World Obesity

South Africa
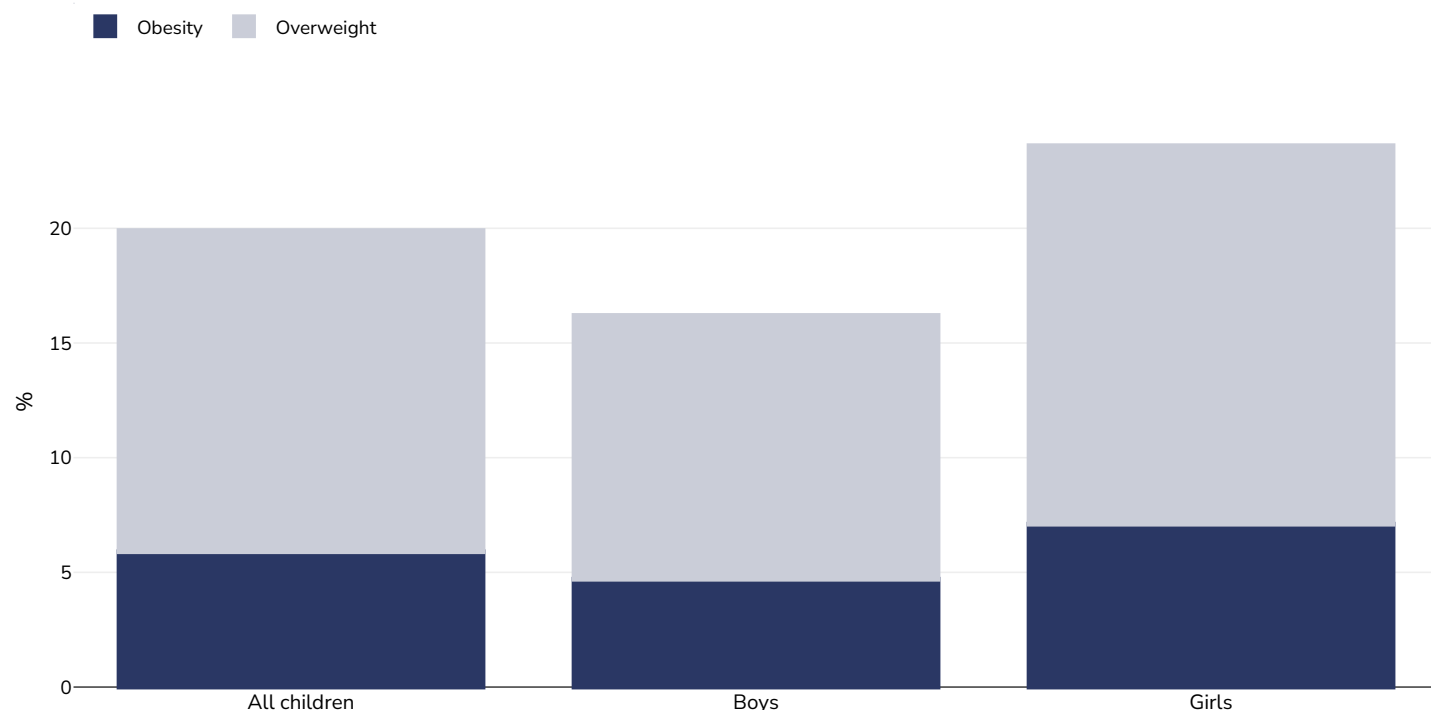

Country report card - children

This report card contains the latest data available on the Global Obesity Observatory on overweight and obesity for children, including adolescents (aged 5 to 18 years). Where available, data on common and relevant obesity drivers and comorbidities are also presented.

View the latest version of this report on the Global Obesity Observatory at https://data.worldobesity.org/country/south-africa-197/.

Contents	Page

Obesity prevalence

Children, 2012

■ Obesity ■ Overweight

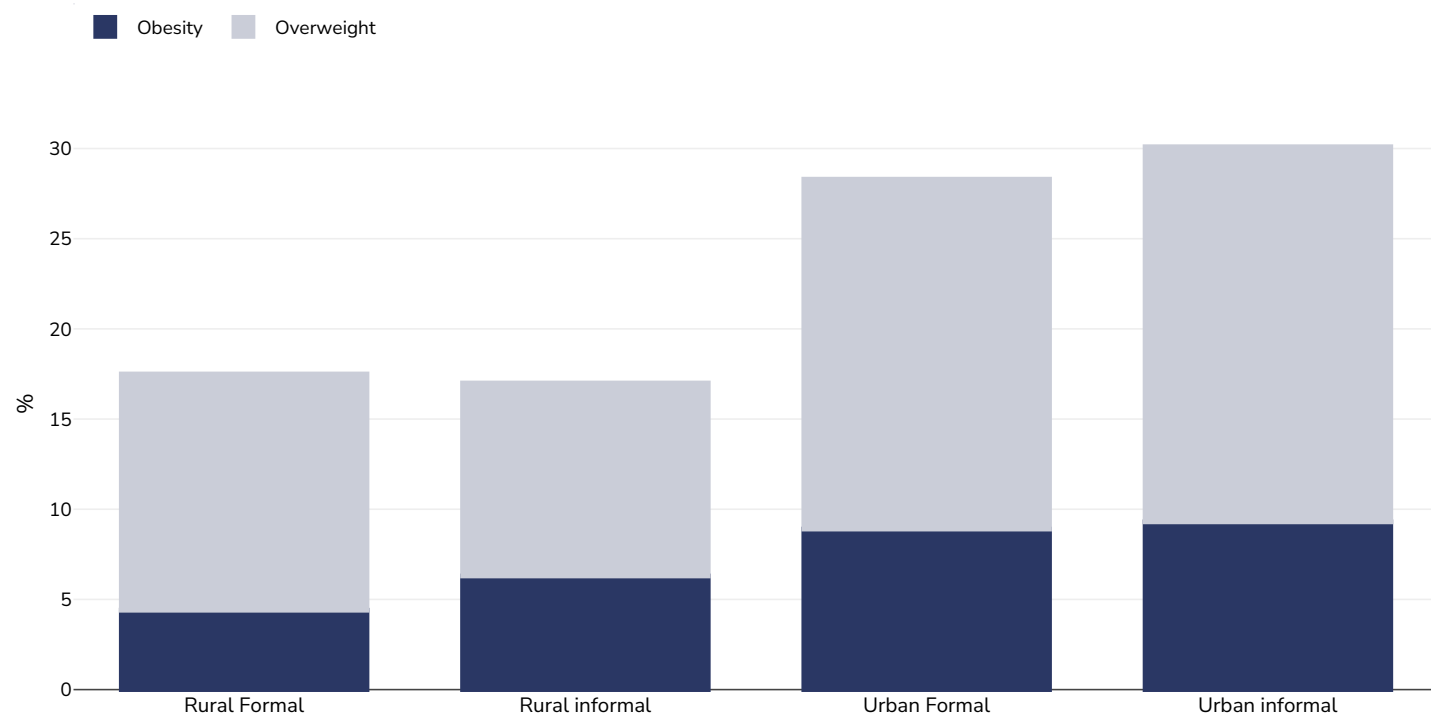| Survey type:	Measured
Age:	2-14
Sample size:	4278
Area covered:	National
References:	NHANES South Africa http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-outputs/view/6493
Notes:	IOTF Cut off. Reference: Cole TJ, Bellizzi MC, Flegal KM, Dietz WH. Establishing a standard definition for child overweight and obesity worldwide: International survey. BMJ. 2000 May 6;320(7244):1240-3 NB. Combined child data estimated. These estimates were calculated by weighting male and female survey results. Weighting based on World Bank Population % total female 2019 (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS - accessed 20.11.20)
Cutoffs:	IOTF

Overweight/obesity by region

Boys, 2012

■ Obesity ■ Overweight

Survey type:	Measured
Age:	2-14
Sample size:	4278
Area covered:	National
References:	Shisana O, Labadarios D, Rehle T, Simbayi L, Zuma K, Dhansay A, Reddy P,Parker W, Hoosain E, Naidoo P, Hongoro C, Mchiza Z, Steyn NP, Dwane N, Makoae M, Maluleke T,Ramlagan S, Zungu N, Evans MG, Jacobs L, Faber M, & the SANHANES-1 Team (2014) South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES-1): 2014 Edition. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
Notes:	Sample size for all 2-14yrs
Cutoffs:	IOTF

Girls, 2012

■ Obesity　　■ Overweight

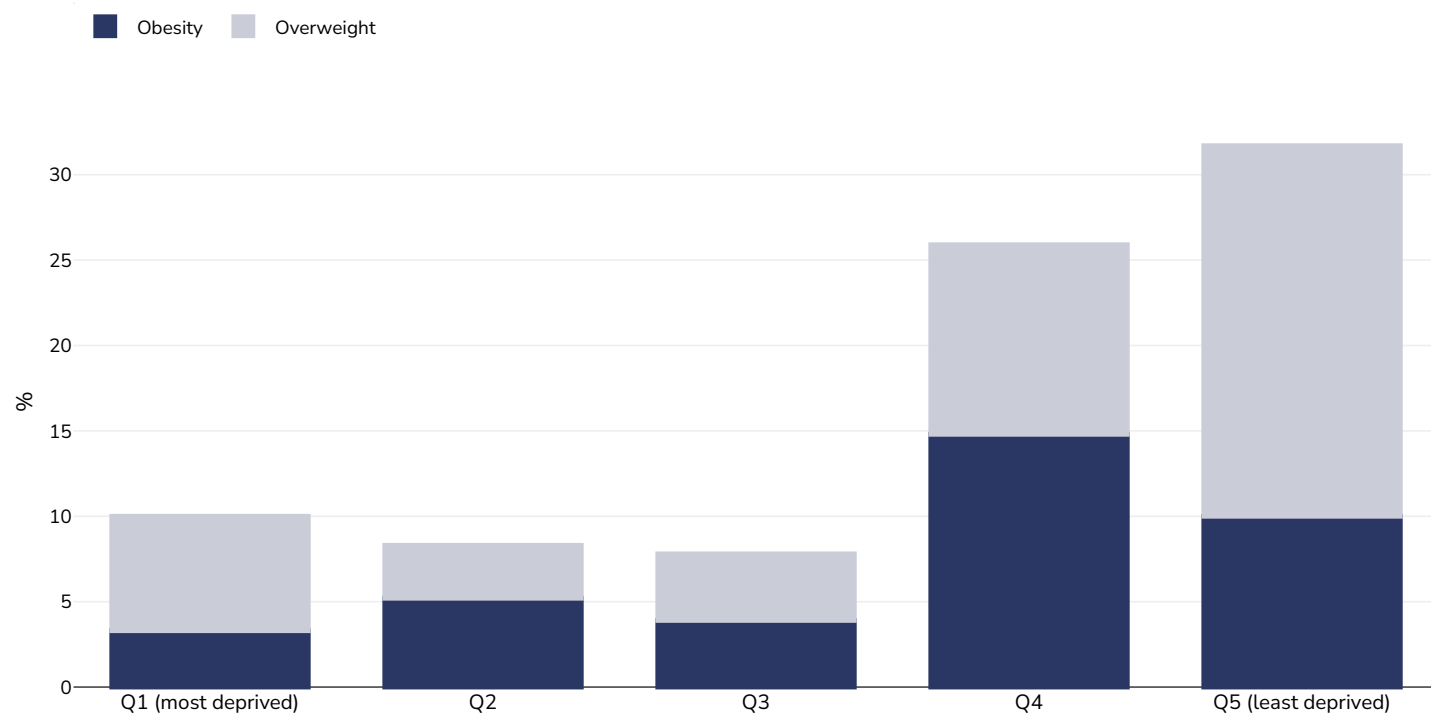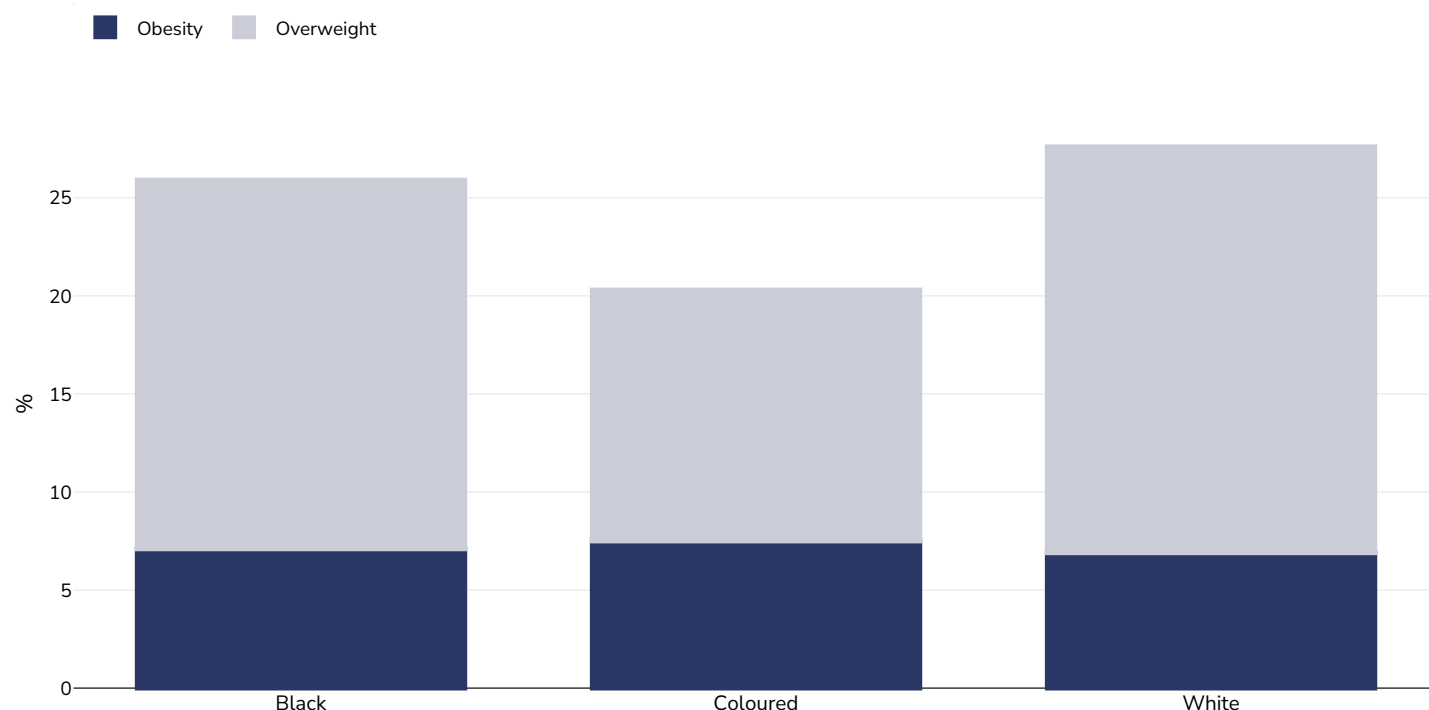| Survey type:	Measured
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Notes:	Sample size for all 2-14yrs
Cutoffs:	IOTF

Overweight/obesity by socio-economic group

Children, 2013

■ Obesity   ■ Overweight

Survey type:	Measured
Age:	9
Sample size:	574
Area covered:	Regional
References:	Pienaar AE. Prevalence of overweight and obesity among primary school children in a developing country: NW-CHILD longitudinal data of 6-9-yr-old children in South Africa. BMC Obes. 2015 Feb 7;2:2. doi: 10.1186/s40608-014-0030-4. PMID: 26217517; PMCID: PMC4511440.
Notes:	NB VERY SMALL SAMPLE SIZE North West Province
Cutoffs:	IOTF

Overweight/obesity by ethnicity

Ethnic groups are as defined by publication of origin and are not as defined by WOF. In some instances ethnicity is conflated with nationality and/or race.
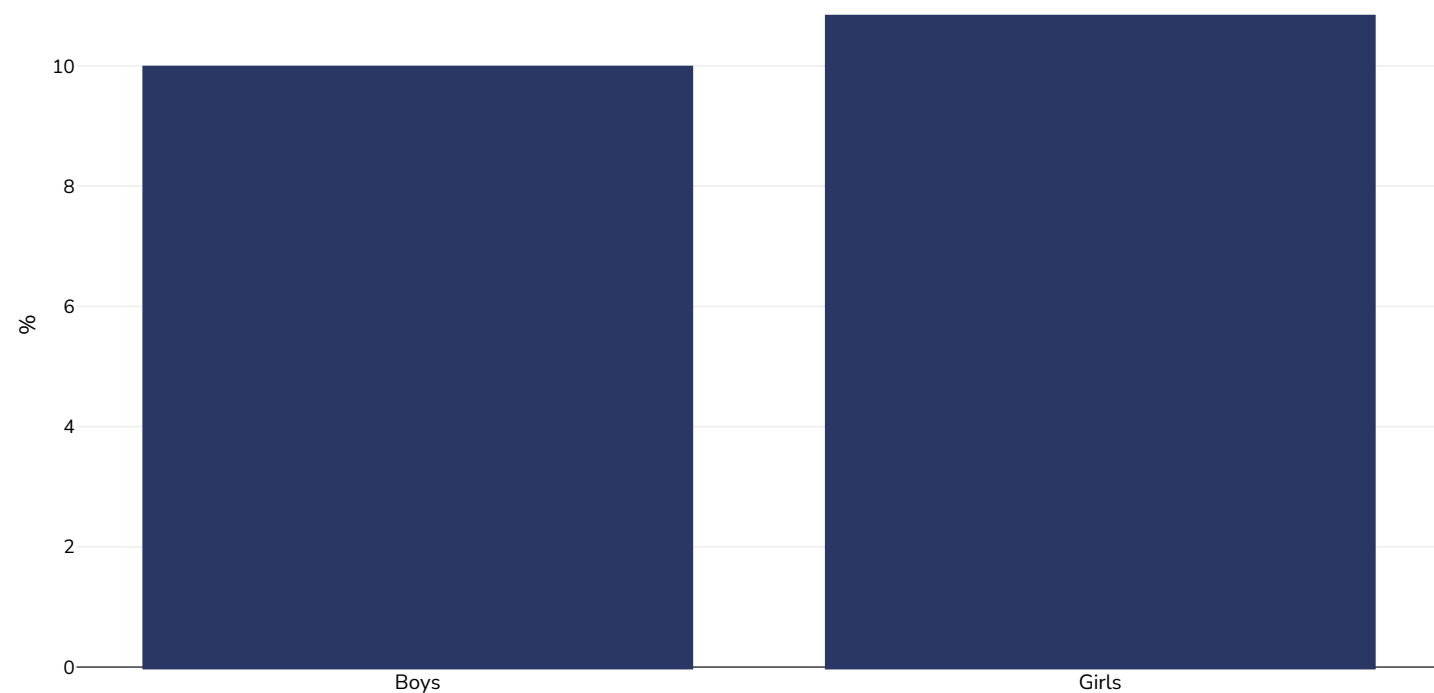
Children, 2007-2008

■ Obesity   ■ Overweight

Survey type:	Measured
Age:	7-18
Sample size:	1559
Area covered:	Regional - Western Cape
References:	Negash, S., Agyemang, C., Matsha, T.E., Peer, N., Erasmus, R.T. and Kengne, A.P. (2017). Differential prevalence and associations of overweight and obesity by gender and population group among school learners in South Africa: a cross-sectional study. BMC Obesity, [online] 4(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s40608-017-0165-1 [Accessed 23.06.25]
Definitions:	Ethnicity was categorised by previously defined official South African population groups. The 'Coloured' group include people of Khoisan, Malaysian, Griqua, African and White descent and describe people of mixed ancestry. The Indian/Asian population were too small in the Western Cape, and were excluded from this study.
Cutoffs:	IOTF

Double burden of underweight & overweight

Children, 2022

Survey type:	Measured
Age:	5-19
References:	NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC). Worldwide trends in underweight and obesity from 1990 to 2022: a pooled analysis of 3663 population representative studies with 222 million children, adolescents, and adults. Lancet 2024; published online Feb 29. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)02750-2.
Notes:	Age standardised estimates
Definitions:	Combined prevalence of BMI < -2SD and BMI > 2SD (double burden of thinness and obesity)
Cutoffs:	BMI < -2SD and BMI > 2SD

Mental health - depression disorders

Children, 2021

Area covered:	National
References:	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)
Definitions:	Number living with depressive disorder per 100,000 population (Under 20 years of age)

Boys, 2021

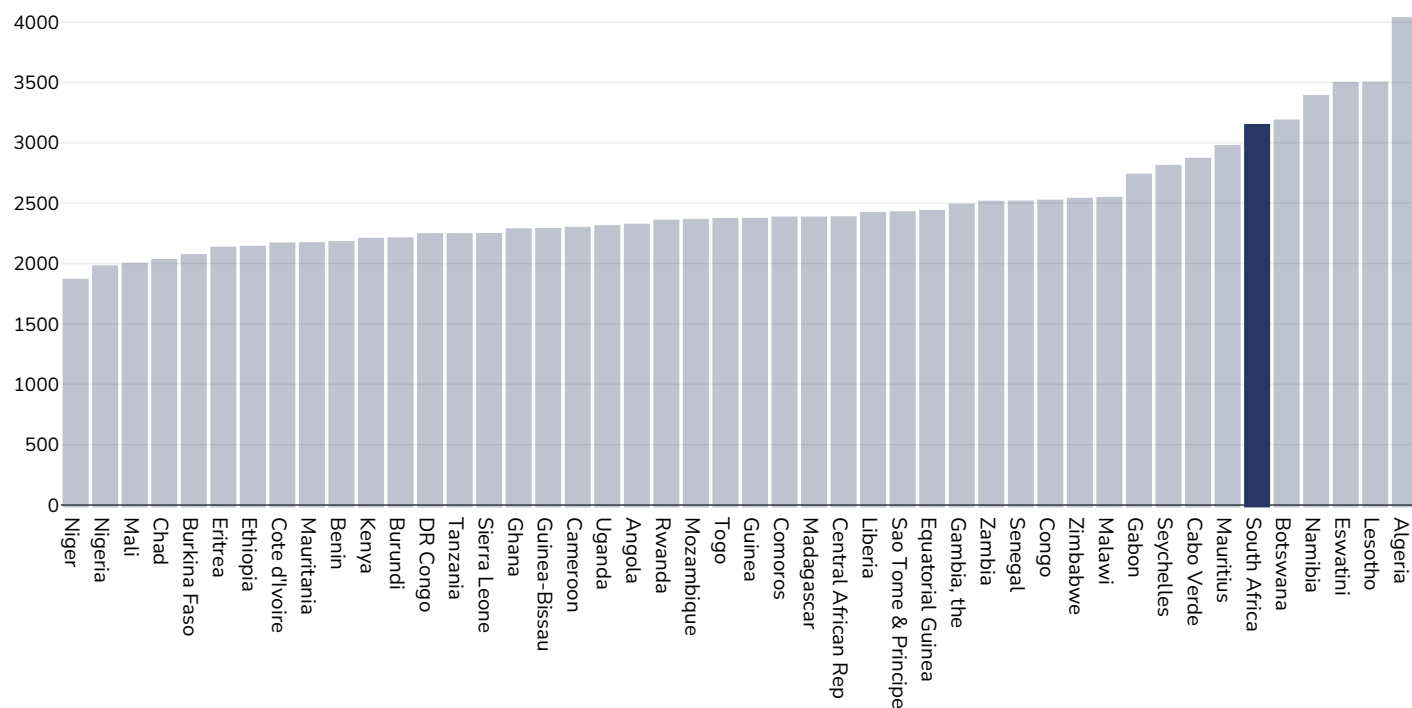|	
Area covered:	National
References:	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)
Definitions:	Number living with depressive disorder per 100,000 population (Under 20 years of age)

Girls, 2021

Area covered:	National
References:	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)
Definitions:	Number living with depressive disorder per 100,000 population (Under 20 years of age)

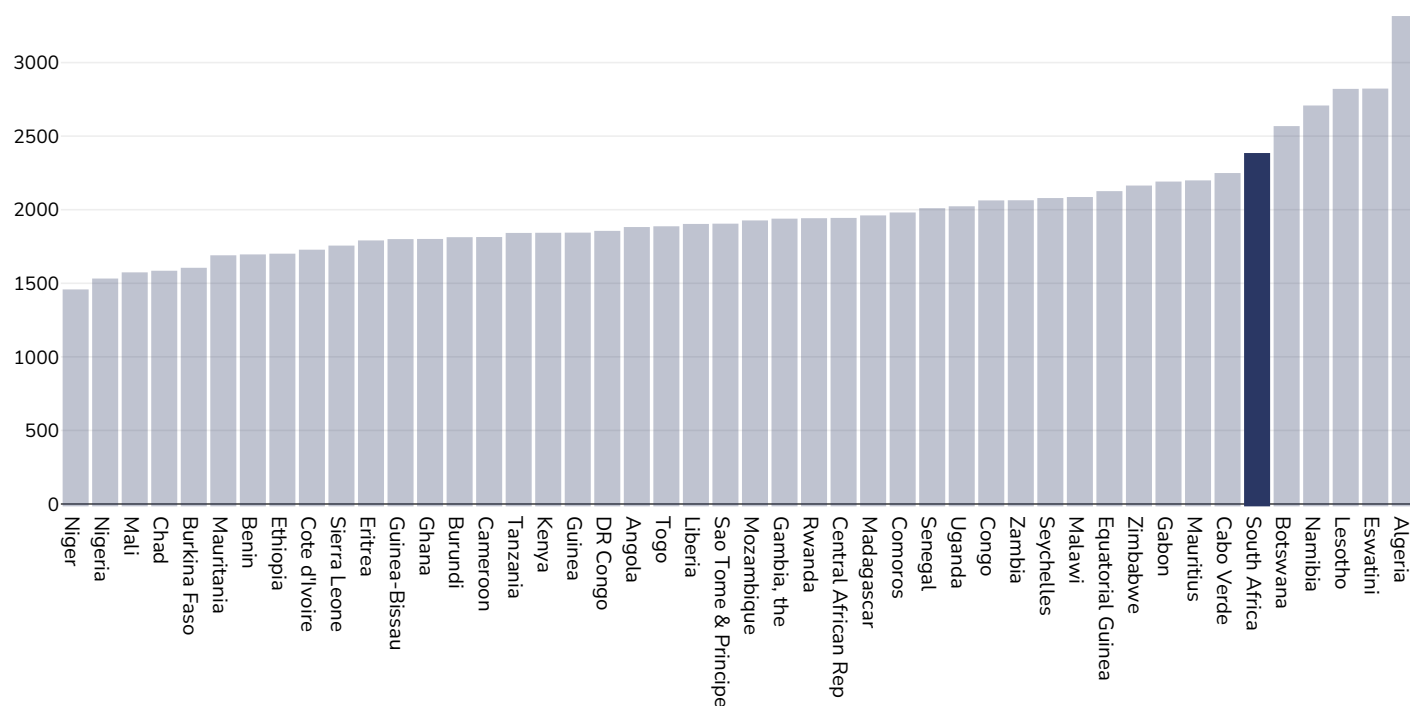# Mental health - anxiety disorders

Children, 2021
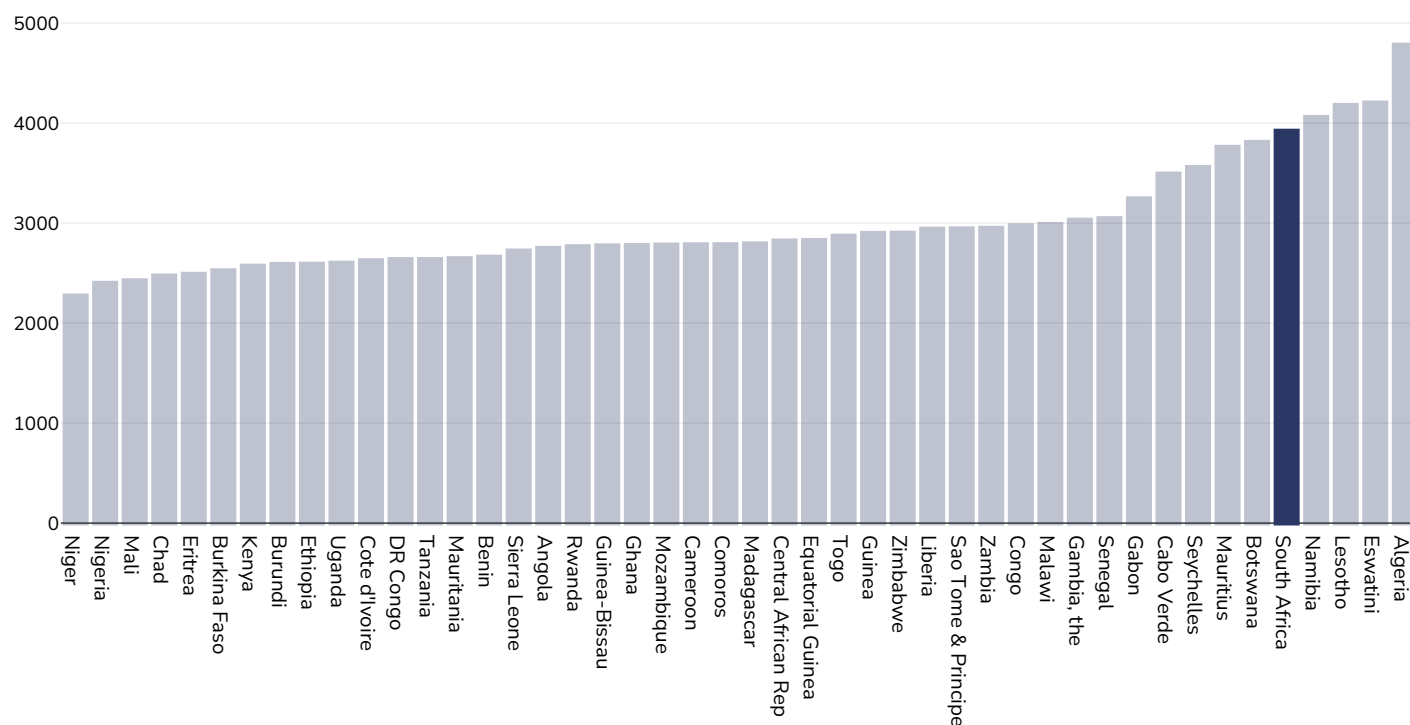
References: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)

Boys, 2021

References: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)

Girls, 2021

References: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). GBD Compare Data Visualization. Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2021. Seattle, WA: IHME, University of Washington, 2023. Available from http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare. (Last accessed 23.04.25)

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