

**Is Overweight a Heavy Burden for Teenagers? New Evidence about Adolescent Body
Composition and Psychological Distress ***

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ABSTRACT

Prior research investigating relationships between adolescent body composition and psychological well-being has surprisingly yielded null findings. We reexamine this association using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to investigate whether unexplored complexities explain these unexpected findings. More specifically, we predict multiple aspects of psychological distress, evaluate how being underweight as well as overweight is related to distress, and assess whether relationships between body composition and distress vary by gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Results suggest few associations between body composition and psychological distress among female adolescents. Among male adolescents, underweight is more distressing than overweight. Furthermore, both age and race/ethnicity moderate relationships between body composition and psychological distress.