Overweight Exceeds Underweight among Women in Kerala: 
An Analysis of Trends and Determinants

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KEYWORDS Nutrition Transition. Body Mass Index. Logistic Regression Analysis

ABSTRACT While under-nutrition (underweight and stunting) is still prevalent in India, the rates of 
overweight and obesity are steadily increasing, especially among adults. In Kerala, the rates of 
overweight and obese exceeded underweight. This paper examines the trends in the shift from 
underweight to overweight and identify the major determinants of the co-existence of ‘double burden’ 
of malnutrition among women of reproductive age 15–49 years using the data from National Nutrition 
Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) diet and nutrition surveys and the second National Family Health Survey 
(NFHS-2). Results of the multivariate logistic regression analyses on NFHS-2 data show that household 
standard of living and age are significantly associated with both underweight and overweight or 
obesity. On the other hand, work status, residence and caste are not significant on women’s nutritional 
status. Among others, Muslim and Christian women, women who watch television more than once a 
week and women who reported eating fruits daily and consume chicken or meat or fish are more likely 
to be overweight or obese than their counterparts. The risk of chronic energy deficiency or underweight 
is significantly higher among never married women and lower among literate women. In summary, both 
underweight and overweight or obesity are equally present in Kerala and there is a need for public 
health programs that are able to address both simultaneously.