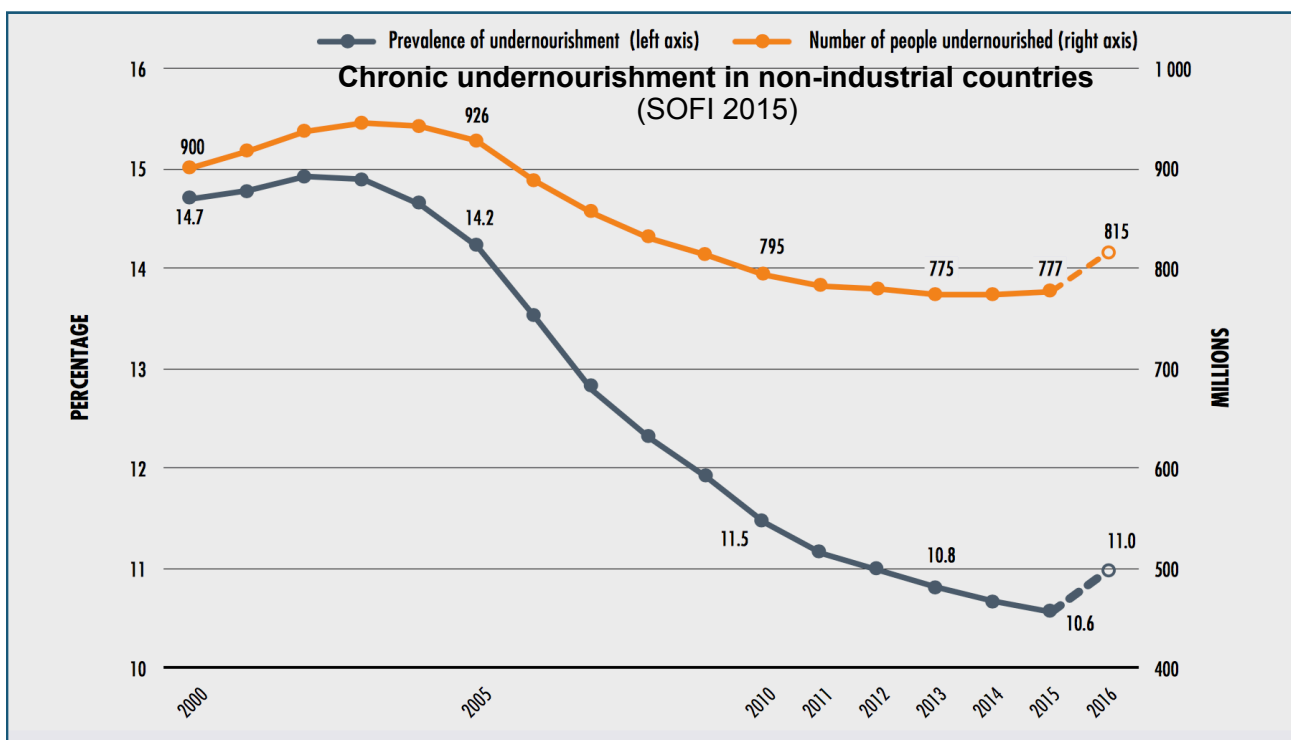


## Facts and figures on world hunger

### Chronic undernourishment

The report on the [State of Food Insecurity in the World](#) (SOFI) published in September 2017 by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, in the framework of the monitoring process of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), presents data estimates that suggest that there were 815 million chronically undernourished persons in the world in 2016, equivalent to one person out of nine. These figures show an increase in hunger-affected people in the world, reversing the declining trend of UN estimates since 2003 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Number and percentage of chronically under-nourished persons in the World since 2000**

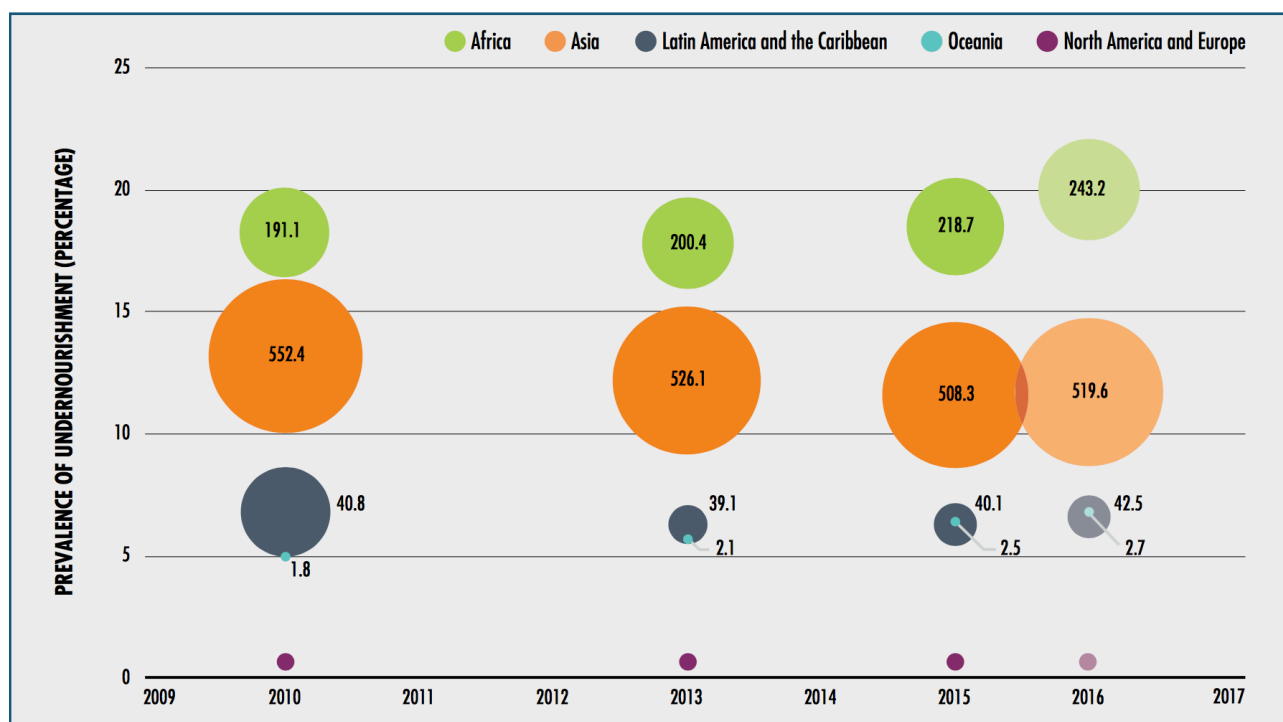


\* Figures for 2016 are projected estimates. Source: FAO

At the regional level, Asia remains by far the region with most persons suffering from under-nourishment (almost 520 million people), followed by Africa (243 million people) and Latin America and the Caribbean (43 million people).

The increase observed at world level is confirmed in every region, with Africa seeing the largest increase (+25 million people), followed by Asia (+15 million people) and Latin America and the Caribbean (+2 million people). (Figure 2)

**Figure 2: Number and percentage of chronically undernourished persons since 2009\***



\* The size of the circles represents the number of undernourished people in millions, as labelled. Figures for 2016 are projected values. Source: FAO

This negative evolution at global and regional levels is confirmed by numerous local assessments.

Several factors are put forward by the UN to explain the observed increase:

- Recent reductions in food availability in some countries, combined with increases in food prices in regions affected by El Niño / La Niña-related phenomena, mainly in Eastern and Southern Africa and in South-Eastern Asia;
- The surge in conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Near-East which led to severe food-crisis situations, explains the fact that around 60 percent of undernourished persons and 75 percent of stunted children live in conflict-affected countries [\[read\]](#);
- The economic slowdown observed in some countries, often linked to lower primary commodity prices, which implies a reduction of food availability (decreased production and imports) and of resources that would assist people to have access to sufficient food (household income, social programmes).

To the factors enumerated by the UN, one should add the food and agriculture policy measures adopted by countries, often under the influence of international organisations, particularly financial organisations, that contribute to further marginalise poor agricultural producers by depriving them of access to their land to the benefit of large private investors or by excluding them from agricultural development programmes [\[read\]](#)

## Severe food insecurity

The same UN report deals, for the first time, with the way individuals are experiencing food insecurity. Data presented come from surveys conducted in 150 countries, in collaboration with Gallup.

Results of this work show that almost one person out of ten in the world - 690 million people - suffered from severe food insecurity over the 2014-2016 period. This proportion is of more than one person out of four in Africa (330 million people) and approximately one out of fifteen in Asia (310 million people)

It is interesting to note that while global statistics generally do not give estimates of the number of under-nourished in rich countries, those on severe food insecurity provide data that show that hunger also exists in those countries. They suggest that there are every year around 15 million people in the so-called “developed” countries who suffer from severe food insecurity, of which more than 3 million in the US, 2.7 million in the UK, 0.8 in Germany, 0.9 in France and 0.6 in Italy. At [hungerexplained.org](http://hungerexplained.org), we have already drawn the attention of our readers to the degradation of the food situation in rich countries and, based on data published by several NGOs, we believe that there are several tens of millions of people who suffer chronic undernourishment in rich countries where the need for food assistance programmes increased considerably in recent years. [\[read\]](#)

Data from these surveys also show that the probability of being food insecure is slightly higher if you are a woman than if you are a man.

## Other forms of malnutrition in 2016 (in brief)

- 155 million children under five years of age across the world suffer from stunted growth (slightly decreasing in all regions) (Source: UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group);
- 51.7 million children under five years of age suffered from wasting (weight too low for height), with 17 million of them being in a severe condition (decreasing in all regions) (Source: UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group);
- 41 million children under five were considered overweight in 2016 (increasing everywhere but in Western Africa, South America and Eastern Asia (Source: UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group);
- Between 1980 and 2014, prevalence of adult obesity more than doubled to reach a total of 600 million affected people, North America, Europe and Oceania coming first with more than one third of adults concerned (Source: WHO);
- More than 613 million women aged between 15 and 49 years (one third of the total) are affected by anemia, the highest rates being found in Africa and Asia (Source: WHO);
- 43 percent of infants aged less than 6 months were exclusively breastfed in 2016, compared to 36 percent in 2005, the highest rates being found in Southern Asia and Eastern Africa (Source : UNICEF).

## Conclusion

In a cruel twist of irony, the increase of the number of undernourished people in the world takes place at a time when declarations and pledges to eradicate hunger by 2030 have multiplied [\[read here and here\]](#). Despite some progress made during the Paris COP21, these declarations have unfortunately been followed by inaction [\[read\]](#) or even by threats to withdraw, namely by Trump’s US. This leaves little hope for the bright future that was

promised to us not so long ago, as policies adopted almost everywhere in the world are in favour increased inequality. [\[read\]](#)

Unless policies followed by countries are fundamentally modified in a way that we have suggested many times on [hungerexplained](#) [\[read\]](#), one can only expect that the degradation observed will be confirmed in the future, along with its huge attached human cost in terms of lost lives and suffering.

[Materne Maetz](#)  
(September 2017)

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For more information:

- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, [State of Food Insecurity in the World](#), 2017

Earlier articles on [hungerexplained.org](#) related to the topic:

- [Why famines in a world of plenty?](#) 2017
- [How to stop the global inequality machine](#), 2017
- [Climate finance for poor countries: confusion, lack of transparency and probability that commitments made will not be respected](#), 2016
- [Africa: can the continent end hunger and become food self-sufficient by 2025?](#) 2016
- [Countries are getting ready to approve new Sustainable Development Goals for the 15 years to come: What is new compared to the MDGs in 2000?](#), 2015
- [More resources are needed to combat hunger in rich countries](#), 2014
- [Seven principles for ending hunger sustainably](#), 2013
- [Exclusion](#), 2013
- [La FAO va tester une nouvelle méthode pour mesurer la faim dans le monde](#), 2013 (In French only)
- [Deux «revenants» menacent la France: la pauvreté et la faim](#), 2012 (In French only)

and all our articles under our "[Investment](#)" and "[World Hunger](#)" categories.

Archives on the world food situation :

- [Facts and figures on world hunger 2015](#)
- [Facts and figures on world hunger 2014](#)
- [Our comments on SOFI 2013](#), 2013
- [Facts and figures on world hunger 2013](#)
- [What is the real number of hungry people in the world?](#), 2013