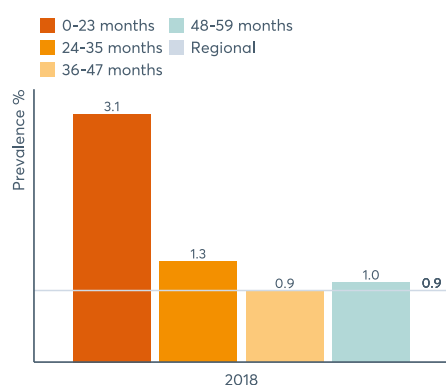
Stunting by mother's education



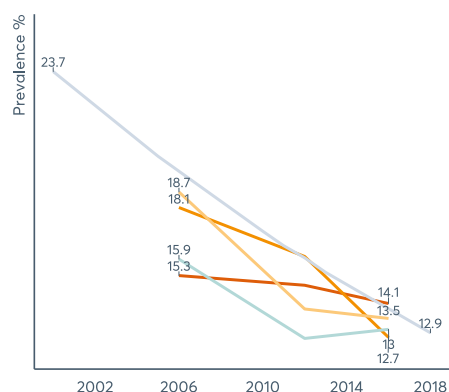
Overweight by mother's education



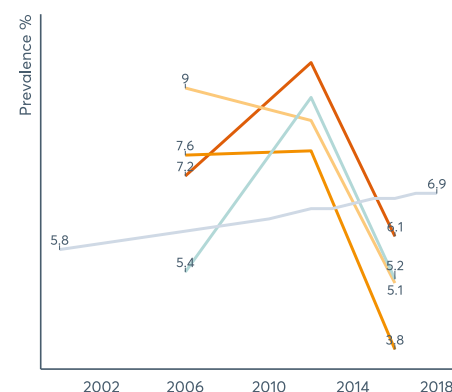
Wasting by age



Stunting by age



Overweight by age

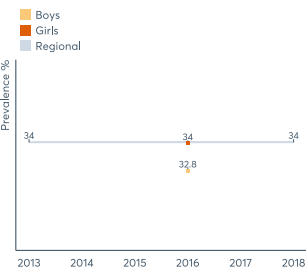


Sources: UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group: Joint child malnutrition estimates.

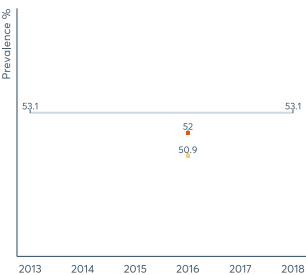
Notes: Regional trends (grey line in charts) refer to estimates from UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group: Joint child malnutrition estimates. Disaggregated data (coloured lines/bars in charts) is based on population weighted means. Estimates are presented only where available data represents at least 50% of the regional population. Based on population weighted means of between 3 and 7 countries.

Infant and young child feeding over time

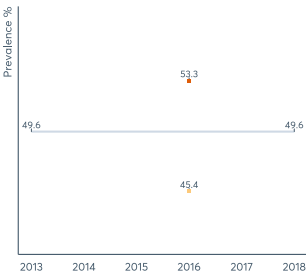
Exclusive breastfeeding by gender



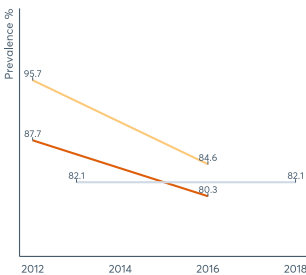
Continued breastfeeding at 1 year by gender



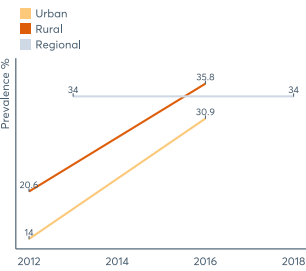
Minimum acceptable diet by gender



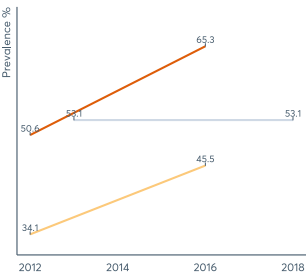
Intro. to solid, semi-solid, soft foods by gender



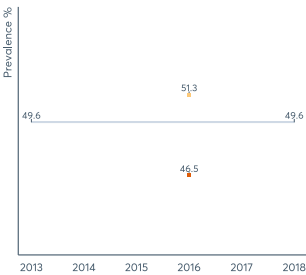
Exclusive breastfeeding by location



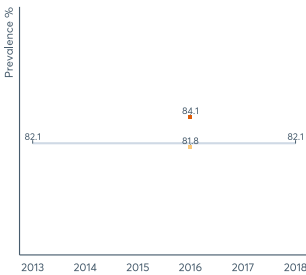
Continued breastfeeding at 1 year by location



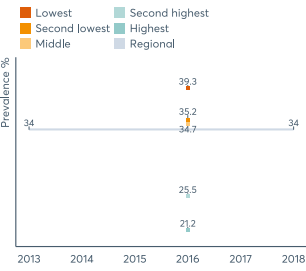
Minimum acceptable diet by location



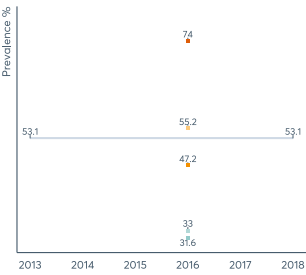
Intro. to solid, semi-solid, soft foods by location



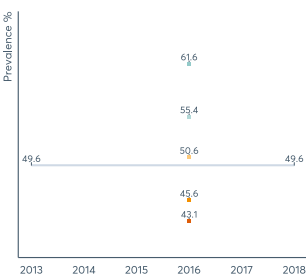
Exclusive breastfeeding by income



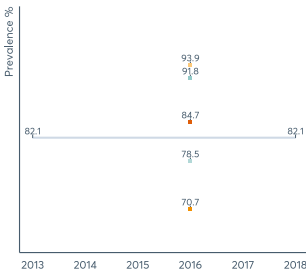
Continued breastfeeding at 1 year by income



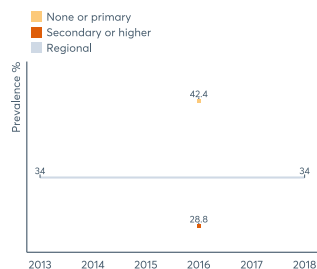
Minimum acceptable diet by income



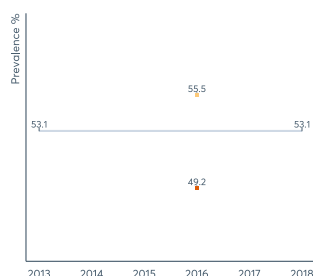
Intro. to solid, semi-solid, soft foods by income



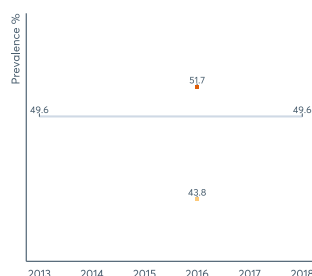
Exclusive breastfeeding by mother's education



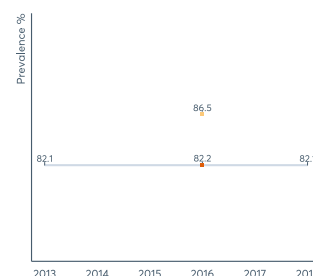
Continued breastfeeding at 1 year by mother's education



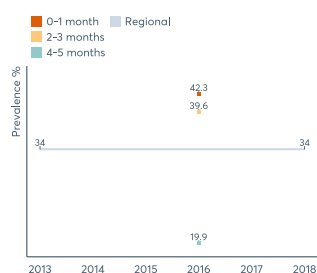
Minimum acceptable diet by mother's education



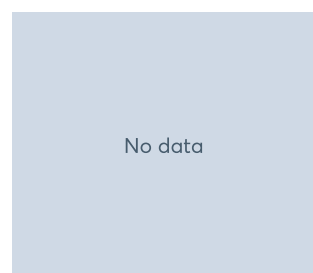
Intro. to solid, semi-solid, soft foods by mother's education



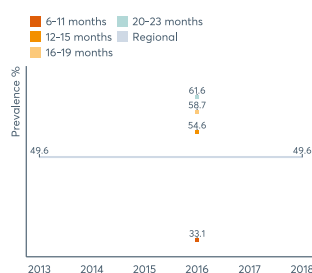
Exclusive breastfeeding by age



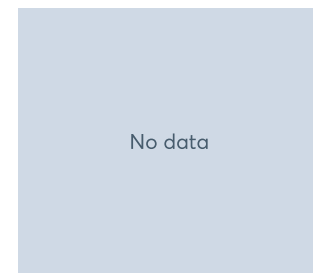
Continued breastfeeding at 1 year by age



Minimum acceptable diet by age



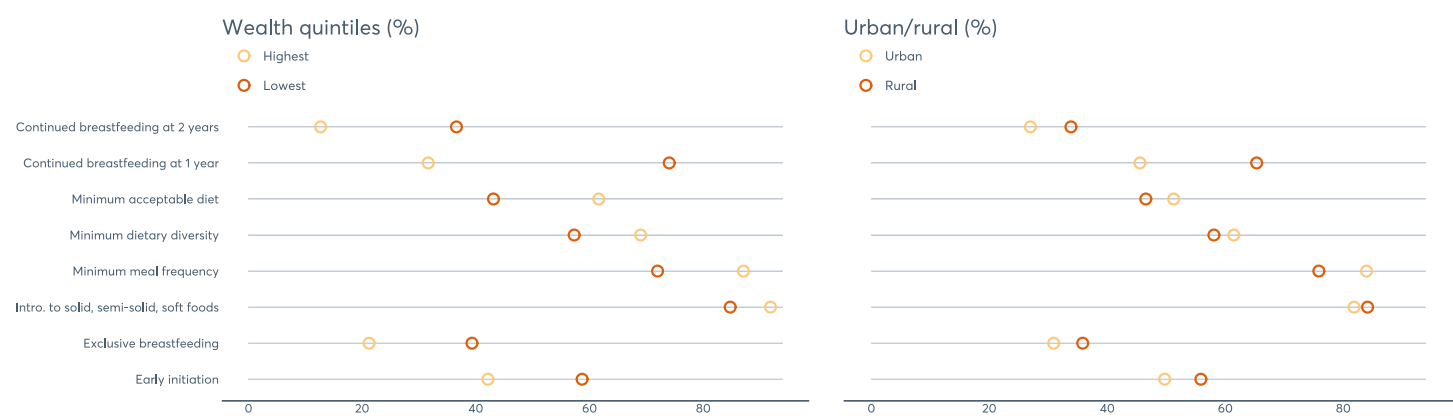
Intro. to solid, semi-solid, soft foods by age



Sources: UNICEF, Division of Data Research and Policy (2019). Global UNICEF Global Databases: Infant and Young Child Feeding, New York, May 2019.

Notes: Regional trends (grey line in charts) refer to estimates from UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group: Joint child malnutrition estimates. Disaggregated data (coloured lines/bars in charts) is based on population weighted means. Estimates are presented only where available data represents at least 50% of the regional population. Based on population weighted means of between 3 and 5 countries.

Infant and young child feeding

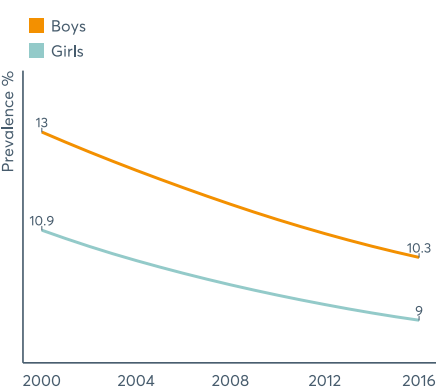


Sources: UNICEF, Division of Data Research and Policy (2019). Global UNICEF Global Databases: Infant and Young Child Feeding: Exclusive breastfeeding, Predominant breastfeeding, New York, May 2019.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of between 3 and 5 countries.

Child and adolescent (aged 5-19) nutrition status

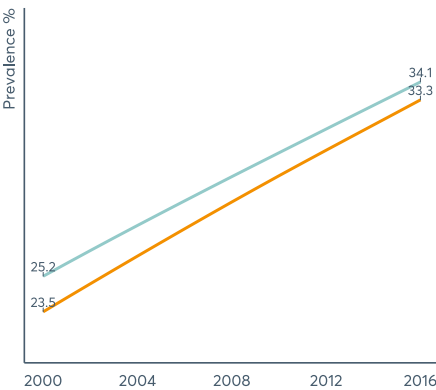
Underweight by gender



Sources: NCD Risk Factor Collaboration.

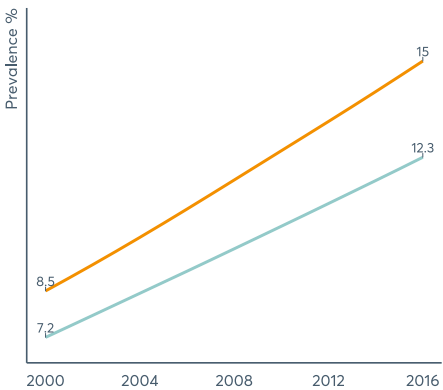
Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Overweight by gender



Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

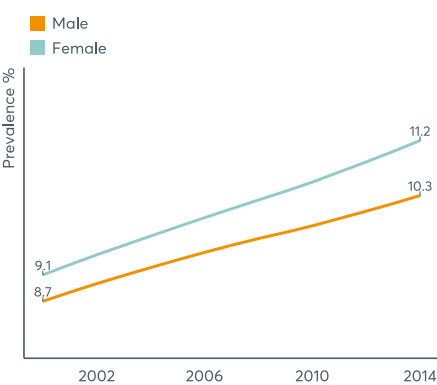
Obesity by gender



Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Adult nutrition status

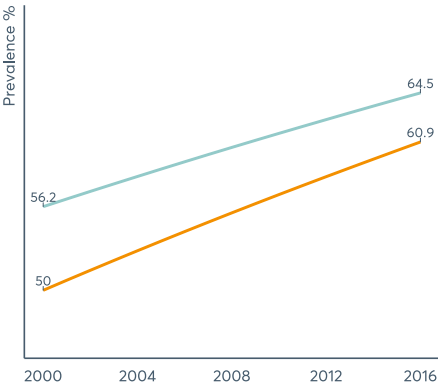
Diabetes by gender



Sources: NCD Risk Factor Collaboration.

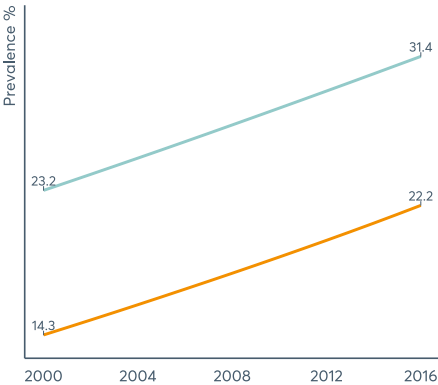
Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Overweight by gender



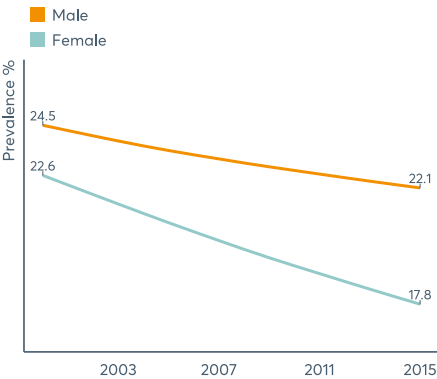
Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Obesity by gender



Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

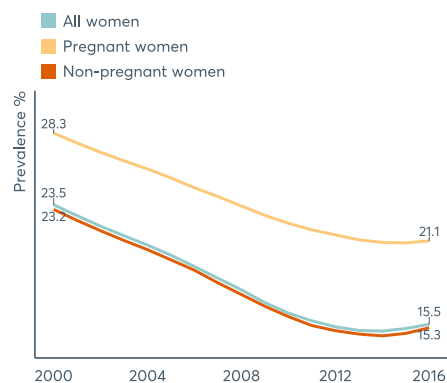
Raised blood pressure by gender



Sources: NCD Risk Factor Collaboration.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

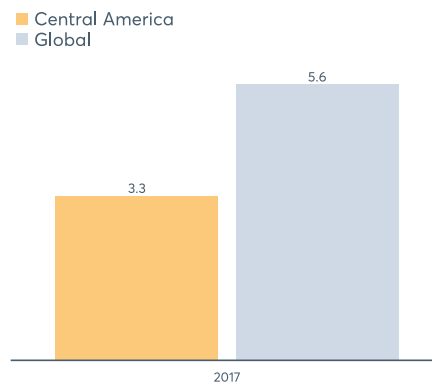
Anaemia in WRA



Source: WHO Global Health Observatory.

Notes: WRA = women of reproductive age. Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Salt intake (grams per day)

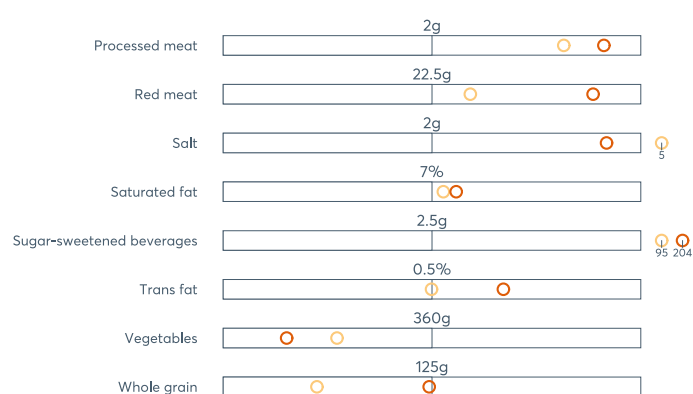
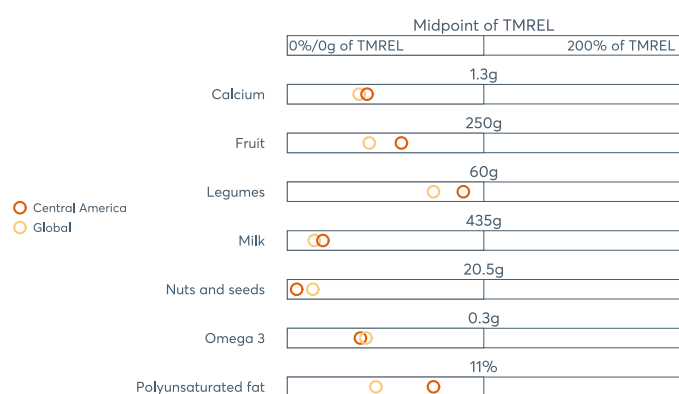


Source: Global Burden of Disease, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Dietary needs

Consumption of food groups and components, 2016



Sources: Global Burden of Disease, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Notes: TMREL = theoretical minimum risk of exposure level. Men and women aged 25 and older. Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

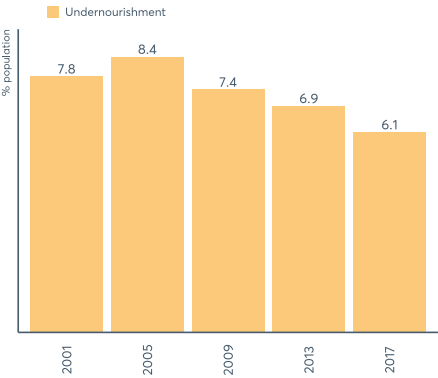
Intervention coverage

| Coverage/practice indicator | Total (%) | Boy (%) | Girl (%) | Year |
|---|-----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Children 0-59 months with diarrhoea who received zinc treatment | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| Children 6-59 months who received vitamin A supplements in last 6 months | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| Children 6-59 months given iron supplements in past 7 days | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| Women with a live birth in the five years preceding the survey who received iron tablets or syrup during antenatal care | No data | NA | NA | No data |
| Household consumption of any iodised salt | No data | NA | NA | No data |

Notes: NA = not applicable. Data is compiled using STATcompiler and taken from country Demographic and Health Surveys for 2005-2018.

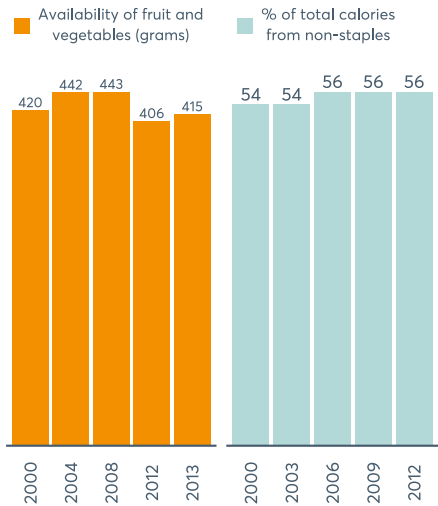
Determinants

Undernourishment



Source: FAOSTAT 2018.

Food supply



Source: FAOSTAT 2018.

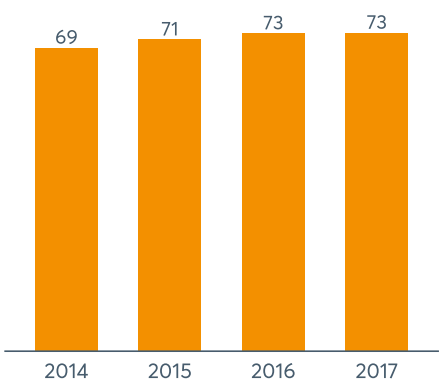
Gender-related determinants

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| Early childbearing births by age 18 (%) ¹ | NA | NA |
| Gender Inequality Index (score [*]) ² | NA | NA |
| Gender Inequality Index (country rank) ² | NA | NA |

Sources: ¹ UNICEF 2018; ² UNDP 2018.

Notes: ^{*} 0 = low inequality, 1 = high inequality.

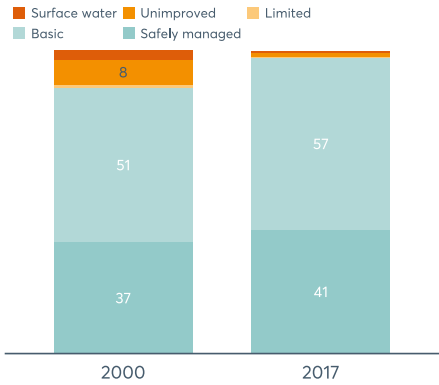
Female secondary education enrolment (net, % population)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of between 2 and 7 countries.

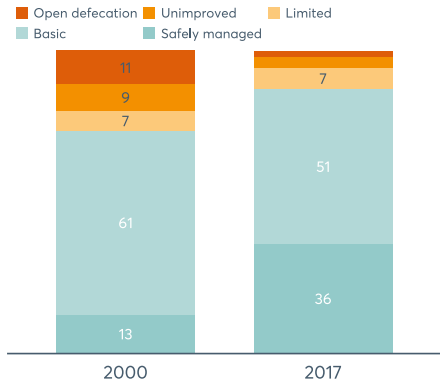
Drinking water coverage (% population)



Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme 2019.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of between 4 and 8 countries.

Sanitation coverage (% population)



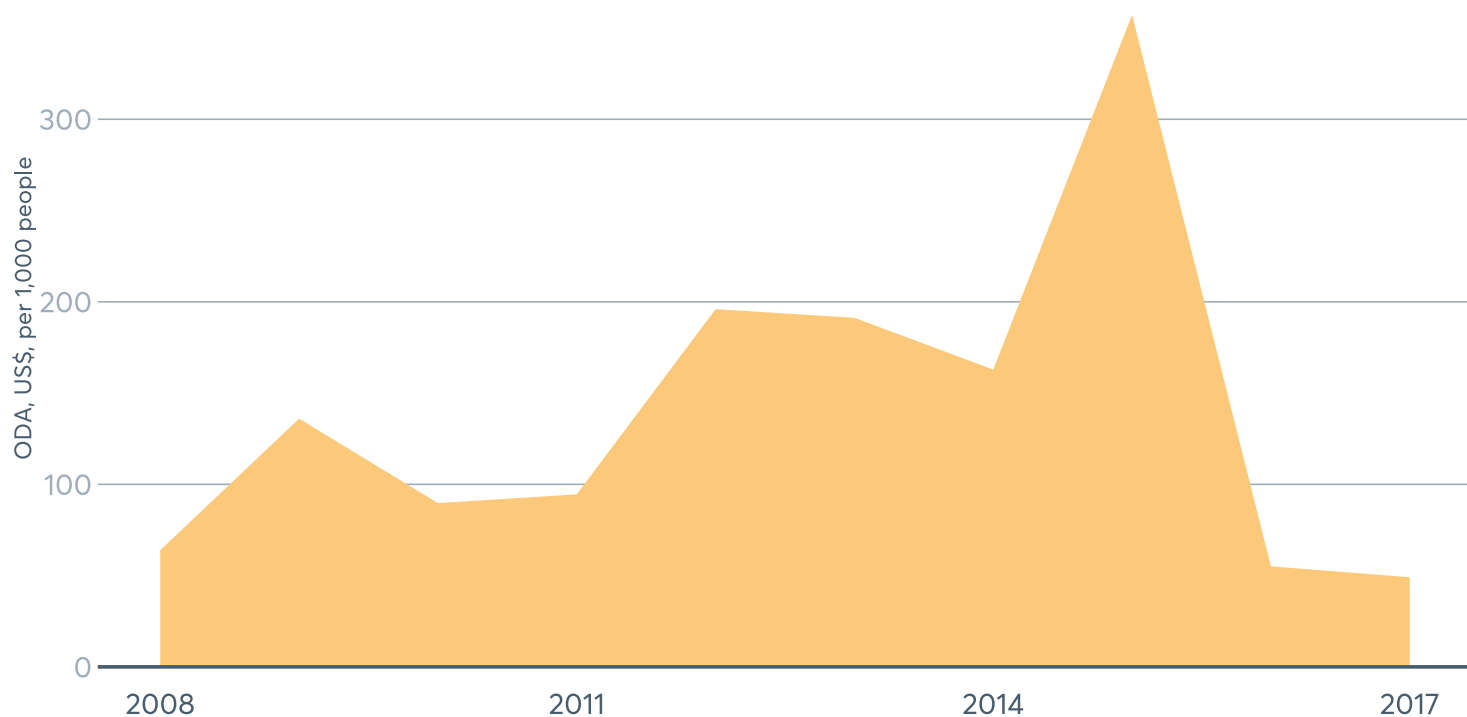
Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme 2019.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of between 1 and 8 countries.

Resources, policies and targets

Development assistance

Basic nutrition ODA received



Sources: Development Initiatives based on OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS).

Notes: ODA = official development assistance. Amounts based on gross ODA disbursements, constant 2017 prices. Figure includes ODA grants and loans, but excludes other official flows and private grants.

National policies

| | |
|--|-----|
| Mandatory legislation for salt iodisation | 8/8 |
| Sugar-sweetened beverage tax | 8/8 |
| Food-based dietary guidelines | 7/8 |
| Policy to reduce salt consumption | 2/8 |
| Operational policy, strategy or action plan to reduce unhealthy diet related to NCDs | 6/8 |
| Operational, multisectoral national NCD policy, strategy or action plan | 5/8 |
| Operational policy, strategy or action plan for diabetes | 6/8 |
| Policy to reduce the impact on children of marketing of foods and beverages high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars or salt | 1/8 |
| Policy to limit saturated fatty acids and virtually eliminate industrially produced trans-fats | 1/8 |

Sources: Global Fortification Data Exchange 2018; Sugar-sweetened data prepared using data from the NOURISHING database, academic references and market reports; FAO 2018; WHO Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA), 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review, WHO Global Health Observatory.

Notes: Value refers to the number of countries with policy. NA = not applicable; NCD = non-communicable disease.

Targets included in national (nutrition or other) plan

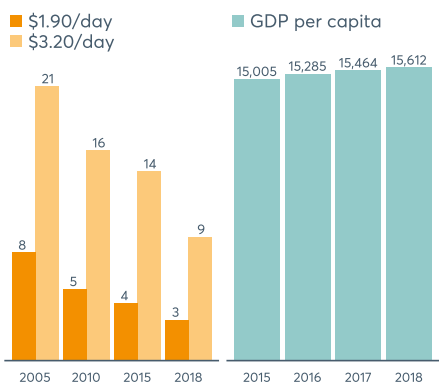
| Stunting | Anaemia |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 7/8 | 4/8 |
| Low birth weight | Child overweight |
| 6/8 | 6/8 |
| Exclusive breastfeeding | Wasting |
| 8/8 | 7/8 |
| Salt intake | Overweight adults and adolescents |
| 5/8 | 6/8 |
| Multisectoral comprehensive nutrition plan | |
| 5/8 | |

Sources: WHO Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA), 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review.

Notes: Value refers to the number of countries with target.

Economics and demography

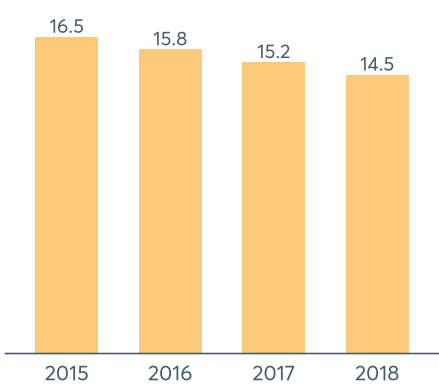
Poverty rates (%) and GDP (PPP\$)



Sources: World Bank 2019, IMF World Economic Outlook Database 2019.

Notes: PPP = purchasing power parity. Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Under-five mortality (per 1,000 live births)



Source: UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation 2018.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Government revenues (\$m)



Sources: IMF Article IV staff reports (country specific) and IMF World Economic Outlook Database (April 2019).

Income inequality

| Gini index score ¹ | Gini index rank ² | Year |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| NA | NA | NA |

Sources: World Bank 2019.

Notes: ¹ 0 = perfect equality, 100 = perfect inequality. ² Countries are ranked from most equal (1) to most unequal (159).

Population

| | | |
|---|---------|------|
| Population (thousands) | 175,472 | 2018 |
| Under-five population (thousands) | 16,126 | 2019 |
| Rural (%) | 25 | 2018 |
| >65 years (thousands) | 12,574 | 2019 |

Sources: World Bank 2019, UN Population Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.

Population density of health workers per 1,000 people

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Physicians | 1.91 | 2016 |
| Nurses and midwives | 2.23 | 2016 |
| Community health workers | No data | No data |

Sources: WHO's Global Health Workforce Statistics, OECD, supplemented by country data.

Notes: Based on population weighted means of 8 countries.