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52% of Women Victims of Weight-Related Bullying Says New Survey from SheByShe

Survey Also Finds 15% of Women are Victims of Weight-Related Discrimination in the Work Place

Burlingame, CA – April 24, 2014 – Weight-related bullying is widespread and devastating according to women who participated in the most recent [SheByShe™](#) opinion survey, “Women’s Weight and Body Image Concerns.” Over half, 52 percent, of those women participating in the survey said they have been the victim of weight-related bullying at least once in their lives. Most of the bullying was related to being overweight, although nearly 25 percent said incidents happened because they were underweight. Much of the bullying occurred while these women were children or teenagers and the bullies were most commonly other children, teenagers or family members. According to the women, the bullying left life-long scars with several women citing low self-esteem and eating disorders as a result of repeated bullying.

In addition, 15 percent of survey respondents have suffered from weight-related discrimination or prejudice. Most of these incidents involve not receiving a job offer, while being well qualified for the job, or not receiving deserved promotions. Weight-related workplace discrimination was reported over a broad range of professions with just over 25 percent of the women reporting discrimination being professionals.

“These survey results are all too familiar; unfortunately women are highly vulnerable to bullying and discrimination because of their weight,” said Rebecca M. Puhl, PhD, deputy

director of the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. “No one should suffer from this kind of treatment and, as the stories from these women show, weight-based victimization and bullying have a lasting and damaging impact. We need to continue to shine a light on this prevalent problem and increase efforts to eliminate weight bias.”

Cruel Name Calling Most Common

The survey found that the most common form of weight-related bullying is cruel name-calling. Some women reported they have been left out of activities and opportunities because of their weight, and some have endured physical bullying. A respondent shared her experience, “In middle and high school I was the victim of bullying due to my weight. I was called names like Free Willy, Beluga and Roly Poly. I was left out of many things due to my weight.”

Another woman said, “I suffered joking comments from my family and friends when I gained weight. Then my boyfriend at the time was pinching and grabbing me, making snarky comments about eating and exercising.”

The majority of women reported being bullied in their earlier years, “I was bullied badly as a child and teenager. I was called terrible names. No one wanted to date me. I was ridiculed by the nuns at school because of my weight.”

So, who are the bullies? Most bullies are family members, childhood or teenage peers, teachers, coaches and instructors. Many reported being bullied by boyfriends and husbands. Some respondents mentioned co-workers, and complete strangers are also guilty.

Missing Out on Jobs and Opportunities

A little more than 25% of the women in this study who have experienced weight-related discrimination feel like they were not hired for a job because of their weight. Almost all feel they were well qualified

As one woman shared, “I was up for a job, at the third interview, the man who would be my boss came into the room, took one look at me and said, ‘no’ and walked out.”

“I feel as though I was not hired for a position because I am obese. It seemed as if they took one look at me in my black suit and said, ‘she’s lazy’,” recounted another.

Several women also said they had lost out on promotions because of their weight, and a few said they have been fired or demoted because of weight-related discrimination.

As one woman said, “A former boss questioned my request for a promotion because she said my health concerned her. Meanwhile, I’d never had any health problems more serious than a cold. My current boss has made comments that make it clear that she thinks my weight makes me less professional.”

And one shared a story of reverse-discrimination. “I’m being demoted because I’m no longer liked for losing weight.”

SheByShe is Providing Women a Voice

The SheByShe “Women’s Weight and Body Image Concerns” survey questioned Internet-savvy, mostly millennial women from across America. Married and single women, working and non-working women across the nation and all household income levels responded to the survey.

A colorful, visual slideshow of full survey results can be found [here](#).

The survey was conducted in March and April of 2014 and represents U.S. women, ages 25-64, with 722 participants.

About SheByShe

SheByShe is a women’s opinion site dedicated to sharing what women think about important issues. SheByShe is committed to being objective and transparent. SheByShe is not affiliated with any political party, religion or other group. Surveys are fielded to cover current social, lifestyle, economic, and political issues. Results are posted on SheByShe.com and are shared with key influencers and publicized through major media and information dissemination sources. Participating women feel satisfied that they are speaking up and sharing their point-of-view. For more information or to contact SheByShe please go to www.shebyshe.com.

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