

Overweight/Obesity

Figure 10a: Percent¹ Overweight/Obese, by Income², Males Aged 20-64 Years, Toronto, 2001, 2003 & 2005 Combined

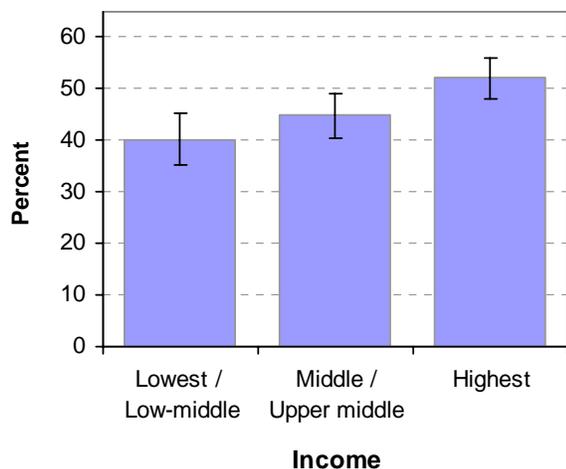
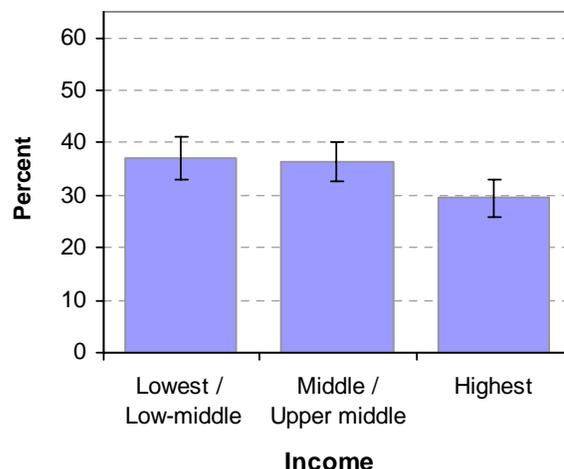


Figure 10b: Percent¹ Overweight/Obese, by Income², Females Aged 20-64 Years, Toronto, 2001, 2003 & 2005 Combined



¹ Age standardized to the 1991 Canadian population.

² Income is the income adequacy measure used in the CCHS.

Error bars (I) denote 95% confidence intervals.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey Cycles 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1 .

The increasing prevalence of obesity has been called the fastest growing epidemic of our time.²⁶ Increases in obesity and overweight are linked to many common chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, osteoarthritis, and some types of cancers.²⁷ The body mass index (BMI), based on height and weight, classifies weight into risk categories - ‘underweight’, ‘acceptable weight’, ‘overweight’ or ‘obese’. Understanding and interpreting the association between gender and income and its impact on obesity is challenging, given that it involves the interaction of genetic, social, cultural, physical and economic environments. Among Toronto adults 45% of males and 34% of females were overweight or obese. These data are based on self-reported heights and weights, which tend to systematically underestimate obesity prevalence.²⁸

There was a gradient for people who reported being overweight or obese (BMI=25+) for both Toronto males and females (age 20-64 years) by income category. The gradient for males was the reverse compared to females. Males in the lowest income category were the least likely to report being overweight or obese (40%) compared to the highest income category (52%). A similar pattern was seen in Canadian males. While the reason for this pattern is not clear, it has been suggested that higher smoking rates and physically demanding jobs may contribute to lower rates of obesity in men with lower levels of income.¹⁰ Males in the lowest income category had a significantly different rate from those in the highest income category. For females, the opposite pattern occurred, where 37% in the lowest income category reported being overweight or obese, compared to 30% in the highest income category. The rate among females in the lowest income category was significantly different from that in the highest income category.

The absolute difference for females aged 20-64 years between the lowest and highest income categories was 8 percentage points. In relative terms, females in the lowest income category reported being overweight or obese 1.3 times more than females in the highest income category.

If all females aged 20-64 years had the same percent as the females in the highest income category, there would be 40,190 or 14% fewer overweight or obese females in Toronto.

Across all income categories for both males and females, the overweight/obesity rates in Toronto were lower than the overall rate in the rest of Ontario.