



News

Almost one third of overweight Britons believe weight has hindered their success

New research shows the impact of excess weight on self esteem

16th July 2009 – Research released today shows that those who are overweight have low self-esteem and believe others view them as ‘stupid’, ‘lazy’ and having ‘no self-control’.¹ In fact, of those who are overweight, 27 per cent believe they would be more successful if they were slimmer.¹

Around 24 per cent of adults in England are now classified as obese.² With this figure predicted to continue its dramatic increase³, action needs to be taken now, to address the impact that excess weight is having on the self esteem of people across the UK. The research, carried out by YouGov amongst a random sample of 2,023 UK residents, also found that:

- more than one in three women (34 per cent) and one in five men (23 per cent) who are overweight believe other people make judgments about them without knowing them
- one in 10 people who are overweight believe others assume they must be unhappy with themselves (11 per cent)
- 32 per cent of respondents said comments about their weight would have more of a negative impact on their self-esteem than comments about their attractiveness (23 per cent), professional capability (28 per cent) or sexual performance (13 per cent)
- over half of women (56 per cent) and just under half of men (46 per cent) would change their weight over other aspects of their physical appearance.¹

Some respondents also admitted refusing social invitations or avoiding the gym due to feelings of self-consciousness about their physical appearance.

Commenting on the findings, Jeremy Milnes, Life and Confidence Coach said: “I think we should be concerned that lack of self esteem and altered self perception may actually be preventing people who want to do something about their weight from seeking help.

“Being overweight is a very personal issue and it is not easy for some people to talk about, particularly if they feel they are being judged because of it. Imagine the difficulty someone is facing in plucking up the confidence to go and talk to a doctor or nurse about their weight issues. This is particularly worrying if people are seriously overweight or obese as weight may be affecting not only their confidence but more worryingly their health.”

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This research reinforces previous findings by the Department of Health and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) highlighting the important role self-esteem plays in weight management.^{4,5}

Obesity experts confirm that self-esteem can become a barrier to discussions around tackling weight. "We have developed techniques to allow us to raise weight issues with people so that they do not feel stigmatised" said Jane DeVille Almond, Director and Vice Chair of the National Obesity Forum. "I would be worried if people were going for quick fixes because of embarrassment about discussing their weight issues. The combination of diet, exercise and the support of a healthcare professional continues to be one of the best ways to lose weight effectively."

NICE states that obesity is a risk factor for other diseases that are major causes of morbidity and mortality in adults such as diabetes and heart disease.⁴ For this reason, the best course of action for those who are seriously overweight or obese is to consult a GP in the first instance before commencing any weight loss programme to rule out or identify any underlying health issues related to their weight.

Ends -

References

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Notes to Editors

About the Survey

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2023 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 28th - 30th April 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

NICE Guidelines

Under NICE Guidelines, a healthcare professional may recommend a weight-loss programme supported by a prescription medicine to help people achieve beneficial weight loss. Two medicines have been approved by NICE – sibutramine (Reductil[®]) and orlistat (Xenical[®]) – that people can take to help them lose weight. They are not suitable for everyone, and in consultation with the doctor, a patient will be recommended the appropriate treatment. Surgery for weight loss (known as bariatric surgery) is recommended by NICE for those who are morbidly obese i.e. have a BMI of 40 kg/m² or more, or between 35 to 40 kg/m² and other significant diseases are present e.g. type 2 diabetes that could be improved if weight was lost.

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