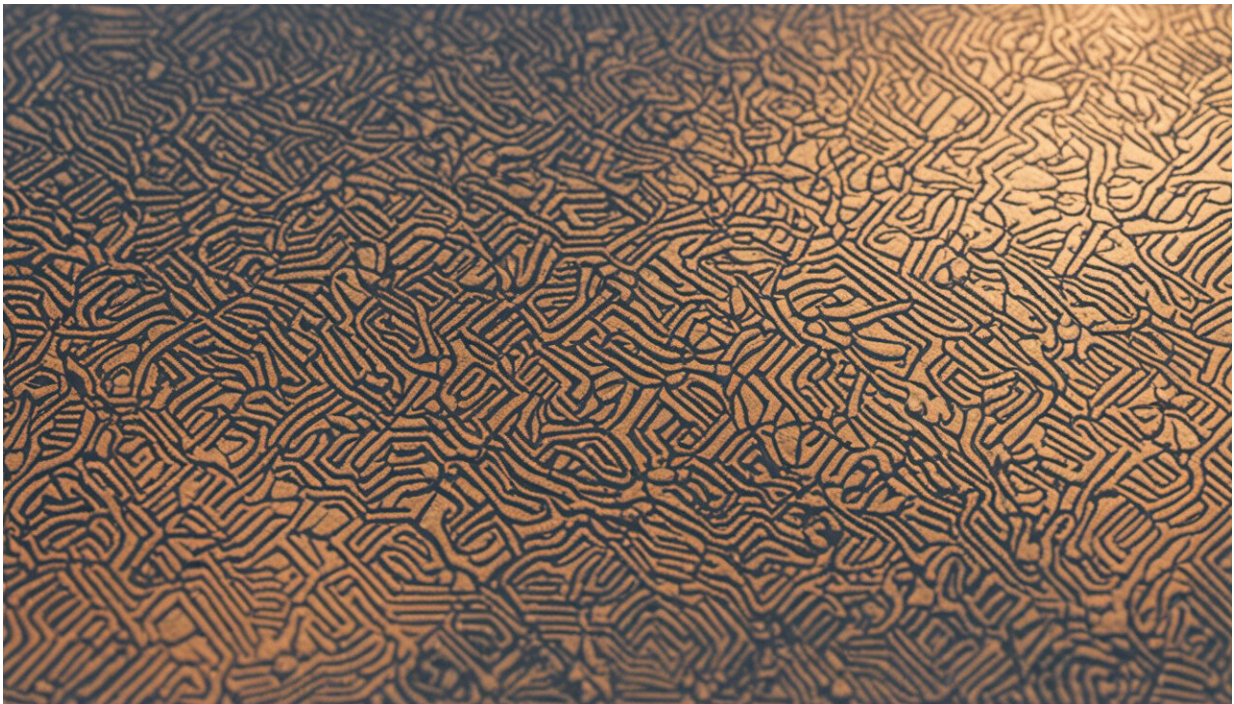


Public supports disability and civil rights legal protection for obese people

April 10 2014, by Megan Orciari



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Public support for policies that prohibit weight discrimination and even provide disability and civil rights protection for obese individuals has grown in the past few years, according to a new study by researchers from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. The study is published online in the journal *Obesity*.

Researchers surveyed more than 1,000 people in 2011, 2012, and 2013 to assess their support for proposed legislation that would prohibit weight discrimination, extend disability protection for individuals with obesity, and add body weight as a protected class under the federal civil rights statutes.

Support for laws prohibiting weight discrimination were consistent, with least 75% of those surveyed in favor of laws that would make it illegal for employers to discriminate against employees based on their weight.

Furthermore, support for extending disability protections for individuals with obesity grew from 62% in 2011 to 69% in 2013. And support for adding body weight as a protected class under the civil rights laws grew from 70% to 76% in the same time period.

"The trends we observed have important implications for existing and future [policy](#) initiatives," said Rebecca Puhl, Rudd Center deputy director and co-author of the study. "Legislation could reduce inequities for millions of Americans who are vulnerable to unfair treatment because of their weight, and improve their quality of life."

Currently, there are no federal laws making it illegal to discriminate against a person based on his or her weight. Michigan is the only state that has a law preventing discrimination on this basis. In 2013, Massachusetts also proposed a law to prohibit weight discrimination.

"Legal measures to prohibit [weight discrimination](#) could help rectify employment inequalities, facilitate public health efforts to improve the health and well-being of individuals with obesity, and reduce the social acceptability of weight prejudice," Puhl explained.

Provided by Yale University

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