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'**Overweight'** women are paid less - what did you expect?  
  
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Still high off of the fumes of female empowerment from International Women's Day yesterday? Then here's something to bring you crashing back down to depressingly Stone Age-earth: ladies of a 'slender' disposition earn more over their lifetimes than their tubbier counterparts, with every extra stone docking £1.5k from their annual pay.

Scientists at the University of Exeter have  collected data from 120,000 participants, surmising that irrespective of upbringing, women could lose some £100k over the course of their careers for being of a bigger build.

The 'average' woman in the UK weighs 11 stone which, according to the study, sees them bring in a wage of £26.5k per year - that drops by £3k for those who hit 13 stone, and climbs by the same amount for those two stone lighter than the norm.

WeightHeight wage

Fatter men were not found to have any discernible difference in earnings than their thinner peers, though those below the 5"9 British male average saw a drop in income.

So is this a sign that the benevolent bosses of Britain care deeply about the health of their female employees and want them to get into (socially acceptable) shape? Or simply another way of shifting gender pay gap blame onto those who aren't svelte enough to command a better wage packet?

That discussion of a woman's appearance should even factor into her workplace worth is troubling and tiresome in equal measure.

Ashley Graham, one of the plus size models du jourCredit: Getty Images

The results of the study seem reductive to say the least, particularly as 11 stone can be dramatically different from woman to woman depending on her **height**. It also makes little mention of how devoid of nuance  Body Mass Index calculators are - is a female athlete with 13 stone of solid muscle really the health equivalent of a woman of the same **weight** who hasn't exercised in years?

The fact remains that numbers on a scale reveal very little - you can be fat and fit, thin and unhealthy and everything in between - but digging into that is an unnecessary diversion when there are lazy stereotypes to perpetuate.

"This is the best available evidence to indicate that your **height** or **weight** can directly influence your earnings and other **socioeconomic** factors throughout your life," explained Professor Tim Frayling from the University of Exeter Medical School.

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"Although we knew there was a strong association, most people assumed that shorter **height** and higher **BMI** were a consequence of poorer nutrition and chances in life.

"Now we have shown that there is an effect in the other direction as well - shorter **height** and higher**BMI** can actually lead to lower income and other lifestyle measures. There is something about being a bit shorter or heavier that can actually influence your chance in life."

Australian plus sized model Robyn LawleyCredit: Getty

As ever, it may not be as simple as chalking up correlation to causation: perhaps the real reason larger women do worse in the work pay stakes is because they are less confident - as you would be if almost every advert in existence told you how ashamed you should be of your body not being to society's specified proportions.

The current trend for  'plus sized'  models (read: slim women with big busts) only seems to reiterate the standards we all have to adhere to - that you may be deemed less abhorrent, especially in the workplace, if you have curves in the designated places and a flat stomach.

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The reality is that there are enough obstacles for women to negotiate at work without added anxiety over whether that extra pound gained on holiday will stop their salaries climbing - and given that putting on **weight**  often arises out of happiness, and happiness induces greater productivity, isn't employers' concerns over women's waistlines somewhat misplaced?

Not to mention that there are a myriad reasons why a woman might weigh more than 11 stone, and to use any kind of medical or emotional issue she might be going through as an excuse to pay her less than slimmer colleagues should not be something we tolerate.

The sooner people realise a woman's value extends past the way she looks, the better.

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