

# Stunting (height/length for age with standard deviation <-2 of the World Health Organization WHO growth patterns for children under 5 years of age median)



**EVERY WOMAN  
EVERY CHILD**

FOR HEALTHY AND EMPOWERED WOMEN,  
CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

<b>Definitions</b>	Prevalence of Stunting (standard deviation of height/ length for age <-2 of Stunting patterns for children under five years of the World Health Organization (WHO) median ).
<b>Numerator</b>	Number of boys and girls under 5 years of age below minus two standard deviations (-2 SD) regarding height/length-for-age of WHO Stunting patterns median.
<b>Denominator</b>	Total boys and girls under 5 years of age.
<b>Measuring unit</b>	X percent (%).

<b>Considerations for indicator quality</b>	<p>Not measured boys and girls, marked as out of range size for their age (aberrant values with SD &lt;-6 or &gt; 6), and not having recorded month and year of birth are excluded from the Stunting calculations (short height/ length for age).</p> <p>Depending on the child's age and ability to stand, height or size is measured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If under 2 years of age, length is measured in lying flat position.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the boy or girl does not sit still in this position, size is measured in the standing position and 0.7 cm are added to convert it to length during data analysis.</li> </ul> </li> <li>If the child is 2 years of age or older, foot size is measured.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If not able to stand up, length is measured in the lying flat position and 0.7 cm subtracted to convert to size during data analysis.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Uncertainty of survey estimates is due to sampling errors and non-sampling errors (for example, technical errors in measurement, computation, among others). Neither source of error has been fully considered for derived estimates at the national, regional or global levels.</p>
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**Interpretation implications**

Stunting is an internationally recognized result as an indicator of children's nutritional status. Stunting refers to a boy/girl being too short height/length for his/her age and is the cumulative result of chronic or recurrent malnutrition, including the effect of disease/infection from intrauterine life, with a life-cycle perspective. This measure is also interpreted as an indicator of poor environmental conditions that restrict potential growth of infants.

**Context indicator**

Stunting is a risk factor that contributes to infant mortality and is also a marker of human development inequalities. Children with Stunting may not reach their full physical and cognitive potential. Stunting is the devastating result of malnutrition in the womb and during childhood. Children with Stunting may not reach their full physical and cognitive potential. These children begin their lives at a marked disadvantage leading them to face consequences such as having learning difficulties in school, earning less as adults and facing barriers to participate in their communities.

ODS framework	EWEC-LAC framework	Dimension	Monitoring framework	Suggested stratifier for inequality analysis
<p><b>2 ZERO HUNGER</b></p>	Survive	Woman	Input	<b>Sex</b> ✓
	<b>Thrive</b> ✓	Childhood	Output	<b>Ethnicity</b> ✓
	Transform	<b>Adolescence</b> ✓	Results	<b>Mother's education</b> ✓
			<b>Impact</b> ✓	<b>Socioeconomic level (quintiles of national wealth)</b> ✓
			Product	<b>Place of residence (urban / rural, or geographic location)</b> ✓

**Preferred data source**

National nutrition surveys, household surveys, and country nutrition surveillance systems.

**Alternative data sources**

N/A

**Inter-agency group estimates**

- Global database on growth and malnutrition in children:
- WHO: <https://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/publications/methodology/en/>
- UNICEF: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/>
- [World Bank Open Data](#).

**Global monitoring frameworks**

- Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework. <https://apps.who.int/nutrition/landscape/global-monitoring-framework>
- [Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health](#).

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**For more information**

- Joint child malnutrition estimates - Levels and trends. UNICEF-WHO-WB. <https://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates/en/>
- [WHO Anthro Survey Analyzer](#).
- [The World Health Organization Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition: methodology and applications International](#). Journal of Epidemiology 2003;32:518-526.

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**References**

- SDG metadata repository. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>
  - WHO Anthropometric Measurement Specifications: [https://www.who.int/childgrowth/publications/physical\\_status/es/](https://www.who.int/childgrowth/publications/physical_status/es/)
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