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PRESS RELEASE

Economic impact of overweight and obesity to surpass \$4 trillion by 2035

Global study predicts that more than half the global population will be living with overweight and obesity within 12 years if prevention, treatment and support do not improve

- The World Obesity Atlas 2023, published by World Obesity Federation, predicts that the **global economic impact of overweight and obesity will reach \$4.32 trillion annually by 2035** if prevention and treatment measures do not improve. At almost 3% of global GDP, this is comparable with the impact of COVID-19 in 2020.
- **The majority of the global population** (51%, or over 4 billion people) will be living with either overweight or obesity by 2035 if current trends prevail. 1 in 4 people (nearly 2 billion) will have obesity.
- **Childhood obesity could more than double** by 2035 (from 2020 levels). Rates are predicted to double among boys to 208 million (100% increase) and more than double among girls to 175 million (125% increase) and are rising more rapidly among children than adults.
- **Lower income countries are facing rapid increases** in obesity prevalence. Of the 10 countries with the greatest expected increases in obesity globally (for both adults and children), 9 of those are from low or lower-middle income countries. All are from either Asia or Africa.
- **World Obesity Federation calls for comprehensive national action plans** to help countries act on new World Health Organization (WHO) Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Obesity. The Atlas report will be presented at a high-level policy event on 6 March to UN policymakers, member states and civil society.
- Acknowledgement of the economic impact is in no way a reflection of blame on people living with obesity, which is a chronic, relapsing disease.

A new World Obesity Atlas report from the World Obesity Federation, published on [World Obesity Day](#), predicts that 51% of the global population will be living with overweight or obesity by 2035 based on current trends. Continued failure to improve prevention and treatment could contribute to a total economic impact of US\$4.32 trillion by 2035 – nearly 3% of global GDP. These new figures represent a significant increase on current levels and lend urgency to World Obesity Federation's calls for the development of national obesity action plans around the world.

Rising rates and rising costs

Compiled by the World Obesity Federation, the World Obesity Atlas 2023 presents a series of obesity prevalence projections for the period 2020 to 2035. Worryingly, over half of the global

population is expected to have a high body mass index (BMI $\geq 25\text{kg/m}^2$) by the end of this period, and 1 in 4 people will be living with obesity (BMI $\geq 30\text{kg/m}^2$) compared to 1 in 7 today.

Childhood obesity is rising particularly fast. Rates are expected to double among boys by 2035 to 208 million, and to increase by 125% among girls to 175 million. In all, over 1.5 billion adults and nearly 400 million children will be living with obesity in 12 years time unless significant action is taken.

In addition, the report provides eye-opening new insights into the economic impacts of overweight and obesity, which are predicted to reduce the global economy by over US\$4 trillion a year by 2035. At nearly 3% of global GDP, this is on a par with the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Every single region will see an increase in economic impact by 2035, with the Americas (North, Central and South America) shouldering the highest costs as a proportion of GDP (3.7%) and the Western Pacific region the highest total costs (US\$1.56 trillion).

The report emphasises the importance of developing comprehensive national action plans to prevent and treat obesity and support people affected by the disease. It also acknowledges the impact of climate change, COVID-19 restrictions, new pandemics, and chemical pollutants on overweight and obesity and warns that without ambitious and coordinated action to address systemic issues, obesity rates could rise still further.

Prof. Louise Baur, President of the World Obesity Federation, said: "This year's Atlas is a clear warning that by failing to address obesity today, we risk serious repercussions in the future. It is particularly worrying to see obesity rates rising fastest among children and adolescents. Governments and policymakers around the world need to do all they can to avoid passing health, social, and economic costs on to the younger generation. That means looking urgently at the systems and root factors that contribute to obesity, and actively involving young people in the solutions. If we act together now, we have the opportunity to help billions of people in the future."

Countries unprepared to deal with obesity

Obesity is often seen as an issue for high income countries, where rates are generally higher. However, the report reveals that obesity levels are rising fastest in low and lower-middle income countries, which are often the least able to respond to obesity and its consequences.

The report includes Obesity-NCD Preparedness Rankings for 183 countries. First introduced in the 2022 Atlas, this ranking system takes account of countries' current health system responses to NCDs and their commitment to the implementation of obesity prevention policies.

The report shows marked variations in preparedness across national income levels and geographical regions. For example, the average preparedness ranking for low income countries is just 154/183 compared to 29/183 for high income countries. All 10 of the most prepared countries are in Europe, while 8 of the 10 least prepared countries are in the African region.

By 2035, the economic impact of overweight and obesity is estimated to be over \$370 billion a year in low and lower-middle income countries alone.

Rachel Jackson-Leach, Director of Science at World Obesity Federation, said: "If we do not act now, we are on course to see significant increases in obesity prevalence over the next decade. The greatest increases will be seen in low and lower-middle income countries,

where scarce resources and lack of preparedness will create a perfect storm that will negatively impact people living with obesity the most."

Urgent call for national action plans at high-level policy event

The launch of the Atlas report will be marked with a high-level policy event: 'Changing perspectives and advancing national action' on Monday 6 March 2023, 13:00 CET (12:00 GMT). During the event, World Obesity Federation and partners will lead calls for a robust international response.

The Atlas report discusses the importance of national action plans and Universal Health Coverage to help countries implement new WHO Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Obesity that were adopted in 2022.

Johanna Ralston, CEO of the World Obesity Federation, said: "Let's be clear: the economic impact of obesity is not the fault of individuals living with the disease. It is a result of high-level failures to provide the environmental, healthcare, food, and support systems that we all need to live happy, healthy lives. Addressing these issues will be valuable in so many ways, to billions of people. We simply cannot afford to ignore the rising rates of obesity any longer. We hope that the findings of this latest Atlas will convince policymakers and civil society to take action and make tangible commitments to change in their regions."

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Notes to editors:

Spokespeople are available on request.

Further information and context:

- In 2013, member states of WHO committed to halt the increase in obesity rates at 2010 levels by 2025. No country is on track to meet these targets.
- In 2022, WHO adopted new Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Obesity, with Acceleration Plans being piloted in multiple countries.
<https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/obesity/who-accelertaion-plan-to-stop-obesity-briefing.pdf>
- The World Obesity Federation is calling on governments to develop national action plans and to build on the ROOTS framework for tackling obesity. Developed by a panel of global obesity experts in 2020, the ROOTS framework involves **R**ecognising the root causes, **m**onitoring **O**besity data, **i**nvesting in **O**besity prevention, **e**nsuring access to **T**reatments, and **a**dopting a **S**ystems-based approach.
- Throughout the Atlas report, overweight and obesity are defined using WHO BMI cut-offs. Please note that BMI is used to estimate overweight and obesity and is not a diagnostic tool.
- Acknowledgement of the economic impact of overweight and obesity is in no way a reflection of blame on people living with high BMI. Obesity is a chronic, relapsing disease influenced by numerous biological, social, and environmental factors outside an

individual's control.

- World Obesity Federation strongly encourages journalists and editors to use people-first language and respectful [images](#) when reporting on obesity and overweight. For more information please visit: <https://www.worldobesity.org/news/creating-a-better-obesity-landscape-breaking-down-language>
- Additional data and statistics can be found on the **Global Obesity Observatory**, an online, interactive database collating information about the prevalence and epidemiology of obesity, maintained by the World Obesity Federation. <https://data.worldobesity.org/>
- **World Obesity Day webinar: Changing perspectives and advancing national action** takes place on 6 March 2023 at 13:00 CET (12:00 GMT). To mark World Obesity Day and the publication of the World Obesity Atlas 2023, World Obesity Federation and partners will hold a special session to hear from governments about their priorities for action on obesity and explore how to address obesity nationally and globally across all areas of the WHO obesity recommendations. <https://www.worldobesity.org/training-and-events/events/world-obesity-day-webinar-changing-perspectives-and-advancing-national-action>
- **The World Obesity Atlas** is published annually by the World Obesity Federation on World Obesity Day (4 March). The reports provide analyses of significant obesity trends, projections for global and regional obesity prevalence, national scorecards and Obesity-NCD Preparedness Rankings assessing countries' readiness to deal with obesity and its impacts. The 2023 World Obesity Atlas is the fifth such report, and focuses on the economic impact of obesity.
- **World Obesity Day** takes place on 4 March every year to increase awareness of obesity as a disease, encourage advocacy to change the way obesity is addressed across society, improve policies by creating a healthy environment that prioritises obesity as a health issue, and create platforms to share experiences. The theme for this year's World Obesity Day is 'Changing Perspectives: Let's Talk About Obesity' with a focus on creating change through impactful conversations. www.worldobesityday.org
- **The World Obesity Federation** is the only global organisation focused exclusively on obesity. It brings together member organisations dedicated to solving the problems of obesity, representing professional members of the scientific, medical, research and advocacy communities from over 90 regional and national obesity associations. The World Obesity Federation is a lead partner to global agencies on obesity, including WHO – with which it has formal consultative status, approved by the World Health Assembly. www.worldobesity.org

Access to World Obesity Atlas 2023

- Embargoed link to Atlas 2023 report, press release, and additional regional statistics: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XVQN9TFvZ3t6aJX2F_dC1mOH8BdcWpei?usp=sharing
- Public link to use once embargo lifts: <https://www.worldobesityday.org/resources/entry/world-obesity-atlas-2023>
- Social: #WorldObesityAtlas #WOD2023 #WorldObesityDay

Access to images

- The World Obesity Federation Image Bank is a gallery of free-to-use images that are accurate, non-biased and respectful. www.worldobesity.org/resources/image-bank

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NCD-Obesity Preparedness Rankings (most and least prepared)

Least prepared to deal with rising obesity and non-communicable diseases:

183/183: Niger
182/183: Papua New Guinea
181/183: Somalia
180/183: Nigeria
179/183: Central African Republic
178/183: Burkina Faso
177/183: Guinea Bissau
176/183: Burundi
175/183: [Tokelau – omitted from report due to lack of data]
174/183: Gambia

Most prepared to deal with obesity and non-communicable diseases:

1/183: Switzerland
=3/183: Norway
=3/183: Finland
4/183: Iceland
5/183: Sweden
6/183: France
7/183: United Kingdom
8/183: Portugal
9/183: Ireland
10/183: Belgium

Table 1: Economic impact of high BMI (BMI \geq 25kg/m²) by region 2020-2035

| | | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 |
|------------------------------|---|----------|------------|------------|------------|
| African region | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 23 | US\$ 30 | US\$ 40 | US\$ 53 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 1.2% | 1.3% | 1.4% | 1.6% |
| Americas | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 870 | US\$ 1,030 | US\$ 1,230 | US\$ 1,470 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 3.2% | 3.3% | 3.5% | 3.7% |
| Eastern Mediterranean region | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 70 | US\$ 92 | US\$ 122 | US\$ 163 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 2.3% | 2.5% | 2.8% | 3.1% |
| European region | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 516 | US\$ 596 | US\$ 691 | US\$ 807 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 2.3% | 2.4% | 2.5% | 2.6% |
| South-East Asian region | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 65 | US\$ 102 | US\$ 162 | US\$ 254 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 1.4% | 1.6% | 1.9% | 2.2% |
| Western Pacific region | Economic impact (US\$ at 2019 value) (billions) | US\$ 412 | US\$ 625 | US\$ 984 | US\$ 1,560 |
| | Impact as proportion of total regional GDP | 1.7% | 2.1% | 2.5% | 2.8% |