# Bosses pay shorter and fatter staff less

**Scientists said that the results indicated a world obsessed with body image**

Alamy

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**Katie Gibbons**

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Those seeking to climb the career ladder may find that their best weapons are a diet and a pair of heels.

It is well know that people who are shorter or fatter have lower wages because they are typically from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with worse education and poor nutrition.

Scientists, however, have now found that men who are short and women who are overweight lose out financially even without any social disadvantage.

A study at the University of Exeter found that a man 3in shorter than a colleague for no other reason than genetics would be likely to earn £1,500 a year less. A woman who is a stone heavier than a colleague of the same height would also earn £1,500 a year less.

Tim Frayling, who led the work, said that the results indicated a world obsessed with body image. “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,” he said. “This won’t apply in every case. Many shorter men and overweight women are very successful but science must now ask why we are seeing this pattern. Is this down to factors such as low self-esteem or depression or is it more to do with discrimination?”

The study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, examined genetic data from almost 120,000 people aged between 40 and 70 and compared it with information on living and income provided by UK Biobank. It found that people who were predisposed to being short had lower levels of education, lower job status and less income, particularly in men. A higher BMI led to lower income for women.

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

Dr Jessica Tyrrell, lead author on the study, said: “The genetic analysis we used is the best possible method to test this link outside of randomly altering people’s height and weight for a study, which is obviously impossible.

“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.”