

Fewer heavy people trying to lose weight, study finds

By **Lindsey Tanner**

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Fewer overweight Americans have been trying to lose weight in recent years, and researchers wonder if fat acceptance could be among the reasons.

The trend found in a new study occurred at the same time obesity rates climbed.

“Socially accepted normal body weight is shifting toward heavier weight. As more people around us are getting heavier, we simply believe we are fine, and no need to do anything with it,” said lead author Dr. Jian Zhang, a public health researcher at Georgia Southern University.

Another reason could be people abandoning efforts to drop pounds after repeated failed attempts, Zhang said.

The researchers analyzed U.S. government health surveys from 1988 through

2014. The surveys involved in-person physical exams and health-related questions including if they'd tried to lose weight within the past year. More than 27,000 adults aged 20 to 59 were included.

In the early surveys, about half the adults were overweight or obese. Those numbers climbed to 65 percent by 2014. But the portion of overweight or obese adults who said they were trying to slim down fell from 55 percent to 49 percent.

Body mass index, a measure of height and weight, determines weight status. Those with a BMI of 25 to 29 are considered overweight; 30 and above is obese. A BMI of 30 generally reflects being about 50 pounds above your ideal weight.

The study was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Dr. Scott Kahan, direc-

tor of a weight-loss clinic in Washington, said the study is important and echoes previous research. He acknowledged that it has become more acceptable in some circles to be overweight, but that many patients still feel stigmatized. The study found obesity was most common among black women — 55 percent were obese in the most recent survey years, and there was a big decline in black women trying to lose weight.

Zhang said there's a positive side to fat acceptance, if it means people feel less ridiculed for their weight. But obesity can increase risks for heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other ailments.

The findings “are a very serious concern,” he said.

“We should forget the words ‘fat’ or ‘obesity,’” Zhang said, adding that a healthy lifestyle may be an effective way to help people lose weight.