

TOWARDS ZERO HUNGER: STUNTING IN MALAYSIA

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“Hidden hunger does not produce hunger as we know it. You might not feel it in the belly, but it strikes at the core of your health and vitality.”

Kul C. Gautam, former deputy executive director of UNICEF



Malaysia faces challenges in its current progress to achieve the SDGs.


▼ CURRENT ASSESSMENT – SDG DASHBOARD



■ Major challenges ■ Significant challenges ■ Challenges remain ■ SDG achieved ■ Information unavailable



SDG 2: Zero Hunger is a “red” area for Malaysia.

 Malaysia ✕	Description End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
SDG 2 Zero hunger	Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">● ↑ Prevalence of undernourishment● ↓ Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age● ↓ Prevalence of wasting in children under 5 years of age● ↓ Prevalence of obesity, BMI ≥ 30● → Human Trophic Level● ↑ Cereal yield● ↑ Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Major challenges remain→ Score stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate	



Stunting is the failure of children to reach their full potential height for their age.

Children are stunted if their height-for-age is more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards median.

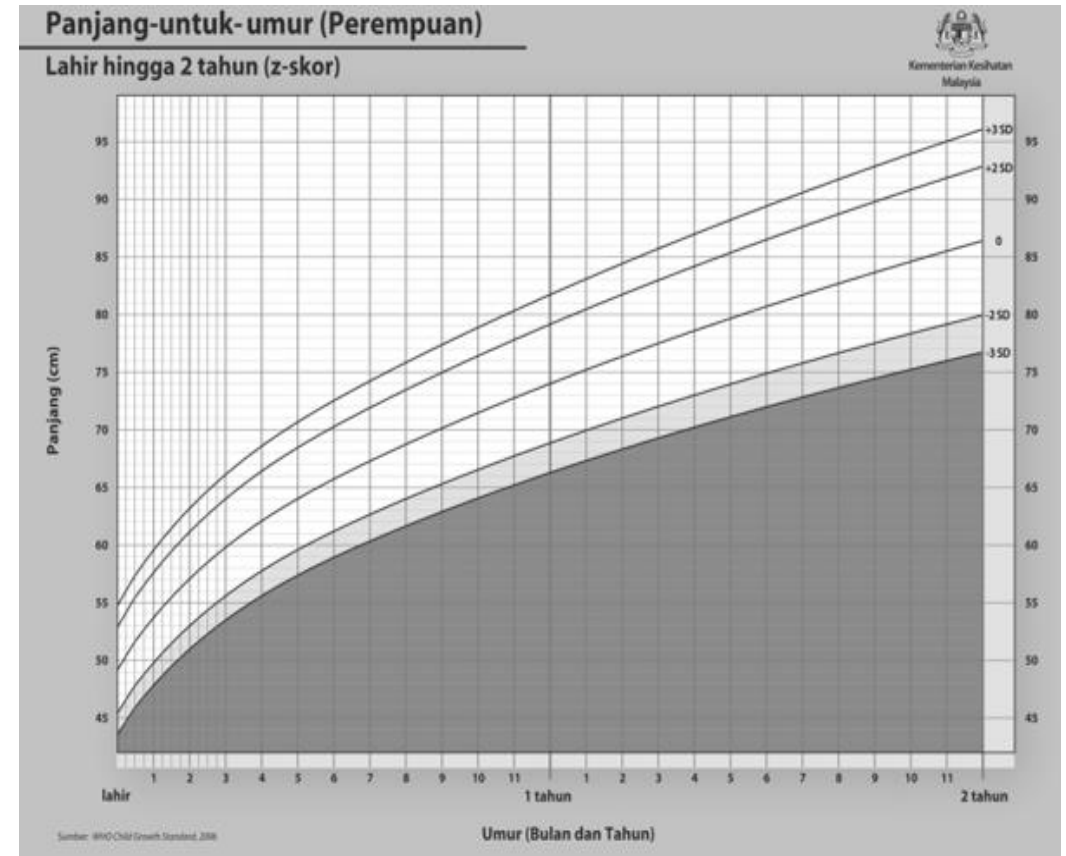


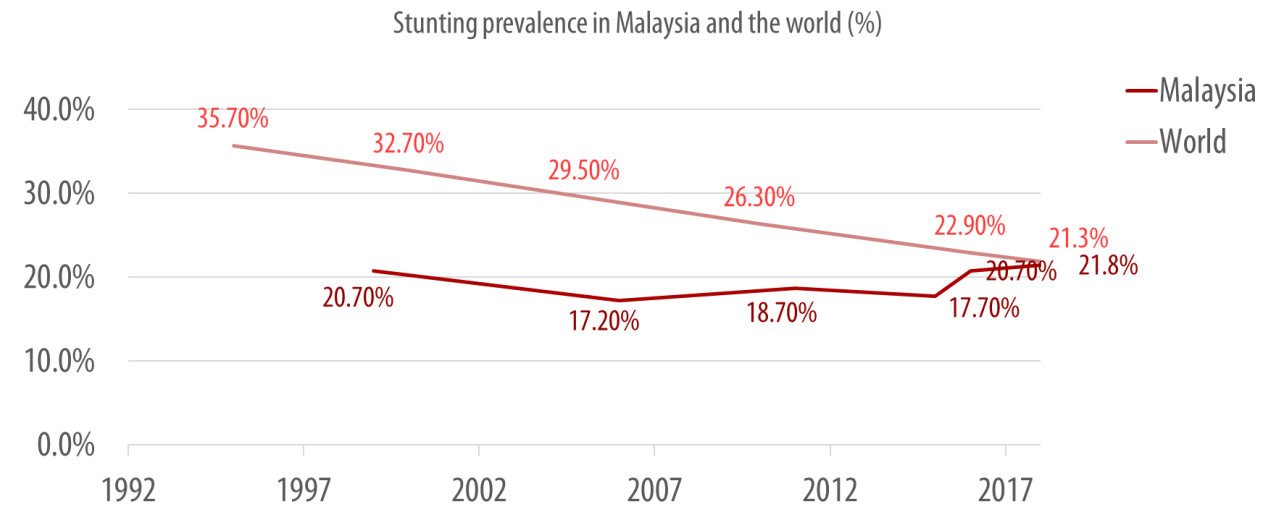
Figure 1: Malaysian child growth charts based on the WHO Child Growth Standards (Ministry of Health Malaysia 2016)

Stunting is about more than just height.

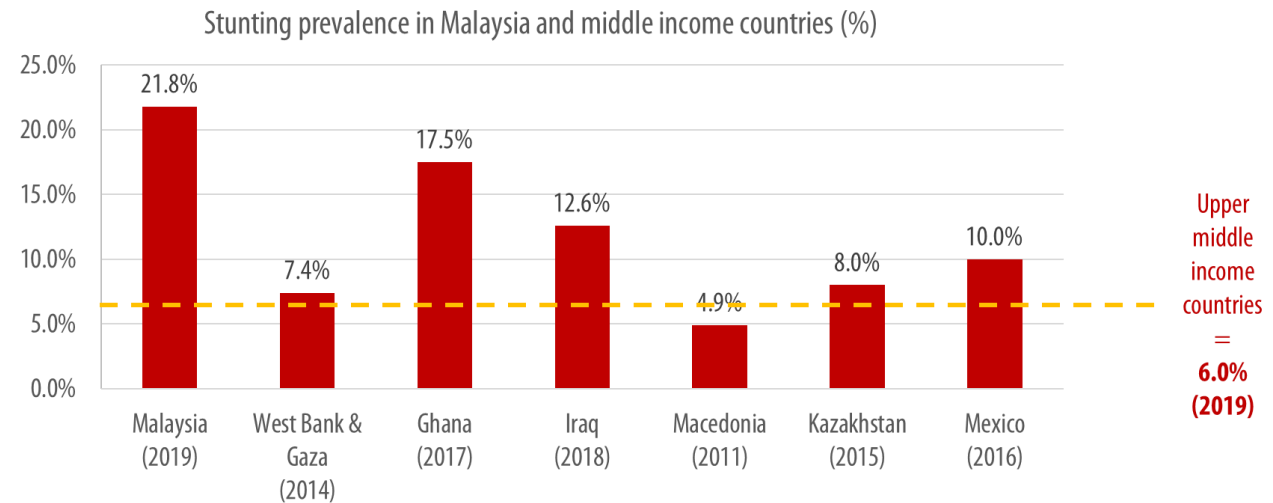
- Increased risk of child mortality and morbidity, diseases like high blood pressure in adulthood.
- Poorer mathematics achievement, reading comprehension, and receptive vocabulary.
- Earn 20% less in their working life compared to non-stunted individuals.
- A 2018 World Bank study by Galasso and Wagstaff calculated that countries lose, on average, 7% of per capita income because of stunting.



Malaysia's stunting rate is on a worsening trend – higher than its 1999 level and the improving global level



The level of stunting in Malaysia is high compared to other middle-income countries.



*“... in reality there are no two distinct populations – one stunted and the other growing adequately – but rather **a gradation of growth faltering.***

*That is, the risk of being stunted and suffering from its devastating consequences does not change dramatically simply by crossing the cut-off line; **significant deterioration within the ‘normal’ range may also occur.***

- de Onis (2014)



The pandemic exacerbates and amplifies the consequences of stunting disproportionately, especially among disadvantaged populations.



Increased risk of child **mortality and morbidity**, diseases like **high blood pressure** in adulthood

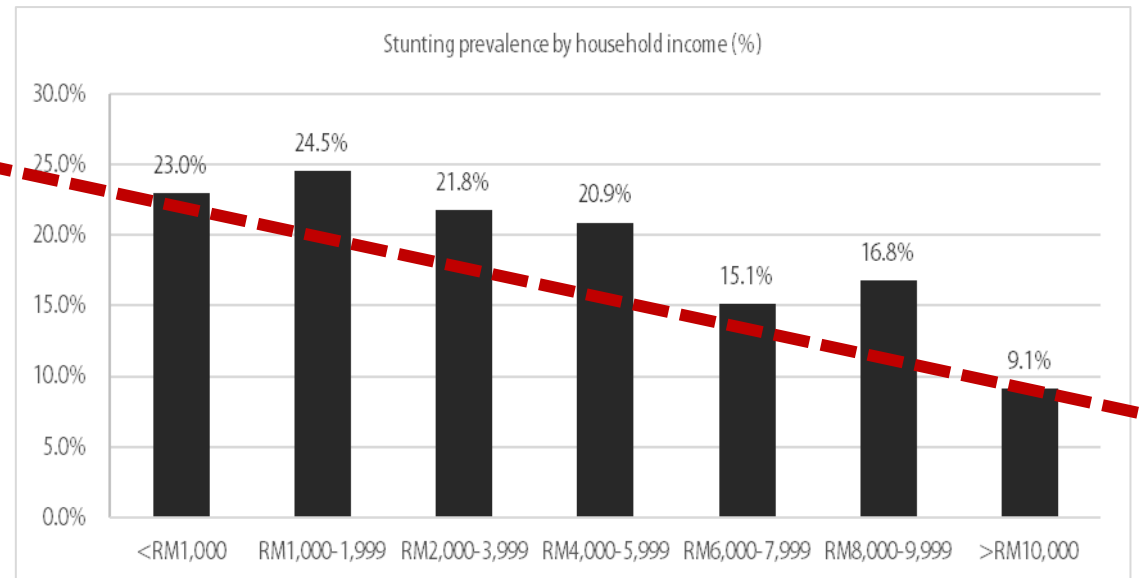
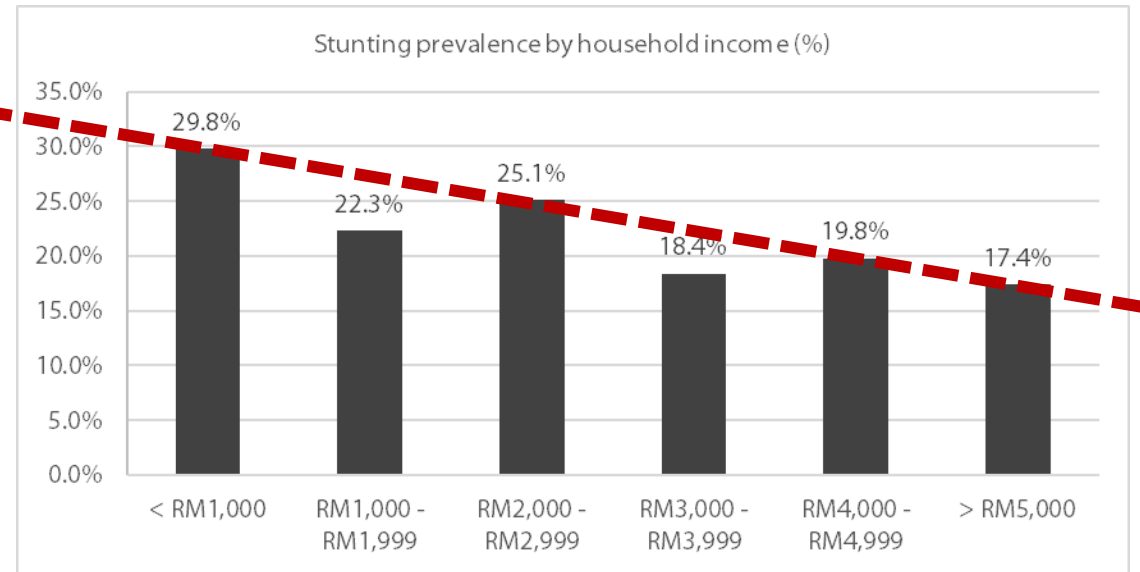


Poorer **mathematics achievement, reading comprehension, and receptive vocabulary.**



Earn 20% less in their working life compared to non-stunted individuals.

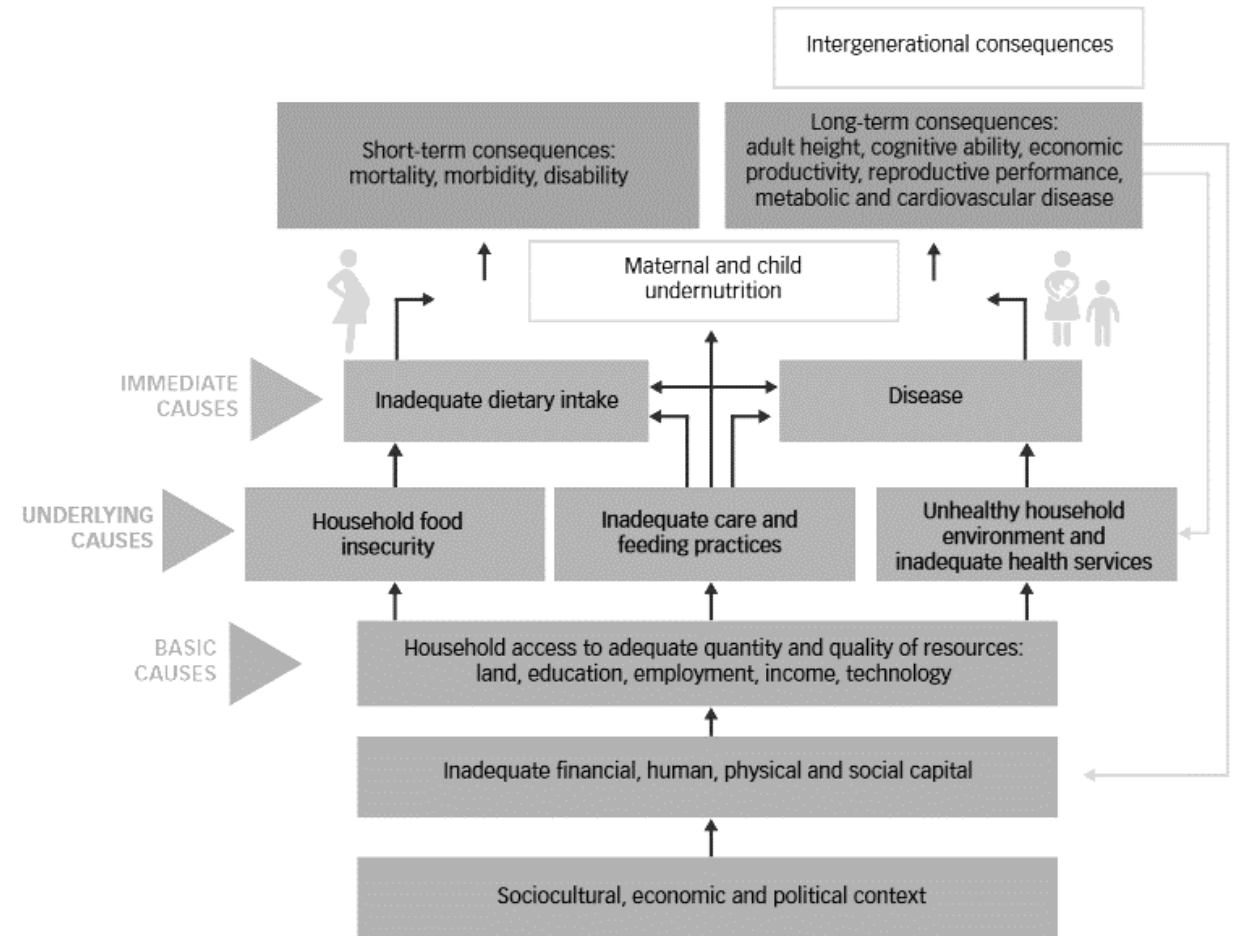
Stunting is higher in poorer households, gradually lowering as household income increases.



**Vicious cycle of
poverty and
stunting, especially
among girls and
women.**



The pandemic affects the causes of stunting at every level.



Nearly half of all Malaysian children above six months old do not receive adequate and appropriate complementary food

19.2% of Malaysian children aged 6-23 months do not achieve the prescribed minimum meal frequency.

33.6% of Malaysian children do not consume at least four food groups.
(NHMS 2016)



Children in food-insecure households were **three times more likely to be stunted** than children in food-secure households. (Naser 2014)

65.7% of low-income households in Kuala Lumpur experienced some kind of food insecurity, with 27.0% falling into the child hunger category. (Zalilah & Ang 2001)

97% of households in low-cost flats say that **high food prices prevent them from preparing healthy meals** for their children, while 1 in 2 do not have enough money to buy food in recent months with 15% experiencing this frequently. (UNICEF 2018)



In 2014, 94.6% of all households spent **more on food** than on any other expenditure items. (KRI 2018)

The income remaining for households earning below RM2,000 was **only RM76 in 2016.**

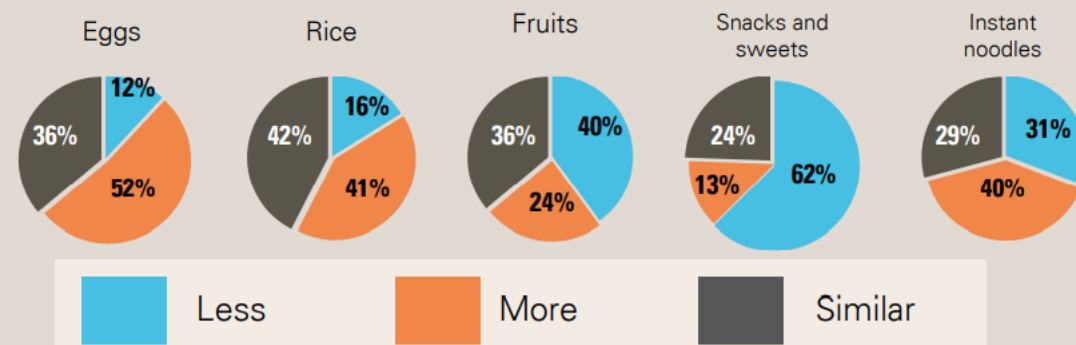
Although overall expenditure on food at home increased for lower income households between 2014-2016, **the quantity of food consumed in these households, both at and outside home, actually fell.**



During the MCO, low-income households were found to have consumed more eggs, rice, and instant noodles, while consumption of fruits fell.

On average, the HH consume more eggs (+50%), rice (+40%), and instant noodles (+40%), and less on snacks and sweets (-62%), fruits (-40%).

Figure 5.2: Expenditure during the MCO by food category (%)



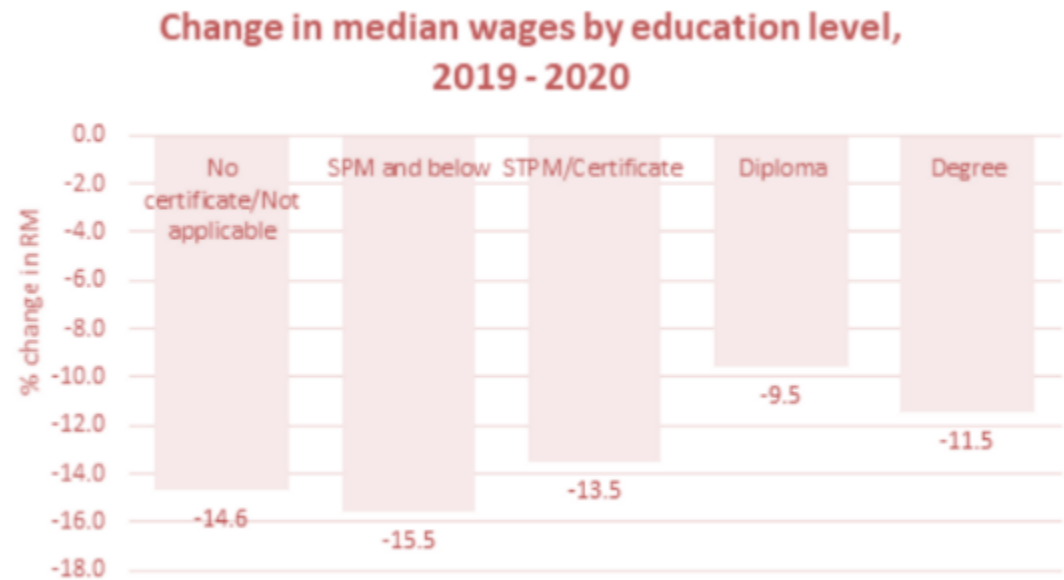
UNFPA-UNICEF 2020

Between 2019 (before the pandemic) and 2020, nationally there has been a 9% decrease in median wages and 15% decrease in mean wages.



DOSM 2021

Fall in median wages largest in lower education levels.

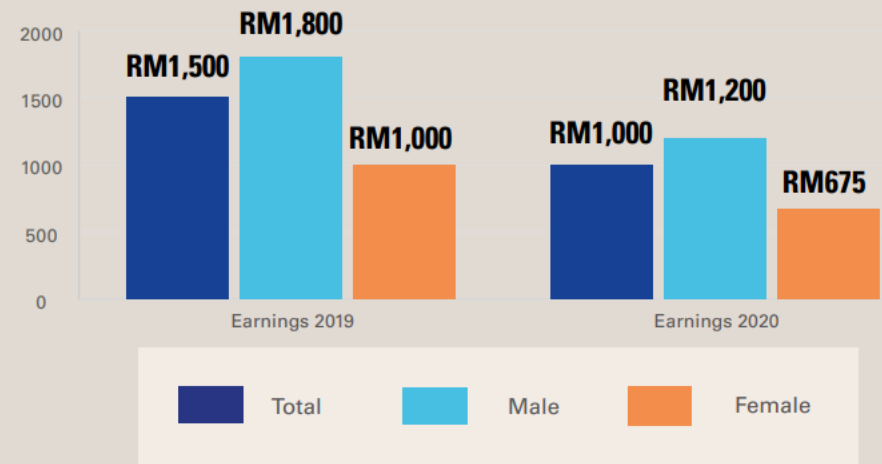


DOSM 2021; Chart by Zhai Gen Tan



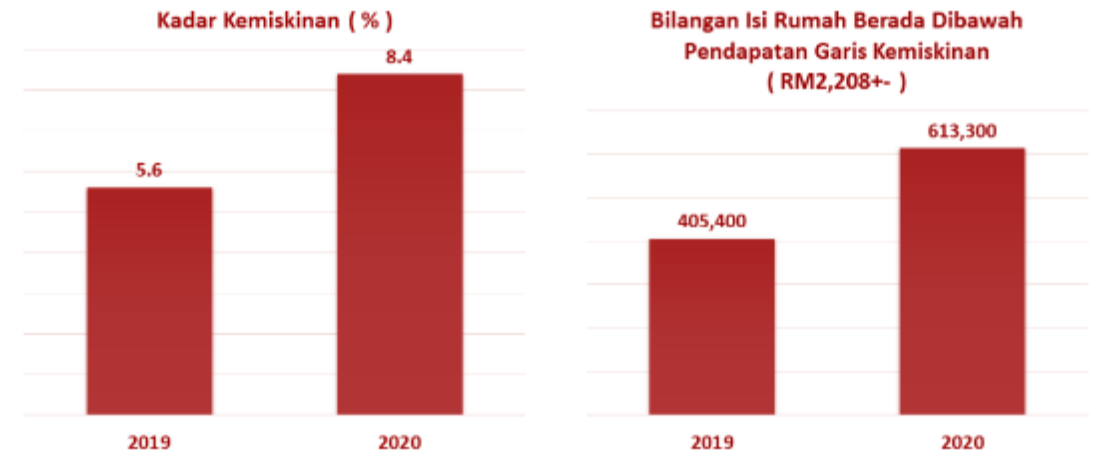
Monthly median wages of households heads of low-cost flats residents fell by 1/3.

Figure 4.8: Monthly median earnings (December 2019/June 2020)



UNFPA-UNICEF 2020

**Poverty has increased
in Malaysia.**



EPU 2021; Chart by Ekonomi Rakyat



CONCLUDING REMARKS

