

The WHO STEPwise approach to Surveillance is a simple, standardized method for collecting, analysing and disseminating data in WHO member countries.

By using the same standardized questions and protocols, all countries can use STEPS information not only for monitoring within-country trends, but also for making comparisons across countries. The approach encourages the collection of small amounts of useful information on a regular and continuing basis.

There are currently two primary STEPS surveillance systems: the STEPwise approach to risk factor surveillance; and the STEPwise approach to stroke surveillance.

Risk factor surveillance

Stroke surveillance

Regional situation

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, noncommunicable diseases and injuries accounted for 50% and 11% of all deaths in 2005, respectively. The prevalence of risk factors for noncommunicable diseases is high in most countries of the Region.

Data collected by the STEPwise survey among adults, aged 15–65 years, in the Region showed that almost one quarter of the adult population was found to be hypertensive. A high prevalence of hypercholesterolaemia was noted with a range between 20% and 40% (4). Furthermore, 6 out of 10 countries with the highest prevalence of diabetes in the world are from the Region – Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Overweight and obesity are potent risk factors for noncommunicable diseases and they are major contributors to premature deaths. Compiled data for adults, aged above 15 years, from the Region show the highest levels of overweight in Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, where the prevalence of overweight/obesity ranges from between 74% and 86% in women and 69% and 77% in men. The escalating level of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents is of particular concern, given the fact that changes in food habits are evident in all Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Prevalence of NCDs & risk factors

STEPWise survey implementation by country

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