

Gender Difference in Obesity and Preventive Health Behaviors in A US-Mexico Border Hispanic Cohort

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Overweight and obesity is a prevalent chronic disorder in Mexican Americans, however, obesity-related behaviors and the role of gender remain unclear. This study examined gender difference in obesity-related health behaviors among Mexican Americans. **Methods:** A sample (n=1439) was drawn from the Cameron County Hispanic Cohort, a prospective cohort sample of Mexican American adults aged 18 years and older living in a large and poor city along the Texas / Mexico border. The participants' baseline demographic, behavioral, and clinical measures were used for this analysis. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were conducted to analyze the data. **Results:** The sample had a mean age of 48.06 ± 15.60 years, 67.06% female, 48.81% employed, 45.66% had less than high school education, 77.57% chose to complete survey in Spanish, and 31.65% had some type of public or private insurance. Females (57.82% vs. 47.08% males) were more likely to have a lower than high school education ($p < .0001$), while males were more likely to be employed (66.31% vs. 40.41%). About 88% males and 84% females were either overweight ($25 \leq \text{BMI} < 30$) or obese ($\text{BMI} \geq 30$). Males (39.47% vs. 31.18%) were more likely overweight, while females (53.28% vs. 48.68% in males) were more likely obese. We also found poor health behaviors contributing to the high obesity prevalence. Females (18.98% vs. 11.11%) were more likely to adhere to U.S. fruit and vegetables guidelines of more than 5 portions, $p = .0005$, while males (36.42% vs. 27.94%) were more likely to adhere to U.S. physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes moderate to vigorous weekly, $p = 0.0013$. **Conclusions:** There were significant gender differences in obesity-related behaviors in the Texas / Mexico Hispanic cohort. Interventions for this population need to take gender difference into consideration when designing appropriate behavior change strategies.

KEY WORDS: Gender, Overweight, Obesity, Hispanics, Preventive Health Behaviors