

Lower Cardiovascular Risk for Self-Employed Latinas

A study links self-employment to lower rates of high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, overall poor health and binge drinking in Latinas.

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A [study published in Ethnicity & Disease](#) found a connection between [cardiovascular](#) disease and work structure among Latinas. Specifically, self-employed Latinas reported lower rates of [high blood pressure](#), [obesity](#), [diabetes](#), poor [health](#) and binge [drinking](#) compared with Latinas who work for a salary.

“Hispanic women experience a disproportionate burden of [heart disease](#) compared to non-Hispanic women,” said senior study author Kimberly Narain, MD, MPH, PhD, in a [University of California, Los Angeles press release](#). “This is the first study to link the structure of work with risks for heart disease among this group of women.”

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, and Latinos have a higher burden of [risk factors](#) for cardiovascular disease, including obesity, high blood pressure and [type 2 diabetes](#). In 2024, Latino adults were [13% more likely](#) to have diabetes and [12% more likely](#) to have obesity, according to the [Office of Minority Health](#).

Using Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data from 2003 to 2022, researchers examined the association between [employment](#) type, cardiovascular disease and health outcomes for 165,600 Latinas. About 21,000 or 13% of Latinas in the study were self-employed.

Self-employed Latinas reported fewer risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, including a 1.7 percentage-point reduction in diabetes (23% decline), 3.3 percentage-point decrease in high blood pressure (17% decline) and 5.9 percentage-point decrease in obesity (15% decline). Self-employed Latinas were 11% more likely to report [exercising](#) and reported lower rates of binge drinking (2 percentage-point lower chance and 2% decline) and overall poor health (2.5 percentage-point lower chance and 13% decline).

The researchers noted some limitations of their study, particularly the self-reported nature of the survey data. Such data may be less reliable among ethnic and racial [minorities](#) or those from a lower socioeconomic background, the researchers wrote. Additionally, the survey did not ask the women to disclose their specific occupations.

While the researchers found a relationship between self-employment and lower [chronic illness](#) and cardiovascular disease risk, the study did not prove a causal association.

“The next step in the research is to conduct studies that are able to better assess whether the structure of work is a cause of higher heart disease risks among Hispanic women,” [Narain said](#).

To learn more about cardiovascular disease and health disparities, read:

- [“Heart Disease, Stroke Deaths Down, Yet Still Kill More in U.S. Than Any Other Cause,”](#)
- [“Single Blood Test Predicts 30-Year Cardiovascular Disease Risks for Women”](#) and
- [“How Exercise May Prevent Cardiovascular Disease in Breast Cancer Survivors.”](#)