



Obesity in Pacific Island Nations

Stanley J. Ulijaszek

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ABSTRACT The emergence of obesity and fatness across the second part of the twentieth century has been documented for a number of Pacific Islands populations. While dietary change and reduced physical activity levels associated with economic modernisation have been identified as the key factors fuelling the emergence of obesity, it is argued here that increasing numbers of Pacific Island migrants in the United States, New Zealand, France and Australia have provided the basis for the acceleration of the modernisation process by way of remittances, and the transmission of ideas of economic opportunity and change. Population growth and potential for migration for the Pacific Island nations is estimated from available data on population growth, total fertility rates and total mortality rates, and described. Pacific Islander migrants form approximately one quarter of the total global Pacific Islander population, the majority of which are from Tonga, Fiji, French Polynesia, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Per capita energy and fats and meat intake for the period 1961 to 2000 is described for five Pacific Island nations, showing that in general, energy intakes have increased, as have the energy densities of the diets consumed. Thus the increase in mean body mass index observed in Pacific Islanders in the second half of the twentieth century can in general be attributed to dietary change associated with greater food and energy intake, associated with increased consumption of fatty foods and meat, most of which are imports.

Author's Address: Dr. Stanley J. Ulijaszek, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PF, UK
E-mail: stanley.ulijaszek@anthro.ox.ac.uk