

The Current Landscape of Research on World Health Assembly Indicators in West Africa: A Systematic Map to Guide Decision-Making



Introduction

The West Africa (WA) Region has been one of the slowest in reducing its many burdens of malnutrition. The World Health Assembly's (WHA) 2025 nutrition targets were developed to track countries' nutritional situations, and measure progress in reducing malnutrition. These indicators are therefore essential to guide decision making. Understanding the regional and in-country dynamics are an essential first step to highlight gaps and trends in evidence in the region.

Objective

This study aimed to identify and catalogue peer-reviewed research on the WHA indicators in West Africa, and create a map of recent research evidence to inform decision-making for nutrition policies and programs in the region.

Methods

The MEDLINE database was searched for research published on World Health Assembly (WHA) indicators from 2010 to June 2021

Search terms were developed to capture evidence on the prevalence, drivers, programs (Randomized Controlled Trials), and policies relating to the WHA indicators. These include stunting, wasting and overweight in children under 5, low birth weight (LBW), exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) up to 6 months, and anemia in women of reproductive age (WRA)

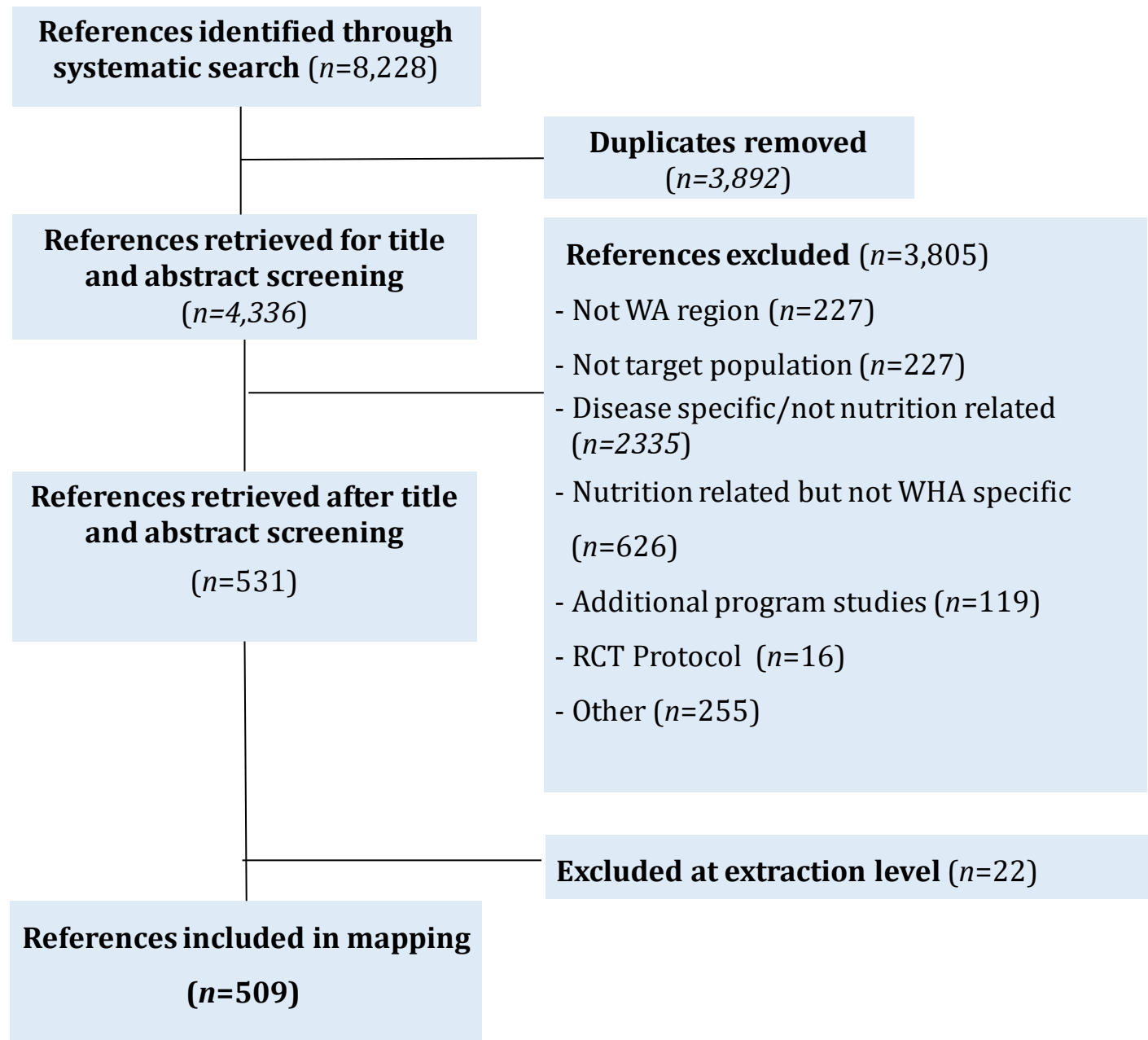


A systematic approach was applied to literature searches, developing inclusion criteria, screening, coding, taxonomy, data extraction, and study synthesis

Data were extracted at abstract level.

No quality appraisal of publications was undertaken.

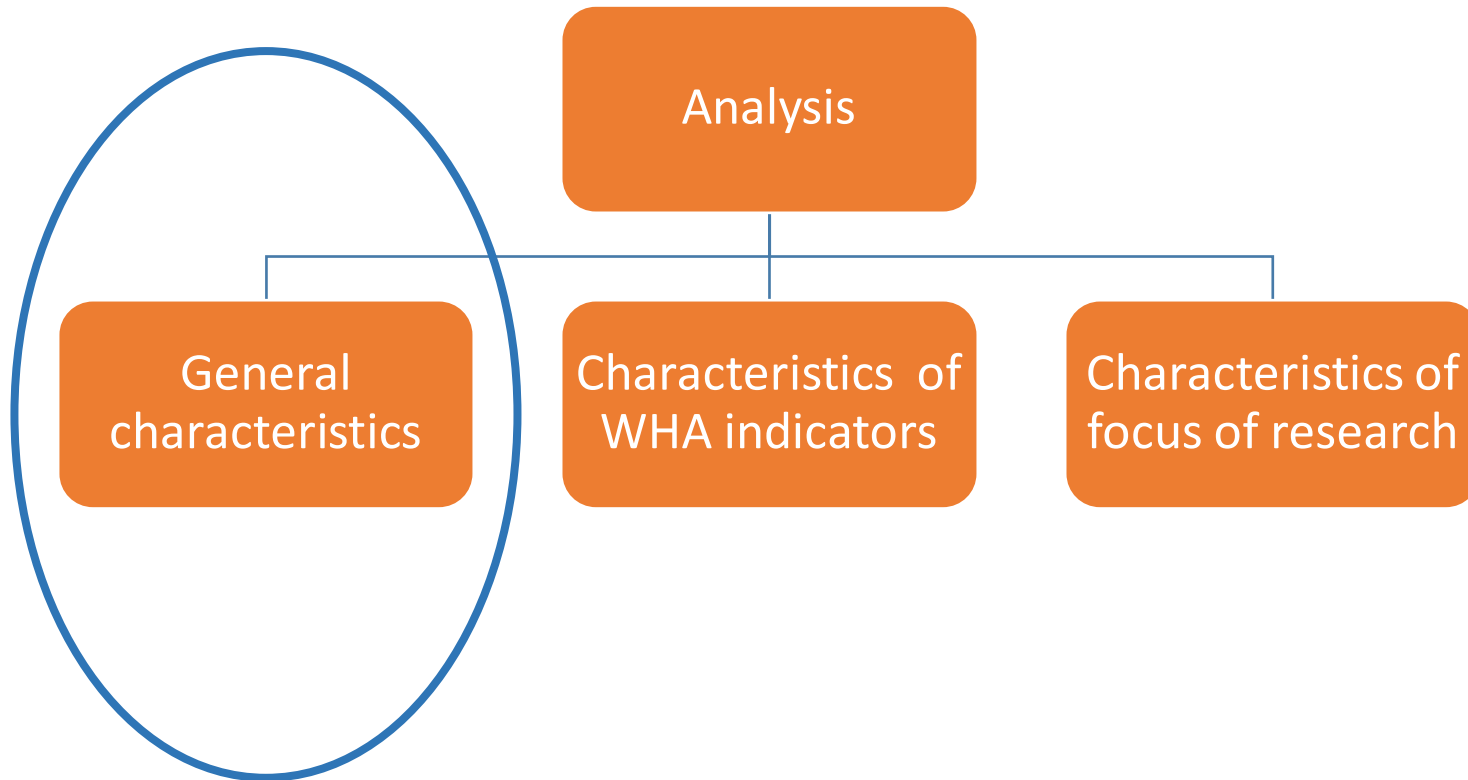
Flow chart of search approach



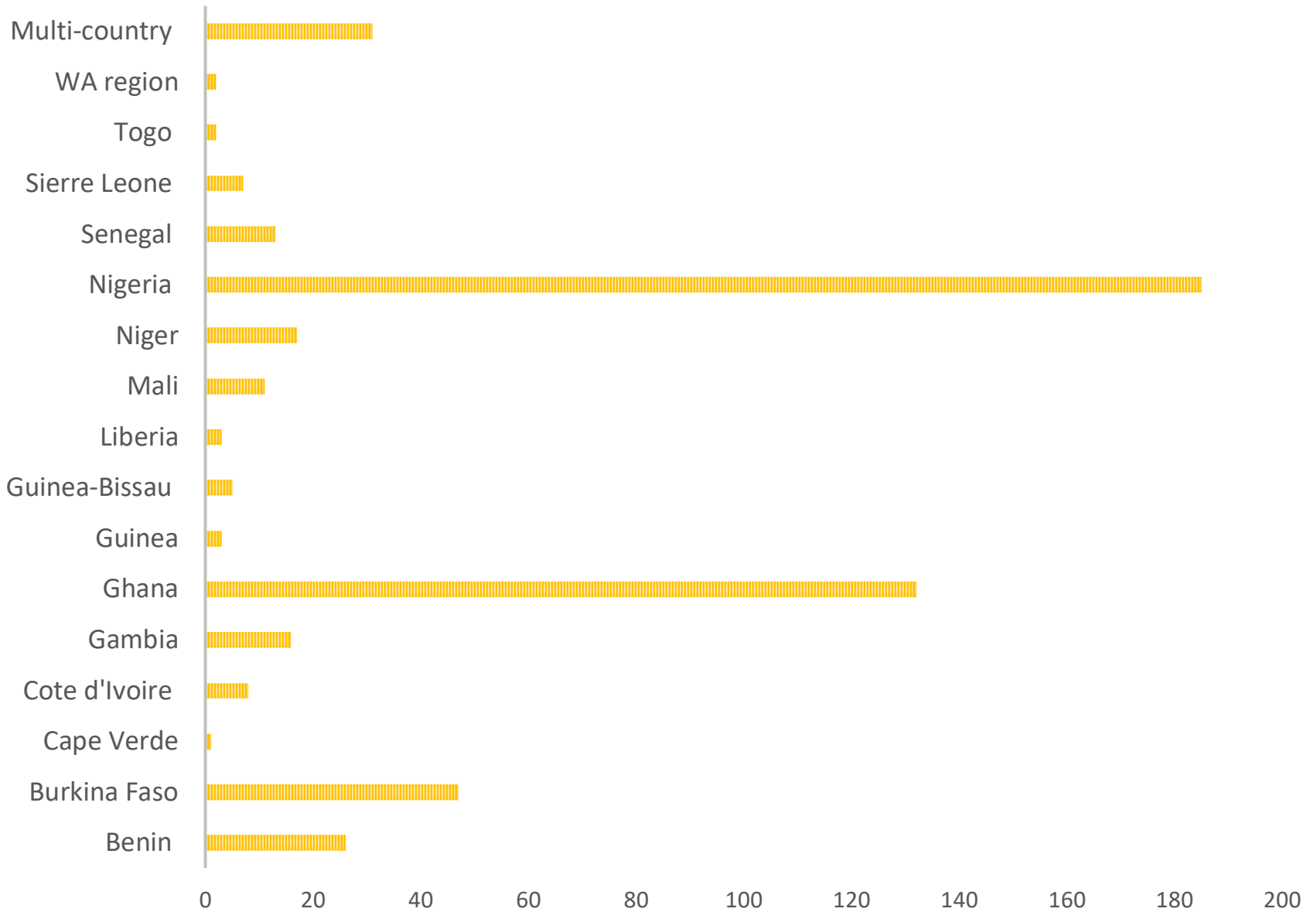
Results for West Africa



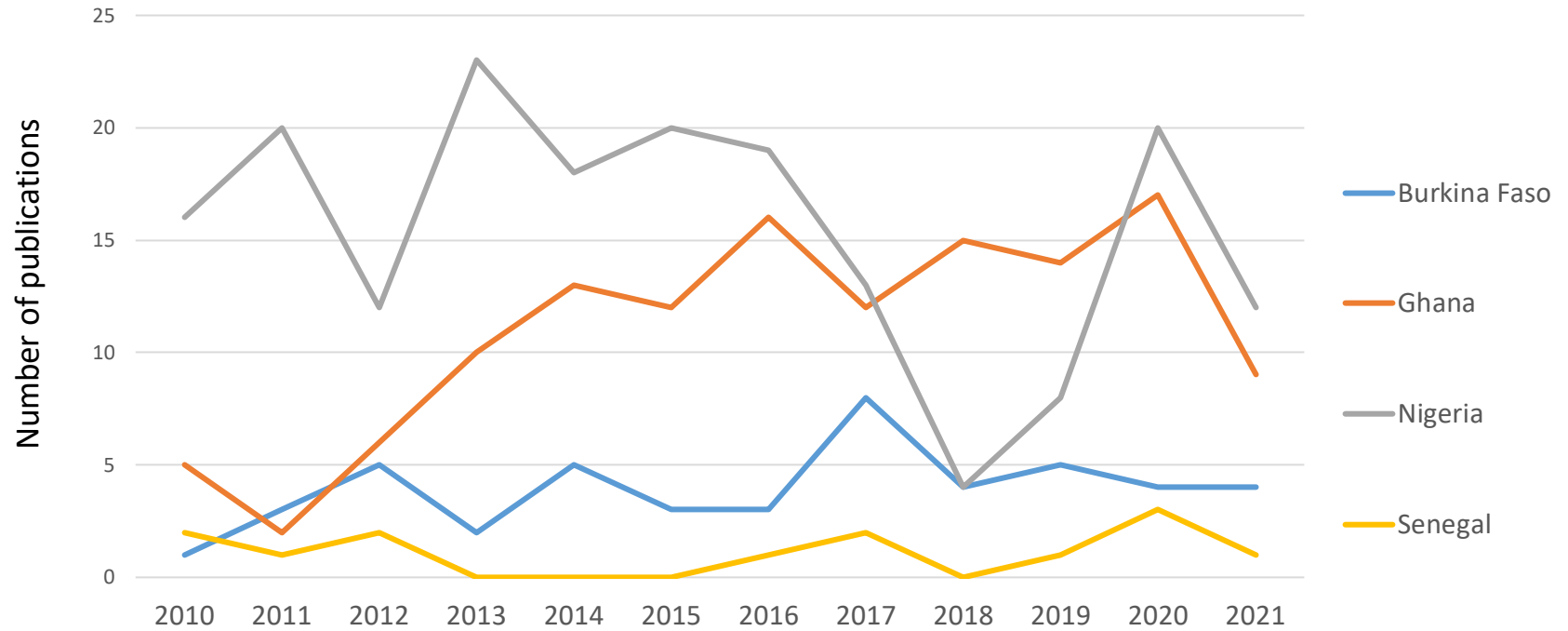
Results



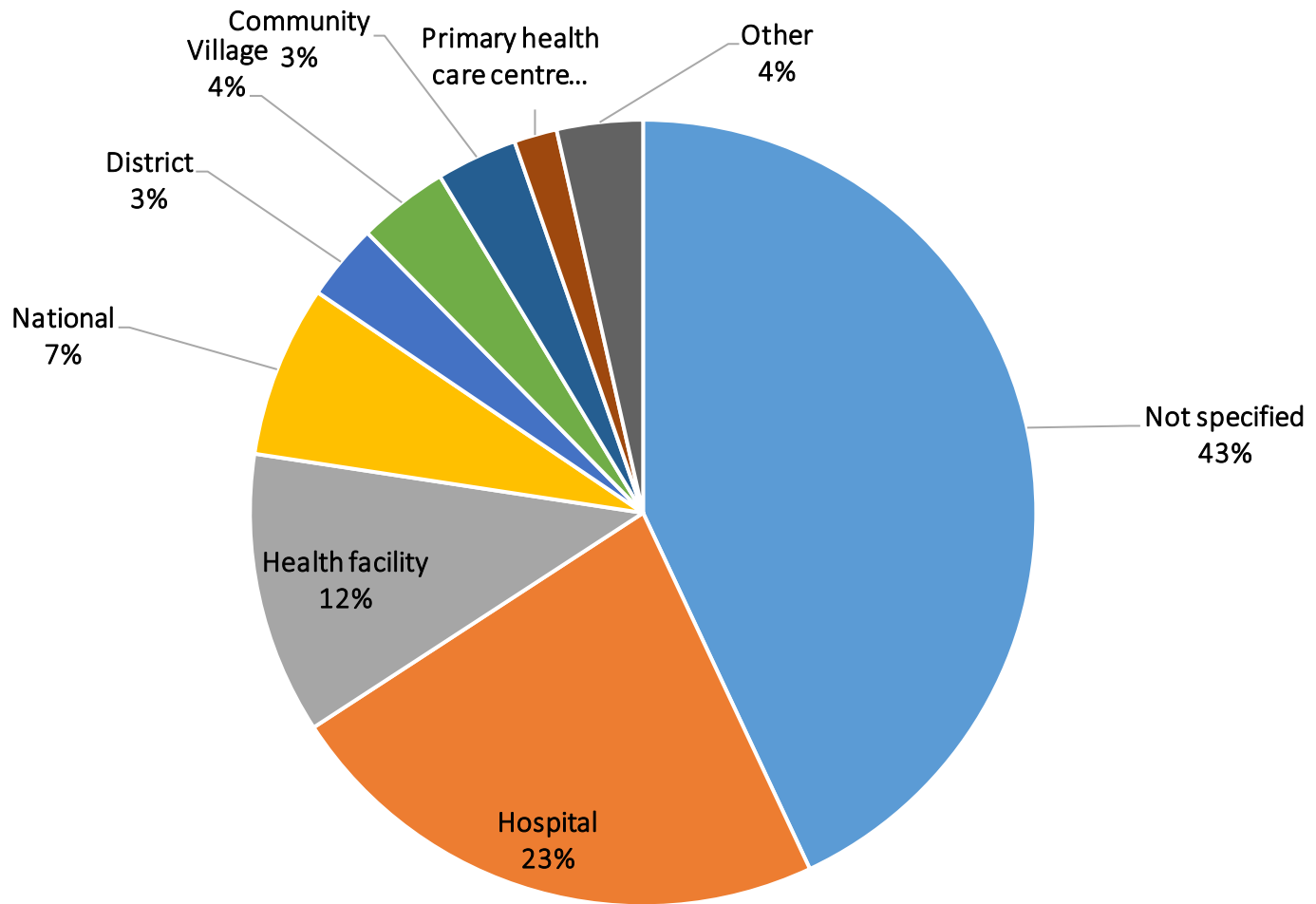
Number of publications by country



Publications per year in four focal countries

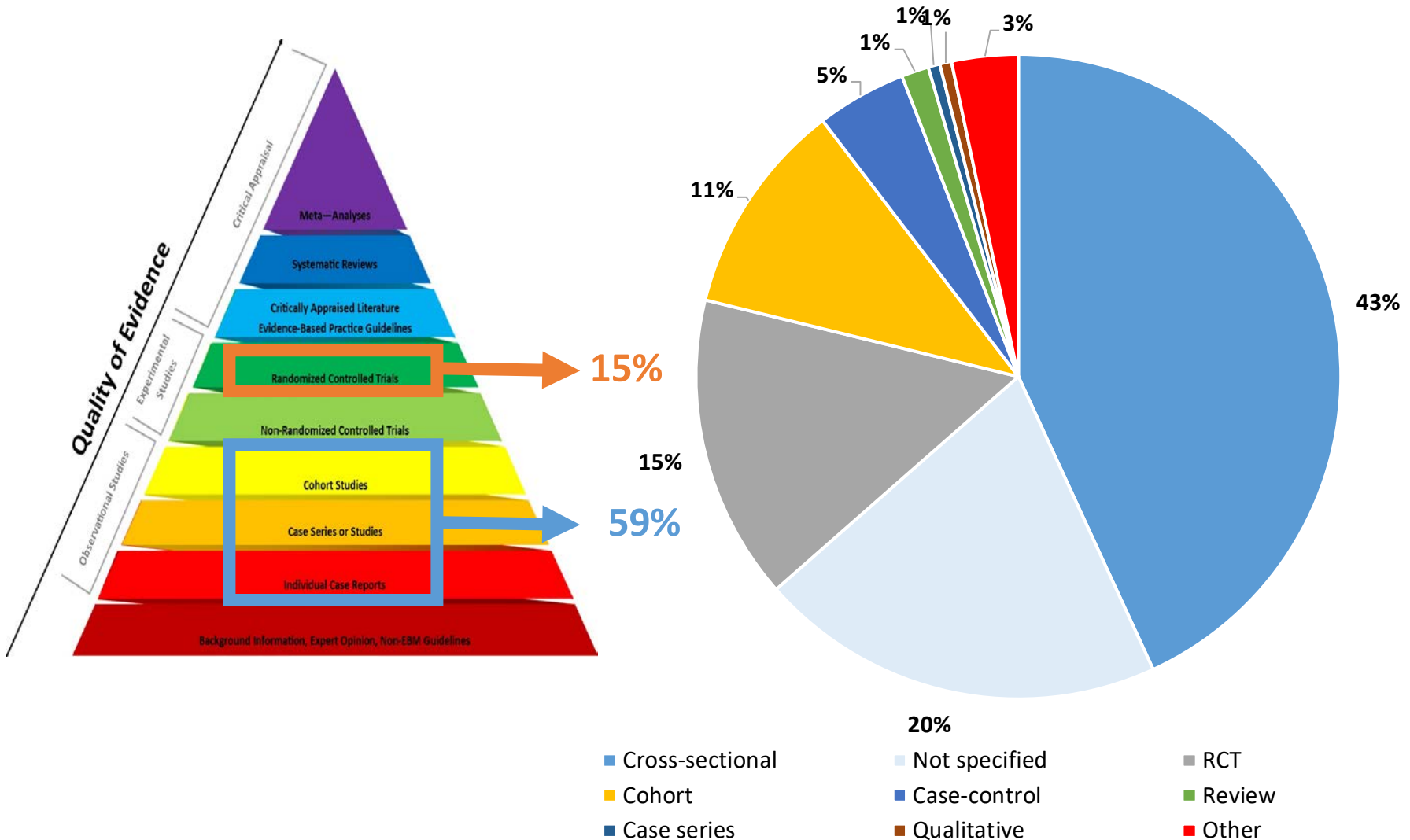


Publications by study setting

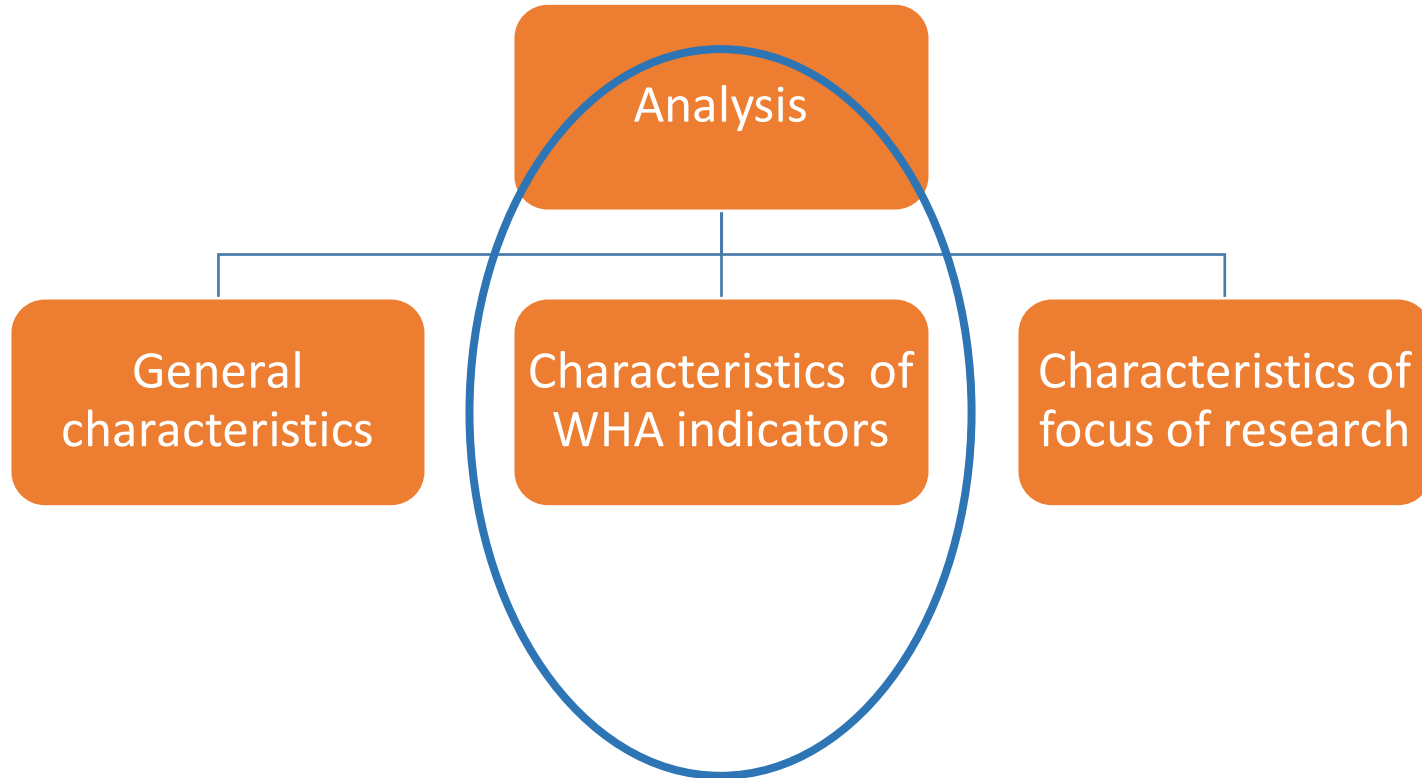


Publications by study design

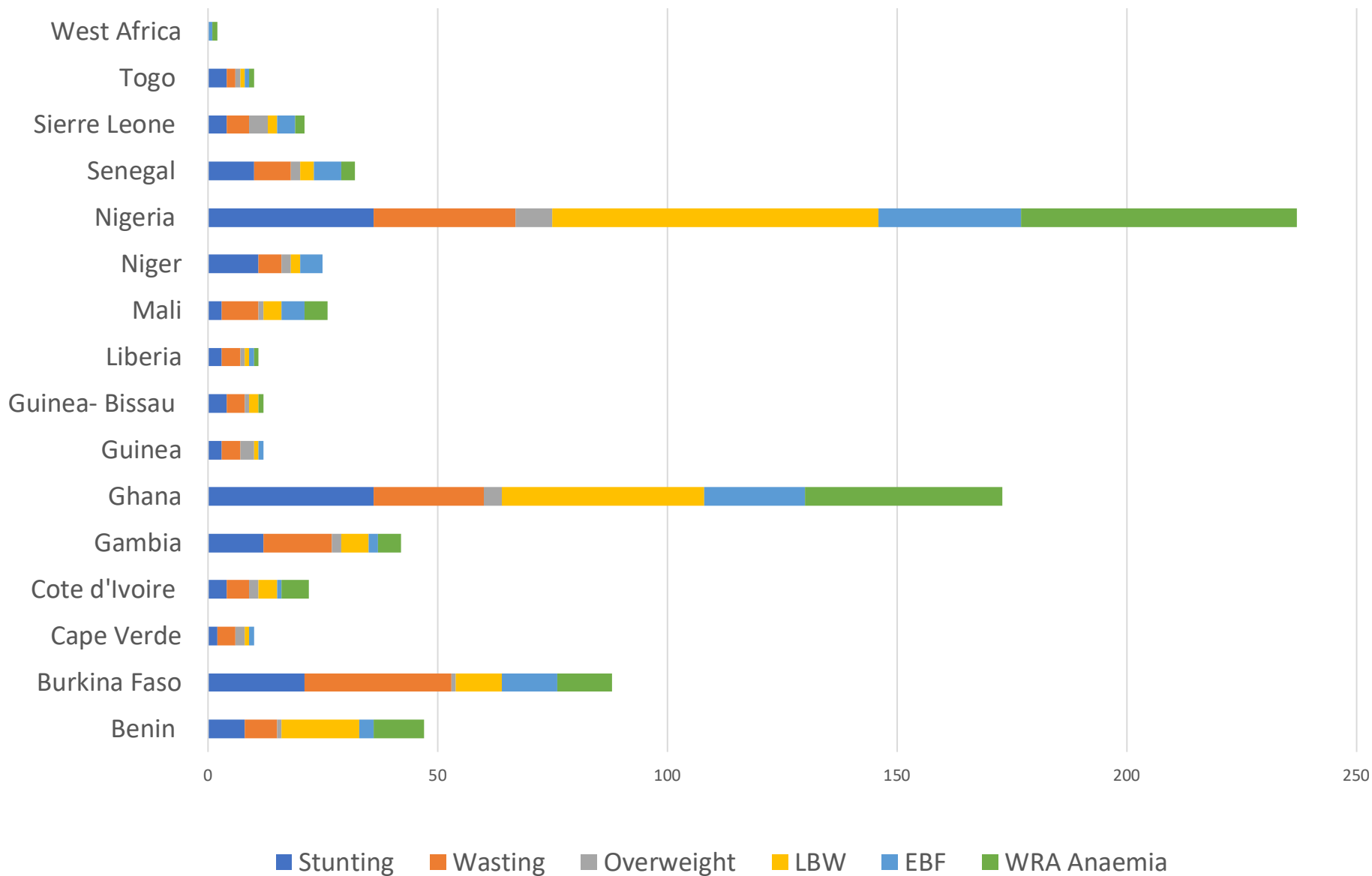
Hierarchy of evidence



Results

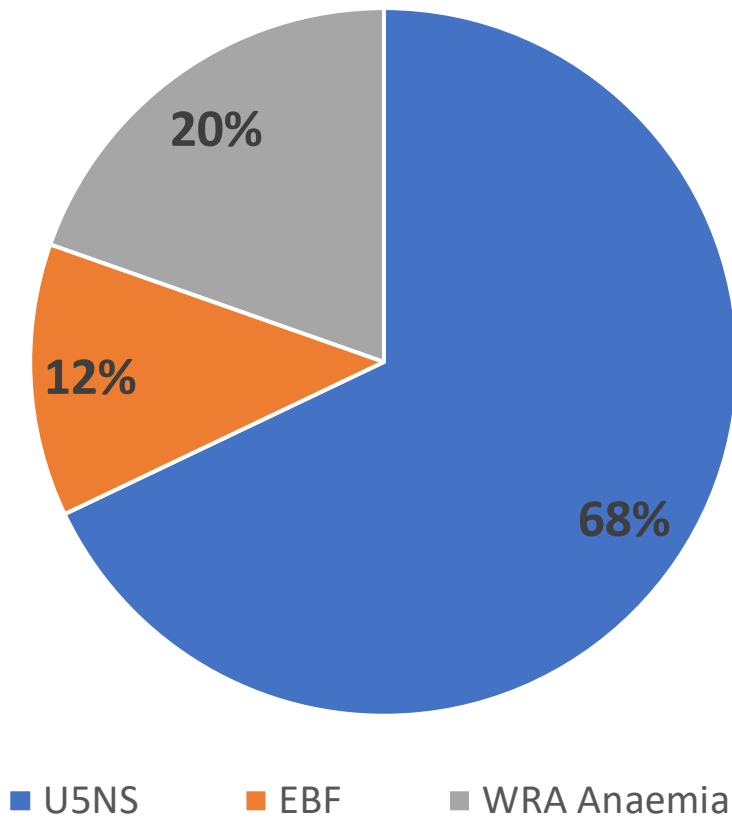


Publications per indicator category

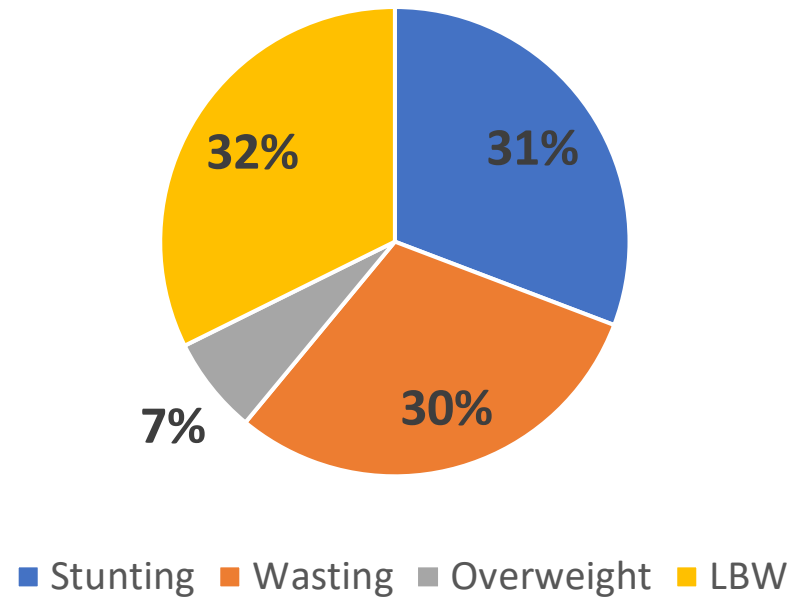


Publications per indicators category

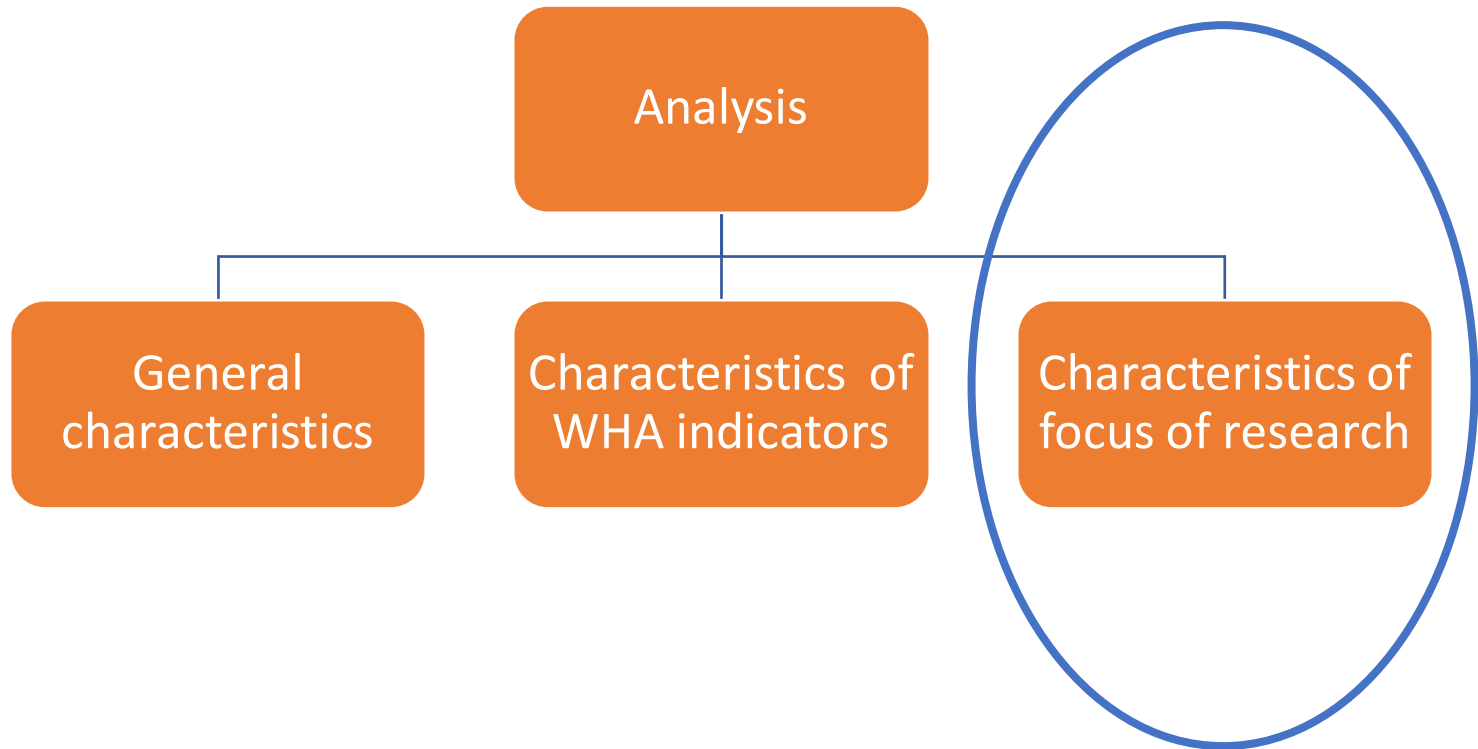
Publications by WHA target



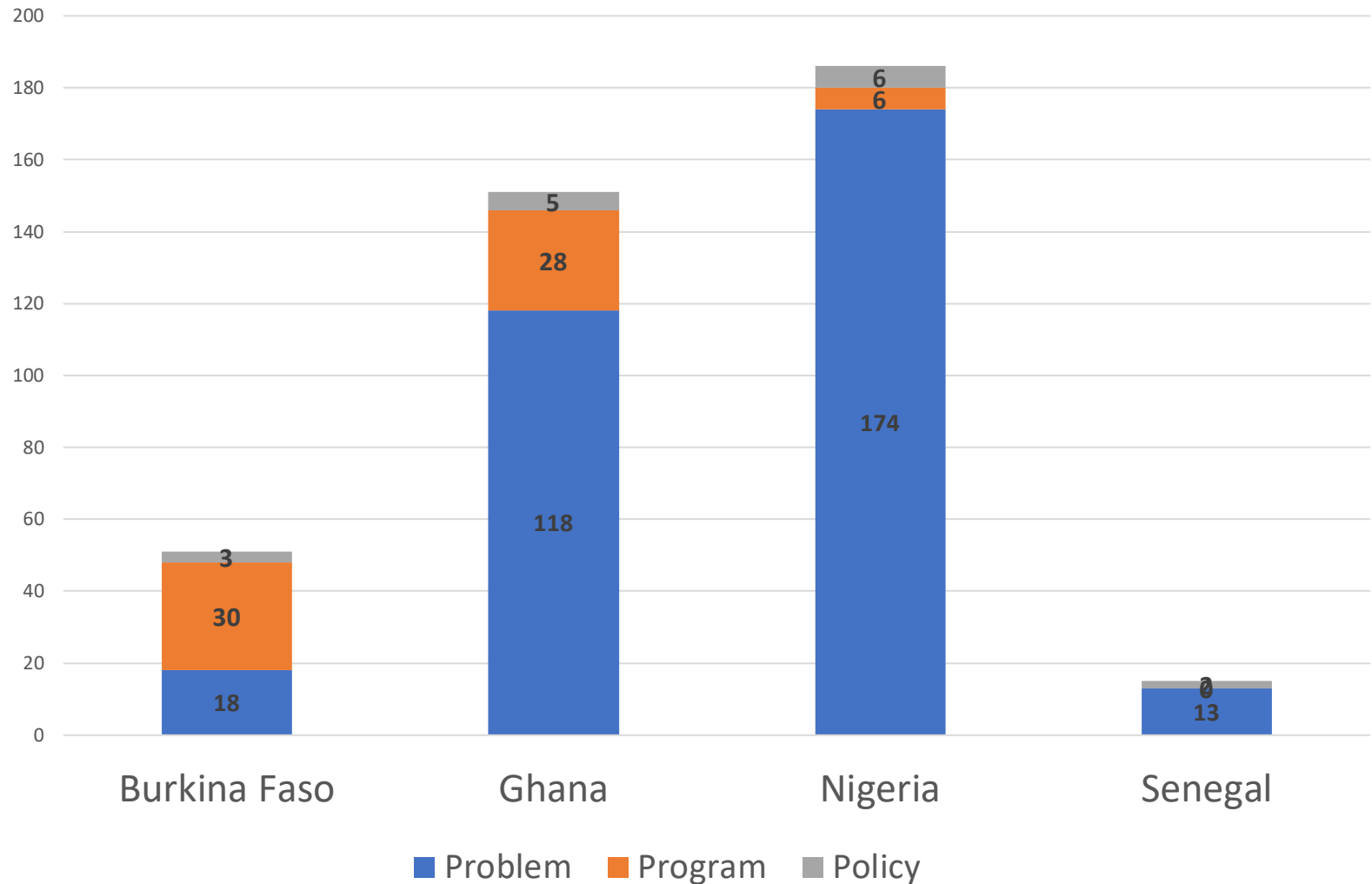
Breakdown of publications within U5NS



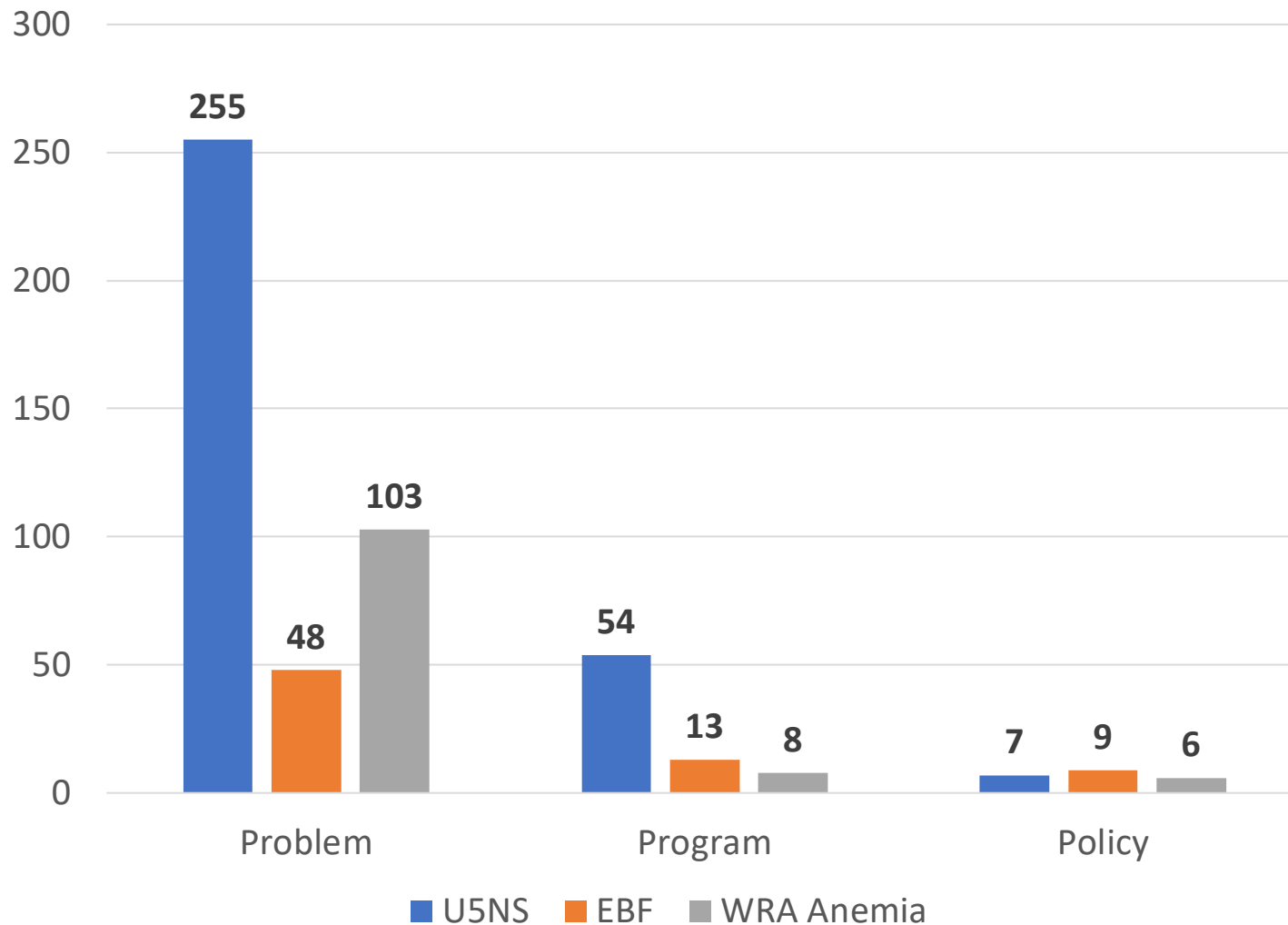
Results



Publications per focus of research in focal countries



Publications per indicator category and focus of research



Key Messages

The majority of the publications were identified through the search report on Anglophone countries.

The majority of research publications report on under 5 nutritional status; within this, low birth weight is heavily reported on but very few report on under 5 overweight.

Most publications report on the prevalence and drivers of World Health Assembly indicators, and very few on programs or policy.