'Weightism' increases risk for becoming, staying obese

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Weight discrimination may increase risk for obesity rather than motivating individuals to lose weight, according to research published July 24 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE* by Angelina Sutin and Antonio Terracciano from the Florida State University College of Medicine.

The researchers compared the height and weight of over 6000 participants, measured in 2006 and 2010. They found that participants who experienced weight discrimination earlier were 2.5 times more likely to become obese by the follow-up assessment in 2010.

Obese participants who perceived weight discrimination in 2006 were more likely to remain obese at the later time than those who had not experienced such discrimination. Discrimination based on other factors, such as sex or race, did not appear to have the same correlation with weight. The effect of 'weightism' also appeared independent of demographic factors like age, gender, ethnicity or education. The researchers conclude that weight discrimination has further implications for obesity than just poorer mental health outcomes.

Sutin adds, "In addition to the well-known emotional and economic costs, our results suggest that weight discrimination also increases risk of obesity. This could lead to a vicious cycle where individuals who are overweight and obese are more vulnerable to weight discrimination, and this discrimination may contribute to subsequent obesity and difficulties with weight management."

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