



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Obesity inequalities persist in Scotland**

NHS Health Scotland has today published new analysis of obesity-related inequality. 'Obesity in Scotland: A Persistent Inequality' provides comprehensive analysis of how levels of obesity in Scotland have changed over time and how obesity levels differ according to socio-economic status.

The article, published in the International Journal for Equity in Health and summarised in the briefing 'Obesity and health inequalities', describes how the Scottish adult population as a whole has become heavier over time. But this increase in weight is not evenly distributed across society – inequalities in levels of obesity exist between people living in the least and most deprived parts of Scotland.

The prevalence of obesity in adults aged 18-64 years of age increased from 17% in 1995 to 27% in 2008, and has remained at a similar level since then. The most recent figures, for 2015, show that 28% of men and 29% of women aged 18-64 were obese. Overall levels of overweight – including obesity – have increased from 40% in men and 31% in women in 1995, to 66% in men and 60% in women, in 2015.

For men, those living in the least deprived areas have the lowest obesity levels while levels are higher, but broadly similar, for men in all other areas. In contrast, obesity is progressively more common for women as deprivation increases.

Commenting on the research, Elaine Tod, Public Health Intelligence Advisor with NHS Health Scotland said:

“Obesity used to be more common amongst the richer in society as it was only those who could afford to eat well who became obese. This trend has reversed and we now see higher rates of obesity in those who are less well-off. The reasons for this are complex and multi-factorial, including the affordability and availability of high fat, high sugar food in comparison with healthy food and the increasing popularity of more sedentary pastimes. What is clear is that action, including structural change at a societal level that does not require individuals to “opt-in”, is needed to achieve both a population-wide

decrease in obesity in Scotland and to prevent health inequalities associated with obesity widening further.”

Lorraine Tulloch, Programme Lead at Obesity Action Scotland added:

“This report clearly outlines that the most deprived in our society are suffering the greatest burden of obesity. It also highlights that focusing on actions individuals can take only worsens the inequalities gap. If we want to ensure we tackle the gap we need to see bold, ambitious action to change the food environment around us to ensure the healthy choice is the easy choice for everyone.”

**-ENDS-**

### **Contact**

For further information please contact NHS Health Scotland’s Communications and Engagement Team on 07500 854574 or email [nhs.HealthScotland-Communications@nhs.net](mailto:nhs.HealthScotland-Communications@nhs.net).

Further information can also be found at

<http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/diet-and-obesity/obesity>

<http://www.scotpho.org.uk/publications/reports-and-papers/2055-obesity-and-health-inequalities-in-scotland>

### **Notes to Editors**

- ‘Obesity in Scotland: A Persistent Inequality’, published in the International Journal for Equity in Health can be accessed <https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-017-0599-6>
- The briefing ‘Obesity and health inequalities’ can be accessed <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/publications/reports-and-papers/2055-obesity-and-health-inequalities-in-scotland>