**PRESS RELEASE**

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**WEIGHT REVEALED AS THE UK’S MOST COMMON FORM OF DISCRIMINATION**

* **81% of UK adults polled believe people with obesity are viewed negatively because of their weight**
* **One in four admit they would hire a candidate with a healthy weight over an overweight candidate**

*11th October 2018, London* - Weight is the most common form of discrimination, according to new research released today by the World Obesity Federation to mark World Obesity Day 2018.

New research reveals that more than four in five UK adults believe people with obesity are viewed negatively because of their weight and 62% Britons think people are likely to discriminate against someone who is overweight. This is higher than other forms of discrimination, including ethnic background (60%), sexual orientation (56%) or gender (40%).

The findings show that people with obesity experience stigma and discrimination across all aspects of their live. Nearly half of UK adults living with obesity have felt judged because of their weight in clothes shops or in social situations and, worryingly, in areas where they s might be seeking help for their condition, such as healthcare settings (45%) and gyms (32%).

Weight stigma is also felt online. Around one in four people with obesity (23%) have felt judged online because of their weight. A separate analysis by the World Obesity Federation has found nearly 10,000 tweets with stigmatising language on social media since January 2018, which include body shaming and abuse.\*\*

The impact of weight stigma and discrimination is far-reaching. It can damage career prospects, with a quarter (25%) of UK adults surveyed admitting that out of two equally qualified candidates they would appoint the one with a healthy weight over a candidate with obesity. Stigma also has physical and mental health consequences: it’s been found to deter people from seeking medical care and can lead to social isolation.

In terms of what influences weight stigma, World Obesity believes the media have a pivotal role to play. More than half of UK adults think the news media (56%) and popular media (61%), such as TV and magazines, worsen the public’s opinion of people with obesity. The World Obesity Federation has also published a report – based on research published in *Clinical Obesity* – highlighting the prevalence of negative images and language used when reporting on obesity in online media.\*\*\*

In light of the findings, World Obesity is calling out examples of discrimination in a bid to #endweightstigmathis World Obesity Day, arguing that stigmatising people with obesity affects their life chances and physical and mental health whilst ignoring the multiple and complex causes that lead to obesity.

**Johanna Ralston, Chief Executive of the World Obesity Federation says:**

“Weight discrimination is rife in modern Britain. People are being blamed for obesity, but decades of public health research show that obesity is complex and there are multiple causes. Despite this, society at large continues to treat people with obesity unfairly. Stigmatising obesity undermines people’s health and makes it harder to seek support. It’s time this ended.

“This World Obesity Day we’re calling on the media to reshape the narrative around obesity and for social media companies to clamp down on weight abuse online. Changing the narrative around diseases and conditions can transform public perceptions and improve quality of life and outcomes for patients. As obesity rates continue to rise, we’re also appealing to the General Medical Council and education providers to improve patient management training in medical schools, as people with obesity are often dismissed by their healthcare professional because of their weight without being properly diagnosed.”

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said: “Everyone has the right to a healthy life in a world where healthy choices are easy to make. Sadly in our modern world, consuming a healthy diet and enjoying an active lifestyle is often hard. For many people, this translates to obesity and ill health.

“But governments can address this. Making healthy food easily available in communities, workplaces and schools is essential to protecting people from obesity. Restricting marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children, taxing sugary drinks, and banning industrial trans-fat in foods attacks the main drivers of obesity. Providing more opportunities for active transport and leisure is essential to promoting better health.”

To coincide with World Obesity Day, a new Twitter handle – @endweightstigma – has been launched to highlight examples of discrimination. Anyone can highlight good and bad practices by businesses, institutions or individuals when they see examples of stigmatising language or images by tweeting **@endweightstigma** or using the hashtag **#endweightstigma**. More information about how to help combat weight stigma can be found on the World Obesity website ([www.worldobesity.org](http://www.worldobesity.org)).

World Obesity has also published an [Image Bank](http://www.imagebank.worldobesity.org/) for media, picture editors and healthcare professionals to use when writing about obesity. This includes a range of non-stigmatising visuals in different settings, providing a more accurate reflection of living with obesity.

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**For more information please call the World Obesity Federation team at Barley Communications:**

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**Notes to editors**

\* Survation poll of 1,115 UK adults, September 2018

\*\* Snapshot of weight stigma on social media in 2018, using 26 common stigmatising and derogatory phrases as search terms, including filters to ensure that the most relevant posts were captured.

\*\*\* K. Sievert, T. Lobstein, P. Baker, *Stigmatizing images in the media – a cross‐national* survey: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cob.12282> and World Obesity Federation, ‘Weight Stigma In The Media’, *The current use of imagery and language in the media*’<https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/43c091_9b48437d657343c595c3acfe10173c9d.pdf>

***How likely or unlikely do you think people are to discriminate against someone because of the following?***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Likely to be discriminated against** |
| Being overweight | 62% |
| Ethnic background | 60% |
| Health (including mental health) | 57% |
| Sexual orientation | 56% |
| Gender | 40% |
| Height | 22% |

***Have you ever felt judged because of your weight in the following?***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **% of people with obesity that have felt judged because of their weight** |
| Clothes shops/fashion outlets | 46% |
| In social situations | 45% |
| Healthcare settings (e.g. hospital or GP surgery) | 45% |
| At school | 39% |
| In dating situations | 34% |
| At home (family) | 33% |
| At the gym | 32% |
| At work | 31% |
| In restaurants | 28% |
| On public transport | 27% |
| Online (e.g. social media) | 23% |

**About World Obesity Federation**

World Obesity Federation is an international, umbrella organisation for national obesity organisations in over 50 countries worldwide. A not-for-profit body, World Obesity represents scientists, medical and health professionals working in the field of obesity research, clinical management and education.

Founded in 1986, World Obesity's mission is to improve global health by promoting better understanding of obesity and weight-related diseases through scientific research, dialogue and education whilst encouraging the development of effective policies to reduce, prevent and treat obesity.

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