

Study explores weight terminology that youth prefer, dislike

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Many youth have a preference and dislike for terms of weight

terminology, with differences seen across sex, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and weight status, according to a study published online Nov. 21 in *Pediatrics*.

Rebecca M. Puhl, Ph.D., from the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Health at the University of Connecticut in Hartford, and colleagues collected online survey data from two panels between September and December 2021 involving 2,032 youth aged 10 to 17 years and 1,936 parents of youth aged 10 to 17 years. Twenty-seven different terms and phrases to describe [body weight](#) were rated; parents reported their usage of this terminology, while preferences for and [emotional responses](#) to this terminology were reported by youth.

The researchers found that preferences for words such as "healthy weight" were reported by youth, while they disliked "obese," "fat," and "large," which induced feelings of sadness, shame, and embarrassment. Across sex, [sexual orientation](#), race/ethnicity, and [weight status](#), differences in youth preferences and emotional reactions were observed.

These differences included lower preference ratings for girls versus boys and sexual minority versus heterosexual youth in general and stronger preferences for words like "thick" and "curvy" among racial/ethnic and [sexual minorities](#) and higher-weight youth. Fathers used most weight terms more than mothers, as did Hispanic/Latinx versus White and Black/African American parents.

"Our findings underscore diversity of youth preferences and the need for individualized approaches that support effective parent and youth communication by using their preferred terms when discussing weight-related health," the authors write.

Several authors disclosed financial ties to WW International.

More information: Rebecca M. Puhl et al, Patient and Family Perspectives on Terms for Obesity, *Pediatrics* (2022). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2022-058204](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-058204)

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