

# A Threat to Health Equity

## Weight-loss supplements are dangerous.

With **limited FDA oversight**, some dietary supplements laced with banned pharmaceuticals, steroids, and other toxic ingredients [1-4]

Annual revenue of U.S. weight-loss supplement industry = **\$2.56 billion** [5]

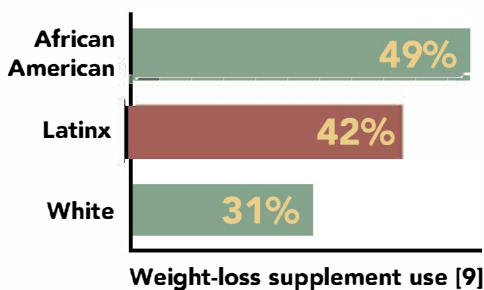
**23,000 ER visits per year in U.S.** due to supplements [6] – 25% of these sold for weight loss – which may result in organ failure, heart attack, stroke, and death [1-4]

According to the FDA adverse event reporting system, weight-loss supplements are **3x more likely to cause severe medical injury** than vitamins [7]

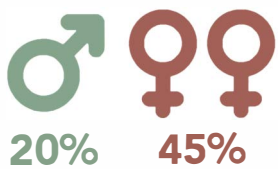
Youth who use over-the-counter (OTC) diet pills are **6x more likely to be diagnosed with an eating disorder** within 3 years than nonusers [8]

## Weight-loss supplements worsen health inequities.

Among adults trying to lose weight, unacceptable inequities in lifetime use of **harmful** weight-loss supplements:

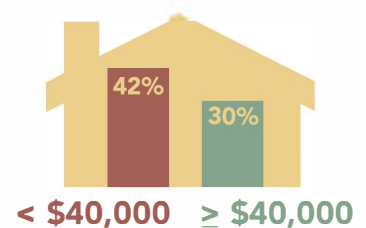


African American & Latinx adults at **higher risk** than white adults [9]

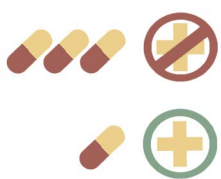
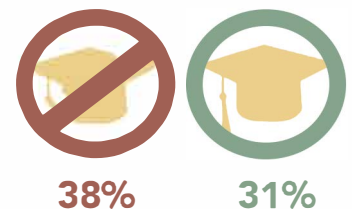


Women have **twice the risk** as men [9]

People in households with annual income **less than \$40,000** at higher risk than those with higher income [9]



People with high school education or less at **higher risk** than those with higher education [9]



Uninsured adults **3x more likely** to use harmful weight-loss supplements than insured adults [10]

Latinx teens **40% more likely** to use OTC diet pills than white teens [11]

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, African-American adults **3x more likely** than white adults to start using weight-loss supplements [12]



Immigrants with low English proficiency at **higher risk** of not understanding FDA alerts/recalls on supplements compared to those with high English proficiency [10]

**STRIPED**

A PUBLIC HEALTH INCUBATOR

Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders  
Designed by Marlena Skrabak

Find out more about the dangers of weight-loss supplements and threats to health equity at:  
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/out-of-kids-hands/>

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