

# Food security: why should we care? Links with obesity



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# Obesity, SES and food insecurity

- In wealthy countries:
  - Higher obesity prevalence in lower SES
    - Especially in women, sometimes in men & children
  - Higher obesity prevalence with food insecurity
    - In women only (20-40% higher risk)
  - Higher thinness prevalence with extreme poverty
    - Often associated with mental health problems, substance abuse etc

C Burns, Literature review VicHealth, 2004

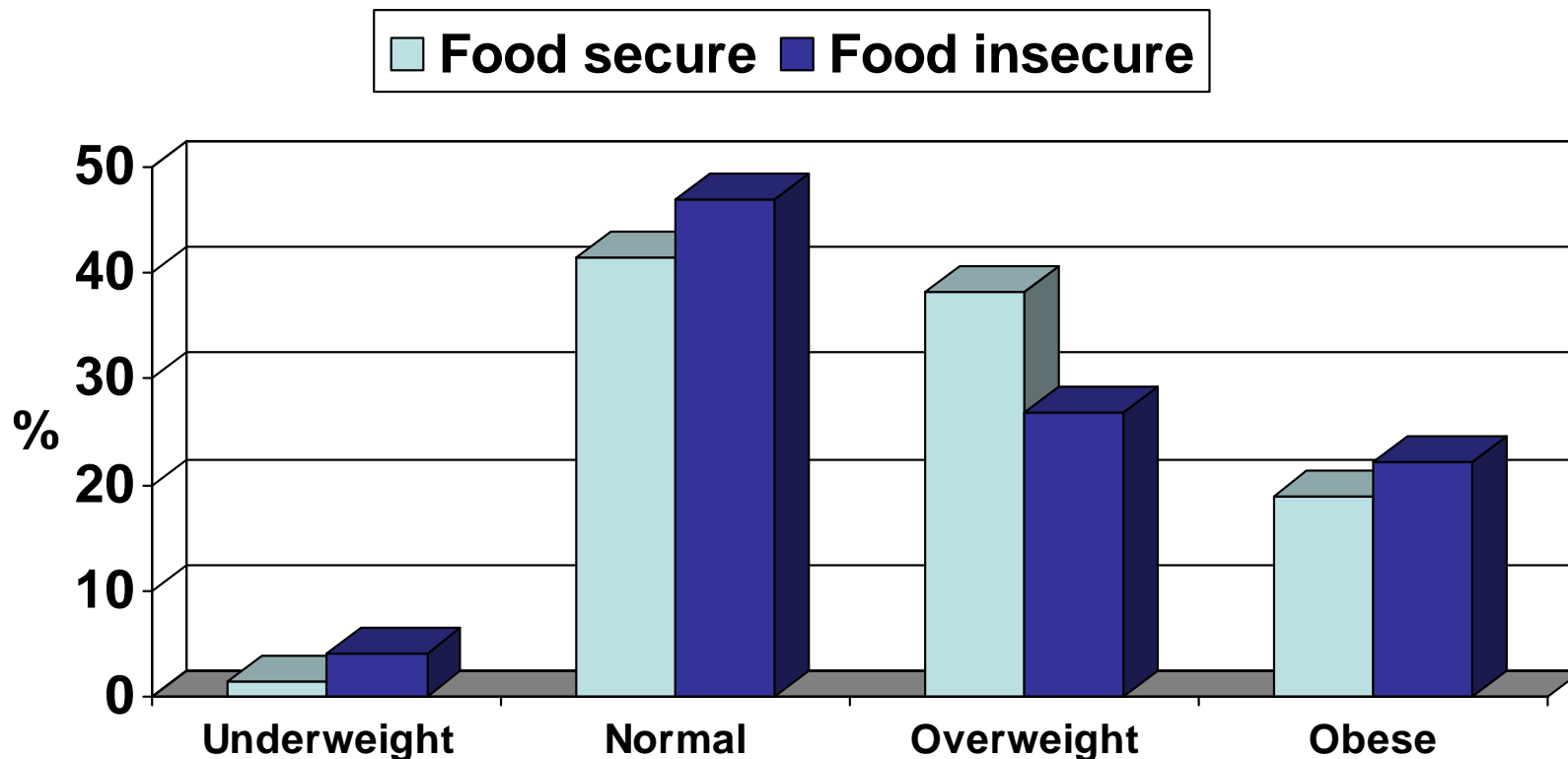
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# National Nutrition Survey 1995 (women)



Wood et al, Monash University 2000





# The obesity/food insecurity paradox

- Individual factors
  - Lack of knowledge and/or skills??
  - Restraint/disinhibition cycles
- Economic environment
  - ‘Cheaper’ foods: more energy dense and highly palatable
- Physical environment
  - ED foods are more available
  - Reduced recreation, active transport opportunities
- Socio-cultural environment
  - ED foods marketed to lower income populations
  - S-C norms (behaviours, values, attitudes)

Drewnowski, 2004, Reidpath 2002, Burns 2004





# Obesity prevention interventions

- Aims
  - To reduce unhealthy weight gain
  - To reduce SES inequalities with obesity
  - Do no harm





# Colac's Be Active Eat Well

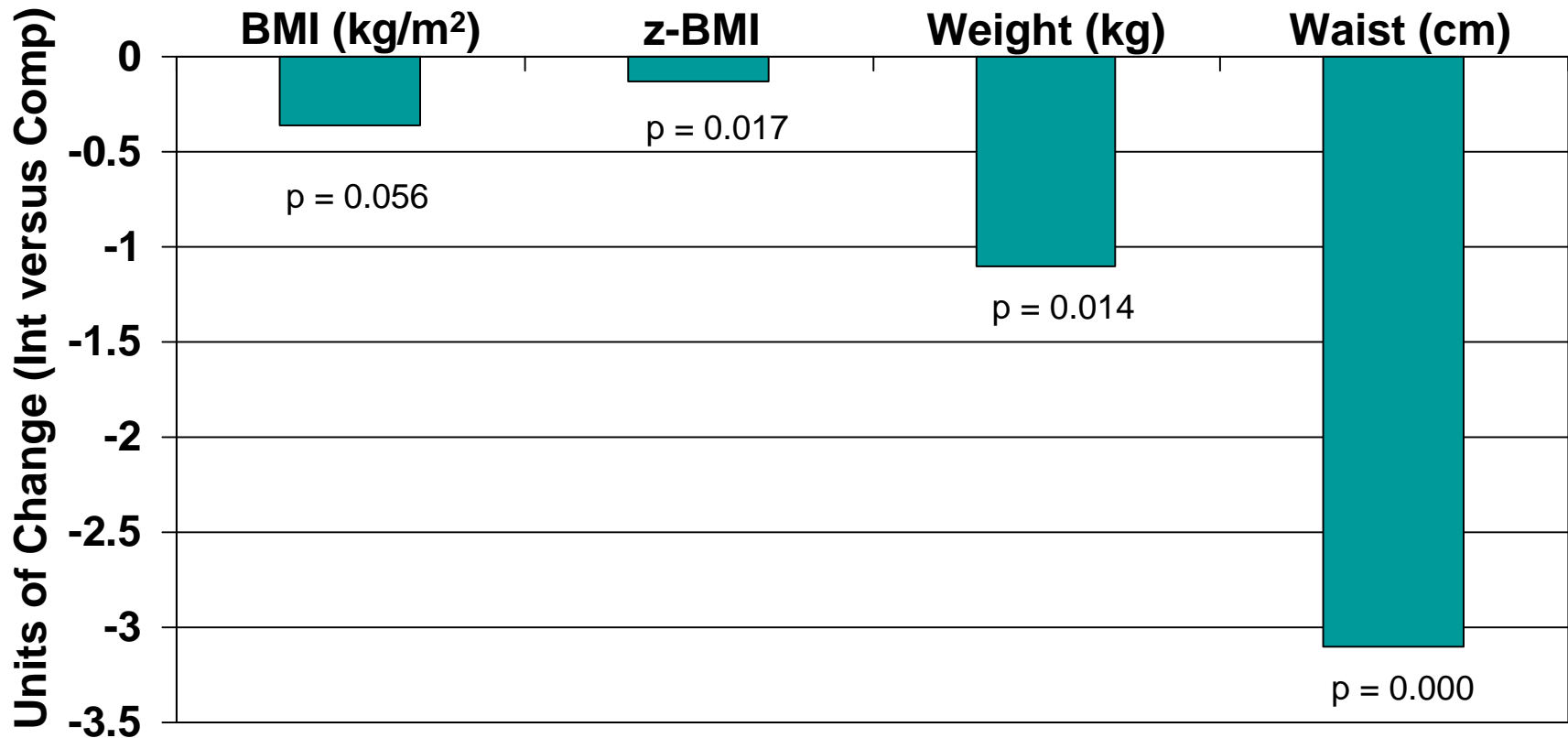


- Whole-of-community demonstration program in Colac, Vic (rural, pop 11,000)
- Funded for 4 years
  - Dept of Human Services, Victoria
  - 1y planning, 3y intervention
  - Target group: 4-11 years
  - Regional sample – comparison group
- Capacity-building approach
  - Create skills, structures, leadership, resources to promote healthy eating and physical activity





# Less weight and waist gain in intervention group over 3y



Adjusted for confounders: age, gender, height, duration of follow up  
 Sanigorski et al Int J Obesity 2008





## What about SES and Safety?

- Measures: 4 of SES, 5 of anthropometry
- The intervention appeared to be equitable
  - Comparison children
    - Low SES gained more weight
  - Colac children
    - No relationship of weight change with SES
- The intervention appeared to be safe
  - No differences in:
    - Underweight, dieting, body size perceptions, self esteem etc

Sanigorski et al Int J Obesity







# Conclusions

- Low SES and food insecurity is related to higher risk of obesity (women)
- Potentially bi-directional relationships
  - Multiple mechanisms
  - Vicious cycles
- Interventions need to address obesity and inequalities
  - Whole-of-community approaches are showing promise

