

## The role of obesity in disability trends in older European adults

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### Topic:

Population Health

### Presentation:

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### Abstract:

Over the past five decades, the elderly have on average become less disabled. However, disability rates have risen markedly among younger cohorts approaching old age, as has their obesity prevalence – a significant risk factor for disability. If observed obesity trends will continue, it is unclear how they will influence disability of the future ageing cohorts. Using the micro-simulation Future Elderly Model (EU-FEM) – a dynamic micro-simulation model of the health of Europeans aged over 50 years – with The Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe, we estimate associations between obesity and reported disability, disability-free life expectancy at 65, disability-free years, as well as chronic diseases. We forecast these relationships through 2050 assuming the current obesity trends will continue, but also for a more and less optimistic scenario of obesity trends in younger cohorts. If current obesity trends continue, disability rates for obese people aged 60 to 69 will reach 14%, compared with a 8% prevalence of disability for those with a BMI between 19 and 25 in the same age group. Similarly, disability rates are projected to reach 30% of the obese population aged 70 to 79, a prevalence rate 50% higher with respect to those with a normal BMI.

**Objective:** We study the current and project future trends in disability and health status of European older adults through 2050 as a function of trends in obesity. We also describe how these associations vary between EU regions by sex and education.

**Methods:** We estimate the correlation between obesity and disability and other health measures and project them through 2050 by using the European Future Elderly Model (EU-FEM) – a dynamic micro-simulation model of the health of Europeans aged over 50 years with The Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe between 2004 and 2015.

**Data:** We use The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), a cross-national panel for older adults, collected across 6 waves between 2004-2015. Countries we focus on are Austria, Germany, Sweden, Netherland, Spain, Italy, France, Denmark, Switzerland and Belgium . To calculate trends in health outcomes, we use the European Community Household Panel (ECHIP), an annual panel household survey between 1994-2001. Population projections are from the EUROSTAT data, available for years 2014-2080.