

Measures to Assess Weight Bias

The following are validated measures used to assess weight bias, which may be used for self-assessment or in group training sessions to initiate discussions about weight bias in clinical practice.

- Anti-fat Attitudes Questionnaire (AFA)¹
- Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS)²
- Anti-fat Attitudes Test (AFAT)³
- Attitudes toward Obese Persons Scale (ATOP)⁴
- Beliefs about Obese Persons Scale (BAOP)⁵
- Fat Phobia Scale (short form)⁶
- Nurses' Attitudes Toward Obesity and Obese Patients (NATOOPS) Scale⁷
- Bray Attitude Toward Obesity Scale (BATOS)⁸

Because these tools ask direct questions about attitudes toward obese persons, providers may be reluctant to share their survey results with others. It may be best not to focus on actual responses to the questions in group discussions. Rather, the intention of these tools is to generate discussion and awareness about beliefs and stereotypes which could reinforce bias or prejudice toward patients.

1 Crandall, C.S. (1994). Prejudice against fat people: Ideology and self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 882-894.

2 Morrison, T.G., & O'Connor, W.E. (1999). Psychometric properties of a scale measuring negative attitudes toward overweight individuals. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 139, 436-445.

3 Lewis, R.J., Cash, T.F., Jacobi, L., & Bubb-Lewis, C. (1997). Prejudice toward fat people: The development and validation of the Anti-fat Attitudes Test. *Obesity Research*, 5, 297-307.

4 Allison, D.B., Basile, V.C., & Yuker, H.E. (1991). The measurement of attitudes toward and beliefs about obese persons. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 10, 599-607.

5 Allison, D.B., Basile, V.C., & Yuker, H.E. (1991). The measurement of attitudes toward and beliefs about obese persons. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 10, 599-607.

6 Bacon, J.G., Scheltema, K.E., & Robinson, B.E. (2001). Fat Phobia Scale revisited: The short form. *International Journal of Obesity*, 25, 252-257.

7 Watson, L., Oberle, K. & Deutscher, D. (2008). Development and psychometric testing of the Nurses' Attitudes Toward Obesity and Obese Patients (NATOOPS) Scale. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 31, 586-593

8 Brandsma, L. (2005) Physician and patient attitudes towards obesity. *Eating Disorders*, 13:201-211



The Implicit Association Test

Biased attitudes can sometimes exist outside of conscious awareness – meaning that they can operate automatically and even be contrary to the attitudes we consciously express. Researchers developed the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to identify implicit or automatic preferences and bias. For example, when assessing attitudes towards overweight or obese persons, we may sometimes have beliefs or attitudes that we are either unable or unwilling to report. Through a timed word association task, the IAT can uncover our unconscious associations toward a target group, which are sometimes at odds with our conscious attitudes.

The IAT was developed by researchers at Harvard University and has been used to study bias in a range of disciplines, including gender, race, religion, and sexuality. To assess implicit attitudes towards overweight and obese persons, the test asks you to pair the terms “Fat People” and “Thin People” with both positive and negative attributes, such as good-bad, lazy-motivated, or smart-stupid. For most people, it is more difficult to pair “Fat People” with positive attributes than it is to pair “Thin People” with positive attributes, indicating an implicit bias against fat people and a preference for thin people.

Rather than being unaware of our unconscious biases, learning about them can help us to consciously alter our behaviors to avoid acting in a biased way. Recognizing that our implicit negative attitudes towards obese people can manifest themselves in our day-to-day interactions is an important step toward challenging negative stereotypes and assumptions.

Take the IAT and become aware of your own implicit attitudes. When the Project Implicit site appears, click on ‘Go to Demonstration Tests’, then choose **Weight IAT**.

* The ATOP, BAOP, and a paper and pencil version of the IAT can be downloaded from http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what/bias/resource_tools.html

Fat People		Thin People
fat		slim
obese		thin
large		skinny
Lazy		Motivated
slow		determined
lazy		motivated
sluggish		eager

Fat People		Thin People
Lazy		Motivated
<input type="radio"/>	obese	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	sluggish	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	slim	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	eager	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	large	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	lazy	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	fat	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	motivated	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	thin	<input type="radio"/>

For more information on weight bias, please visit www.YaleRuddCenter.org



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