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WEEKLY COLUMN

Do Men Hate Fat Women? Relationship Trends

By Josie Brown, updated 6/18/2008 at 1:12:01 PM



"She's got such a pretty face, but..."

That compliment shouldn't sting, but it does—because of what goes unsaid:

"...It's a shame she's so fat."

Says who? Men? The media? Society? Other women?

Yes, all of the above.

When supermodel Tyra Banks took a walk in a fat suit that added two hundred pounds to her mean lean frame, the response to her was disgust and, worse yet, derision.

Whenever an actress or songstress packs on the pounds, the media pounces onto her, like wolves fighting over fresh, liberally marbled meat. You saw it happen to Britney Spears after childbirth, and again when Renee Zellweger beefed up for both *Bridget Jones* movies.

According to the journal *Obesity*, weight discrimination, especially against women, is increasing in U.S. society and is almost as common as racial discrimination. In fact, reported discrimination based on weight has increased 66% in the past decade, up from about 7% to 12% of U.S. adults. *The International Journal of Obesity* points out that, among severely obese people, about 28% of men said they have experienced discrimination because of their weight. That figure leaps to 45% for women.

In a survey of 400 *Marie Claire* readers, 77% acknowledge they've wondered "How did she get that?" when seeing a fat woman walk by with an average-weight guy; and 73% admit to having been "secretly disgusted when they saw a fat person eating junk food."

Work and Weight

Weight discrimination is a common occurrence at work, too. In a national survey of 12,686 women between 1981 and 2000, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that, as the percentage of American white women who are overweight and obese expanded from 12.6 percent to 50.4 percent, the wage penalty for obesity nearly doubled: in 1981, a woman in the 75th percentile on the Body Mass Index (roughly 165 pounds for a 5-foot-4-inch woman) could expect wages 4.29 percent lower than women in the 25th percentile (roughly 120 pounds). In 2000, the same hypothetical woman's wage penalty had risen to 7.47 percent.

He's Just Not That Into Your Body

And yes, men can be cruel to zaftig women. Campus lotharios find sport in barhopping for "sweat hogs," overweight coeds whose low self-esteem makes easy lays.

Sadly, society also has it in for men who may not mind dating chubby women. In a study conducted at the University of Liverpool in England, a man photographed with a heavysset woman was rated 22 percent more negatively (including being called "a loser") than when the same man is pictured with a svelte date by his side.

The Opinion That Matters Most: Her Own

Does the overweight woman hate herself, too?

Odds are that she does.

And according to a recent Meredith/ NBC Universal survey, 84% of American women feel they are overweight. In fact, only 13% of women feel that they are the ideal weight. Another 40% of women admit that they are more than 20 pounds overweight, while 23% feel they are 21-50 pounds overweight, and 16% report being more than 50 pounds overweight.

But when it comes to health issues, 56% of women are most concerned about diet or weight. Whereas only 36% fret about eating right, while a mere 23% express the same degree of concern about cancer, 20% about heart health, and 18% about diabetes.

Ironically, developing good eating habits is the first step toward achieving your ideal weight—and of course it's also the first line of defense against those other health concerns. According to Anne Sassaman, a director of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, because heavysset women have more body fat than their slim counterparts, they are more susceptible to environmental toxins, which are stored in body fat.

Obesity is also associated with an increased risk of renal cell carcinoma (RCC) according to researchers at the German Institute of Human Nutrition in Potsdam-Rehbruecke: a malignancy was twice as likely to develop in women in the highest quintiles of body weight and Body Mass Index than in those in the lowest quintiles. [See the BMI chart, below.]

And women who carry excess fat around their waists are at greater risk of dying early from either cancer or heart disease, according to sixteen-year study of 44,000 women conducted by researchers from Harvard and the National Institutes of Health.

Being a heavyweight doesn't do much for a woman's emotional health, either. While the relationship between obesity and self-esteem is not clear-cut, body esteem—satisfaction with appearance—is the domain of self-worth most affected by obesity.

A 2004 University of Michigan study conducted by Jennifer Crocker and Julie A. Garcia concluded that weight is a vulnerability factor for low self-esteem in all women. This is particularly true for women who feel overweight.

The study's authors summarize it this way:

"...When overweight people (or anyone, for that matter) question whether they are worthy or worthless, they are disconnected from reality and blinded to the real issues they face...When overweight people question their worth and value, they have difficulty recognizing that the reality is that they are human. And, because they are human, they have real issues to address in their lives, some of which might concern their weight, but others of which have nothing to do with their weight. For example, perhaps the overweight person who is rejected for a job is discriminated against, but also there are almost certainly areas in which his or her job skills could be improved, because everyone has room for improvement. Perhaps the overweight woman is rejected for a

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date because a man is prejudiced against her, but there might also be areas in which she could improve her ability to connect with people, because strides can often be made in this domain..."

**Addressing the Underlying Issues**



"I'm big-boned" is not a good enough excuse for denying the affect your weight is having on your health and your self-esteem. According to an SMW interview with Bob Greene, a major life change like this won't happen overnight.

"To take the weight off and keep it off, first you must be honest with yourself as to why you're unhappy. If you address that first, you can change your point of view, and your goals will be easier to reach, says Greene. "When our diets are out of balance, we see it on our bodies. Start out making small steps...The most important thing is to focus on where you are today. After a month of 'todays,' you will be in a totally different place in the process, and you can change direction accordingly."

**Other SMW Articles for a Healthier, Happier You**  
**Fitness Guru Bob Greene Tells You How to Set Goals—and Reach Them**  
**Healthy Snacks: Eat Right, Feel Great!**  
**Mindless Eating—and What You Can Do About It**  
**Is There Such a Thing as a Good Carb?**  
**Are Your Girlfriends Making You Fat?**

**Body Mass Index Chart**

[Calculate your body Mass Index.](#)

BMI	Height (in)																		
	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76
Wgt. (lbs)	4'10"	4'11"	5'0"	5'1"	5'2"	5'3"	5'4"	5'5"	5'6"	5'7"	5'8"	5'9"	5'10"	5'11"	6'0"	6'1"	6'2"	6'3"	6'4"
100	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12
105	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13
110	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	13
115	24	23	23	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14
120	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15
125	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	17	16	16	15
130	27	26	25	25	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16
135	28	27	26	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16
140	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17
145	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18
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165	35	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21	20
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250	52	51	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30
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260	54	53	51	49	48	46	45	43	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	33	32
265	56	54	52	50	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32
270	57	55	53	51	49	48	46	45	44	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33
275	58	56	54	52	50	49													

Courtesy of HealthDiscover.net

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