Social and Financial Status Affects Weight

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People who have a lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to be overweight than those with higher SES, regardless of racial or ethnic background, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association and reported by HealthDay News.

For the study, Johns Hopkins University researchers examined data collected from more than 4,300 participants in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Continuing Survey of Individual Food Intakes.

The USDA's Diet and Health Knowledge Survey asked questions about participants' health and diet habits. Then scientists used participants' education level and household income to calculate their socioeconomic status.

In general, researchers found African Americans had a higher body mass index (height-to-weight ratio), scored lower on the USDA's healthy eating index and got less exercise than whites. But after controlling for SES, scientists noted that differences in the healthy eating index between African Americans and whites got smaller.

"Different from what we expected, few of the racial/ethnic differences in diet, exercise and weight status were explained by health- and nutrition-related psychosocial factors," said Youfa Wang, MD, MS, director of the John Hopkins Global Center for Childhood Obesity. "But [SES] explained a considerable portion of the disparities."

The study findings are important because they could help researchers better understand the complex factors that create disparities in diet, exercise and obesity across ethnic and socioeconomic groups, Wang added.

And it's not just weight that's influenced by someone's socioeconomic status. SES also affects a person's risk of developing specific conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Click here to read more.

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