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Over 35.5% kids stunted, govt releases target to curb malnutrition

Percentages down from NFHS-4, but India still has huge malnutrition burden, say experts.

Written by [Esha Roy](#) | New Delhi |

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The government stated that it aims to reduce low birth weight by 2% per annum, and anaemia among children between six and 59 months, as well as women and adolescent girls from 15 to 49 years, by 3% per annum. (File)



Wednesday said in a written statement tabled in [Rajya Sabha](#) said that it aims at reducing stunting and under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) among children under 6 years by 2% per annum.

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The ministry stated that it aims to reduce low birth weight by 2% per annum, and anaemia among children between six and 59 months, as well as women and adolescent girls from 15 to 49 years, by 3% per annum.

According to findings of the 2019-21 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), nutrition indicators for children under 5 have improved over NFHS-4 (2015-16).

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Stunting has reduced from 38.4% to 35.5%, wasting from 21.0% to 19.3% and underweight prevalence is down from 35.8% to 32.1%, according to the data. Women (15-49 years) whose BMI is below normal has reduced from 22.9% in NFHS-4 to 18.7% in NFHS-5. Despite the decrease, nutrition experts have said that India has one of the highest burdens of malnutrition in the world.

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According to data released on Wednesday, [Meghalaya](#) has the highest number of stunted children (46.5%), followed by Bihar (42.9%). Assam, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have stunted children higher than the national average of 35.5%.



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Maharashtra has 25.6% wasted children (Epaper for height) — the highest — followed by Gujarat (25.1%).

Assam, Bihar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Karnataka and West Bengal have a higher percentage of wasted children than the national average of 19.3%.

Bihar has the highest number of underweight children (41%), followed by Gujarat (39.7%), and Jharkhand at (39.4%).

Assam, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have a higher percentage of underweight children than the national average of 32.1%.

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The NFHS-5 data shows that Jharkhand has the highest percentage of women, between 15 and 49 years, who have a below-normal Body Mass Index (BMI), a value derived from mass and height of a person, and an indicator of under-nutrition. More than 26% Jharkhand women have below-normal BMI, the national average being 18.5%.

Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha also have high percentages of undernourished women.

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The Supplementary Nutrition Programme under Anganwadi Services and POSHAN Abhiyaan have been converged to form the 'Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0' (Mission Poshan 2.0), which seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

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