

Weight Stigma in Leeds Survey Results

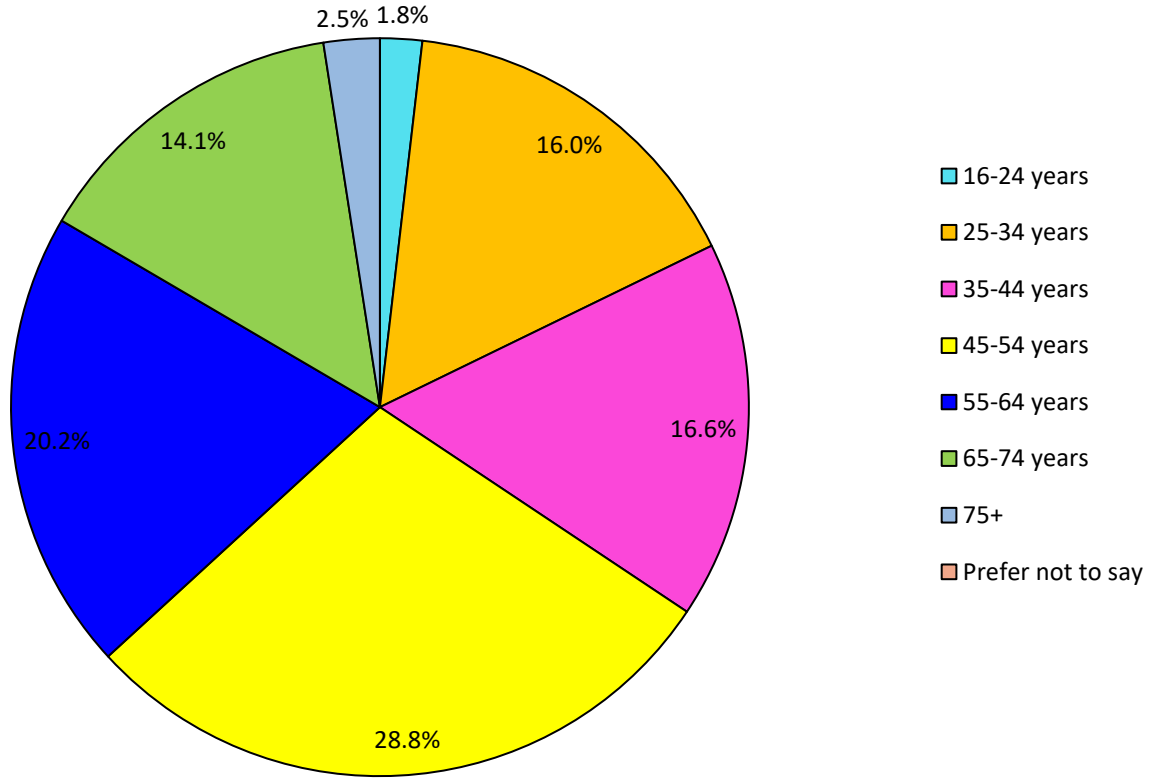
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169 Leeds locals completed a survey regarding their personal experience with weight related bias and discrimination.

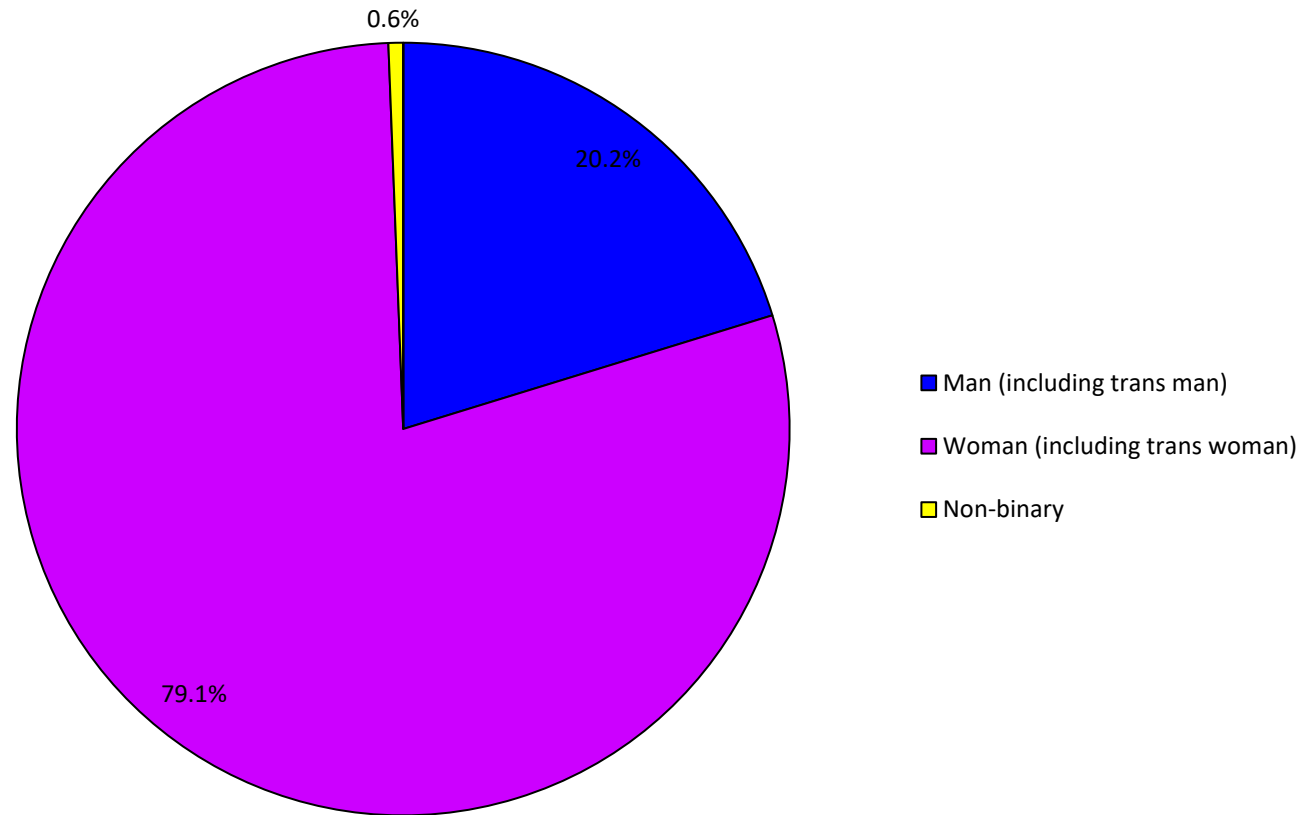
Summary

- 55% of responders stated they had experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination.
- Those who experienced weight related bias/or discrimination were more likely to have sought/needed multiple levels and types of support
- 49.5% of responders were less than 16 years old when they first experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination
- Over 50% experienced teasing (64.5%), unfair treatment (51.6%) or verbal abuse (58.1%) regarding their weight.
- Over 90% expressed that they have experienced negative judgement towards their weight.
- This was common across multiple settings causing distress, anxiety, low mood and avoidance of public place
- 90% of all responders were actively not OK about their weight
- Compassionate, non-judgemental and supportive approaches are needed

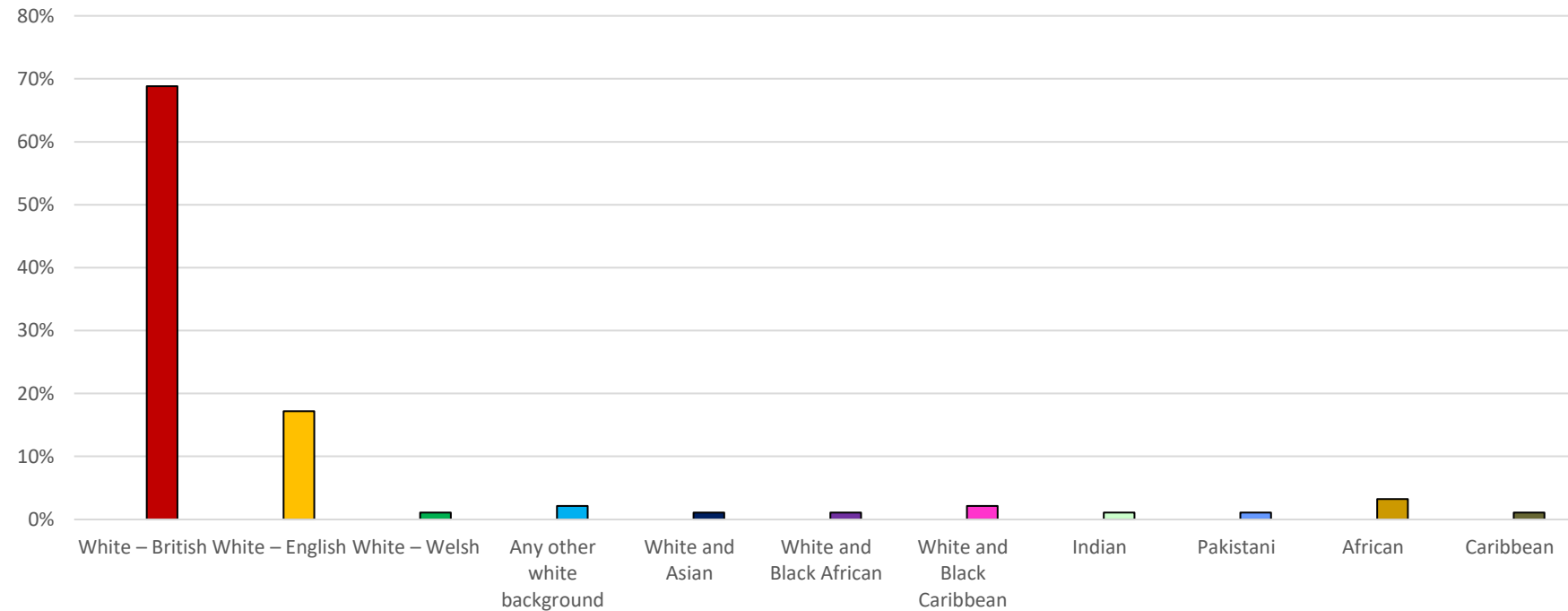
Age of participants responding to survey



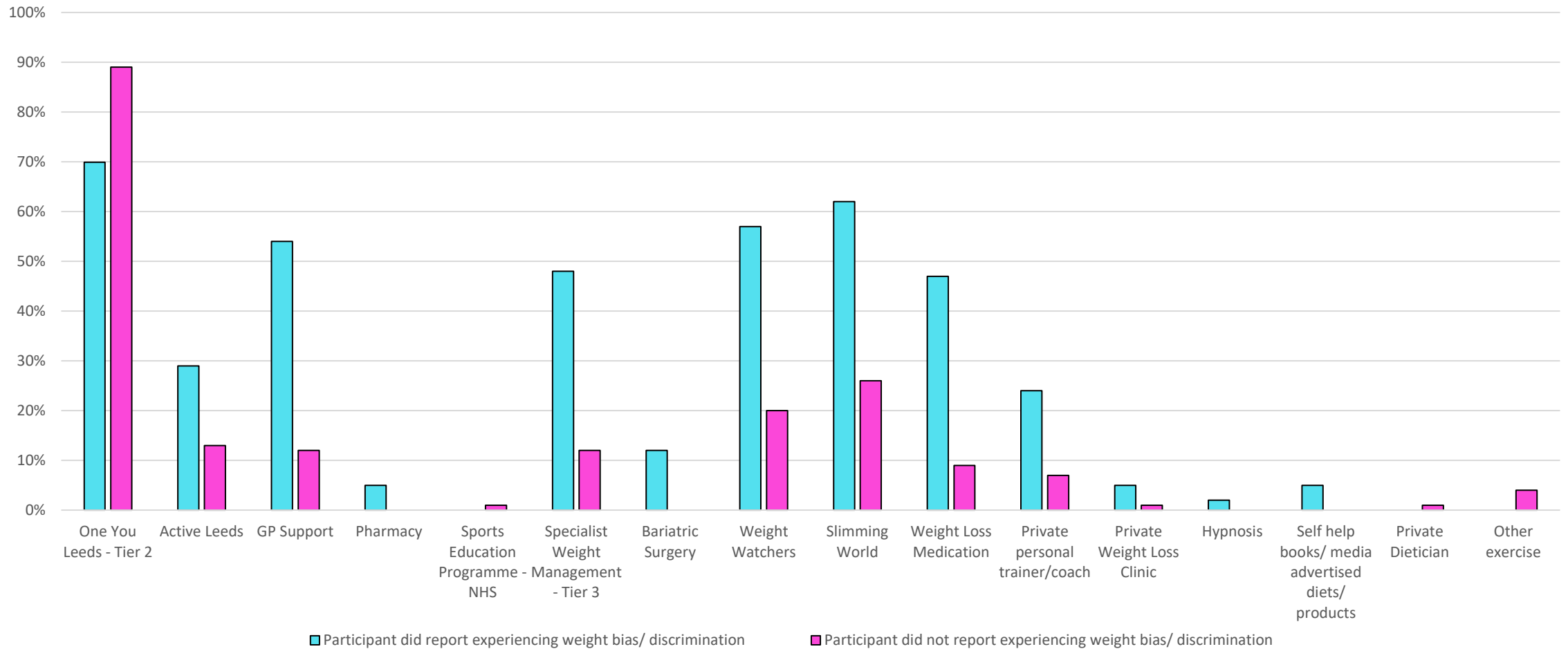
Gender of participants responding to survey



Ethnicity of participants responding to survey



Services attended by participants split by those who have and haven't experienced weight bias and/or discrimination



Weight related bias and/or discrimination

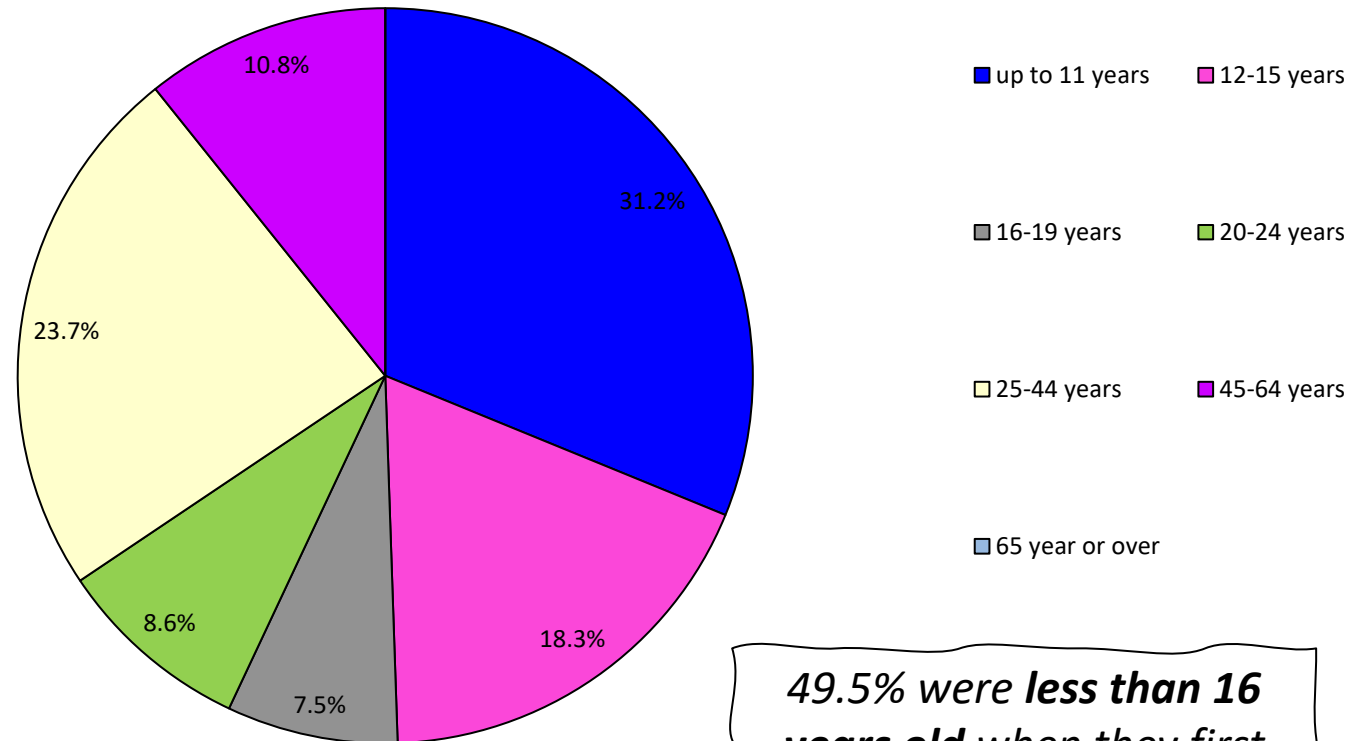
55% of responders stated they had experienced weight related bias
and/or discrimination.

Of those participants who had experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination...

- 100% had attended services for support with their weight.
 - Community
 - One You Leeds (69.9%) -Tier 2 weight management
 - Active Leeds (29.0%)
 - GP support (53.8%)
 - Pharmacy (5.4%)
 - Specialist
 - Specialist weight management services- Leeds Community HealthCare (48.4%)
 - Bariatric surgery (11.8%)
 - Private
 - Weight Watchers (57%)
 - Slimming World (62.4%)
 - Weight loss medications (47.3%)
 - Private personal trainers/coach (23.7%)
 - Private weight loss clinic (5.4%)
 - Hypnosis (2.2%)
 - Self help books/media advertised diets/products (5.4%)

Age of participants **first** experience of weight bias/discrimination

*65.6% were **less than 25 years old** when they first experienced weight bias/discrimination*



*49.5% were **less than 16 years old** when they first experienced weight bias/discrimination*

Of those participants who had experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination...

- 79% share that they have experienced this bias and/or discrimination on at least a monthly basis.
- Over 50% experienced teasing (64.5%), unfair treatment (51.6%) or verbal abuse (58.1%) regarding their weight.
- Over 90% expressed that they have experienced negative judgement towards their weight.
- Over 50% experienced weight bias and/or discrimination in Bars/restaurants (60.2%), Workplace (57.0%), shopping centres & supermarkets (55.9), and General Practices (53.8%).
- Just under 50% of participants experience discrimination from GPs (45.2%) and healthcare professionals (49.5%).

Of those participants who had experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination...

- 93.5% are actively not okay with their weight
- 81.7% feel anxious of what other people might think
- 55.9% believe their weight is purely their responsibility
- 40.8% believe their competency is affected by their weight
- 64.5% measure their value on their weight
- 94.6% think other people blame them solely for their weight
- 88.1% understand their weight is a complex result of many causes that are not entirely in their control

Personal experiences with weight related bias/discrimination: Bullying/Verbal Abuse

- *"regular verbal abuse about my weight from members of the public"*, comments like
 - *"who ate all the pies"*
 - *"will they make a coffin big enough"*
 - *"I should buy looser clothes"*
 - *"You walk like I'm a giant baby"*
 - *"Bullied throughout school years"*
 - *"Your coat is more like a rug/tent"*
 - *"You take up too much room"*
 - *"If you lost weight you would be beautiful"*
 - *"You're too fat to shop here"*
 - *"gross/disgusting"*
 - *"Crickey you're a big unit"*
 - *"You could do with missing a meal"*
- *"It's just banter"*
- Sexual assault and targeted abuse
- Shouting out of cars as they drive past.
- Heckling in the streets

Personal experiences with weight related bias/discrimination:

Judgement

- *“Always feel uneasy and unfit”*
- *“Difficult to exercise, as people judge”*
- *“I feel I am judged instantly based on my weight, it makes you an easy target”*
- *“I feel I am unable to eat in public places because people stare and watch you eat and the assumption you must be overweight because you eat too much”*
- *“You’re always judged by people. Walking and in the gym, buying clothes, buying food, you can’t get away from it”*
- *“Having multiple medical conditions, unrelated to weight, I feel constantly judged for the required interventions not involving a weight loss regime.”*
- *“I don’t socialise because I don’t want people to judge me”*
- *“Lazy, unmotivated”*
- *“Feeling inadequate for the situation”*
- *“drug addicts get less judgement”*

Personal experiences with weight related bias/discrimination: Healthcare professionals

- *'Everything that goes wrong gets blamed on my weight'*
- Individuals specifying health care professionals need to be more compassionate towards weight issues:
 - *"Doctors thinking I'm lazy or just eat takeaways"*
 - *"Poor healthcare or understanding of weight issues in NHS"*
 - *"If you loose weight you'd be healthier but no support or sign positing given by medical professionals"*
 - *"Ridiculed by a dietitian for only loosing 6lbs in a week. This made me feel depressed. Refused treatment."*
 - *"Slimming world was a very toxic environment. No support or nutritional guidance, turned to daily 2 hour gym sessions and starving myself. If I did eat I threw it up on purpose as I wanted to lose weight. Support was abysmal"*
 - *"If I attended GP appointments, no matter what I go for, the cause would always be related back to my weight. Yet when it was apparent I needed specialist help for my weight is wasn't available."*
 - *"Being told loosing weight is a priority despite being very ill "*
 - *"Health professionals judge you quite harshly it makes you feel bad about yourself and that it's completely self-inflicted"*
 - *A nurse stated "with your obvious carriage I'm surprised you're not diabetic". Making me feel guilty for not being ill*
 - *I went to the doctors for a chest infection, the first thing they said "Lose weight"*
 - *"Doctor told me I shouldn't run at my size. That comment put me of exercising for a long time."*
 - *"Doctors told me my trimalleolar fracture was due to my weight and discharged me with no support. I went to see a private osteopath which prescribed rehab exercises for me, it got better without me losing any weight."*
 - *A GP said to me "I can't help your situation, just stop eating soo much"*
 - *"Told I can't have an operation because of my weight but no offer of support after."*
 - *"I had undiagnosed MS and a lot of symptoms, but was first told by my GP to do more exercise"*
 - *"I had a sore throat and the doctor said 'lose some weight' "*
 - *"I avoid going to the GP as I knew I would be judge the second I walked in"*

Personal experiences with weight related bias/discrimination: Workplace

- *“I didn’t get my job because I was overweight”*
- *“Failed to be provided with a fitting uniform”*
- *“Passed over for promotion”*
- *Mocked for wearing a jumper at work to cover my sweating*
- *Unfair treatment was when I applied for a job I was told I would probably not be accepted as it was hard work and very physical, another was when I applied for a bus driving job and was told I wouldn't fit behind the steering wheel.*
- *My daughter was passed over for promotion within swimming as they took into account the parents physic as a judgement of there ability!*

Long-term implications of weight bias/discrimination for those participants who had experience with weight bias and/or discrimination

- No confidence. Avoid social situations
- Constant dieting
- Stopped progression in career
- Comfort/over-eating
- Trust issues
- Abusing drugs
- Loneliness/ isolation- Agoraphobia
- Health problems (period and hormone related from trying to lose weight)
- Poor mental health
 - Anxiety
 - Triggered eating disorders (Bulimia, Anorexia, Bingeing)
 - Low self-esteem
 - Depression
 - PTSD
 - Paranoia
 - Self-harm

What participants who had experience with weight bias and/or discrimination feel they need to do to feel more comfortable about their weight...

- I need to Lose weight
- I need Surgery
- I receive Support accessing affordable food
- I need Therapy/ hypnotherapy/ counselling
- I need to Amend emotional trauma
- I need to exercise
- To receive Less judgement
- To receive Nutritional education / understanding
- To receive Support losing weight
- To be able to buy clothes in high-street shops
- To Stop advertisement and media weight loss schemes/ skinny people as the ideal
- To make healthier food cheaper than unhealthier food
- To be allowed to work from home
- To get help from the private sector

How can healthcare professionals provide better support those participants who had experience with weight bias and/or discrimination?

- “Be kind and recognise we are self-medicating because of trauma”
- “People accepting it’s not just greed”
- “to recognise I didn’t do this on purpose”
- “Sympathy” “Empathy” “compassion” “Understanding”
- “No judgement”
- “Someone who isn’t expecting a ‘by the book transformation’ and accepts the challenges of life for someone who is overweight”
- "Trustworthy people"
- "Not having to achieve a number of predefined universal targets. Personalised plans"
- "Healthcare professionals should be trained in the physical and psychological aspects of weight issues"
- "Understanding that I give 100% and not being made to feel like I’ve failed"
- "Stop fat shaming"
- "Encouraging regular contact and support"
- "Stop patronising / conceding"
- "Support mental health that occurs with weight"
- "Become an inspiration, try to boost confidence"
- "Be optimistic about progress / reassurance"
- "Privacy"
- "Reduce waiting time for tiered assistance"
- "Look at body fat percentage not BMI"

How those participants who had experience with weight bias and/or discrimination feel about completing the survey

- Sad/upset/angry that this is a problem
- Persistent in highlighting the complexity behind their weight
- Happy that people can identify a weight bias/discrimination and that there is potential for solutions/ something good can come out of it .
- Anxious and nauseous triggering feelings about weight
- Reignited feelings of failure towards weight control
- Ashamed
- Reiterated how alone and unsupported by medical practitioners
- Created awareness and vulnerability towards weight bias/discrimination
- Heard/ advocated for

Weight related bias and/or discrimination

45% of responders stated they had not experienced weight related bias
and/or discrimination.

Of those participants who had not experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination...

- 89.7% had attended services for support with their weight
 - Community
 - One You Leeds (89.5%) – tier 2 weight management
 - Active Leeds (13.2%)
 - GP support (11.8%)
 - Pharmacy (0%)
 - Sports education program with NHS (1.3%)
 - Specialist
 - Specialist weight management services- Leeds Community HealthCare (11.8%)
 - Bariatric surgery (0%)
 - Private
 - Weight Watchers (19.7%)
 - Slimming World (26.3%)
 - Weight loss medications (9.2%)
 - Private personal trainers/coach (6.6%)
 - Private weight loss clinic (1.3%)
 - Private Dietician (1.3%)
 - Online meetings (1.3%)
 - Exercise (3.9%)
 - Swimming
 - Ladies gym
 - Running club

Of those participants who had not experienced weight related bias and/or discrimination...

- 85.5% are actively not okay with their weight
- 44.7% feel anxious of what other people might think
- 84.2% believe their weight is purely their responsibility
- 25% believe their competency is affected by their weight
- 34.2% measure their value on their weight
- 31% think other people blame them solely for their weight
- 64.4% understand their weight is a complex result of many causes that are not entirely in their control

What participants who had not experienced weight bias and/or discrimination feel they need to do to feel more comfortable about their weight...

- I need to Lose weight
- I need to carry on what I am doing
- I'm happy the way I am
- Live a more balanced healthy lifestyle
- Free access to resources
- Eat healthier
- Improve my mental health
- Need more support
- Make more of an effort to look after myself
- Once I have lost weight being able to keep it off
- Help with meal planning
- Improve my fashion
- Get a personal trainer/coach
- Being clinically healthy
- Less confusion within the media/ health care services in what I need to do to be 'healthy'
- Reach the 'correct' BMI
- Removal of skin (after losing significant weight)
- Personalised advice (age/ suffering with health conditions/ post menopause/ post lockdown)
- Hypnosis
- Group sessions with likeminded people
- Remove unhealthy decisions for youth

How those participants who had not experience with weight bias and/or discrimination feel about completing the survey

- Happy to share
- Struggled to complete
- Reflective
- Self-conscious / embarrassed
- Angry
- Depressed
- Motivated
- Anxious
- Informed