

# Increased risk of obesity with increased time in the US in Filipino immigrants in New York

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A study led by SUNY Downstate Medical Center has found increased risk of obesity among Filipino immigrants living in the New York City metropolitan area. The findings were published in the January/March issue of the journal, *Family & Community Health*.

Aimee Afable, PhD, MPH, assistant professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences in the School of Public Health at SUNY Downstate, said, "Our latest study is the first to examine association between time in the U.S. - a marker of assimilation - in Filipino [immigrants](#), the second largest Asian immigrant group in the U.S., and overweight/[obesity](#) risk." An earlier study found a similar pattern among New York City immigrants from China.

Dr. Afable continues, "The study of how assimilation to U.S. society influences health of immigrants is of particular interest to public health researchers because we know that immigrants arrive in the U.S. with a health advantage. However, evidence suggests that this advantage erodes over time, a process sometimes referred to as 'unhealthy assimilation.' It is not clear whether this pattern varies by country of origin of the immigrant group."

Dr. Afable adds, "While our findings should be confirmed in prospective causal studies, they contribute to the evidence base suggesting increased exposure to the U.S. environment is detrimental to the health of

immigrants, a relationship better understood by examining how immigrants adjust to stressors in their new environment in the U.S.

"In an urban context such as New York City, these stressors may include work stress that accompanies more sedentary occupations; discrimination; limited time for rest and recreation; less healthy diets; and an overburdened healthcare system - all factors that create a situation dramatically different from what they left behind in their countries of origin."

Dr. Afable concludes, "I think it is important to note that while the United States has always been a country of immigrants, scholarship in immigrant health is relatively recent and has seen an explosion in the past 15 years, a period in which there has been more than a doubling of the immigrant population in the U.S."

**More information:** Aimee Afable et al. Duration of US Residence Is Associated With Overweight Risk in Filipino Immigrants Living in New York Metro Area, *Family & Community Health* (2016). DOI: [10.1097/FCH.0000000000000086](https://doi.org/10.1097/FCH.0000000000000086)

Provided by SUNY Downstate Medical Center

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