



Global Hunger Index

Key Findings

- The current hot spots of hunger and undernutrition are in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, although Haiti, Yemen, Tajikistan, Laos, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and the Democratic Republic of Korea also scored poorly on the index.
- In most of Asia where the Green Revolution boosted food supplies, hunger and under-nutrition have continued to decrease since 1981. While there have been dramatic improvements in South Asia, the region still faces high levels of hunger.
- South Asia has higher levels of child undernutrition than Sub-Saharan Africa, but Sub-Saharan Africa has higher rates of child mortality.
- There has been good progress in reducing hunger in the Andean region of South America.
- The availability of economic resources at the national level largely determines the extent of hunger and under-nutrition. Food availability, education, and health care, which are important determinants of children's nutritional status, require a range of goods and services to be produced by the national economy or to be purchased on international markets.
- However, many countries perform notably better than expected on the basis of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, including several Middle Eastern countries, particularly Egypt and Syria. Several former Soviet states also do well relative to their level of resources, including Moldova, the Kyrgyz Republic, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
- Other nations perform worse than expected on the basis of GNI per capita, due to factors such as armed conflict, AIDS, and extremely high income inequality.
- Armed conflicts aggravate hunger as combatants frequently use hunger as a weapon by cutting off food supplies, starving opposing populations into submission and hijacking food aid intended for civilians. Most countries that were involved in full-blown wars between 1989 and 2003 scored poorly on the Global Hunger Index, not only in absolute terms, but also relative to their level of economic development. Examples are Eritrea, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, and Ethiopia.
- Countries with high HIV infection rates also scored poorly on the index relative to their level of economic development. The death and disease toll of AIDS among prime-age adults exacerbates hunger. In turn, food insecurity may heighten exposure to HIV (as men migrate to look for work and women engage in transactional sex to provide for their families) and susceptibility to infections due to malnutrition.
- Deficiencies in vitamin A, iron, and other essential micronutrients continue to pose a vast public health problem, resulting in illness, reduced school and work performance, and premature death. Countries that rank poorly on the index also tend to have higher rates of micronutrient malnutrition.