

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

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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.