

Extra weight equals better health-related quality of life for blacks, not so for women

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A survey of nearly 4,000 Americans finds that obese women reported significantly worse health than obese men. Blacks who were overweight also reported better health than blacks in the normal or obese weight categories. Respondents were divided into three categories: normal, overweight, or obese, according to their height and weight.

The survey results are published online in the June issue of Springer's journal *Quality of Life Research* and they come from a study funded by the National Institute on Aging. During the survey, researchers conducted comprehensive telephone interviews asking health-related questions about cognition, vision, speech, hearing, [physical activity](#), pain, mobility, and mental health.

"This study points out that the relationship between extra weight and health-related quality of life varies by gender and race," said Tanya Bentley, PhD, the paper's lead author at the Partnership for Health Analytic Research in Beverly Hills, California.

"Our study did not look at why extra weight seems to be less of a burden for blacks and more of a burden for women, but there are several possible explanations," said David Feeny, PhD, co-author and investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, Oregon. "These are questions that should be addressed in future studies," added Feeny.

To administer the survey, researchers conducted telephone interviews with 3,844 U.S. adults aged 35 - 89 in 2005-2006. They asked up to 266 questions during interviews which lasted about 45 minutes. The questions came from six different health-related quality of life surveys that include measures of mental and physical health such as mobility, self-care, activity, pain, anxiety and depression, vision, hearing, speech, cognition, and vitality. Most prior studies looking at weight and quality of life have used only one or two of these surveys.

In general, people in the normal weight category, with a body mass index of 18.5 - 25, scored higher than people who were [overweight](#) (BMI 25 - 29) or obese (BMI 30 and above). In fact, in all six surveys people of normal weight scored higher than their overweight and obese peers. But [obese women](#) scored significantly lower than [obese men](#) in all six surveys and overweight blacks scored higher than normal weight and obese blacks in four of the six surveys.

More information: Bentley TGK et al (2011). Race and gender associations between obesity and nine health-related quality-of-life measures. *Quality of Life Research*; [DOI:10.1007/s11136-011-9878-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-011-9878-7)

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