

## **Effect of Health Insurance on Obesity**

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### **Abstract**

Turkey established universal health insurance (UHI) through the implementation of the Health Transformation Program (HTP) in 2003. The HTP has contributed to better health outcomes, especially, for maternal and child health by improving the provision of health services. However, obesity prevalence among women in Turkey has been rising over time. It increased from 18.5% in 2008 to 24.8% in 2019. Literature has mixed results in terms of the impact of health insurance coverage on obesity status because of the possibility of ex-ante moral hazard which states that insured individuals may engage in riskier behaviors when they are insured. This study aims to analyze the effect of health insurance on obesity for women in Turkey. For this purpose, data are obtained from the most recent two waves of the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey series (2013 and 2018). The survey is cross-sectional and nationally representative. Obesity status is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) level of at least 30. The probability of being obese is estimated as a function of demographic and socioeconomic variables as well as the health insurance coverage, separately for the two waves. According to the preliminary results, having any health insurance (i.e., universal health coverage, private health insurance, other health insurance or a combination of these) is associated with a higher likelihood of being obese. Specifically, being obese is positively associated with being covered by universal health insurance (UHI).

**Keywords:** Health Insurance, Obesity, Women

**JEL Codes:** C25, I10, I13