

SKYROCKETING OBESITY IN CHILDREN: WHY EVERYBODY SHOULD BE CONCERNED

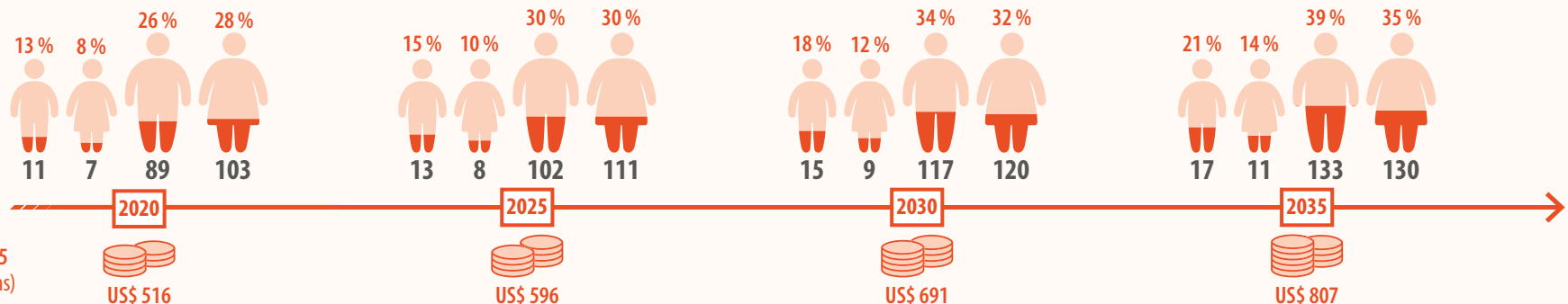
Nearly **400 million** children around the world are projected to live with obesity by 2035. Worryingly, that is double the number in 2020. 'Our children are increasingly growing up in environments that make it very difficult for them to eat well and be active. This is a root cause of the obesity epidemic', **argued** Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, Regional Director for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Europe. Worryingly, child obesity often carries through to adolescence and is likely to endure into adulthood. Based on current trends and looking exclusively at obesity in the WHO European region, which covers 53 countries across Europe and Central Asia, the **World Obesity Atlas 2023** projects that between **2020 and 2035**, there will be a 61 % increase in the number of boys living with obesity and a 57 % increase in the number of girls living with obesity. A total of 17 million boys and 11 million girls aged 5-19 in the region will be living with obesity in 2035.

Projected evolution of children, adolescents and adults living with obesity in the WHO European region and its economic impact, 2020-2035

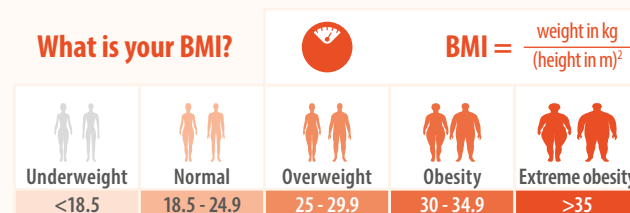
Proportion of people with obesity (in percentage)

Number of people with obesity (in millions)

Economic impact of BMI ≥ 25 (in US\$ at 2019 value, in billions)



Issues involving overweight and obesity across all age groups are projected to cost the WHO European region over US\$800 billion overall annually, by 2035. World Obesity Day – celebrated every year on 4 March – is a **World Obesity Federation** initiative supporting practical solutions to help reverse obesity. A person is considered **overweight** by the WHO if he or she has a body mass index (BMI) – calculated by dividing body weight by the square of height – equal to or greater than 25. Obesity is the condition of severe overweight where a person has a BMI equal to or greater than 30. Worryingly, obesity acts as a gateway to a **range of diseases**, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and at least 13 different types of cancer.



A number of **EU-funded projects** tackle the growing epidemic of childhood and adolescent obesity. The EU also fights **physical inactivity**, among other things by holding the **European Week of Sport**. The European Parliament and Council have recently agreed to **update the rules** on the composition and labelling of honey, fruit juices and fruit jams. Changes include increasing the fruit content in jams, while reducing the amount of sugar, and introducing clearer labelling for honey and fruit juices to enable consumers to make healthier choices.

Sources: **World Obesity Atlas 2023**, **Eurostat 2019**.

Overweight population in the EU by age in percentage, 2019

