**Tall people more likely to be successful in life, study finds**

The findings are the strongest evidence yet that size matters when it comes to future success

* [Jonathan Owen](http://www.independent.co.uk/author/jonathan-owen)
* Tuesday 8 March 2016

Being taller really does make a difference in terms of being one of life’s winners or losers, according to a major new study which will be welcomed by the 6’ 3” tall Donald Trump.

For people who are short or fat are destined to do less well in life. They are less likely to have a good education, job, and standard of living, according to a major new study published in the British Medical Journal.

The findings, based on data from 120,000 Britons, are the strongest evidence yet that size matters when it comes to future success.

Such conclusions are likely to resonate with Marco Rubio, Trump’s rival for the Republican Presidential nomination.

He is behind in the polls in his home state of Florida and was mocked earlier this year after wearing Cuban heeled boots to boost his 5’ 10” height. If Trump succeeds in his quest to run for President and faces 5’ 7” Hilary Clinton, the odds will be in his favour - more than half of all US Presidential elections have been won by the taller candidate.

Being short can bring out a determination in some people, with ‘Napoleon complex’ named after the aggressive attempts of the 5’6” French general to compensate for his lack of stature.

But the results of the new research by British and US experts make for sobering reading.

“High BMI and short stature, as estimated by genetics, are causally related to lower socioeconomic status,” warns the study, which was overseen by Timothy Frayling, professor of human genetics at the University of Exeter Medical School.

“Height and BMI play an important partial role in determining several aspects of a person’s socioeconomic status, especially women’s BMI for income and deprivation and men’s height for education, income, and job class,” it states.

Researchers looked at 396 genetic variants associated with height, and 69 with body mass index (BMI), for the study - which assessed people on education, jobs, income, and deprivation. It drew on genetic data from 120,000 people aged between 40 and 70 who have taken part in the UK Biobank – a database of biological information.

The study found that shorter height led to lower levels of education, lower job status, and less income, particularly in men; while higher BMI resulted in lower income and greater deprivation in women.

“If you could take the same woman - same intellect, same CV, same background - and send her through life a stone heavier, she would be about £1,500 per year worse off,” commented Professor Frayling.

“And if you took the same man - say a 5ft 10in man and make him 5ft 7in - and sent him through life, he would be about £1,500 worse off per year,” he added.

And Dr Jessica Tyrrell, research fellow at the University of Exeter Medical School, and lead author on the study, said: “Because we used genetics and 120,000 people, this is the strongest evidence to date that there's something about being shorter as a man and having a higher BMI as a woman that leads to being less well-off financially.”

Experts from the Broad Institute of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard; Boston Children’s Hospital; and Harvard Medical School also took part in the research.

A “genetically determined” single standard deviation in height of 6.3cm increases the odds of working in a skilled profession, and having a degree level education, by 12 and 25 times respectively, says the study. And it is associated with a £1,130 increase in annual household income.

Although it does not answer the question of why being taller is an economic benefit, the research states: “Some of the possibilities include complex interactions between self-esteem, stigma, positive discrimination, and increased intelligence.”

Discrimination against overweight people applying for jobs and those in work is cited as a possible reason why a higher BMI is linked to lower income in women. “Very thin women are idealised and more socially valued, compared with their normal weight and overweight peers. In contrast, a very different set of social standards exists regarding men’s weight, so discrimination based on body size could well be different in men and women,” it says.