

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

A great deal of attention has focused on the increase in obesity and its link to greater coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, gall bladder disease, osteoarthritis, and many types of cancer.<sup>1,2</sup> This public health concern can be framed in terms of the relatively low prevalence of healthy weight. Setting healthy weight targets might be a more positive and motivating approach than only emphasizing obesity reduction. The national *Healthy People 2010* target is to increase to 60.0 percent the proportion of adults at a healthy weight.<sup>3</sup>

In the 2004 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS), women self-reported their heights and weights, which were then converted to a Body Mass Index (BMI). For the analysis presented here, women classified as underweight (BMI less than 18.5) or overweight or obese (BMI more than 25) were not considered to be of a "healthy weight."

Women who were pregnant or one-year postpartum were excluded from the analysis for a total sample of 4,032.

- Overall, less than half of the California women (47.8 percent) had a healthy weight.

Healthy weight status varied significantly by race/ethnicity, age group, income, education level, and food security status.<sup>4</sup>

- A greater percentage of Asian/Other women had a healthy weight (64.6 percent), followed by White (50.1 percent), Hispanic (35.8 percent), and Black/African American women (33.9 percent). The prevalence of healthy weight was even higher (69.1 percent) among women identifying themselves as Asian or Pacific

Islander and excluding women who are American Indian or Alaska Native.

- Healthy weight prevalence declined with age. The majority of women 18-24 years had a healthy weight (62.5 percent) compared with 50.8 percent of women 25-34 years, 49.7 percent of women 35-44 years, 43.0 percent of women 45-54 years, 36.9 percent of women 55-64 years and 46.1 percent of women 65 years and older.
- Just over one in three (39.4 percent) women with incomes below the federal poverty level had a healthy weight, compared with just over one in two (51.8 percent) respondents with incomes twice the federal poverty level.
- Greater formal education was positively associated with a healthy weight. Only 31.5 percent of women with less than a high school education had a healthy weight, compared with 41.4 percent of high school graduates, 47.2 percent of women with some college, and 59.0 percent of college graduates. (See graph)
- More than half (51.4 percent) of women in food secure households had a healthy weight compared with 39.8 percent of women in food insecure households without hunger, and 31.1 percent of women in food insecure households with hunger.

For women income eligible to receive food stamps (less than 130 percent federal poverty level), healthy weight did not differ significantly by participation in the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Healthy weight prevalence was 39.6

## Healthy Weight Among California Women, 2004

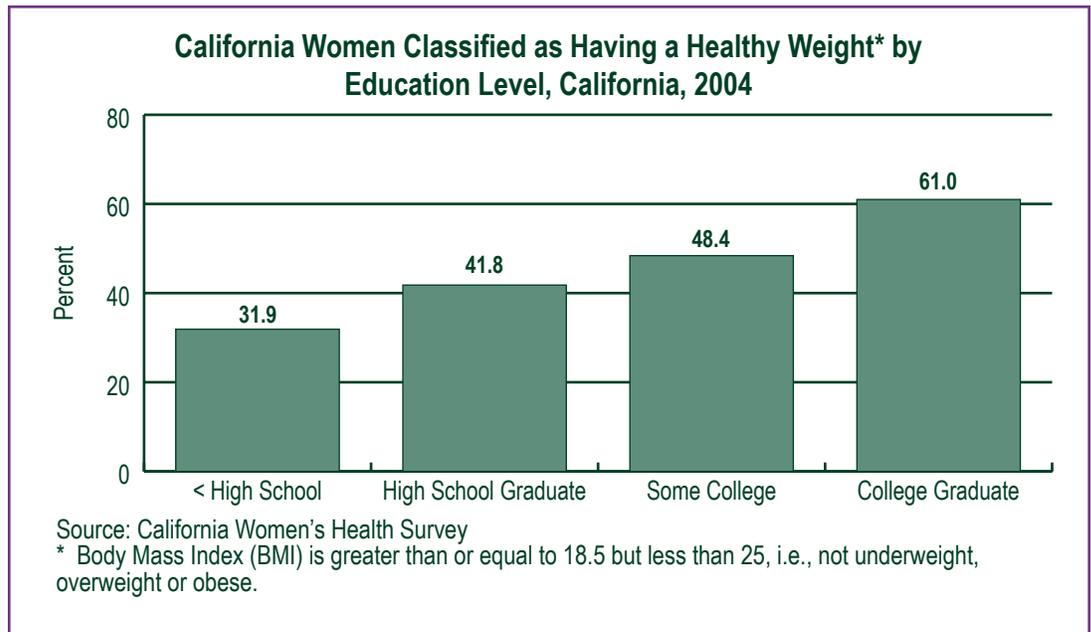
California Department of Health Services  
Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section

**Public Health Message:**  
*Most California women do not have a healthy weight. Having a healthy weight was positively and significantly related to respondents' income, education level, and food security, negatively and significantly related to age, and not significantly related to participation in the Food Stamp Program. Health disparities undermine California's social and economic well-being. They are likely to persist unless the prevalence of healthy weight increases among California's women and especially low-income women and women of Black/African American and Hispanic race/ethnicity.*

Issue 4, Summer 2006, Num. 22

## Healthy Weight Among California Women, 2004

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percent for food stamp recipients compared with 40.9 percent for women income eligible but not receiving food stamp benefits.

- 1 Must A, Spadano EH, Coakley AE, Field G, Colditz W, Dietz H. The disease burden associated with overweight and obesity. *Journal of American Medical Association*. 1999;282(16):1523-1529.
- 2 Calle EE, Rodriguez C, Walker-Thurmond K, Thun MJ. Overweight, obesity, and mortality from cancer in a prospectively studied cohort of U.S. adults. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2003;24(348):1625-1638.
- 3 United States Department of Health and Human Services. 2000. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, <http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/html/volume2/19nutrition.htm>.
- 4  $p < 0.0001$ , chi-square test.

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