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# Nutrition in India

## Key Findings from the 2005-06 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3)

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Macro International

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# Nutrition in India National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) 2005-06

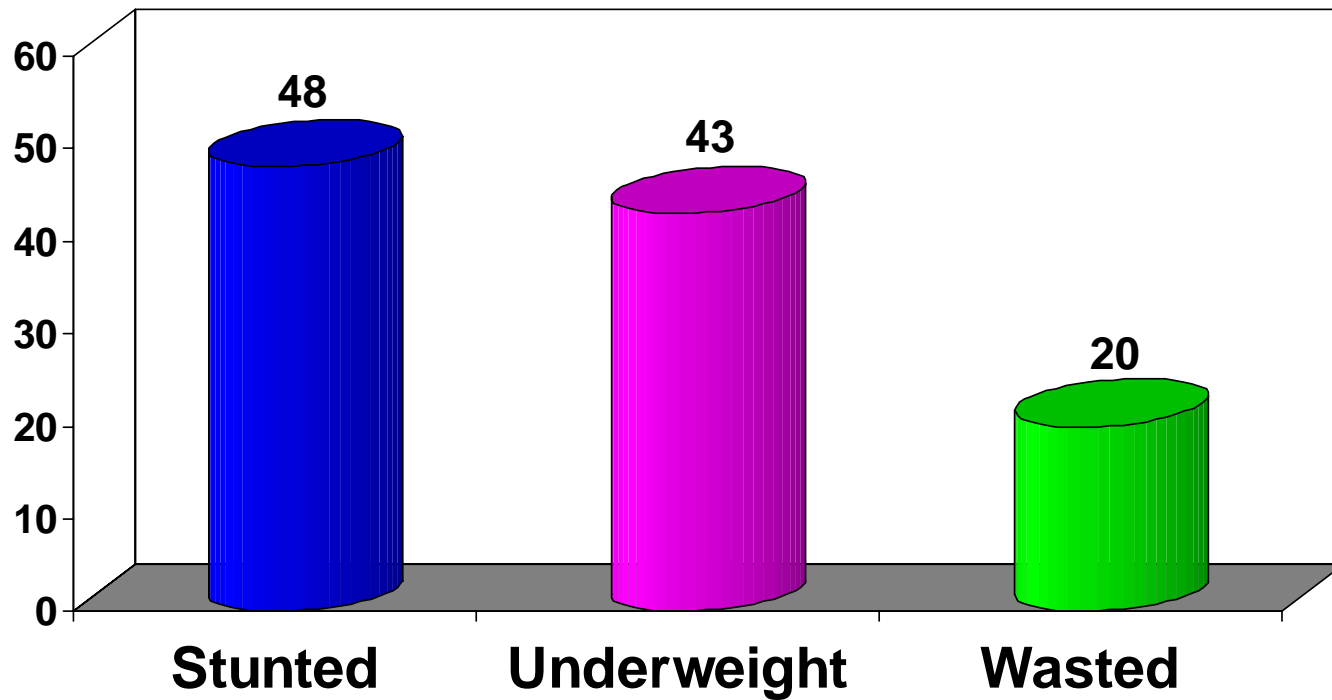


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# Quote from Amartya Sen

*“India’s record in countering hunger and famine is strangely mixed. The rapid elimination of famine since independence is an achievement of great importance...And yet India’s overall record in eliminating hunger and undernutrition is quite terrible. Not only is there persistent recurrence of severe hunger in particular regions, but there is also a dreadful prevalence of endemic hunger across much of India. Indeed, India does worse in this respect than even sub-Saharan Africa.”*

# Undernutrition in Children under Age 5



# Are Indian Children Naturally Small?

No - Indian children grow at the same rate as children elsewhere when they are allowed to reach their full genetic potential

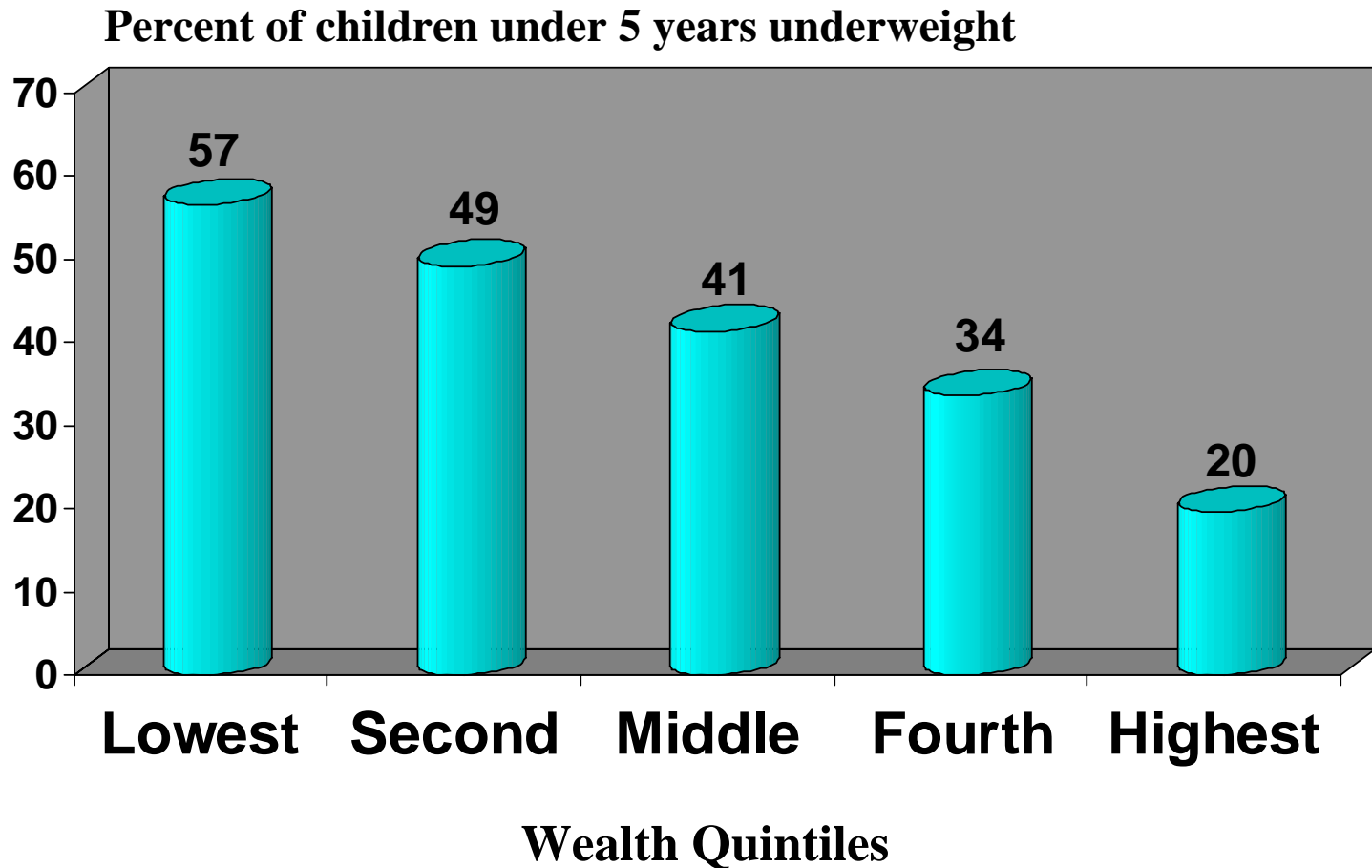
Seminal study from the Nutrition Foundation of India (1992)

WHO Multicentre Growth  
Reference Study Group (2006)

# Differentials in Underweight Prevalence

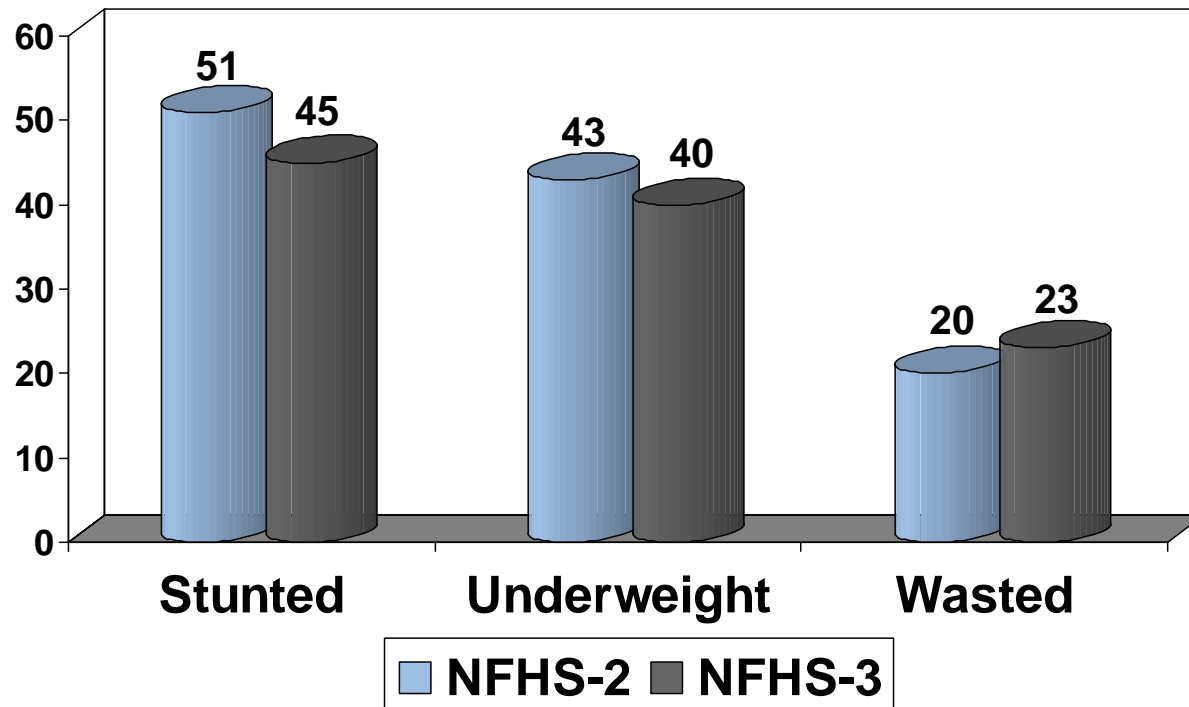
- ❖ **Almost no difference between girls and boys (same finding as in NFHS-1 and NFHS-2)**
- ❖ **Inadequate nutrition higher in rural areas, SC/ST children, children with short birth intervals, and higher-order births**
- ❖ **Underweight decreases sharply with mother's education and household wealth**

# Underweight Prevalence by Wealth



# Trends in Child Nutrition

Percent of children under age 3





# Anaemia Widespread in India

- **Anaemia is characterized by a low level of haemoglobin in the blood**
- **Anaemia in children often leads to impaired cognitive and motor development**
- **Anaemia is usually caused by nutritional deficiencies (iron, vitamin A, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, folate, etc.) or infections such as malaria or hookworm**

# Anaemia in Children Is Widespread in India

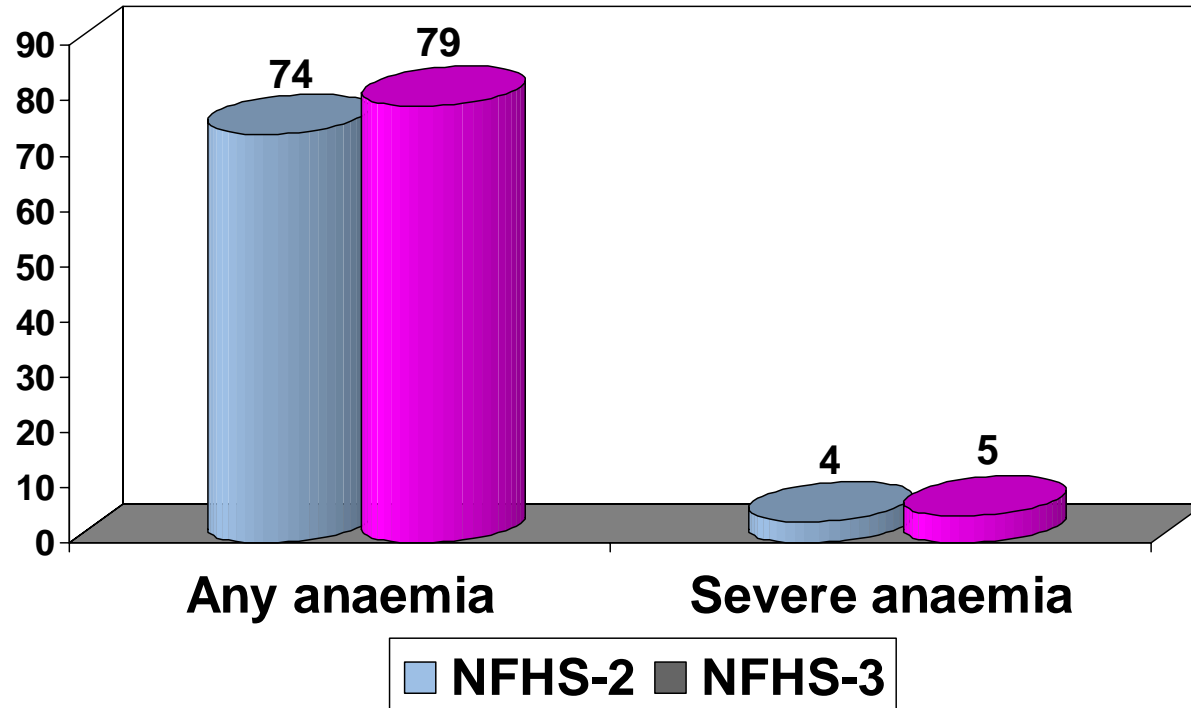
Anaemia Prevalence	State	
Anaemia prevalence more than 70 percent	Bihar	Chhattisgarh
	Madhya Pradesh	Andhra Pradesh
	Uttar Pradesh	Karnataka
		Jharkhand
	Haryana	
Anaemia prevalence less than 50 percent	Goa	Kerala
	Manipur	Mizoram

India's anaemia prevalence for children is almost twice as high as the WHO estimate of anaemia in children in all developing countries

# Anaemia High in All Groups

- **Percent of children with any anaemia**
  - **Urban (63%)**
  - **Wealthiest households (56%)**
  - **Children whose mother's have 12+ years of education (55%)**
  - **Girls (69%), boys (70%)**

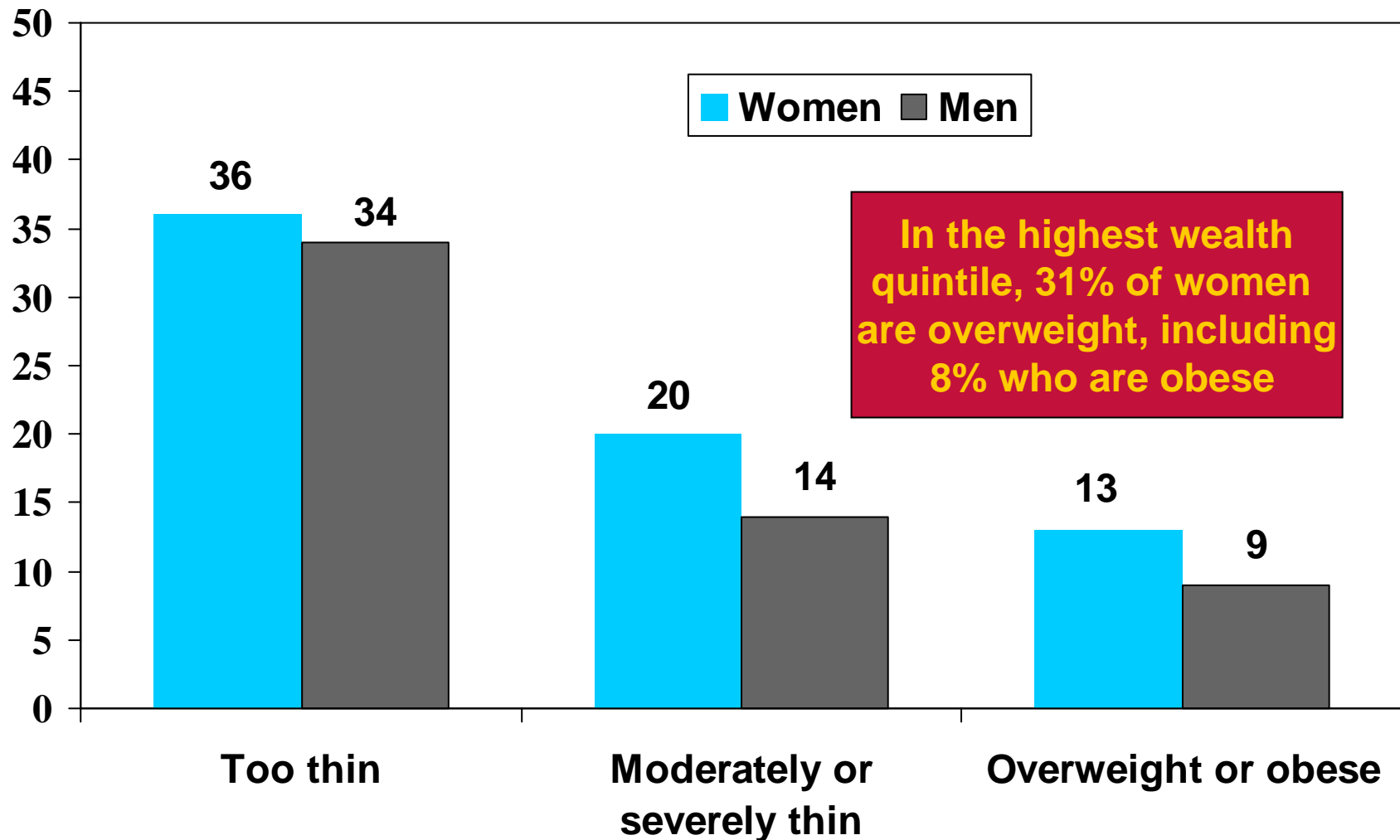
# Anaemia among Children 6-35 Months



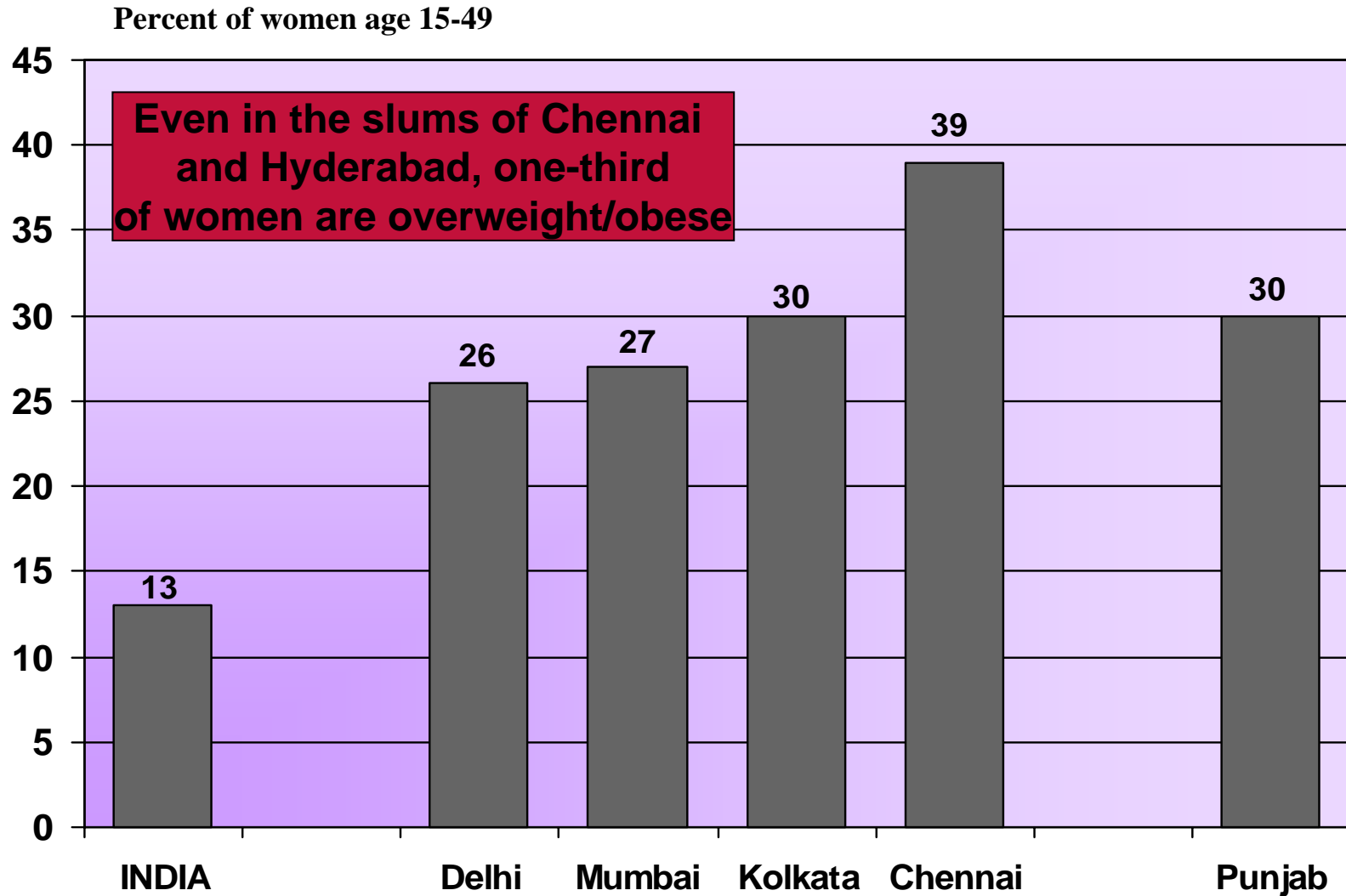
# Adult Nutrition

**The poor nutrition conditions of young children in India have received much attention recently, but adults are also experiencing a variety of nutritional problems**

# Percentage of Adults Age 15-49 Malnourished



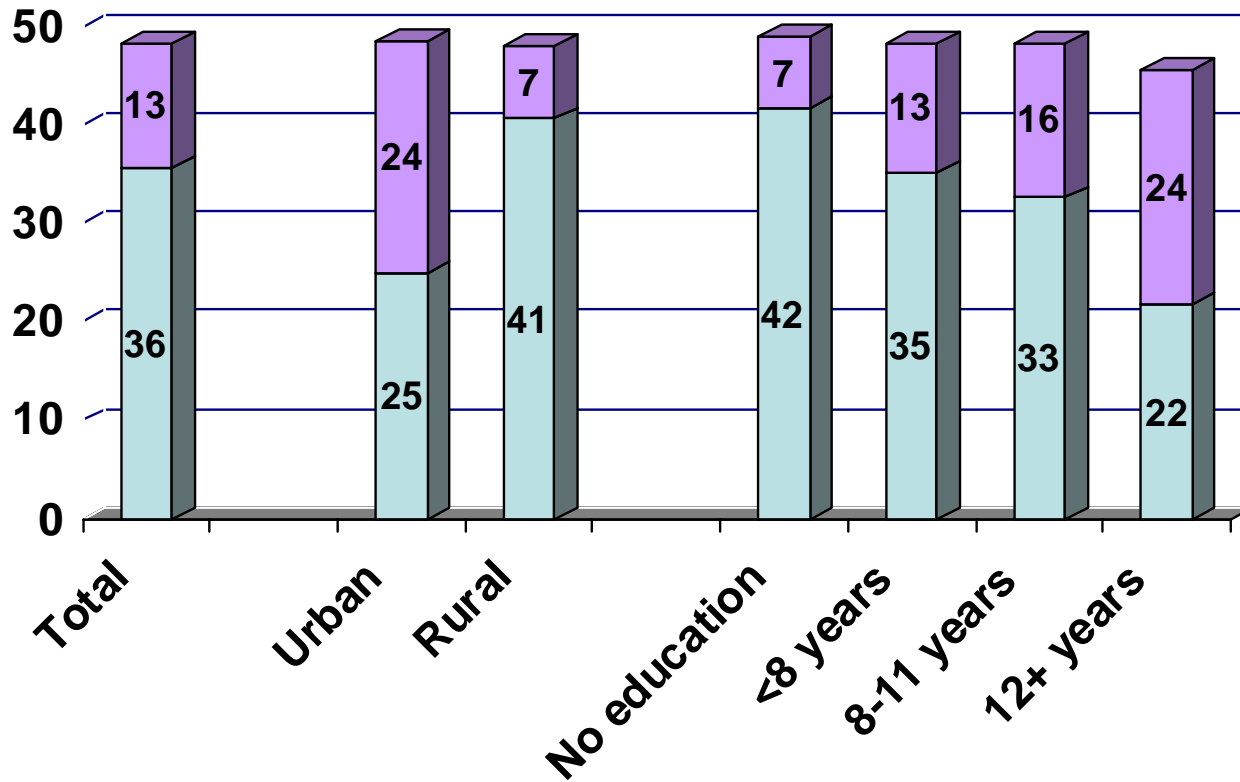
# Overweight/Obese Women



# Dual Burden of Malnutrition

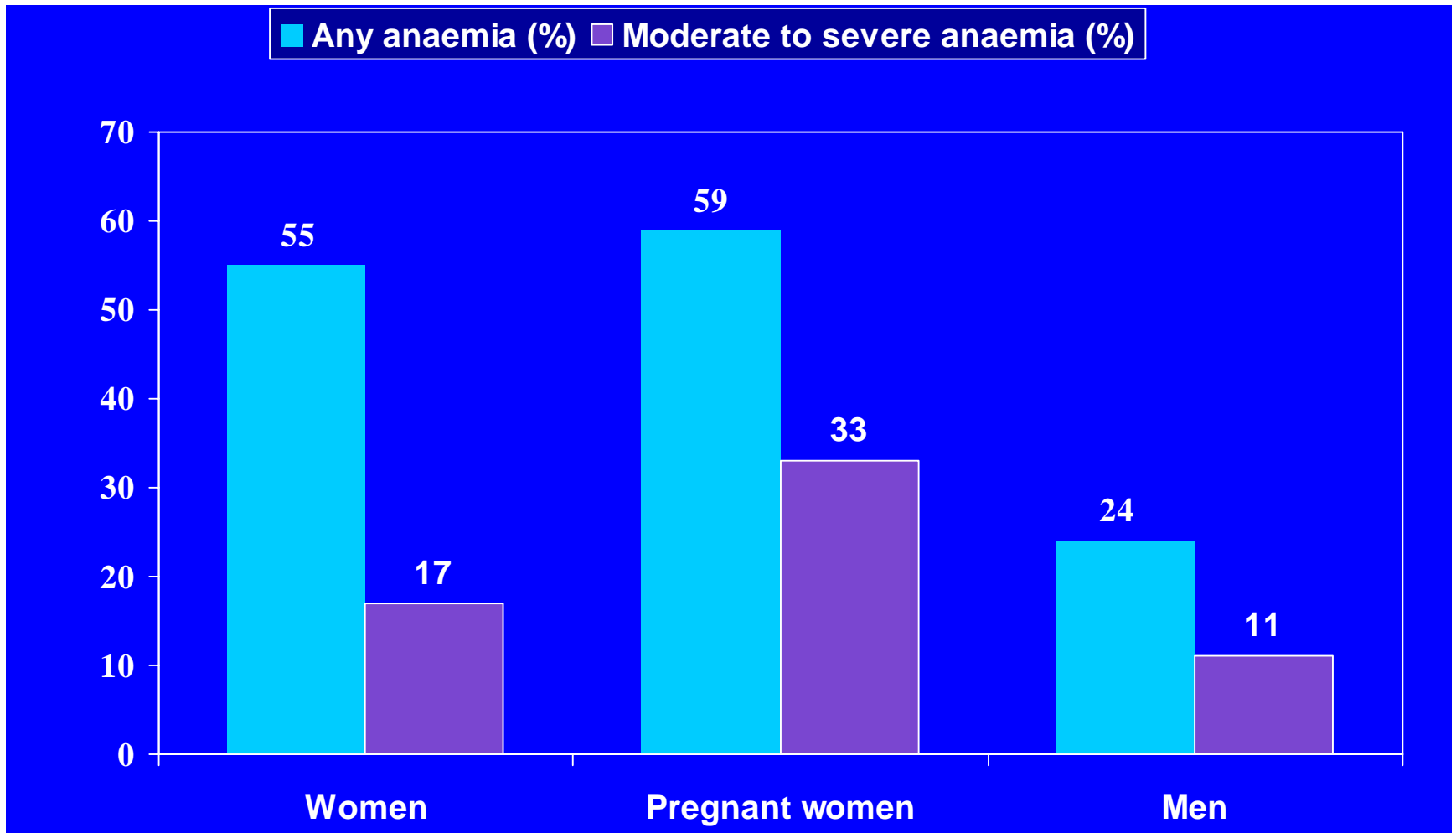
Overweight  
Underweight

Percent of women age 15-49

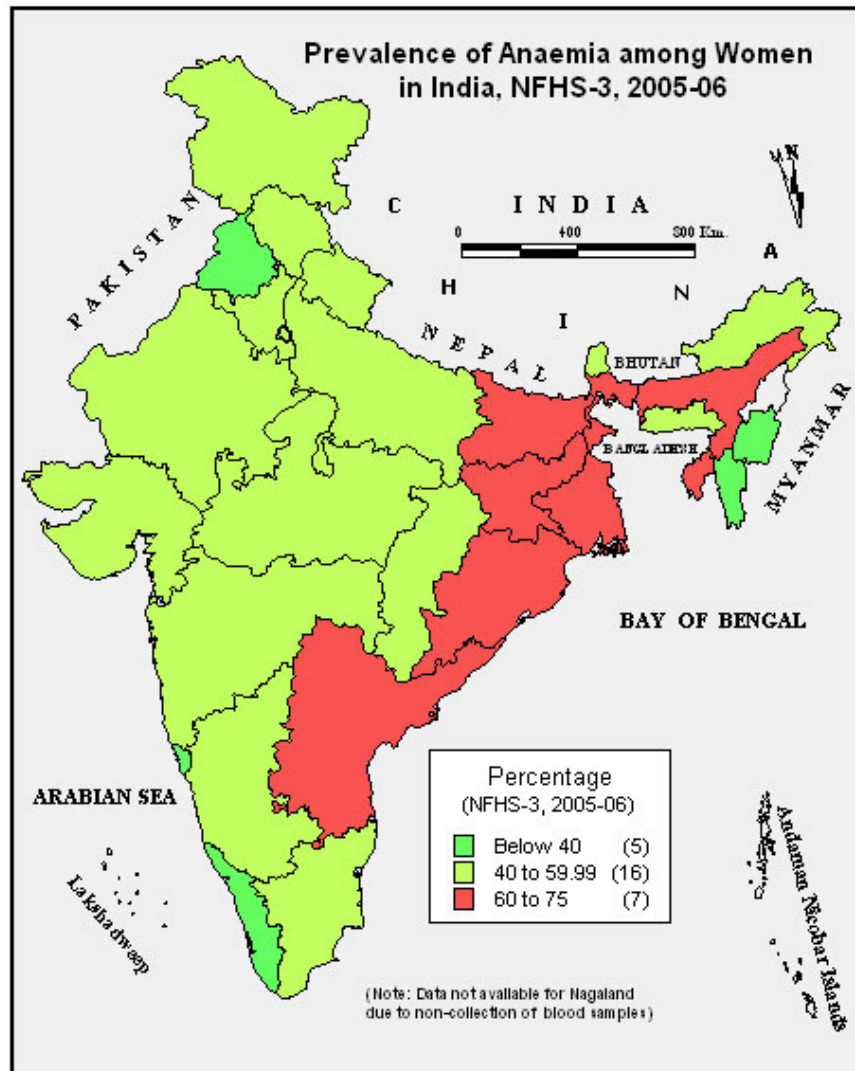




# Anaemia in Women and Men



# Anemia among Women



# Conclusions for Adults

- The adult population suffers from a dual burden of undernutrition and overweight/obesity**
- Almost half of women in most population subgroups are either too thin or too fat**
- Women's nutrition has not improved in the last seven years, and overweight/obesity is a growing problem**

# Conclusions for Adults

- ❑ Men are much less likely than women to be anaemic (as expected), but their nutritional status is still not satisfactory**
- ❑ Although the percentage of women and men who are overweight or obese is still much lower than it is in more developed countries, the potential threat of growing problems of overweight cannot be ignored**

# Conclusions for Children

- Children in India suffer from some of the highest levels of stunting, wasting and underweight in the world and the situation has not improved markedly in recent years**
- Anaemia levels among children have actually increased since the time of NFHS-2**
- Most recommended infant and young child feeding practices are widely ignored by parents**
- Over the last 30 years, the ICDS programme has not been able to reduce malnutrition to acceptable levels in any state**



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**The good news is that there is no longer any doubt that nutritional problems in India need to be urgently addressed. Many health officials now seem energized to take on the challenge and to develop innovative programmes to get results, but their chances of success remain to be seen.**

**We hope that NFHS-4 and other data collection efforts in the coming years will be able to document the fruits of their efforts.**



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**THANK YOU**