

Trends in Men and Women Dieting and Exercising for Weight Loss over Time

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In recent years, due to the increasing obesity rate, dieting and exercising for weight loss have become more popular. This study was done to evaluate these trends in men and women with and without obesity using diet and exercise data from the National Health and Examination Survey (NHANES Continuous 1999-2016). Trends in weight loss practices were adjusted for age, ethnicity, education status and smoking status with investigation of time, sex and obesity as main effect and interaction terms.

Amongst individuals trying to lose weight, the prevalence of individuals with obesity engaging in exercise for weight loss increased from 38.6% to 50.2% between 1999 and 2016 ($p=0.001$) but the prevalence was not different for those without obesity (56.3% to 55.5%, $p=0.77$). On average, there was a higher prevalence of men engaging in exercise than women across all years (52.3% vs. 48.0%, $p < 0.0001$). Amongst individuals trying to lose weight, the prevalence of individuals engaging in caloric restriction decreased from 78.9% to 73.9% between 1999 and 2016 ($p=0.056$). The prevalence of women engaging in caloric restriction was higher than men across all years (75% vs 72.4%, $p=0.006$), while there was no difference in the prevalence of caloric restriction in individuals with and without obesity (74.2% vs 73.1%, $p=0.29$). While the prevalence of exercising for weight loss is increasing, the prevalence of caloric restriction is decreasing. Nevertheless, dieting remains far more common than engaging in exercise for weight loss.