How has children’s body image changed over time?

Results from a Chinese nationwide survey indicate that the prevalence of childhood overweight/obesity nearly tripled from 6.5 percent to 16.8 percent from 2000-2011, but children’s perception of being fat remained at 2 percent. The findings are published in *Obesity*.

The study also found that 49 percent of children underestimated their weight status at the start of the study. Children who perceived themselves as being fat at the start of the study had a higher increase in body mass index over time than those with an average body image. Boys, young children, and rural children had higher body mass index increases than their counterparts. Over time, a thin body silhouette became more desirable.

The study analyzed data on 4,605 children aged 6-17 years at
baseline.

“Resolving negative body image among children could bring great self-motivation toward a healthy lifestyle,” said lead author Dr. Jungwon Min, of Ball State University.

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