

## India and the Global Hunger Index 2022

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### Introduction

The Global Hunger Index which maps the hunger and undernourishment status of each country of the world has released the country wise scores for the year 2022 and our nation, India, is in a shape which we had not expected her to be. India has ranked 107 out of 121 countries and is technically one among the 31 countries featuring in the “Serious” provisional hunger severity category with a score of 29.1 (<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/>). At a time when India is making efforts to create a

trillion-dollar economy, such indices time and again remind us that the gap between rich and poor is still the same and until and unless it is bridged, no number of efforts can make our country become a member of the trillion-dollar club. The authors of this article have attempted to provide an idea about the Global Hunger Index (GHI), its components and methodology of ranking, India’s progress in GHI and policy implications that need to be addressed to bridge the rich-poor gap of our country.

## Hunger and Food Insecurity

**Hunger** is usually understood to refer to the distress associated with a lack of sufficient calories. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) defines food deprivation, or undernourishment, as the habitual consumption of too few calories to provide the minimum dietary energy an individual requires to live a healthy and productive life, given that person’s sex, age, stature, and physical activity [level](https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/) (<https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>). Hence,

according to FAO, “hunger” may also be referred to as undernourishment.

On the other hand, 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. FAO measures food insecurity using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) shown below (Fig.1):

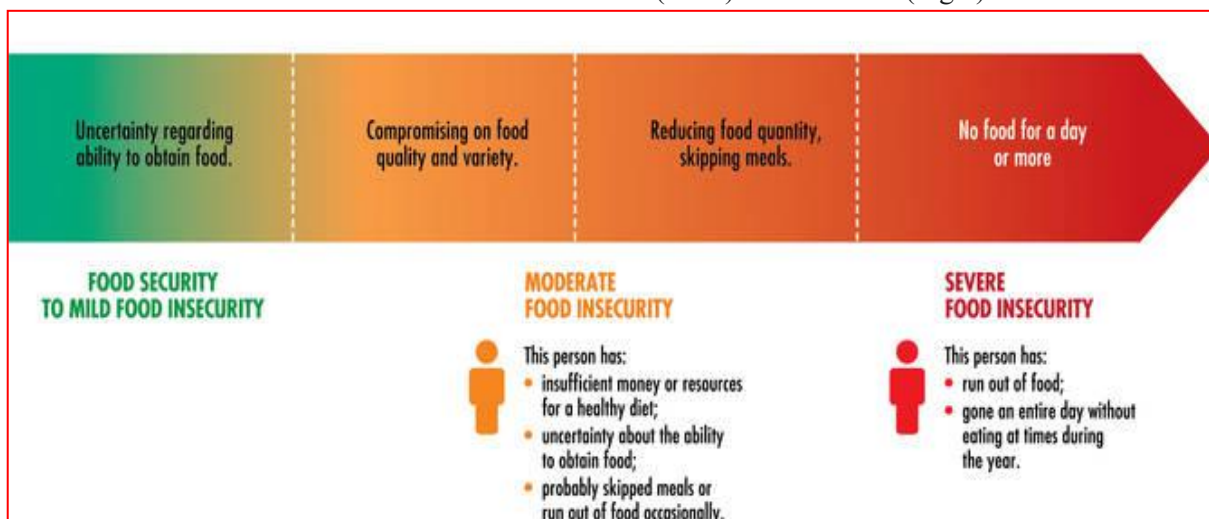


Fig-1: Scale of Food Insecurity

Source: FAO, 2022

Hunger and food insecurity are related because 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 (<https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>).

## Global Hunger Index and its components

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels reflecting multiple dimensions of hunger over [time](#) (Wiesmann *et.al.*, 2000) . GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators:

**Undernourishment:** the share of the population with insufficient caloric intake.

**Child stunting:** the share of children under age five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition.

**Child wasting:** the share of children under age five who have low weight for their height, reflecting *acute* undernutrition.

**Child mortality:** the share of children who die before their fifth birthday, partly reflecting the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments.

Based on the values of the four indicators, a GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger, where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from *low* to *extremely alarming*.

Methodology of Calculating GHI scores

All kinds of composite indices have a rigorous methodology to arrive at such score or index values based on which countries ranked. Global Hunger Index has 4 components with varied weights as mentioned below and follows a 3 step process to arrive at score values:

1. Values are determined for the four component indicators for each country, drawing on the latest published data available from internationally recognized sources.
2. Each of the four component indicators is given a standardized score based on thresholds set slightly above the highest country-level values

observed worldwide for that indicator [since 1988](#). For example, the highest value for undernourishment estimated in this period is 76.5 percent, so the threshold for standardization is set a bit higher, at [80 percent](#). Here are the formulae used to standardize each indicator:

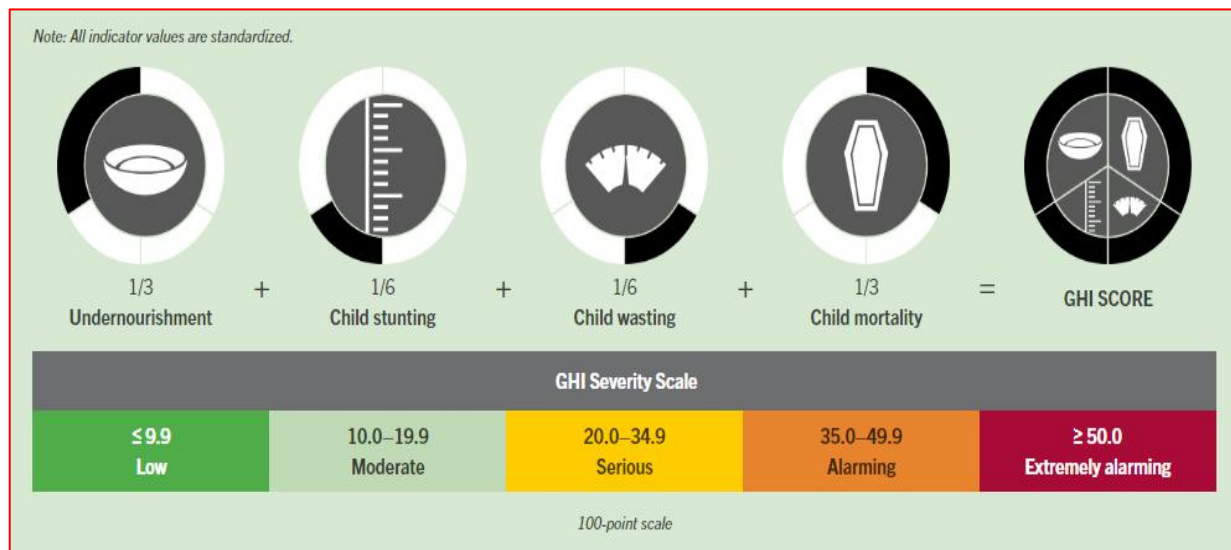
$$\left( \frac{\text{Prevalence of undernourishment}}{80} \right) * 100 = \text{Standardized Undernourishment Value}$$

$$\left( \frac{\text{Child Stunting Rate}}{70} \right) * 100 = \text{Standardized Child Stunting Value}$$

$$\left( \frac{\text{Child Wasting Rate}}{30} \right) * 100 = \text{Standardized Child Wasting Value}$$

$$\left( \frac{\text{Child Mortality Rate}}{70} \right) * 100 = \text{Standardized Child Mortality Value}$$

3. The standardized scores are aggregated to calculate the GHI score for each country. Undernourishment and child mortality each contribute one-third of the GHI score, while child stunting and child wasting each contribute one-sixth of the score, as shown in the formula [\(Fig.2\)](#).



Source: Global Hunger Index 2022 (Alliance, 2015)

**Fig-2: Composition of GHI scores and severity designations**

This calculation results in GHI scores on a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. In practice, neither of these extremes is reached. A value of

100 would signify that a country's undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality levels each exactly meets the thresholds set slightly above the

highest levels observed worldwide in recent decades. A value of 0 would mean that a country had no undernourished people in the population, no children younger than five who

### India's Record in Global Hunger Index

India, with a score of 29.1, ranked 107 among 121 countries in Global Hunger Index charts of 2022. India now belongs to the category of countries with "Serious" hunger issue in which in which 31 countries feature all total. Countries with GHI score of  $\leq 9.9$  are designated as those with low hunger, 10.0-19.9 as moderate, 20.0-34.9 as serious, 35.0-49.9 as alarming and  $\geq 50.0$  as extremely alarming. In 2007 and 2014, India had a hunger score of 38.8

### Rich-Poor Gap and Policy Implications

The rise in hunger score of India puts a question mark on our run towards progress. If progress means widening the rich-poor divide in society thus exposing the poverty stricken to the flames of hunger and undernourishment, then such progress needs a thorough rethinking. The Global Hunger Index delineates certain policy recommendations for the "hungry" countries of the world so that the rich-poor divide in society is reduced and poor have access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food. First of all, inclusive governance and accountability should be at the centre of all efforts to transform food systems. Governments should fulfil the citizens' right to food and make all-inclusive policies to cater to the people of grassroot level. Second of all, policies that transform food systems that transform food systems should

### Conclusion

It is essential for a developing economy like India to address essential for a developing economy like India to address the issue of

### References

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2. Wiesmann, D., Braun, J.V., Feldbrügge, T. (2000). An International Nutrition Index – Successes and Failures in Addressing Hunger

were wasted or stunted, and no children who died before their fifth birthday (<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/>).

and 36.3 respectively which falls under "alarming" hunger issue category. The next 7 years India undoubtedly progressed to achieve a score of 28.2 to register herself in "serious" hunger category. But this progress dipped when 2022 scores revealed a spike in hunger with 29.1 as new "serious" hunger score of India. This is unbecoming of a fast developing economy like India.

involve citizens' participation and take into consideration the local context. Communities, civil society organizations, small producers, farmers, indigenous groups and women with their local knowledge and lived experiences, should shape how access to nutritious food is governed; their capacities and good practices should be supported, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Third of all, resources should be scaled up to address pressing humanitarian needs in times of unforeseen events like conflicts, wars, natural calamities, climate needs in times of unforeseen events like conflicts, wars, natural calamities and long term dangers of climate change. Hence, making food systems resilient to shocks is utmost essential.

poverty and hunger so that as an inclusive and sustainable economy, we can make a mark in the map of the world.

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3. <https://www.fao.org/hunger/en/> Accessed on 25th October, 2022.