

## Adult rates of overweight and obesity rise in Bangladesh

*Global obesity prevalence rates soar among children, but remain the same in Bangladesh*

SEATTLE—Over the last 33 years, rates of either being overweight or obese doubled among Bangladeshi adults but remained low among children, according to a new, first-of-its-kind analysis of trend data from 188 countries. In 1980, 7% of adults and 3% of children were overweight or obese. In 2013, those rates had climbed to 17% for adults but only 4.5% for children.

The study, “Global, regional, and national prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adults during 1980–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013,” conducted by an international consortium of researchers led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington was published in *The Lancet* on May 29.

Overweight is defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI), or weight-to-height ratio, greater than or equal to 25 and lower than 30, while obesity is defined as having a BMI equal to or greater than 30.

“Bangladesh has lowered the rates of death from infectious diseases, childhood causes of death and complications during pregnancy,” said Dr. Aliya Naheed, Associate Scientist at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh and one of the paper’s co-authors. “For overweight and obesity to be rising to the point where nearly 1 in 5 adults are too heavy, we must look for ways to change behavior and change policy.”

Of the 17% of overweight or obese adults in Bangladesh, just 4% were obese, and obesity rates in Bangladesh are increasing at a slower pace. From 1980 to 2013 obesity rates in adults grew from 2% to 4%, and rates in children and adolescents remained at about 1.5%.

When looking at the region, South Asia has seen a steady increase in overweight and obesity since 1980, with the rate of overweight or obese adults rising from 16% to 21% in 2013. South Asia also has the lowest child overweight/obesity prevalence among all regions (6%) and the lowest child obesity prevalence (3%).

Within the region, Pakistan has the highest obesity rate for adults (14%), and Bhutan has the highest obesity rate for children (6%). South Asia also has the smallest gender gap in adult obesity among all regions (4.8% male, 5.2% female).

“Obesity is an issue affecting people of all ages and incomes, everywhere,” said Dr. Christopher Murray, director of IHME and a co-founder of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study. “In the last three decades, not one country has achieved success in reducing obesity rates, and we expect obesity to rise steadily as incomes rise in low- and middle-income countries in particular, unless urgent steps are taken to address this public health crisis.”

While the percentage of people worldwide who are either overweight or obese has risen substantially over the last 30 years, there have been marked variations across regions and countries. In developed countries,

increases in obesity that began in the 1980s and accelerated from 1992 to 2002 have slowed since 2006. Conversely, in developing countries increases are likely to continue.

The global study found that among children and adolescents, obesity has increased substantially worldwide. Between 1980 and 2013, the prevalence of overweight/obese children and adolescents increased by nearly 50%. In 2013, more than 22% of girls and nearly 24% of boys living in developed countries were found to be overweight or obese. Rates are also on the rise among children and adolescents in the developing world, where nearly 13% of boys and more than 13% of girls are overweight or obese. Particularly high rates of child and adolescent obesity were seen in Middle Eastern and North African countries, notably among girls.

Key global findings:

- More than 50% of the world's 671 million obese live in 10 countries (ranked beginning with the countries with the most obese people): United States (US), China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, Germany, Pakistan, and Indonesia.
- While the highest proportion of the world's obese people (13%) live in the US, China and India together represent 15% of the world's obese population.
- Today, 2.1 billion people—nearly one-third of the world's population—are overweight or obese. The number of overweight and obese individuals in the world has increased from 857 million (~20%) in 1980 to 2.1 billion (~30%) in 2013. Globally, the prevalence of overweight and obesity combined increased by nearly 50% among persons under age 18 between 1980 and 2013.
- Being overweight or obese is also a major problem for the world's children. From 1980 to 2013, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children increased by nearly 50%.

Health risks such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoarthritis, and chronic kidney disease increase when a person's BMI exceeds 23. In 2010, obesity and overweight were estimated to have caused 3.4 million deaths globally, most of which were from cardiovascular causes. Research indicates that if left unchecked, the rise in obesity could lead to future declines in life expectancy.

“Being overweight carries significant health risks, and those risks are greatly increased for obese individuals,” said Alan Lopez, Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne and a co-founder of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study. “Unlike tobacco control, there is very little evidence that public health campaigns or industry regulatory mechanisms are yet having an impact. Health authorities across Asia need to take the population health consequences of weight gain much more seriously.”

**The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)** is an independent global health research organization at the University of Washington that provides rigorous and comparable measurement of the world's most important health problems and evaluates the strategies used to address them. IHME makes this information widely available so that policymakers have the evidence they need to make informed decisions about how to allocate resources to best improve population health.

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