

International comparisons of weight stigma: addressing a void in the field

Weight-based stigmatisation towards people living with overweight and obesity is well documented, however little evidence exists providing an international comparison of individuals' personal experiences of weight bias and stigma.

This study aims to compare weight stigma and personal experiences of weight stigma between 6 countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the UK, and the US), with the specific focus of assessing experiences and interpersonal sources of weight stigma.

Data was gathered via an online survey which asked questions surrounding individuals' experience of:

- the nature of weight stigma
- the onset and frequency of weight stigma across the lifespan
- interpersonal sources of weight stigma
- distress associated with stigma.

Findings illustrate the presence of weight stigma in societies around the world and underscore that people in many countries (particularly countries with high levels of obesity) have negative attitudes towards individuals with higher weight.

Overall, there were more similarities than differences in the nature of people's experiences of weight stigma across the six countries in this study. More than half of participants (55.6–61.3%) across countries reported experiencing some form of weight stigma. Weight-based teasing was most common (reported by over half of participants), and approximately one-third of participants reported mistreatment and/or discrimination across countries. Across all six countries, participants with higher BMI were significantly more likely to report weight-stigmatising experiences than individuals with lower BMI.

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