

Internalized weight bias: How does it affect healthy behaviors?

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Disclosures

Personal bias

- I have not lived with obesity
- I believe weight bias is harmful & I believe in evidence-based science to help reduce weight bias, stigma & discrimination in society

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- Concordia University, Montreal
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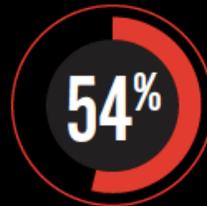
Weight bias prevalence

WEIGHT BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION IS RAMPANT IN OUR SCHOOLS, WORKPLACES, HEALTH SYSTEMS AND MEDIA.

The problem is widespread:



Elementary school kids with obesity face a 63% higher chance of being bullied



54% of adults with obesity report being stigmatized by coworkers



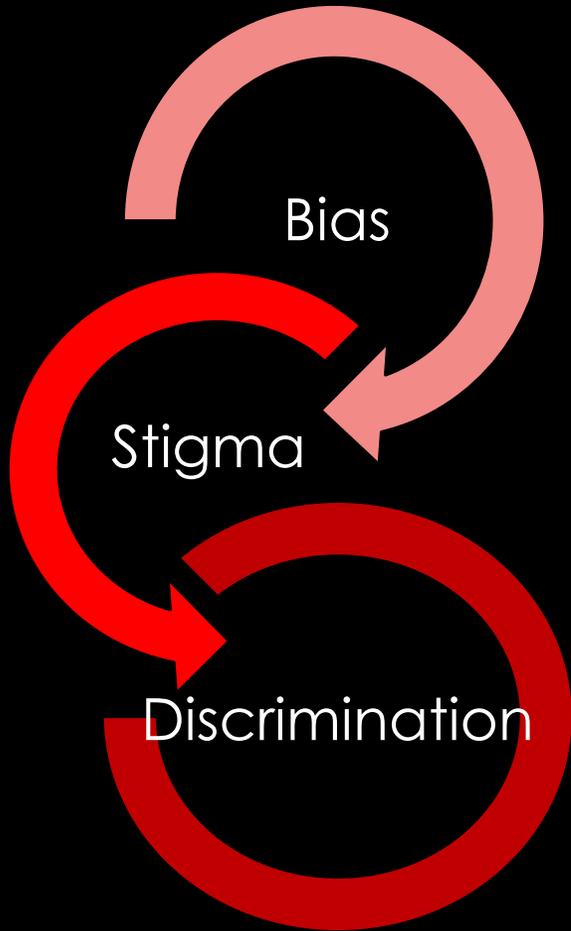
69% of adults with obesity report experiences with weight bias from a health care professional



72% of images and 77% of videos stigmatized obese persons according to recent media studies



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Weight bias internalization

- Self-stigma
- Applying stereotypes to ourselves
- Belief that the stigma is deserved

**I hate myself
for my weight.**

**I feel anxious
about my weight
because of what
people might
think of me.**

**I am less attractive
than most other
people because of
my weight.**

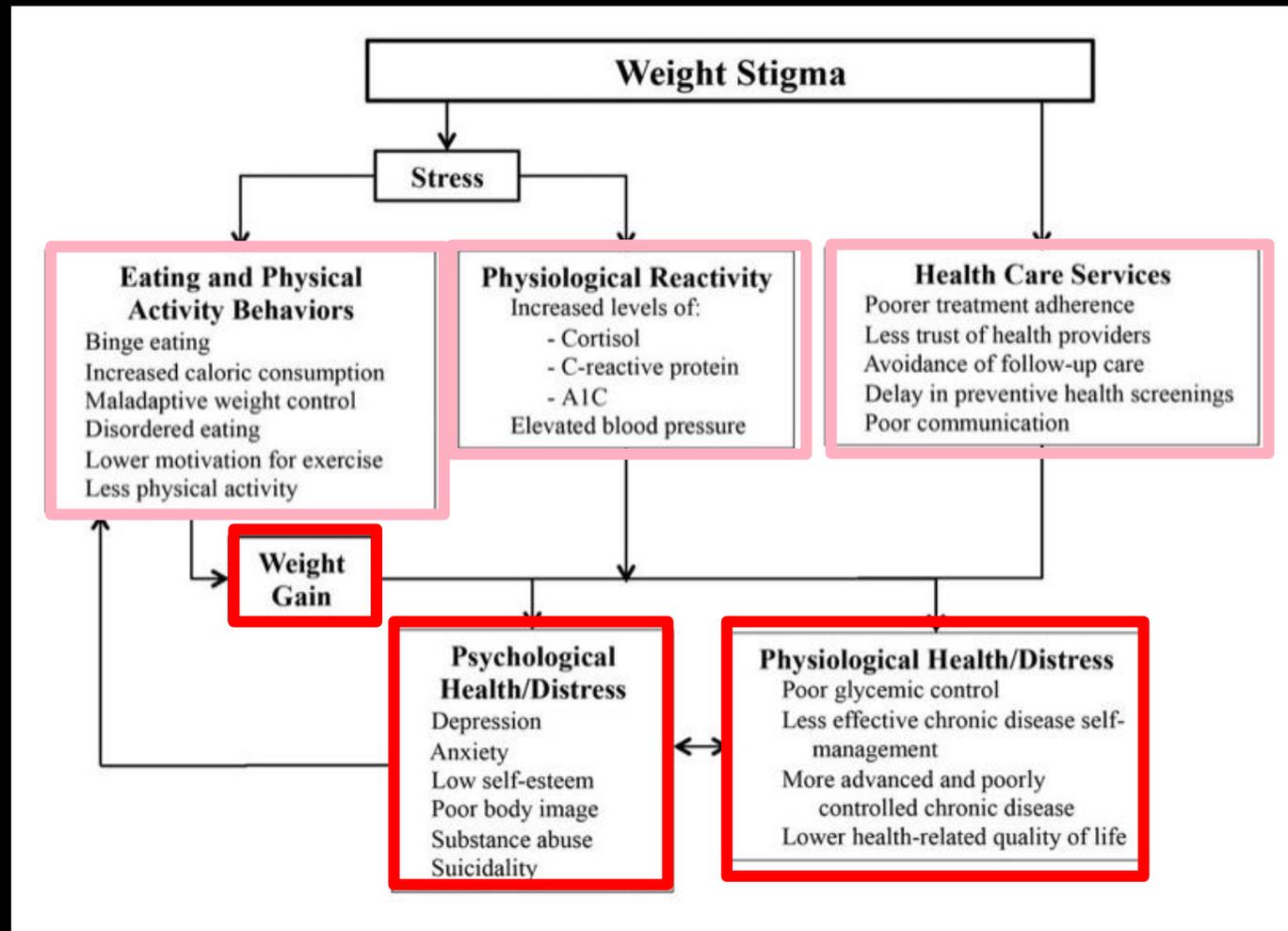
**Whenever I think a
lot about my
weight,
I feel depressed**

Weight Bias Internalization Scale (WBIS)

Durso & Latner, 2008

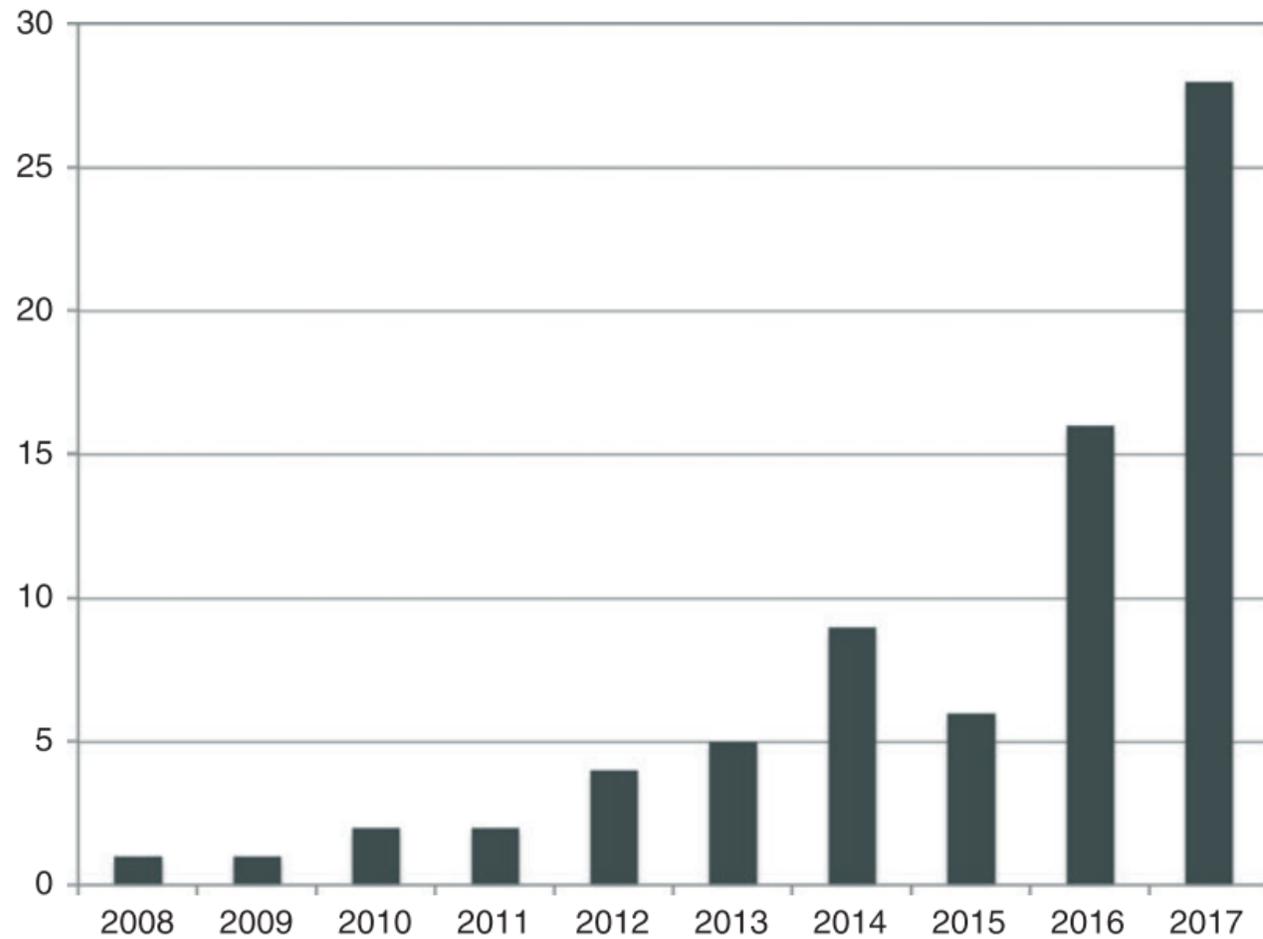


Health consequences of weight bias



Puhl et al. Clin Diabetes 2016

Published studies: WBI & health



Weight bias internalization & health

Weight Bias/Health

Weight bias internalization and health: a systematic review

R. L. Pearl¹  and R. M. Puhl²

Obesity Reviews **19**, 1141–1163, August 2018

Weight bias internalization & mental health

Higher WBI scores associated with...

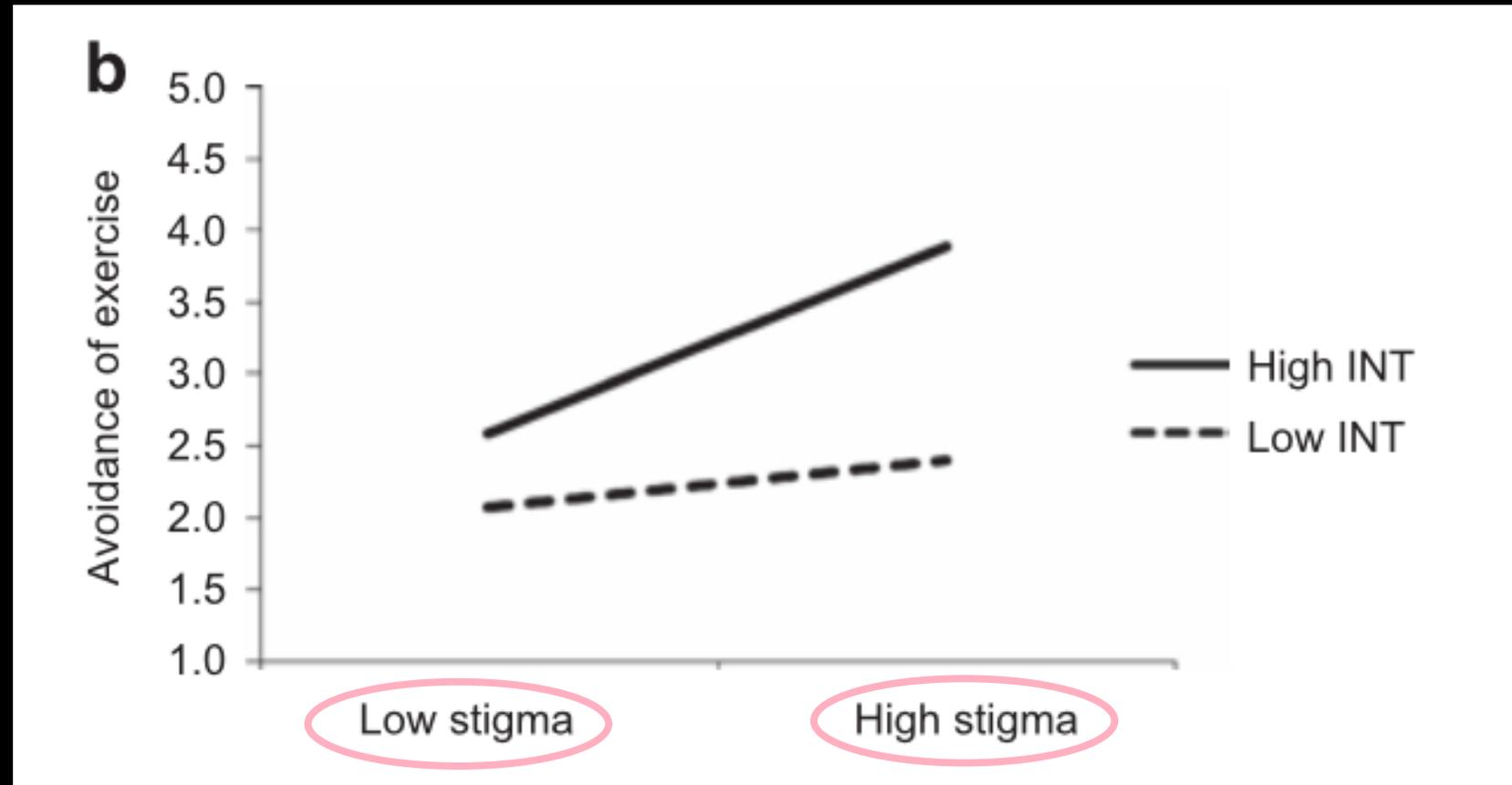
- ↑ depression & anxiety
- ↑ negative emotions
- ↑ eating disorder symptoms, binge eating
- ↓ self-esteem
- ↓ quality of life

Weight bias internalization & physical health

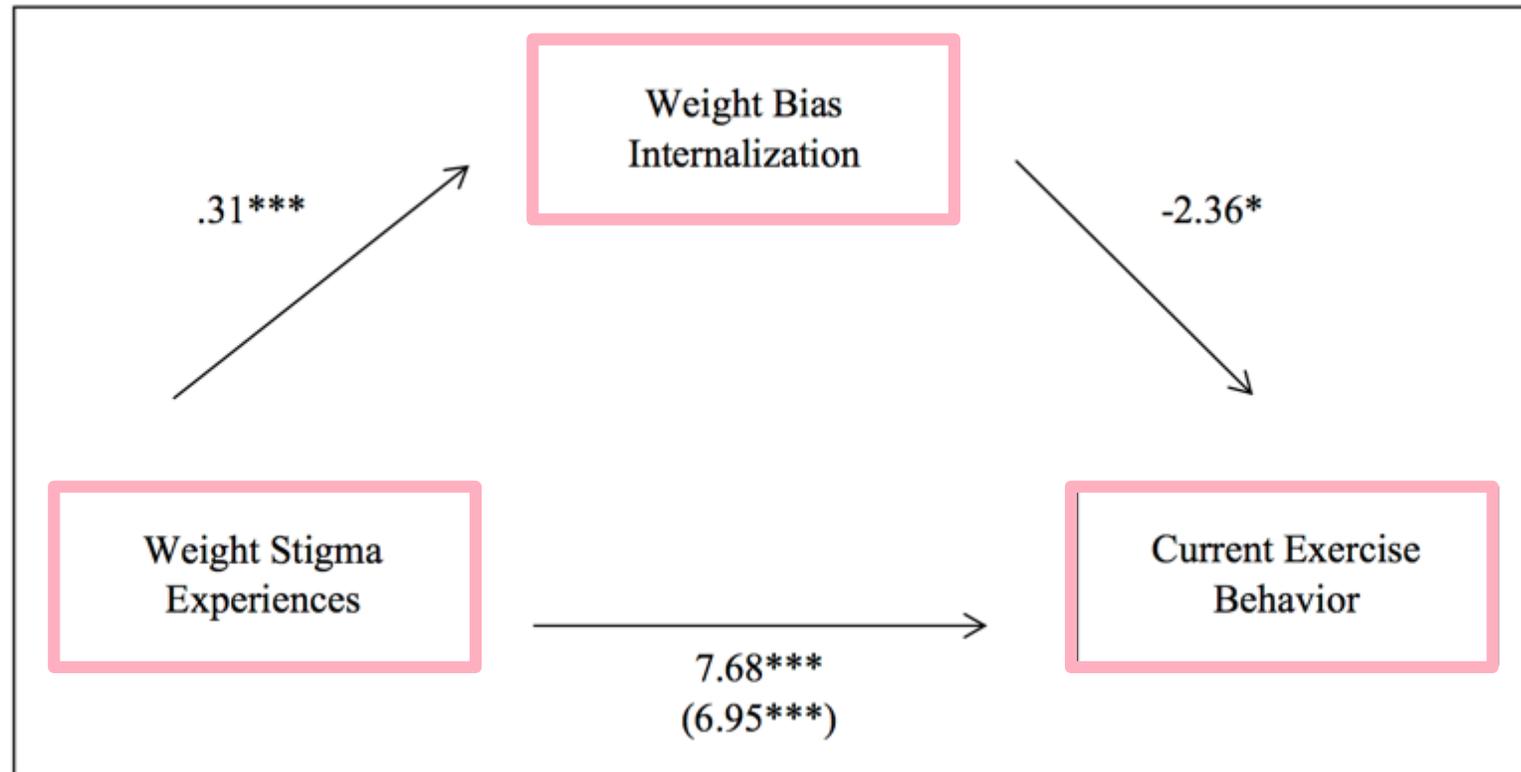
Higher WBI scores associated with...

- ↓ overall physical activity
- ↓ enjoyment of physical activity
- ↓ exercise motivation
- ↑ resting heart rate
- ↑ metabolic syndrome

Weight bias internalization: Impact on physical activity



Weight bias internalization: Impact on physical activity



Study limitations

Most published studies to date:

- Women
- Caucasian
- Cross-sectional (75.7%)

New research



PERFORM Center, Concordia University

N=175

- 51.42% women
- Mean age = 45.45 ± 16.95
- BMI = 26.67 ± 5.49 kg/m²

New research: mental health



For every unit increase in mean WBI...

- Life satisfaction, positive emotions and body satisfaction decreased ($p < 0.001$)

By sex, for every unit increase in mean WBI...

- Life satisfaction, positive emotions and body satisfaction decreased in females ($p < 0.01$)
- Only life satisfaction & body satisfaction decreased in males

Future research directions

Physical health

- Sedentary behaviour *
- Pre & post bariatric surgery
- Sex differences
- Ethnic, cultural differences
- Coping strategies
- Interventions
- Longitudinal studies *

Practical suggestions

Let's check-in with ourselves



- Self-reflection, discuss & challenge weight stereotypes
- Weight Implicit Association Test (IAT):
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Practical suggestions

- **Avoid making assumptions**
- **Assess weight bias internalization among ourselves & our clients/ patients**
 - Weight Bias Internalization Scale (Durso & Latner, 2008)
 - WBIS- Modified- for varying weight statuses
 - Weight Self-Stigma Questionnaire (Lillis et al. 2010)

Advocacy

Overcoming Weight Bias

Do you have it in you?



Weight Bias

refers to negative attitudes toward others because of their weight

Weight Stigma

refers to stereotypes and labels we assign to people who have obesity

Weight Discrimination

refers to actions against people who have obesity that can cause social exclusion and inequities

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Thank you



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