Measures of Health Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) have become increasingly important in efforts to assess the health of individuals and populations and are a key component of Healthy People 2020. Some studies find a connection between obesity and HRQoL, others do not suggesting that there may be significant modifiers of this relationship. As average BMI in the US has increased, fewer overweight men and women perceive themselves as being overweight (Burke, Heiland & Nadler 2010). Adults who misperceive their weight as healthy may be doing so to avoid the stigma often associated with excess weight. An accurate perception of overweight status may combine with an identification of fat-stigmatizing beliefs leading to lower ratings of quality of life; whereas a more optimistic perception of weight status may have higher ratings.

Current Study
We examine the relationship between bodyweight and physical- and mental- HRQoL among a national sample of young adults aged 29. Weight perception is considered as a potential moderator of the relationship between bodyweight and HRQoL.

Data and Sample
The NLSY97 is a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of youth born in 1980-84 who were living in the US in 1997. Pregnant women are excluded. N=6,052.

Key Measures at Age 29

- **HRQoL**: Dependent variables are the Physical Component Summary Scale Score and the Mental Health Component Summary Scale Score.
- **Bodyweight**: BMI at age 29. BMI cutoffs define underweight (BMI ≤ 18.5), healthy weight (18.5 > BMI < 25) and overweight (BMI ≥ 25).

**Results**
A sizeable proportion of the sample did not accurately perceive their weight status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODYWEIGHT</th>
<th>UNDERWEIGHT</th>
<th>ABOUT RIGHT</th>
<th>OVERWEIGHT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>ROW %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men (N=3,024)</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (N=2,858)</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 Cohort

Notes: Predicted values based on multivariate linear regression models including interactions between actual and perceived weight. Significantly different from those at a healthy weight. A significant interaction indicates the degree to which weight perceptions may influence the degree to which young adults with excess weight may experience diminished HRQoL. Increasing awareness of healthy weight levels, may have an impact of weight-related behavior change.

Summary
- Men who accurately perceive their overweight status have lower ratings of mental and physical HRQoL than overweight men who perceive their weight as About Right.
- Healthy weight and overweight men who perceive themselves as Underweight report lower ratings of physical HRQoL.
- Overweight men who perceive their weight as About Right have higher ratings of mental HRQoL than men at a healthy weight.
- Women who accurately perceive their overweight status have lower ratings of mental HRQoL than overweight women who perceive their weight as About Right.

Conclusions
In the context of an increasingly overweight society, it is important to understand how weight perceptions may influence the degree to which young adults with excess weight may experience diminished HRQoL. Increasing awareness of healthy weight levels, may have an impact of weight-related behavior change.

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**Background**

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- Some studies find a connection between obesity and HRQoL, others do not suggesting that there may be significant modifiers of this relationship.
- As average BMI in the US has increased, fewer overweight men and women perceive themselves as being overweight (Burke, Heiland & Nadler 2010).
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