Heterogeneous contributions of change in population distribution of body mass index to change in obesity and underweight

NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC)*

Abstract From 1985 to 2016, the prevalence of underweight decreased, and that of obesity and severe obesity increased, in most regions, with significant variation in the magnitude of these changes across regions. We investigated how much change in mean body mass index (BMI) explains changes in the prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity in different regions using data from 2896 population-based studies with 187 million participants. Changes in the prevalence of underweight and total obesity, and to a lesser extent severe obesity, are largely driven by shifts in the distribution of BMI, with smaller contributions from changes in the shape of the distribution. In East and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the underweight tail of the BMI distribution was left behind as the distribution shifted. There is a need for policies that address all forms of malnutrition by making healthy foods accessible and affordable, while restricting unhealthy foods through fiscal and regulatory restrictions.

Introduction

Underweight as well as obesity can lead to adverse health outcomes (Prospective Studies Collaboration et al., 2009; Global BMI Mortality Collaboration, 2016; Emerging Risk Factors Collaboration et al., 2011). For at least four decades, the prevalence of underweight has decreased, and that of obesity has increased, in most countries with significant variation in the magnitude of these changes across regions of the world (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2019).

A shift in the whole distribution of body mass index (BMI) would simultaneously affect mean BMI as well as the prevalence of underweight and obesity (Razak et al., 2018; Rose and Day, 1990). In contrast, changes in the shape of BMI distribution – for example, widening or narrowing of the BMI distribution, becoming more or less skewed, or having a thinner or thicker tail – would affect the prevalence of underweight and obesity with only small impacts on the population mean, as shown schematically in Figure 1. Understanding these two mechanisms is essential as they may require different public health and clinical responses (Penman and Johnson, 2006). But it is unclear how much the two mechanisms have contributed to the observed decline in underweight and rise in obesity in different world regions.

Some studies have investigated whether the rise in obesity or the decrease of underweight over time, or differences across countries, were due to a shift in BMI distribution versus changes in the low- or high-BMI tails of the distribution (Razak et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2007; Wagner et al., 2019; Vaezghasemi et al., 2016; Razak et al., 2013; Popkin and Slining, 2013; Popkin, 2010; Peeters et al., 2015; Ouyang et al., 2015; Monteiro et al., 2002; Midthjell et al., 2013; Lebel et al., 2018; Khang and Yun, 2010; Helmchen and Henderson, 2004; Hayes et al., 2015; Green et al., 2016; Flegal and Troiano, 2000; Stenholm et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2017; Flegal et al., 2012; Bovet et al., 2008). Most of these studies focused on a single or small number of countries over relatively short durations or covered only one sex, a narrow age group, or specific
social groups. To understand whether weight gain occurs across all BMI levels or disproportionately affects the underweight or obese segments of the distribution, and how this phenomenon varies geographically, there is a need for a population-based study that simultaneously investigates both underweight and obesity in relation to mean BMI in different regions of the world. We used a comprehensive global database to investigate how much change in mean BMI can explain the corresponding changes in prevalence of adults with underweight (defined as BMI <18.5 kg/m²), total obesity (BMI ≥30 kg/m²), and severe obesity (BMI ≥35 kg/m²) over three decades from 1985 to 2016 in different regions of the world.

**Results**

**Data sources**

The Non-Communicable Disease Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) database contains 2896 population-based studies conducted from 1985 to 2019 with height and weight measurements of 187 million participants. Of these, 2033 studies had measurements of height and weight on 132.6 million participants aged 20–79 years. The number of studies with participants aged 20–79 years in different regions ranged from 53 in Oceania to 637 in the high-income western region. The number of data sources by country is shown in Figure 2. The list of data sources and their characteristics is provided in Supplementary file 4.

**Change in mean BMI and prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity by region**

In 2016, the age-standardised prevalence of underweight was highest (>16% in different sex-age groups) in South Asia; it was <2.5% in Central and Eastern Europe; the high-income western region; Latin America and the Caribbean; Oceania; and Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa for most age and sex groups. The age-standardised prevalence of obesity was highest (>24%) in these same regions for most age and sex groups. It was lowest (<7%) in men and women from South Asia; the high-income Asia Pacific region; and men from sub-Saharan Africa. The age-standardised prevalence of severe obesity was highest (12–18%) in women aged 50–79 years from Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; the high-income western region; Central and Eastern Europe; and

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**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of contribution of change in mean body mass index (BMI) to change in total prevalence of underweight or obesity. (A) Change in the prevalence of underweight and obesity if the distribution shifts, represented by a change in its mean and its shape. In this example, the change (shown as the difference between blue and gray) results in a small decrease of underweight and a large increase in obesity. (B) Change in the prevalence of underweight and obesity when only mean BMI changes (shown as the difference between orange and gray), without a change in the shape of the distribution.
Latin America and the Caribbean. It was lowest (<2%) in South Asia; East and Southeast Asia; the high-income Asia Pacific region; and men in sub-Saharan Africa.

From 1985 to 2016, age-standardised mean BMI increased by 1–4 kg/m\(^2\) in all regions, with the exception of women in the high-income Asia Pacific region and Central and Eastern Europe whose mean BMI changed by less than 1 kg/m\(^2\) (Figure 3). The prevalence of underweight decreased or stayed unchanged and that of obesity and severe obesity increased from 1985 to 2016 in all regions, with the exception of an increase in the prevalence of underweight in younger women in the high-income Asia Pacific region. The largest absolute decrease in underweight prevalence from 1985 to 2016 was seen in South Asia; East and Southeast Asia; and sub-Saharan Africa, where it declined by 14–35 percentage points in different age–sex groups (Figure 4). Nonetheless, underweight prevalence remained higher in these three regions than elsewhere in 2016. Prevalence of underweight changed only marginally in regions such as Central and Eastern Europe and the high-income western region, where prevalence was already low in 1985.

The largest absolute increase in obesity prevalence from 1985 to 2016 occurred in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; the high-income western region; Latin America and the Caribbean; Oceania (women); and Central and Eastern Europe (men) (Figure 4). Women in these regions also experienced the largest increase in severe obesity prevalence, along with men in the high-income western region. In these regions and sexes, obesity prevalence increased by 16–24 percentage points in different age groups, and severe obesity increased by 5–13 percentage points. The increase in obesity was less than five percentage points in the high-income Asia Pacific region; South
Asia; and in men in sub-Saharan Africa; in the same regions, along with East and Southeast Asia, the increase in severe obesity was less than two percentage points.

**Associations of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity prevalence with mean BMI**

There was a strong association between the prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity with mean BMI as measured by R-squared of the regressions of prevalence on mean (Supplementary files 1 and 2). These indicate that 93% (men) and 96% (women) of variation in obesity, and between 83% and 92% of variation in underweight and severe obesity, were explained by mean BMI and other variables (year, region, and age group) in the regression models. The coefficients of the mean BMI terms represent the changes in (probit-transformed) prevalence associated with a unit change in mean BMI, and their interactions with region represent variations in this association across regions. For all three outcomes, the association of prevalence with mean BMI varied across regions.

The inter-regional variation in the prevalence–mean association was stronger for obesity and severe obesity than underweight, as seen in larger inter-regional range of the interaction terms. The extent to which prevalence changes with any variation in mean BMI in each region is an outcome of the main BMI term and its interaction with region; to be epidemiologically interpretable, this will have to be converted from probit-transformed to original prevalence scale. For example, in the year...
Figure 4. Change in prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity from 1985 to 2016 by region, sex, and age group.
2016, for women aged 50–59 years, at a mean BMI of 25 kg/m² (which was approximately the global age-standardised mean level of BMI) (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a), prevalence of underweight would have varied by seven percentage points across regions, being lowest in Central and Eastern Europe and highest in sub-Saharan Africa; a unit increase in mean BMI would have been associated with a relative change in prevalence ranging from −49% in the high-income Asia Pacific region to −14% in Oceania. Also for women aged 50–59 years and a mean BMI of 25 kg/m², the prevalence of obesity and severe obesity would both have been the highest in Oceania and the lowest in the high-income Asia Pacific region, with a difference of 12 and 6 percentage points, respectively, for the two outcomes; a unit increase in mean BMI would have been associated with a relative change ranging from 21% to 46% for obesity and from 30% to 59% for severe obesity, the smallest change for both being in Oceania and the largest in East and Southeast Asia. There was similar inter-regional variation in the other year–age–sex strata.

Contribution of mean BMI to changes in underweight and obesity prevalence

The rise in mean BMI accounted for >82% of the decline in underweight in different age–sex groups in South Asia, where underweight prevalence declined by over 16 percentage points for all age–sex groups (Figure 5). The remainder of the decline was due to change in the shape of the BMI distribution which reduced underweight prevalence beyond the effects of the population mean. In contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa and East and Southeast Asia, the total change in prevalence of underweight (3–12 percentage points) was 20–80% less than what was expected based on the increase in mean BMI (Figure 5). In other words, in these regions the underweight tail of the BMI distribution was left behind as the distribution shifted.

Where obesity increased the most – Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and the high-income western region – the rise in mean BMI accounted for over three quarters of the increase in different age–sex groups (Figure 5). In Oceania, the actual rise in prevalence of obesity (8–14 percentage points for all age–sex groups) was about two-thirds to one-half of what would have been expected by the observed increase in mean BMI in men and women (Figure 5). Change in mean BMI consistently accounted for a smaller share of the change in severe obesity than it did for change in total obesity. Specifically, in regions where prevalence of severe obesity changed by more than one percentage point, the contribution of change in mean BMI to change in severe obesity in different regions was 53–90% of the corresponding contribution for total obesity (Figure 5).

In other regions, the change in the prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity was too small for the contribution of change in mean BMI to be epidemiologically relevant (Figure 5).

Discussion

We found that the trends in the prevalence of underweight, total obesity, and, to a lesser extent, severe obesity are largely driven by shifts in the distribution of BMI, with smaller contributions from changes in the shape of the distribution. The notable exceptions to this pattern were the decline in the prevalence of underweight in East and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and the rise of obesity in Oceania, which were both smaller than expected based on change in mean BMI.

Our results are consistent with a recent cross-sectional study (Razak et al., 2018) using data from women in low- and middle-income countries that found a strong association between mean BMI and prevalence of obesity, and a moderate association between mean BMI and prevalence of underweight. Being cross-sectional, this study did not consider changes over time, as we have. Our results are also consistent with another study which found that changes in median BMI contributed more than 75% to the increase in obesity in the USA from 1980 to 2000 (Helmchen and Henderson, 2004).

Previous studies used one or more approaches to investigate changes in population BMI distribution: some analysed percentiles of the BMI distribution (Wagner et al., 2019; Vaezghasemi et al., 2016; Razak et al., 2013; Popkin and Slining, 2013; Popkin, 2010; Peeters et al., 2015; Ouyang et al., 2015; Lebel et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2015), others focused on the change in prevalence above or below pre-specified BMI thresholds (Wang et al., 2007; Razak et al., 2013; Popkin, 2010; Peeters et al., 2015; Ouyang et al., 2015; Khang and Yun, 2010; Flegal and Troiano,
Figure 5. Contribution of change in mean body mass index (BMI) to total change from 1985 to 2016 in prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity by region, sex, and age group. Blue arrows show the total change in prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity. Orange arrows show the contribution of change in mean BMI to the change in prevalence. The difference between these two arrows is shown with a line, whose colour follows the shorter arrow.
or evaluated how the shape of the BMI distribution has changed via examining metrics such as standard deviation and skewness (Peeters et al., 2015; Ouyang et al., 2015; Lebel et al., 2018; Khang and Yun, 2010; Hayes et al., 2015; Flegal and Troiano, 2000). Most of these studies reached the same conclusion as our study that, as the BMI distribution shifts upwards, the prevalence of underweight declines somewhat more slowly than the prevalence of obesity rises.

Our study has strengths in scope, data, and methods: the strengths of our study include presenting the first global analysis of how much the rise in mean BMI versus changes in the shape of its distribution influenced changes in both underweight and obesity prevalence. We used an unprecedented amount of data from different regions covering three decades and used only measured data on height and weight to avoid biases in self-reported data.

As with all global analyses, our study has some limitations. Despite using the most comprehensive global collection of population-based studies to date, some regions, especially Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa, had less data, especially early in our analysis period. Further, given the large number of age, sex, and region subgroups of population in our analysis, and its long duration, it was not possible to visually explore how the shape of BMI distribution has changed in the underweight and obesity ranges where changes in the mean did not fully explain change in prevalence. Finally, there are variations in characteristics such as response rate and measurement protocol across studies. Some of these, such as exclusion of studies with self-reported height and weight, were a part of our inclusion and exclusion criteria. Others may affect population mean or prevalence.

The finding that the majority of the rise in the prevalence of obesity from 1985 to 2016 is mostly the result of a distributional shift points towards an important role for societal drivers, including lower availability and higher price of healthy and fresh foods compared to caloric-dense and nutrient-deficient foods (Swinburn et al., 2011), and mechanisation of work and motorisation of transport throughout the world that have reduced energy expenditure in populations around the world (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2019; Ng and Popkin, 2012). First, although there is a genetic component to BMI at the individual level (Silventoinen et al., 2017; Silventoinen et al., 2016; Locke et al., 2015; Brandkvist et al., 2019), genetics explain only a small part of changes over time, especially when people have access to healthy food and living environment. When the environment becomes more obesogenic, some people or population subgroups may gain more weight than others, implying that the environment remains the main contributor (Brandkvist et al., 2019). This interplay of genetic predisposition and changes in the environment might account for some of the excess rise in obesity and severe obesity beyond the effect of distributional shift alone (Brandkvist et al., 2019). The exception observed in Oceania is possibly because in 1985 obesity prevalence in this region was already so high (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a) that the rise in BMI did not change overall obesity status (but there was a substantial increase in those with severe obesity, mostly accounted for by the change in mean BMI). The smaller decline in underweight than expected in sub-Saharan Africa and East and Southeast Asia may be because underweight is associated with lower socioeconomic status, food insecurity, and for sub-Saharan Africa widening difference between rural and urban BMI levels which is different from other regions (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2019; Brandkvist et al., 2019; Di Cesare et al., 2015; Subramanian and Smith, 2006; Di Cesare et al., 2013). If the benefits of economic development do not sufficiently reach the poor, they remain nutritionally vulnerable, as has been seen for height and weight during childhood and adolescence (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2020; Subramanyam et al., 2011; Sanchez and Swaminathan, 2005; Pongou et al., 2006; Haddad, 2003; Stevens et al., 2012). Together with the rise in mean BMI and obesity (and short stature which is not a topic of this paper but addressed in other studies) (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2020; Stevens et al., 2012; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2016a), this creates a double burden of malnutrition (Popkin et al., 2020).

In summary, we found that the worldwide rise in obesity and the decline in underweight are primarily driven by the shift in the population distribution of BMI. At the same time, there is an evidence of both excess obesity, and especially severe obesity, and persistent underweight beyond the distributional shift in some regions, which may be related to growing social inequalities that restrict access to healthy foods in those at highest risk of undernutrition (Popkin et al., 2020; Wells et al., 2020; Darmon and Drewnowski, 2015). The response to these trends must motivate ‘double-duty actions’ that prevent and tackle all forms of malnutrition through both fiscal and regulatory restrictions on unhealthy foods, and making healthy foods available, accessible, and affordable especially...
to those at high risks of underweight and obesity (Powell et al., 2013; Hawkes et al., 2020; Bleich et al., 2017).

Materials and methods

Study design

Our aim was to quantify, for all regions of the world, how much of the change in prevalence of underweight (defined as BMI <18.5 kg/m$^2$), (total) obesity (BMI $\geq$30 kg/m$^2$), and severe obesity (BMI $\geq$35 kg/m$^2$) among men and women aged 20–79 years from 1985 to 2016 could be accounted for by change in mean BMI. In the first step, we used data from a global database of human anthropology to estimate the associations of the prevalence of underweight, prevalence of obesity, or prevalence of severe obesity with population mean BMI, including how the association varies in relation to age group and region. We then used the fitted association to estimate the contribution of change in the population mean BMI to change in the prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity in different regions.

Data sources

In the first step of the analysis, we estimated the prevalence-mean associations, using data from a comprehensive database on cardiometabolic risk factors collated by NCD-RisC as described below. In the second step, we needed consistent estimates of mean BMI for all regions. For this purpose, we used data from a recent comprehensive analysis of worldwide trends in mean BMI from 1985 to 2016 (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a) which had fitted a Bayesian hierarchical model to the NCD-RisC data.

Data in the NCD-RisC database were obtained from publicly available multi-country and national measurement surveys (e.g., Demographic and Health Surveys, WHO-STEPwise approach to Surveillance [STEPS] surveys, and those identified via the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research and European Health Interview and Health Examination Surveys Database). With the help of the World Health Organization (WHO) and its regional and country offices as well as the World Heart Federation, we identified and accessed population-based survey data from national health and statistical agencies. We searched and reviewed published studies as detailed previously (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a) and invited eligible studies to join NCD-RisC, as we did with data holders from earlier pooled analysis of cardiometabolic risk factors (Finucane et al., 2011; Farzadfar et al., 2011; Danaei et al., 2011a; Danaei et al., 2011b).

Data inclusion and exclusion

We carefully checked that each data source met our inclusion criteria as listed below:

- measurement data on height and weight were available;
- study participants were 5 years of age and older (as described earlier data used here were for those 20–79 years);
- data were collected using a probabilistic sampling method with a defined sampling frame;
- data were from population samples at the national, sub-national (i.e., covering one or more sub-national regions, with more than three urban or five rural communities), or community level; and
- data were from the countries and territories listed in Supplementary file 3.

We excluded all data sources that only used self-reported weight and height without a measurement component because these data are subject to biases that vary with geography, time, age, sex, and socioeconomic characteristics (Tolonen et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2011; Ezzati et al., 2006). We also excluded data on population subgroups whose anthropometric status may differ systematically from the general population, including

- studies that had included or excluded people based on their health status or cardiovascular risk;
- studies whose participants were only ethnic minorities;
- specific educational, occupational, or socioeconomic subgroups, with the exception noted below; and
- those recruited through health facilities, with the exception noted below.
We included school-based data in countries and age–sex groups with enrolment of 70% or higher. We also included data whose sampling frame was health insurance schemes in countries where at least 80% of the population were insured. Finally, we included data collected through general practice and primary care systems in high-income and Central European countries with universal insurance because contact with the primary care systems tends to be as good as or better than the response rates for population-based surveys. The list of data sources with participants aged 20–79 years and their characteristics is provided in Supplementary file 4, with additional information in Source data 1.

Duplicate data were identified by comparing studies from the same country and year, and then discarded. All NCD-RisC members are also periodically asked to review the list of sources from their country, to verify that the included data meet the inclusion criteria and are not duplicates, and to suggest additional sources. The NCD-RisC database is continuously updated through all the above routes. For each data source, we recorded the study population, sampling approach, years of measurement, and measurement methods. Only population-representative data were included, and these were assessed in terms of whether they covered the whole country, multiple sub-national regions, or one or a small number of communities, and whether rural, urban, or both participants were included. All submitted data were checked independently by at least two persons. Questions and clarifications were discussed with NCD-RisC members and resolved before data were incorporated in the database.

We calculated mean BMI and the associated standard errors by sex and age. All analyses incorporated sample weights and complex survey design, when applicable, in calculating summary statistics, with computer code provided to NCD-RisC members who requested assistance.

Additionally, summary statistics for nationally representative data from sources that were identified but not accessed via the above routes were extracted from published reports. Data were also extracted for nine STEPS surveys that were not publicly available, one Countrywide Integrated Non-communicable Diseases Intervention survey, and five sites of the WHO Multinational MONitoring of trends and determinants in CArdiovascular disease (MONICA) project that were not deposited in the MONICA Data Centre. We also included data from a previous global data pooling study (Finucane et al., 2011) when they had not been accessed as described above.

Here, to estimate the association of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity prevalence with mean BMI as described below, we used data collected from 1985 to 2019 with measured height and weight among men and women aged 20–79 years, in 10-year age groups. Data that did not cover the complete 10-year age groups, for example, 25–29 or 60–64 years, were excluded. We included data from study–age–sex strata with a prevalence between 0 and 1 to allow probit transformation and with at least 25 participants in each stratum. These data were summarised into 11,652 study–age–sex-specific pairs of mean and prevalence of adults with underweight, obesity, or severe obesity.

**Statistical methods**

Anonymised data from studies in the NCD-RisC database were reanalysed according to a common protocol. We calculated mean BMI and prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity by sex and age group in each study in the NCD-RisC database from 1985 to 2019. We used data through 2019 so that the prevalence–mean association is informed by as much data as possible. All calculations took into account complex survey design where relevant. We excluded study–age–sex groups with less than 25 participants because their means and prevalence have larger uncertainty.

We then estimated the relationship between probit-transformed prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity and mean BMI in a regression model, separately for each of these prevalences. The correlation coefficient between mean BMI and median BMI was $0.98$ in different age–sex groups, indicating a strong correlation between the two. In our statistical model, described below, the prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity depends on population mean BMI as well as on age group, region, and year.

All analyses were done separately for men and women. We chose a probit-transformed prevalence because it changes in an approximately linear manner as the mean changes, thus providing a better fit to the data. The regressions also included age group in 10-year bands, region and the year when the data were collected. The regions, used in previous analyses of cardiometabolic risk factors...
(NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2019; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2020; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2016a; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2018; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017b; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2016b; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2016c), were Central and Eastern Europe; Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; East and Southeast Asia; high-income Asia Pacific region; high-income western region; Latin America and the Caribbean; Oceania; South Asia; and sub-Saharan Africa. Countries in each region are listed in Supplementary file 3. The model also included interactions between mean BMI and age group, mean BMI and region, age group and region, age group and year, and year and region. These terms allowed the prevalence–mean association to vary by age group, region, and over time. The models were fitted in statistical software R (version 4.0.2) (Source code 1). The coefficients of the regression models are presented in Supplementary files 1 and 2.

We used the fitted regressions to quantify how much of the change over time in the prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity in each region and age group can be explained by the corresponding change in mean BMI. To do so, we first used the region- and age–sex-specific mean BMI in 1985 and 2016 in the fitted association and then estimated the total change in prevalence of underweight, obesity, or severe obesity by region. The mean BMI values were from a recent comprehensive analysis of worldwide trends in mean BMI (NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), 2017a) and are listed in Supplementary file 5. We then calculated the contribution of change in mean BMI to the change in prevalence of underweight or obesity by allowing mean BMI for each age group and region to change over time, while keeping year fixed at 1985. Results were calculated by 10-year age group and then aggregated into two age bands, 20–49 and 50–79 years, by taking weighted average of age-specific results using weights from the WHO standard population (Ahmad et al., 2001).

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Additional information

Group author details

NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC)

Maria LC Iurilli: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Bin Zhou: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; James E Bennett: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Rodrigo M Carrillo-Larco: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Marisa K Sophiea: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Andrea Rodriguez-Martinez: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Honor Bixby: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Bethlehem D Solomon: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Cristina Taddei: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Cristina Taddei: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Gretchen A Stevens: Independent researcher, Los Angeles, United States; Mariachiara Di Cesare: Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom; Goodarz Danaei: Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston, United States; Mariachiara Di Cesare: Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom; Gretchen A Stevens: Independent researcher, Los Angeles, United States; Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Leanne M Riley: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; Stefan Savin: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; Melanie J Cowan: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; Pascal Bovet: Ministry of Health, Victoria, Seychelles; University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland; Albertino Damasceno: Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique; Adela Chiriti-Emandi: Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania;
Banska Bystrica Regional Authority of Public Health, Banska Bystrica, Slovakia; Shina Avi: Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel; Ana Azevedo: University of Porto Medical School, Porto, Portugal; Mohsen Azimi-Nezhad: Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences, Neyshabur, Islamic Republic of Iran; Fereidoun Azizi: Research Institute for Endocrine Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Mehrdad Azmin: Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Bontha V Babu: Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, India; Maja Bæksgaard Jørgensen: National Institute of Public Health, Copenhagen, Denmark; Azli Baharudin: Ministry of Health, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Suhad Bahijri: King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Jennifer L Baker: Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark; Nagalla Balakrishna: ICMR - National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, India; Mohamed Bamoshoosh: University of Science and Technology, Sana’a, Yemen; Maciej Banach: Medical University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland; Piotr Bandosz: Medical University of Gdansk, Gdansk, Poland; José R Banegas: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid CIBERESP, Madrid, Spain; Joanna Baran: University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów, Poland; Carlo M Barbagallo: University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy; Alberto Barceló: Pan American Health Organization, Washington DC, United States; Amina Barkat: Mohammed V University de Rabat, Rabat, Morocco; Aluisio JD Barros: Federal University of Pelotas, Pelotas, Brazil; Mauro Virgilio Gomes Barros: University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil; Abdul Basit: Baqai Institute of Diabetology and Endocrinology, Karachi, Pakistan; Joao Luiz D Bastos: Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil; Iqbal Bata: Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada; Anwar M Batieha: Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan; Rosangela L Batista: Federal University of Maranhão, São Luís, Brazil; Zhamila Battakova: National Center of Public Healthcare, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan; Assembeck Batyrbek: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan; Louise A Baur: University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia; Robert Beaglehole: University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand; Silvia Bell-Serrat: University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland; Antonisamy Belavendra: Christian Medical College, Vellore, India; Habiba Ben Romdhane: University Tunis El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia; Judith Benedics: Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Vienna, Austria; Mikhail Benet: Cafam University Foundation, Bogota, Colombia; Ingunn Holden Bergh: Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway; Salim Berkinbayev: Kazakh National Medical University, Almaty, Kazakhstan; Antonio Bernabe-Ortiz: Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima, Peru; Gailute Bernotiene: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Heloísa Bettiol: University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; Jorge Bezerra: University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil; Aroor Bhagyalaxmi: B J Medical College, Ahmedabad, India; Sumit Bharadwaj: Chirayu Medical College, New Delhi, India; Santosh K Bhargava: Sunder Lal Jain Hospital, Delhi, India; Zulficar A Bhutta: The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada; Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan; Hongsheng Bi: Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Jinan, China; Yufang Bi: Shanghai Jiao-Tong University School of Medicine, Shanghai, China; Daniel Bia: Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; Elyseé Claude Bika Lele: Institute of Medical Research and Medicinal Plant Studies, Yaoundé, Cameroon; Mukharram M Bikbov: Ufa Eye Research Institute, Ufa, Russian Federation; Bihungum Bista: Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu, Nepal; Dusko J Bjelic: University of Montenegro, Niksic, Montenegro; Peter Bjerregaard: University of Southern Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark; Espen Bjertness: University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway; Marius B Bjertness: University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway; Cecilia Björklund: University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden; Katia V Bloch: Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Annette Bloksma: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Bilthoven, Netherlands; Simona Bo: University of Turin, Turin, Italy; Martin Bobak: University College London, London, United Kingdom; Lynne M Boddy: Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, United Kingdom; Bernhard O Boehm: Nanyang Technological University Singapore, Singapore, Singapore; Heiner Boeing: German Institute of Human Nutrition, Potsdam, Germany; Jose G Boggia: Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; Elena Bogova: Endocrinology Research Centre, Moscow, Russian Federation; Carlos P Boissonnet: Centro de Educación Médica e Investigaciones Clínicas, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Stig E Bojesen: Copenhagen University Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark; University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Marialaura Bonaccio: IRCCS Neuromed, Pozzilli, Italy; Vanina Bongard: Toulouse University School of Medicine, Toulouse, France; Alice...
Bonilla-Vargas: Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social, San José, Costa Rica; Matthias Bopp: University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; Herman Borghs: University Hospital KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; Lien Braeckelveld: Flemish Agency for Care and Health, Brussels, Belgium; Lutgart Braeckman: Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium; Marjolijn CE Bragt: FrieslandCampina, Amersfoort, Netherlands; Imperia Brajkovich: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela; Francesco Branca: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; Juergen Breckenkamp: Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany; Joao Breda: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Moscow, Russian Federation; Hermann Brenner: German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany; Lizzy M Brewer: University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Garry R Brian: The Fred Hollows Foundation, Auckland, New Zealand; Lacramioara Brinduse: University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania; Sinead Brophy: Swansea University, Swansea, United Kingdom; Graziella Bruno: University of Turin, Turin, Italy; H Bas Bueno-de-Mesquita: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Bilthoven, Netherlands; Anna Bugge: University College Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Marta Buoncristiano: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Moscow, Russian Federation; Genc Burazeri: Institute of Public Health, Tirana, Albania; Con Burns: Munster Technological University, Cork, Ireland; Antonio Cabrera de Leon: Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain; Joseph Cacciottolo: University of Malta, Msida, Malta; Hui Cai: Vanderbilt University, Nashville, United States; Tilema Cama: Ministry of Health, Tongatapu, Tonga; Christine Cameron: Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, Ottawa, Canada; Josué Camolás: Hospital Santa Maria, Lisbon, Portugal; Günday Can: Istanbul University - Cerrahpasa, Istanbul, Turkey; Anna Paula Cândido: Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora, Brazil; Felicia Cañete: Ministry of Public Health, Asunción, Paraguay; Mario V Capanzana: Food and Nutrition Research Institute, Taguig, Philippines; Nadežda Capková: National Institute of Public Health, Prague, Czech Republic; Eduardo Capuano: Gaetano Fucito Hospital, Mercato San Severino, Italy; Vincenzo Capuano: Gaetano Fucito Hospital, Mercato San Severino, Italy; Marloes Cardol: University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands; Viviane Cardoso: University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; Axel C Carlsson: Karolinska Institutet, Huddinge, Sweden; Esteban Carmuega: Centro de Estudios sobre Nutrición Infantil, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Joana Carvalho: University of Porto, Porto, Portugal; José Á Casajuás: University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain; Felipe F Casanueva: Santiago de Compostela University, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Ertugrul Celikcan: Ministry of Health, Ankara, Turkey; Laura Censi: Council for Agricultural Research and Economics, Rome, Italy; Marvin Cervantes-Loaiza: Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social, San José, Costa Rica; Juraci A Cesar: Federal University of Rio Grande, Rio Grande, Brazil; Snehalatha Chamukuttan: India Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, India; Angelique W Chan: Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore, Singapore; Queenie Chan: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Himanshu K Chaturvedi: ICMR - National Institute of Medical Statistics, New Delhi, India; Nish Chaturvedi: University College London, London, United Kingdom; Norsymalina Che Abdul Rahim: Ministry of Health, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Miao Li Chee: Singapore Eye Research Institute, Singapore, Singapore; Chien-Jen Chen: Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan; Fangfang Chen: Capital Institute of Pediatrics, Beijing, China; Huashuai Chen: Duke University, Durham, United States; Shouhua Chen: Kailuan General Hospital, Tangshan, China; Zhengming Chen: University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom; Ching-Yu Cheng: Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore, Singapore; Bahman Cheraghian: Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Islamic Republic of Iran; Angela Chetrit: The Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research, Ramat Gan, Israel; Ekaterina Chikova-Iscener: National Centre of Public Health and Analyses, Sofia, Bulgaria; Arnaud Chiolero: University of Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland; Shu-Ti Chiou: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Taipei, Taiwan; Maria-Dolores Chirlaque: CIBER Epidemiología y Salud Pública, Murcia, Spain; Belong Cho: Seoul National University, Seoul, Republic of Korea; Kaare Christensen: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Diego G Christofaro: Universidade Estadual Paulista, Presidente Prudente, Brazil; Jerzy Chudek: Medical University of Szczecin, Szczecin, Poland; Renata Cifkova: Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic; Thomayer Hospital, Prague, Czech Republic; Michelle Cilia: Primary Health Care, Floriana, Malta; Eliza Cintezá: Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania; Frank Claessens: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; Janine Clarke: Statistics Canada,
Romania; Andrzej Galbarczyk: Jagiellonian University Medical College, Kraków, Poland; Henrike Galenkamp: University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Daniela Galeone: Ministero della Salute DG Prevenzione Sanitaria, Rome, Italy; Myriam Galfo: Council for Agricultural Research and Economics, Rome, Italy; Fabio Galvano: University of Catania, Catania, Italy; Jingli Gao: Kailuan General Hospital, Tangshan, China; Manoli Garcia-de-la-Hera: CIBER en Epidemiología y Salud Pública, Alicante, Spain; Marta García-Solano: Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition, Madrid, Spain; Dickman Gareta: Africa Health Research Institute, Mtbubatuba, South Africa; Sarah P Garnett: University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia; Jean-Michel Gaspoz: Geneva University Medical School, Geneva, Switzerland; Magda Gasull: CIBER en Epidemiología y Salud Pública, Barcelona, Spain; Adroaldo Cesar Araújo Gay: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Anelise Reis Gay: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Andrea Gazzinelli: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Ulrike Gehring: Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; Harald Geiger: Agency for Preventive and Social Medicine, Bregenz, Austria; Johanna M Geleijnse: Wageningen University, Wageningen, Netherlands; Ali Ghanbari: Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Erfan Ghasemi: Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Oana-Florentina Gheorghe-Fronea: Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania; Simona Giampoli: Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy; Francesco Gianfagna: University of Insubria, Varese, Italy; Mediterranea Cardiocentro, Naples, Italy; Tiffany K Gill: University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia; Jonathan Giovannelli: University of Lille, Lille, France; Lille University Hospital, Lille, France; Glen Gironella: Food and Nutrition Research Institute, Taguig, Philippines; Aleksander Giwercman: Lund University, Lund, Sweden; Konstantinos Gkiouras: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece; Justyna Godos: University of Catania, Catania, Italy; Sibel Gogen: Ministry of Health, Ankara, Turkey; Marcel Goldberg: Institut National de la Sante et de la Recherche Médicale, Villejuif, France; Paris University, Paris, France; Rebecca A Goldsmith: Ministry of Health, Jerusalem, Israel; David Goltzman: McGill University, Montreal, Canada; Santiago F Gómez: Gasol Foundation, Barcelona, Spain; University of Lleida, Sant Boi de Llobregat, Spain; Aleksandra Gomuła: PASs Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Wrocław, Poland; Bruna Gonçalves Cordeiro da Silva: Federal University of Pelotas, Pelotas, Brazil; Helen Gonçalves: Federal University of Pelotas, Pelotas, Brazil; David A Gonzalez-Chica: University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia; Marcela Gonzalez-Gross: Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Madrid, Spain; Margot González-Leon: Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, Mexico City, Mexico; Juan P González-Rivas: St Anne’s University Hospital, Brno, Czech Republic; Cicerio González-Villalpando: National Institute of Public Health, Cuernavaca, Mexico; María Elena González-Villalpando: Centro de Estudios en Diabetes A.C., Mexico City, Mexico; Angel R Gonzalez: Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Frederic Gottrand: University of Lille, Lille, France; Antonio Pedro Graça: Ministry of Health, Lisbon, Portugal; Sidsel Graff-Iversen: Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway; Dušan Grafnetter: Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Prague, Czech Republic; Aneta Grajd: Children’s Memorial Health Institute, Warsaw, Poland; Maria G Grammatikopoulou: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece; Ronald D Gregor: Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada; Tomasz Grodzicki: Jagiellonian University Medical College, Kraków, Poland; Else Karin Grøholt: Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway; Anders Grøntved: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Giuseppe Grosso: University of Catania, Catania, Italy; Gabriella Gruden: University of Turin, Turin, Italy; Dongfeng Gu: National Center of Cardiovascular Diseases, Beijing, China; Emanuela Gualdi-Russo: University of Ferrara, Ferrara, Italy; Pilar Guallar-Castillon: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid CIBERESP, Madrid, Spain; Andrea Gualtieri: Authority Sanitaria San Marino, San Marino, San Marino; Elias F Gudmundsson: Icelandic Heart Association, Kopavogur, Iceland; Vílumur Guðnason: University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland; Ramiro Guererro: Universidad Icesi, Cali, Colombia; Idris Guessous: Geneva University Hospitals, Geneva, Switzerland; Andre L Guimarães: State University of Montes Claros, Montes Claros, Brazil; Martin C Gulliford: International Agency for Research on Cancer, Lyon, France; Xiu-Hua Guo: Capital Medical University, Beijing, China; Yin Guo: Capital Medical
Mathilde Kersting: Research Institute of Child Nutrition, Dortmund, Germany; Timothy Key: University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom; Yousef Saleh Khader: Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan; Davood Khaliili: Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Kay-Tee Khaw: University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom; Bahareh Kheiri: Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Motahareh Kheradmand: Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Sari, Islamic Republic of Iran; Alireza Khoorsavi: Hypertension Research Center, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran; Ilse MSL Khouw: FrieslandCampina, Amersfoort, Netherlands; Ursula Kiechl-Kohler: Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; Stefan Kiechl: Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; Japhet Killewo: Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Dong Wook Kim: National Health Insurance Service, Wonju, Republic of Korea; Hyeon Chang Kim: Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea; Jeongseon Kim: National Cancer Center, Goyang-si, Republic of Korea; Jenny M Kindblom: University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden; Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Gothenburg, Sweden; Heidi Klakk: University College South Denmark, Haderslev, Denmark; Magdalena Klimek: Jagiellonian University Medical College, Krakow, Poland; Jeannette Kliment: Statistics Austria, Vienna, Austria; Jurate Klumbiene: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Michael Knoeflach: Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; Bhawesh Koirala: B P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal; Elin Kolle: Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo, Norway; Patrick Kolsteren: Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium; Enguine Koning: University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; Raija Korpelainen: University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland; Oulu Deaconess Institute Foundation, Oulu, Finland; Paul Korovits: Tartu University Clinics, Tartu, Estonia; Magdalena Korzycka: Institute of Mother and Child, Warsaw, Poland; Jelena Kos: University Hospital Central Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia; Seppo Koskinen: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland; Katsuyasu Kouida: Kansai Medical University, Hirakata, Japan; Viktoria Kovacs: Hungarian School Sport Federation, Budapest, Hungary; Sudhir Kowlessur: Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, Port Louis, Mauritius; Sławomir Koziel: PNAS Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Wroclaw, Poland; Jana Kratenova: National Institute of Public Health, Prague, Czech Republic; Wolfgang Kratzer: University Hospital Ulm, Ulm, Germany; Susi Kriemler: University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; Peter Lund Kristensen: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Steinar Krokstad: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway; Daan Kromhout: University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands; Herculina Kruiger: North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa; Renata Kucien: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Urho M Kujala: University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland; Enisa Kujundzi: Institute of Public Health, Podgorica, Montenegro; Zbigniew Kulaga: Children’s Memorial Health Institute, Warsaw, Poland; Krishna Kuma: Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Cochin, India; Marie Kunešová: Institute of Endocrinology, Prague, Czech Republic; Pawel Kurjata: National Institute of Cardiology, Warsaw, Poland; Yadlapalli SKusuma: All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India; Kari Kuulasmaa: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland; Catherine Kyobutungi: African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya; Ko Quang Ngoc: Hanoi University of Public Health, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Fatima Zahra Laamiri: Hassan First University of Settat, Settat, Morocco; Tiina Laatikainen: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland; Carl Lachat: Ghent University, Gent, Belgium; Youcef Laid: Ministry of Health, Algiers, Algeria; Tai Hing Lam: University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China; Christina-Paulina Lambrinou: Harokopio University, Athens, Greece; Edwige Landais: French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, Montpellier, France; Vera Lanska: Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine, Prague, Czech Republic; Georg Lappas: Sahlgrenska Academy, Gothenburg, Sweden; Bagher Larijani: Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Center, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Tint Swe Latt: University of Public Health, Yangon, Myanmar; Laura Lauria: Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy; Maria Lazo-Porras: Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima, Peru; Gwenaelle Le Coroller: Luxembourg Institute of Health, Strassen, Luxembourg; Khanh Le Nguyen Bao: National Institute of Nutrition, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Agnès Le Port: International Food Policy Research Institute, Dakar, Senegal; Tuyen D Le: National Institute
Greifswald, Germany; Janina Petkeviciene: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Ausra Petrauskiene: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Emanuela Pettenuzzo: University Hospital of Varese, Varese, Italy; Niloofar Peykari: Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Son Thai Pham: Vietnam National Heart Institute, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Rafael N Pichardo: Clínica de Medicina Avanzada Dr. Abel González, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Daniela Pierannunzio: Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy; Iris Pigeot: Leibniz Institute for Prevention Research and Epidemiology - BIPS, Bremen, Germany; Hynek Pikhart: University College London, London, United Kingdom; Aida Pilav: University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Lorenza Pilo: Cardiovascular Prevention Centre Udine, Udine, Italy; Francesco Pistelli: Pisa University Hospital, Pisa, Italy; Freda Pitakaka: Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Honiara, Solomon Islands; Aleksandra Pionowska: National Institute of Cardiology, Warsaw, Poland; Andrea N Pizarro: University of Porto, Porto, Portugal; Pedro Plans-Rubió: Public Health Agency of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain; Bee Koon Poh: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Hermann Pohlabeln: Leibniz Institute for Prevention Research and Epidemiology - BIPS, Bremen, Germany; Raluca M Pop: University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology of Târgu Mures, Târgu Mures, Romania; Stevo R Popovic: University of Montenegro, Niksic, Montenegro; Miquel Porta: Institut Hospital del Mar d’Investigacions Mèdiques, Barcelona, Spain; Georg Posch: Agency for Preventive and Social Medicine, Bregenz, Austria; Anil Poudyal: Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu, Nepal; Dimitrios Poulimeneas: International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, Greece; Hamed Pouraram: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Farhad Pourfarz: Ardabil University of Medical Sciences, Ardabil, Islamic Republic of Iran; Akram Pourshams: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Hossein Poustchi: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Rajendra Pradeepa: Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, India; Alison J Price: London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom; Jacqueline F Price: University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; Rui Providencia: University College London, London, United Kingdom; Jardena J Puder: Lausanne University Hospital, Lausanne, Switzerland; Iveta Pudule: Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Riga, Latvia; Soile E Puhakka: University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland; Oulu Deaconess Institute Foundation, Oulu, Finland; Maria Puiu: Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania; Margus Punab: Tartu University Clinics, Tartu, Estonia; Radwan F Qasrawi: Al-Quds University, East Jerusalem, State of Palestine; Mostafa Qorbani: Alborz University of Medical Sciences, Karaj, Islamic Republic of Iran; Tran Quoc Bao: Ministry of Health, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Ivana Radic: University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia; Ricardas Radusauskas: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Salar Rahimikazerocn: Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran; Mahfuzar Rahman: Pure Earth, Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mahmudur Rahman: Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research, Dhaka, Bangladesh; Olli Raitakari: University of Turku, Turku, Finland; Manu Raj: Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Cochin, India; Ellina Rakhimova: Ufa Eye Research Institute, Ufa, Russian Federation; Sherali Rakhmatulloev: Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Dushanbe, Tajikistan; Ivo Rakovac: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Moscow, Russian Federation; Sudha Ramachandra Rao: National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, India; Ambady Ramachandran: India Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, India; Jacqueline Ramke: University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand; Elisabete Ramos: University of Porto Medical School, Porto, Portugal; Rafel Ramos: Institut Universitari d’Investigació en Atenció Prima` ria de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain; Géraldine Rampal: University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Vayia Rara: Sotiria Hospital, Athens, Greece; Ramon A Rascon-Pacheco: Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, Mexico City, Mexico; Mette Rasmussen: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Cassiano Ricardo Rech: Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil; Josep Redon: University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain; Paul Ferdinand M Reganit: University of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines; Valeria Regecova: Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia; Luis Revilla: Universidad San Martín de Porres, Lima, Peru; Abbas Rezaianzadeh: Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran; Lourdes Ribas-Barba: Nutrition Research Foundation, Barcelona, Spain; Robespierre Ribeiro: Minas Gerais State Secretariat for Health, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Elio
Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Anja Schienkiewitz: Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany; Sabine Schipf: University Medicine Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany; Carsten O Schmidt: University Medicine Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany; Ida Maria Schmidt: Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen, Denmark; Peter Schnohr: Copenhagen University Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark; Ben Schöttke: German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany; Sara Schramm: University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany; Stine Schramm: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Helmut Schröder: CIBER en Epidemiología y Salud Pública, Barcelona, Spain; Constance Schultsz: Academic Medical Center of University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Aletta E Schutte: University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; The George Institute for Global Health, Sydney, Australia; Aye Aye Sein: Ministry of Health and Sports, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar; Rusidah Selamat: Ministry of Health, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Vedrana Sember: University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Abhijit Sen: Center for Oral Health Services and Research Mid-Norway, Trondheim, Norway; Idowu O Senbanjo: Lagos State University College of Medicine, Lagos, Nigeria; Sadaf G Sepanlou: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Victor Sequera: Ministry of Public Health, Asunción, Paraguay; Luis Serra-Majem: University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; Jennifer Servais: Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Canada; Ludmila Ševčíková: Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia; Svetlana A Shalnova: National Research Centre for Preventive Medicine, Moscow, Russian Federation; Teresa Shamah-Levy: National Institute of Public Health, Cuernavaca, Mexico; Mortezá Shamshirguei: Neyshabur University of Medical Sciences, Neyshabur, Islamic Republic of Iran; Combatore Subramaniam Shanthirani: Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, India; Maryam Sharafkhah: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Sanjib K Sharma: B P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal; Jonathan E Shaw: Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Melbourne, Australia; Amane Shayanrad: Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; Ali Akbar Shayesteh: Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Islamic Republic of Iran; Lela Shengelia: National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, Tbilisi, Georgia; Zumin Shi: Qatar University, Doha, Qatar; Kenji Shibuya: King’s College London, London, United Kingdom; Hana Shimizu-Furusawa: Nippon Medical School, Tokyo, Japan; Dong Wook Shin: Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, Republic of Korea; Majid Shirani: Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, Shahrakord, Islamic Republic of Iran; Rahman Shiri: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Helsinki, Finland; Namuna Shrestha: Public Health Promotion and Development Organization, Kathmandu, Nepal; Kahtir Si-Ramlee: Ministry of Health, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam; Alfonso Siani: Institute of Food Sciences of the National Research Council, Avellino, Italy; Rosalynn Siantar: Singapore Eye Research Institute, Singapore, Singapore; Abla M Sibai: American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon; Antonio M Silva: Federal University of Maranhão, São Luís, Brazil; Diego Augusto Santos Silva: Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil; Mary Simon: India Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, India; Judith Simons: St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, Australia; Leon A Simons: University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Agneta Sjöberg: University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden; Michael Sjöström: Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; Gry Skodje: Nea Municipality, Aarhus, Denmark; Jolanta Słocińska-Kończak: Medical University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland; Przemysław Słupszczak: International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, Warsaw, Poland; Liam Smeeth: London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom; Hung-Kwan So: University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China; Fernando Cunha Soares: University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil; Grzegorz Sobek: University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów, Poland; Eugène Sobngwi: University of Yaoundé 1, Yaoundé, Cameroon; Morten Søderberg: University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark; Stefan Söderberg: Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden; Moesijanti YE Soekatri: Health Polytechnic Jakarta II Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia; Agustinus Soemantara: Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia; Reecha Sofat: University College London, London, United Kingdom; Vincenzo Solfrizzi: University of Bari, Bari, Italy; Mohammad Hossein Somi: Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Islamic Republic of Iran; Emily Sonesdott: Lund University, Lund, Sweden; Yi Song: Peking University, Beijing, China; Thorkild IA Sørensen: University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Elin P Sørøe: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway; Charles Sossa Jérome: Institut Régional de Santé Publique, Ouidah, Benin; Victoria E Soto-Rojas: Universidad
Institute of Child Health, Nicosia, Cyprus; Maties Torrent: Institut d’Investigacio Sanitaria Illes Balears, Menorca, Spain; Laura Torres-Collado: CIBER en Epidemiologia y Salud Publica, Alicante, Spain; Stefania Toselli: University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy; Giota Touloumi: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece; Pierre Traissac: French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, Montpellier, France; Thi Tuyet-Hanh Tran: Hanoi University of Public Health, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Dimitrios Trichopoulos: Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston, United States; Antonia Trichopoulou: Hellenic Health Foundation, Athens, Greece; Danh TH Trinh: University of Medicine and Pharmacy at Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam; Atul Trivedi: Government Medical College, Bhavnagar, India; Lechaba Tshepo: Sefako Makgatho Health Science University, Ga-Rankuwa, South Africa; Maria Tsiggas: International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, Greece; Shoichiro Tsugane: National Cancer Center, Tokyo, Japan; Azaliia M Tuliakova: Ufa Eye Research Institute, Ufa, Russian Federation; Marshall K Tulloch-Reid: The University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica; Fikru Tullu: Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Tomi-Pekka Tuomainen: University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland; Jaakko Tuomilehto: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland; Maria L Turley: Ministry of Health, Wellington, New Zealand; Gilad Twig: Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel; Per Tynelius: Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; Themistoklis Tzotzas: Hellenic Medical Association for Obesity, Athens, Greece; Christophe Tzourio: University of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France; Peter Ueda: Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; Eunice Ugel: Universidad Centro-Occidental Lisandro Alvarado, Barquisimeto, Venezuela; Flora AM Ukoli: Meharry Medical College, Nashville, United States; Hanno Ulmer: Medical University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; Belgin Unal: Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, Turkey; Zhamyila Usupova: Republican Center for Health Promotion, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Hannu MT Uusitalo: University of Tampere Tays Eye Center, Tampere, Finland; Nalan Uysal: Sabiha Gokcen Ilkoku, Ankara, Turkey; Justinia Vaitkeviciute: Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania; Gonzalo Valdivia: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile; Susana Vale: Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Porto, Portugal; Damaskini Valvi: Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York City, United States; Rob M van Dam: National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore; Johan Van der Heyden: Sciensano, Brussels, Belgium; Yvonne T van der Schouw: Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; Koen Van Herck: Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium; Hoang Van Minh: Hanoi University of Public Health, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Natasja M Van Schoor: VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Irene GM van Valkengoed: University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Dirk Vanderschueren: Catholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; Diego Vanuzzo: Cardiovascular Prevention Centre Udine, Udine, Italy; Anette Varbo: Copenhagen University Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark; University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Gregorio Varela-Moreiras: Universidad CEU San Pablo, Madrid, Spain; Patricia Varona-Pérez: National Institute of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Microbiology, Havana, Cuba; Senthil K Vasan: University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom; Tomas Vega: Consejería de Sanidad Junta de Castilla y León, Valladolid, Spain; Toomas Veidebaum: National Institute for Health Development, Tallinn, Estonia; Gustavo Velasquez-Melendez: Universidad Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Biruta Velika: Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Riga, Latvia; Giovanni Veronesi: University of Insbruck, Varese, Italy; WM Monique Verschuren: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Bilthoven, Netherlands; Cesar G Victora: Federal University of Pelotas, Pelotas, Brazil; Giovanni Viegli: National Research Council, Pisa, Italy; Lucie Viet: National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Bilthoven, Netherlands; Salvador Villalpando: National Institute of Public Health, Cuernavaca, Mexico; Paolo Vineis: Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom; Jesus Vioque: University Miguel Hernandez, Alicante, Spain; Jyrki K Virtanen: University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland; Marjolein Visser: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Sophie Visvikis-Siest: Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale, Nancy, France; Bharathi Viswanathan: Ministry of Health, Victoria, Seychelles; Mihaela Vladulescu: Sunflower Nursery School, Craiova, Romania; Tiina Vlasoff: North Karelia Center for Public Health, Joensuu, Finland; Dorja Vocanec: University of Zagreb School of Medicine, Zagreb, Croatia; Peter Vollenweider: Lausanne University Hospital, Lausanne, Switzerland; Henry Völzke: University Medicine Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany; Ari Voutilainen: University of Eastern Finland,
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Author ORCIDs

Maria LC Iurilli [https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0409-1635](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0409-1635)
Bin Zhou [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1741-8628](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1741-8628)
Majid Ezzati [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2109-8081](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2109-8081)

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Additional files

Supplementary files

- Supplementary file 1. Coefficients of the regression of probit-transformed prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity in women on mean body mass index.
- Supplementary file 2. Coefficients of the regression of probit-transformed prevalence of underweight, obesity, and severe obesity in men on mean body mass index.
- Supplementary file 3. List of analysis regions and countries in each region.
- Supplementary file 4. List of data sources used in the analysis and their characteristics.
- Supplementary file 5. Mean body mass index estimates (kg/m²) in 1985 and 2016 stratified by region, gender, and age group.
- Source data 1. Data from studies in the Non-Communicable Disease Risk Factor Collaboration database conducted from 1985 to 2019 with participants aged 20–79 years old.
- Source code 1. Liner regression model used for the analysis of the association of prevalence of underweight, total obesity, and severe obesity with mean body mass index.
- Transparent reporting form

Data availability
Names and characteristics of data sources included in this pooling analysis are listed in Supplementary file 4. Of these data, some are from public sources, for which we have provided the data in Source data 1. Others are from individual researchers and/or from government and international agencies; these should be requested from the data holders on a study to study basis using the information in Source data 1.

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