

## LighterLife reveal the scale of bullying suffered by Britain's obese

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LighterLife, the UK weight loss specialist, has conducted a survey of 1000 adults that reveals the full scale of abuse suffered by overweight or obese Britons.

According to the survey, nine out of ten overweight people in Britain have been called a derogatory name about their weight, and yet many who insult others are overweight or obese themselves. While 46% of people admit to having called, referred to or thought of an overweight person by a derogatory name because of their weight, the percentage of bullies who are overweight themselves is surprisingly high, with 33% of obese or very obese respondents admitting to insulting other overweight people.

When it comes to insulting friends and relatives, men are the cruelest, with 28 per cent of men – nearly a third – admitting to insulting overweight friends, whereas many more women are restrained, with just 11% levelling abuse at overweight people they know. The problem reduces with age however; 29 per cent of 16-24-year-olds will call a friend or relative a derogatory name, whereas only 12 per cent of 55-64-year-olds will do this.

Where someone lives is likely to determine how much abuse they get too. For example, 30% of Londoners would call a friend or relative a derogatory name, while only 15% of Scots would do the same.

The survey from LighterLife has concerned many in the weight management industry, stressing that people need encouragement to go on weight loss diets (<http://www.lighterlife.com/>), not abuse.

Mandy Cassidy, a psychotherapist with LighterLife, said: "It's sad that adults now find such behaviour acceptable, and particularly so among the younger age groups, as they could well carry through these views as they get older, thus increasing the problem even further."

People can appear to shrug off comments, she added, but inside, they can be devastated: "Often it is only through counselling that the full impact become clear - many of our clients have resorted to avoiding social occasions and decline invitations.

"Even some people who appear totally confident say that they become 'really good liars' and concoct a range of excuses for not attending events – which can drive them indoors, to eat as a way of dealing with their hurt and anger, which compounds the problem.

"Just because someone is overweight, it doesn't mean it's acceptable to insult them. This type of prejudice isn't tolerated in any other walk of life – so we shouldn't allow it here?"

Dr Ian W Campbell, Hon. Medical Director of charity Weight Concern, said: "These findings are very concerning. People who have a weight problem need support, encouragement and advice on how to lose weight (<http://www.lighterlife.com/>), not ridicule.

"Many already have underlying psychological and self-esteem issues and this type of behaviour can only serve to make matters worse and cause a great deal of distress.

"Few people want to be very overweight and would love to be able to change. That process needs support, not criticism; it needs incentive, not punishment."

#### About LighterLife:

LighterLife is a weight loss management programme (<http://www.lighterlife.com/>) for people who are clinically obese, equivalent to three stone or more overweight and with a body mass index greater than 29.

The unique LighterLife approach combines low-calorie diets (<http://www.lighterlife.com/>) in the form of nutritionally complete soups, shakes and bars, with specialised counselling using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and transactional analysis (TA) techniques. Clients benefit not only from safe, fast weight loss (<http://www.lighterlife.com> ) but they also learn the behavioural change needed to sustain it.

Founded in 1996, the LighterLife Programme was developed by three of its directors – Jackie Cox, Bar Hewlett and Rebecca Hunter.

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