



Senate Economic
Planning Office

Nutritional Status of Filipino Children

At a Glance

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Initial results of the 6th National Nutrition Survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) in 2003 and Updates on the 2001 Nutritional Status of Filipino Children show that malnutrition continues to persist in the Philippines. These studies found that although there are modest gains, the improvements in the nutrition status of Filipinos observed from 1990 to 2001 have been very slow.

Some of the major findings of the report are:

Prevalence of Malnutrition Among Filipino Children (Ages 0-10 Years Old)

Ø For the period 1990 to 2001, the number of underweight pre-school children decreased by a mere 3.9 percentage points from 34.50 percent in 1990 to 30.60 percent in 2001. In terms of population, this translates into an estimated 3.67 million underweight pre-school children in 2001.

Ø Among the 6-10 year old children, the decrease in underweight prevalence within the 11-year period is only 1.3 percentage points from 34.20 percent in 1990 to 32.90 in 2001.

Ø Given the rate of improvement of underweight prevalence (decrease in prevalence) in the said period, the FNRI has estimated that it will take the Philippines more than 50 years before the problem of under-nutrition can be totally eradicated.

Table 1. Trends in the Prevalence of Malnutrition Among 0-5 and 6-10 Year-Old Children: Philippines, 1989-90 to 2001

Nutritional Status	% Prevalence						Estimated No.(In Millions)*
	1989-90	1992	1993	1996	1998	2001	2001
0-5 years old							
Underweight	34.50	34.00	29.90	30.80	32.00	30.60	3.67
Under-height	39.90	36.80	34.30	34.50	34.00	31.40	3.77
Thinness	5.00	6.60	6.70	5.20	6.00	6.30	0.76
Overweight-for-age	0.60		0.40	0.50	0.40	1.10	0.12
6-10 years old							
Underweight	34.20	32.50	30.50	28.30	30.20	32.90	3.07
Under-height	44.80	42.80	42.20	39.10	40.80	41.10	3.83
Overweight for age	0.10	0.20	0.60	0.40	n	0.80	0.08

Source: Food and Nutrition Research Institute - Department of Science & Technology
* based on the NSO projected population for 2001

Table 2. Prevalence of Malnutrition Among 0-5 and 6-10 Year-Old Children by Gender: Philippines, 2001

AGE (in years)	Underweight	Under-height	Thinness	Overweight
0-5 years	30.6	31.4	6.3	1.0
Male	30.0	31.7	6.5	1.1
Female	31.3	31.2	6.1	1.0
6-10 years	32.9	41.1	-	0.8
Male	37.2	46.2	-	1.4
Female	28.2	35.3	-	0.2

Source: Food and Nutrition Research Institute - Department of Science & Technology

Ø Among school-age children, the boys appear to be at greater risk to the different forms of malnutrition than girls. The number of underweight boys is almost 10 percentage points higher compared with the girls, and more than 10 points higher for short boys.

Prevalence of Malnutrition Among 0-5 Year-Old Children Across Regions

Table 3. Prevalence of Malnutrition Among 0-5 Year-Old Children by Region

Region	Under-weight	Under-height	Thinness	Overweight for age
Philippines	30.6	31.4	6.3	1.0
NCR	20.3	20.0	5.2	2.5
I. Ilocos	31.5	26.6	5.7	0.7
CAR	23.4	35.9	4.0	2.2
II. Cagayan Valley	31.2	24.4	10.4	1.3
III. Central Luzon	25.9	21.2	7.9	1.2
IV. Southern Tagalog	27.8	27.5	5.5	2.0
V. Bicol	37.8	39.3	6.9	0.4
VI. Western Visayas	35.2	38.5	5.8	1.2
VII. Central Visayas	28.3	30.2	5.8	1.0
VIII. Eastern Visayas	32.0	35.0	5.2	0.2
IX. Eastern Mindanao	31.8	35.5	8.4	0.3
X. Northern Mindanao	34.1	36.9	5.7	0.3
XI. Southern Mindanao	32.3	35.4	4.3	0.1
XII. Central Mindanao	30.2	29.0	8.8	1.0
CARAGA	33.5	36.0	7.7	0.1
ARMM	27.9	42.0	6.1	1.4

Source: Food and Nutrition Research Institute-Department of Science & Technology
2001 Updating of Nutritional Status for Filipino Children at the Regional Level

Ø In terms of geographical location, the Bicol Region appears to be the worst-off in underweight prevalence, followed by regions mostly situated in Mindanao island (Region 10, CARAGA, Regions 11, 9 and 12).

Ø The Bicol Region also registered a high prevalence of short pre-school children with a rate of 39.3 percent. The ARMM region had the highest prevalence of under height pre-school children with 42 percent.

Ø The NCR was the only region to register malnutrition indicators - underweight, under-height and thinness - that are much lower than the national average.

Prevalence of Anemia by Age and Physiologic State

Ø The prevalence of anemia among 6 months to < 1 year has remained unabated since 1993. In fact, anemia in this age group has increased from 49.2 percent to an alarming rate of 66 percent.

Table 4. Comparison of Prevalence of Anemia by Age and Physiologic State (by Specific Population Group) Philippines: 1993, 1998, 2003

Age group	(in percent)		
	1993	1998	2003
6 mos. - < 1 yr.	49.2	56.6	66.0
1 yr.-5 yrs.	25.7	29.6	29.1
6-12 yrs.	42.0	35.6	37.4
Pregnant women	43.6	50.7	43.9
Lactating women	43.0	45.7	42.2

Source: Perlas, L. A., et al., 6th National Nutrition Survey: Initial Results

Ø Anemia among pregnant and lactating women has also remained a public health problem. Efforts to decrease anemia in this specific population group have not produced much, as prevalence rates basically remain the same for the period 1993 to 1998.