

# Scientists Say Thin People Face Extinction in United States: Everyone Will Be Overweight by 2048 – And Less Smart.

The most significant change to the human species in millennia spells disaster for the environment, health care, and education. It could even mean the end of sports. The reason is that thin and normal weight Americans are headed for extinction, according to the projections of scientists studying obesity rates in the United States.

If obesity trends continue, almost nine out of every ten Americans will be overweight or obese by 2030, and there will be no more thin or normal weight people *at all* by 2048, according to a [new study](http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/oby2008351a.html) (<http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/oby2008351a.html>) by researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health published in the July issue of *Obesity*:

National survey data show that the prevalence of overweight and obese adults in the U.S. has increased steadily over the past three decades,” said [Youfa Wang](http://faculty.jhsph.edu/default.cfm?faculty_id=1571&grouped=false&searchText=&department_id=0&departmentName=International) ([http://faculty.jhsph.edu/default.cfm?faculty\\_id=1571&grouped=false&searchText=&department\\_id=0&departmentName=International](http://faculty.jhsph.edu/default.cfm?faculty_id=1571&grouped=false&searchText=&department_id=0&departmentName=International) MD, PhD, lead author of the study and associate professor with the Bloomberg School’s [Center for Human Nutrition](http://commprojects.jhsph.edu/chn/) (<http://commprojects.jhsph.edu/chn/>). “If these trends continue, more than 86 percent of adults will be overweight or obese by 2030 with approximately 96 percent of non-Hispanic black women and 91 percent of Mexican-American men affected. This would result in 1 of every 6 health care dollars spent in total direct health care costs paying for overweight and obesity-related costs.”

By 2048, all American adults would become overweight or obese, while black women will reach that state by 2034. In children, the prevalence of overweight (BMI 95th percentile, 30%) will nearly double by 2030.”

The related health-care costs will add up to almost a trillion dollars, accounting for 16 to 18 percent of all health care expenditures.

The result will not only be a public health catastrophe. if these trends continue, there is a strong likelihood that there will be a significant drop in scholastic achievement across the U.S., as research (<http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/oby2008296a.html>) shows a significant association between being overweight and decreased cognitive functioning. Additionally, scientists have found (<http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/v16/n7/abs/oby2008254a.html>) decreased scholastic performance among middle schoolers who were overweight:

Overweight students demonstrated a 0.4 letter grade lower GPA (on a 4.00 scale) and 11% lower national percentile reading scores than their nonoverweight peers.”

Researchers have also found (<http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/vaop/ncurrent/abs/oby2008294a.html>) a strong correlation between lower math proficiency and increased weight, although this doesn't signal causality.

A nation composed entirely of overweight people will adversely effect the environment, according to recent research by scientists at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. They argue that obesity is linked to higher carbon emissions, as overweight and obese people are more likely to resort to driving and other physical labor saving devices.

According to their research ([http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/news\\_room/pdf/Fat\\_is\\_an\\_environmental\\_issue\\_earth.pdf](http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/news_room/pdf/Fat_is_an_environmental_issue_earth.pdf)), obese people consume 18 percent more food energy than lean people – 2960 calories compared with 2,500 calories for people with body mass indexes of 29 versus 24.5

The increased demand for food will result in additional energy costs, as it requires almost six tons of vegetable protein to create one ton of meat protein. And this in turn will result in increased greenhouse gas emissions, as the livestock industry alone accounts ([http://rsh.sagepub.com/cgi/pdf\\_extract/127/5/204](http://rsh.sagepub.com/cgi/pdf_extract/127/5/204)) for 37-percent of all anthropogenic methane emissions, and accounts for significant deforestation.

According to the the age (<http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/stomaching-the-weather/2006/11/12/1163266409273.html>), an Australian newspaper, the combination of increased use of carbon-powered transportation and methane emissions from livestock and people will lead to more and stronger hurricanes.

There are notable caveats with the research findings and hypotheses: there is at present no data showing a causal link between increased enteric fermentation, human farting and hurricane incidence and strength.

Additionally, as the trend data is based on body mass index, athletes with significant muscle mass are likely to have been counted as being obese or overweight. It is thus possible that a small proportion of the U.S. population – NBA players, for example – will not be overweight as judged by the actual fat content of their bodies. The key determining factor for major league and amateur sports is whether any children will be inclined to exercise at all by the middle of this century, as there is, at present, a

significant correlation (<http://www.nature.com/oby/journal/v16/n7/abs/oby2008254a.html>) between low participation in school athletics, poor physical performance and being overweight and obese.

The final caveat is that trends which appear to be increasing upwards are not bound to keep ascending by logical necessity. We can't predict what impact knowledge will have on human agency and physiology. Even so, it is highly, highly unlikely, given education, lifestyle choices, increasing awareness of the importance of diet, and genetic factors that *everyone* in the U.S. is going to be overweight or obese. Public health researchers are hoping, in effect, to rule out the possibility by declaring it inevitable, even though there's nothing inevitable about it at all. Whether implausibility proves to be an effective public health stratagem remains to be seen.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, July 29th, 2008 at 1:31 pm and is filed under Obesity, Statistical Analysis, Trend Stories. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

## 5 Responses to *Scientists Say Thin People Face Extinction in United States: Everyone Will Be Overweight by 2048 – And Less Smart.*

**Mark Bird says:**

August 25, 2008 at 6:49 am

Well, i'm never going to be overweight. Go cross country!!!

Reply

**Melanie says:**

September 14, 2008 at 5:16 am

I highly doubt the 'legit' of this article. Hate to break it to you, folks, but scientist tend to suck at predicting the future.

In 1980, scientists predicted that we would have established civilizations with regular American citizens living on Venus or Mars by the year 2000. Are we ANYWHERE near that? No.

They also predicted that 8 out of 10 people would have cancer by 2005. Has that happened? No. Right now, it's more like 2.4 out of 10.

Scientists are not carnival fortune-tellers. They cannot predict the future, nor should they try to, cause they suck at it. And besides, if we're still driving gas-consuming cars by 2048, we've got bigger problems than obesity (no pun intended).

Look at the facts now. I am a very thin person at the moment. Most of the people I know are average- thin. I would hazard a guess that one-eighth of the people i know have a weight problem. This article is bogus.

Over & out.

**Reply**

**Kevin says:**

September 22, 2008 at 9:47 pm

How can these scientists not see through their own bullshit? Their claims would make sense if one were to assume that the rates of increasing obesity were going to stay constant over time. This makes no logical sense. Obviously at some point the trend will saturate. To suggest that EVERYONE will be obese in 40 years is simply asinine.

**Reply**

**Muzzy says:**

May 21, 2009 at 3:30 pm

Anorexia rates are also increasing.

**Reply**

**Alice says:**

December 14, 2009 at 4:41 pm

What's up?. Thanks a bunch for the blog. I've been digging around for info, but there is so much out there. Google lead me here – good for you i guess! Keep up the great information. I will be coming back in a few days to see if there is updated posts.

**Reply**

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