Perceptions of Weight Bias and Weight-Based Discrimination Laws by Race/Ethnicity

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BACKGROUND

- Overweight is pervasive and harmful, yet few protections exist against weight-based discrimination.
- Perceptions of obesity and anti-discrimination laws are understudied, particularly among racial/ethnic groups, including those traditionally underserved in obesity advocacy.

AIM: To examine perceptions of weight bias and support for laws against weight-based discrimination among racial/ethnic groups, including those traditionally underserved in anti-weight bias efforts.

METHODS

- 26-question online administered through a SurveyMonkey survey panel of U.S. adults in May-August 2020.
- Logistic regression to identify predictors of support for laws against weight-based discrimination.
- Chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis tests to compare categorical and ordinal variables.

Table 1. Demographics of Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>API</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>691 (26.6%)</td>
<td>157 (47.9%)</td>
<td>205 (50.7%)</td>
<td>168 (42.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>487 (28.2%)</td>
<td>112 (32.4%)</td>
<td>116 (28.7%)</td>
<td>104 (28.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>266 (22.4%)</td>
<td>51 (16.2%)</td>
<td>66 (18.6%)</td>
<td>99 (25.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>243 (12.6%)</td>
<td>6 (1.8%)</td>
<td>15 (3.2%)</td>
<td>24 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>196 (18.2%)</td>
<td>6 (1.8%)</td>
<td>32 (6.2%)</td>
<td>158 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS

A. PERCEPTIONS OF OBESITY AND WEIGHT BASED-DISCRIMINATION

- 19% of respondents reported weight bias impacted their ability to control their weight.

B. PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICANS WITH OBESEITY AND OBESITY ADVOCACY GROUPS

- 34.5% of respondents are aware of at least one obesity advocacy group.

C. SHOULD THERE BE LAWS AGAINST WEIGHT-BASED DISCRIMINATION?

- 67.9% of respondents support laws against weight-based discrimination.

D. PREDICTORS OF SUPPORT FOR LAWS AGAINST WEIGHT DISCRIMINATION

- Race/Ethnicity (ref = White): Asian 1.06 (0.82, 1.37) p = 0.66; 1.15 (0.87, 1.51) p = 0.33; Black 1.36 (1.06, 1.73) p = 0.01; Hispanic 1.91 (1.30, 2.82) p = 0.01

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Gaps remain in public recognition of obesity advocacy organizations including the Obesity Action Coalition.

Building on a base of support from individuals who are black, female, and have experienced weight bias may strengthen obesity anti-discrimination legislative efforts.