



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Measuring Food Insecurity

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Global Hunger Index 2022, ranks India 107th out of the 121 countries monitored in 2021. India's ranking results from the use of the Indian government's official statistics, the National Family Health Survey, which reveals disconcertingly high rates of child mortality and chronic malnutrition in India, despite clear progress in the past few years.

What is Food Security?

Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

What is Hunger?

Hunger is an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It becomes chronic when the person does not consume a sufficient amount of calories (dietary energy) on a regular basis to lead a normal, active and healthy life. For decades, FAO has used the Prevalence of Undernourishment indicator to estimate the extent of hunger in the world, thus "hunger" may also be referred to as undernourishment.

Hunger is the main outcome of poverty. Hunger is a condition in which adults and children can't get food all the time, have to eat less, eat poorly, and often go without food. The troubled or painful sensation brought on by a lack of food is another definition of hunger. Economist Amartya Sen explained that the inability to pay for food is the real cause of hunger.

What is food insecurity?

A person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. This may be due to unavailability of food and/or lack of resources to obtain food. Food insecurity can be experienced at different levels of severity.

What does data say on hunger in India?

The country has data on deaths among adults and children, but there are no official statistics on starvation-related deaths. India is experiencing an alarming rate of hunger despite a 3.74 per cent increase in food production to a new record of 308.65 million tons in the crop year 2020-21.

Another report by the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world in 2022 stated that India's undernourished population decreased from 247.8 million in 2004-2006 to 224.3 million in 2019-21. It stated that the number of stunted children under the age of 5 decreased from 52.3 million in 2012 to 36.1 million in 2020, and the number of overweight children under the age of 5 decreased from 3 million in 2012 to 2.2 million in 2020.

How are hunger and food insecurity related?

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When someone is severely food insecure, they have run out of food and gone a day or more without eating. In other words, they have most likely experienced hunger. Severe food insecurity is one extreme of the scale, but even moderate food insecurity is worrisome. For those who are moderately food insecure, access to food is uncertain. They might have to sacrifice other basic needs, just to be able to eat. When they do eat, it might be whatever is most readily available or cheapest, which might not be the most nutritious food. The rise in obesity and other forms of malnutrition is partly a result of this phenomenon. Highly processed foods that are energy-dense, high in saturated fats, sugars and salt are often cheaper and easier to come by than fresh fruits and vegetables. Eating those foods may mean your daily requirement of calories is met, but you are missing essential nutrients to keep your body healthy and functioning well.

Other Reports

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the 2022 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 107th out of the 121 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2022 GHI scores. With a score of 29.1, India has a level of hunger that is serious.

The prevalence of undernourishment indicator is calculated by the experts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) using several factors. Prevalence of Undernourishment takes into account the average per capita availability of food supply as obtained through carefully constructed food balance sheets. Food balance sheets are primarily based on data officially reported by the member countries including India.