

South Carolina Researchers Examine Income Disparities in Children Who are Overweight or Obese

Researchers from the [Exercise Science Department](#) in the University of South Carolina's [Arnold School of Public Health](#) have published a paper in the [International Journal of Obesity](#) on disparities in childhood overweight and obesity status by income in the United States. Assistant professor of exercise science [Glenn Weaver](#) led the study, where they conducted an epidemiological examination using three nationally representative datasets.

Previous research has confirmed that overweight and obesity status has become a global epidemic and, adults and adolescents from low-income households are at higher risk for this condition. This study examined the relationship between income and prevalence of overweight/obesity status for children and adolescents ages 5-18 years from 1971 to 2014. The authors also analyzed the data within and across race/ethnicities.

The data set included a nationally representative sample of 74K participants included in one of three studies: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, & the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. The researchers looked at household income-to poverty ratio alongside prevalence of overweight/obesity status based on body mass index.

Dr. Weaver and his team found that children and adolescents from middle-income and high-income households were less likely to be overweight or obese compared to those from low-income households. When looking at race/ethnicity, they found that children and adolescents from middle- and high-income households were less likely to be overweight or obese compared to their low-income peers within the White, Hispanic, and other race/ethnic groups. However, children and adolescents who were black and from low-income households were not more likely to be overweight or obese than their high- and middle-income peers. Further, the researchers found disparities in the prevalence of overweight and obesity status between low-income children and adolescents and their middle- and high-income counterparts grew each decade between 1971 and 2014.

Overall, the authors concluded that income and overweight/obesity status are related in U.S. children and adolescents with racial/ethnic differences in prevalence emerging in middle- and high-income households and disparities in prevalence growing.