

Socioeconomic Factors Impact Weight Loss Surgery Outcomes

Income, stress and poor sleep quality may explain why Black adults lose less weight than people of other races after bariatric surgery.

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Socioeconomic factors may explain why Black adults who undergo weight loss surgery lose less weight compared with members of other racial groups, according to a study led by NYU Langone Grossman School of Medicine researchers.

[Obesity](#) affects more than 40% of U.S. adults and nearly 50% of Black Americans, according to a 2023 study [published in PubMed Central](#).

[Bariatric surgery](#) is a common procedure that alters the digestive system to help people lose weight and reduce their risk of weight-related health issues. In fact, previous research has shown that bariatric surgery can reduce the [risk of cancer](#) and [cardiovascular disease](#) and lower [mortality](#) in people with obesity and [some forms of liver disease](#).

[Published in Obesity](#), the study at hand focused on Black adults who had undergone a sleeve gastrectomy, the most common weight loss surgery, between 2017 and 2020. A year after surgery, Black adults had lost about 6.2% less weight than white adults and 4.9% less than Latino adults.

Researchers uncovered economic and social factors that may impact weight loss outcomes, including income, sleep disturbances and stress.

“Our findings identified variations in bariatric surgery outcomes so that we can address them and, when appropriate, offer patients individualized support that can help promote the best possible outcomes,” said Melanie Jay, MD, a professor in the departments of medicine and population health at NYU Langone Health.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 300 people who identified as non-Hispanic Black, Latino or white. They measured total weight loss, waist circumference, body composition, hormones and blood glucose levels and then followed up several times over two years via in-clinic visits and questionnaires.

Overall, non-Hispanic Black adults lost less weight at almost every follow-up compared with Latino and white adults. What's more, Black adults consistently reported higher sleep disturbance, perceived stress and discrimination.

For comparison, researchers found no significant differences in total weight loss between Latino and white adults. Additionally, white adults had better long-term blood glucose control compared with Black and Latino adults.

"These varied associations highlight how different lived experiences and self-perceptions across racial and ethnic groups can influence surgical outcomes," said Sally Vanegas, PhD, a research assistant professor in the Department of Medicine and the study's lead author. "Additional research is needed to better understand how a broader range of socioeconomic factors may shape these outcomes."

In related news, a study [published earlier this year](#) found that Black people with obesity are less likely to undergo weight-loss surgery compared with other groups.

The study analyzed records of more than 122,000 people with obesity treated at the Mass General Brigham health system between 2000 and 2022. About 11,100 of those individuals discussed weight-loss surgery with a doctor.

Only about 8% of Black people underwent the surgery, compared with 13% of patients of other races. Researchers speculate that mistrust of the medical system or differences in societal pressure to lose weight may contribute to the lower rate of Black people undergoing weight-loss surgery.

To learn more, click [#Weight Loss](#) or [#Bariatric Surgery](#). There, you'll see headlines such as "[Weight-Loss Surgery Cuts Fatty Liver Complications](#)," "[Weight-Loss Drugs May Prevent 10 Types of Cancer](#)" and "[Cysteine Restriction Plays Key Role in Weight Loss](#)."