

GET GORGEOUS:

A survey of over 5,000 Australian women about their weight, shape and appearance.

Draft report for Fernwood Women's Health Club April, 2006

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Demographics

The total number of respondents to the survey was 5729, with 263 (4.6%) indicating they were current members of Fernwood and 5,203 (95.4%) not members. The remaining 263 (4.6%) did not indicate their status in relation to affiliation with the club. The only significant difference between membership and non-membership was found to be length of time participants had battled with their weight, with members reporting a slightly less period of time (mean diff = -0.21, $t = -2.00$, $df = 180.07$, $p < .05$)

Based on the data supplied (age group, height and weight), 1156 (23.1%) of respondents were within the 18 – 25 year age group, 1932 (38.6%) were 26 – 35 years of age, 1201 (24%) were aged 36 – 45 years, 568 (11.3%) were 46 – 55 years of age and 150 (3.0%) were 56 years or older.

Weight of participants ranged from 58kg – 110kg. The mean weight was 82.2Kg; $sd=15.58$.

Table 1.

Percentage of respondents classified as under, normal, overweight, obese or morbid in size.

agegroup	under	Normal	overweight	obese	morbid	Total
18 - 25	N=6	32%	29.9%	24.2%	13.2%	1156
26 - 35	1	18.58%	35.1%	27.9%	18.5%	1932
36 - 45	2	13.5%	33.3%	30.5%	22.6%	1201
46 - 55		13.2%	32.4%	33.1%	21.3%	568
56 and over		8.7%	40.6%	32.6%	18%	150
Total	1.2%	19.6%	33.3%	28.4%	18.5%	5007

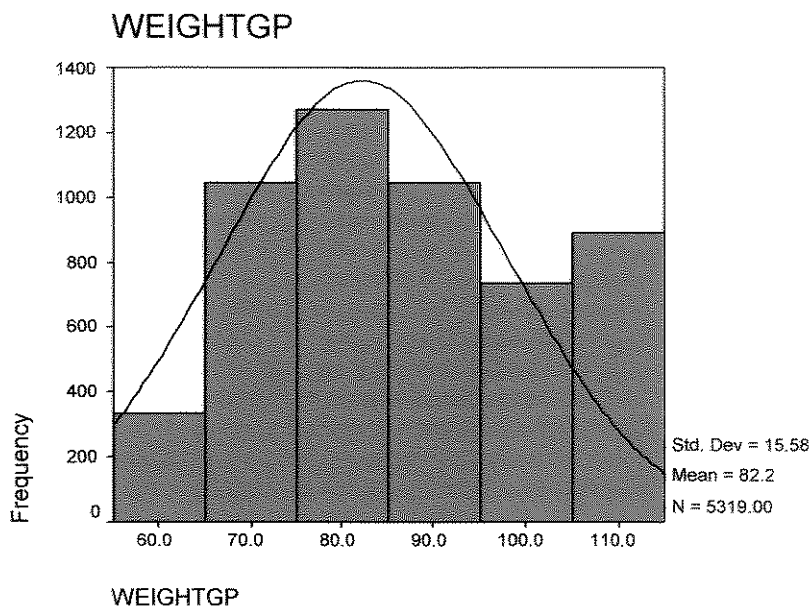


Figure 1. *Distribution of weight in relation to normal curve.*

Based on a calculation of bodymass index, 9 (0.2%) of respondents fell within the underweight classification, 981 (19.6%) were within normal bodymass limits, 1668 (33.3%) were classified as overweight, 1421 (28.4%) were obese and 928 (18.5%) were morbidly obese.

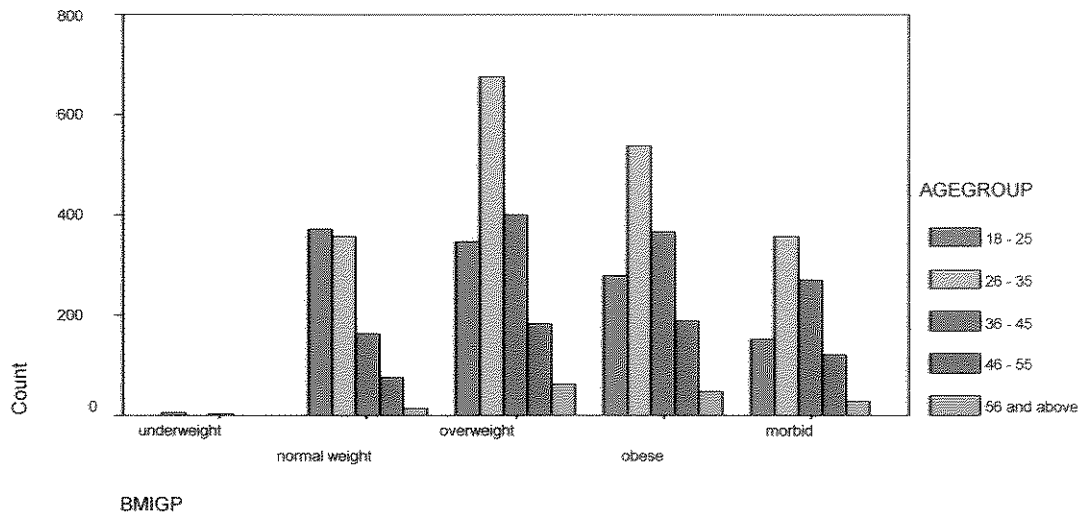


Figure 2: *Bodymass distribution by age group*

Bodymass distribution was found to increase significantly in relation to age ($\chi^2 = 202.56$, $df = 16$, $p < .001$) with older women becoming larger.

Clothing sizes

Indications of current clothing size for participants suggested that the average sizes of all participants was size 14 or 16.

Table 2:
Clothing size of participants.

	10 or less	12	14	16	18	20	22	24+
N	299	800	1250	1169	858	433	290	220
%	5.2	14.0	21.8	20.4	15.0	7.6	5.1	3.8

Based on Bodymass grouping, the majority of underweight participants were a size 10 or under, normal weight were size 12, overweight were a size 14, obese respondents were a size 16 - 18 and those classified as morbid were size 20 - 22.

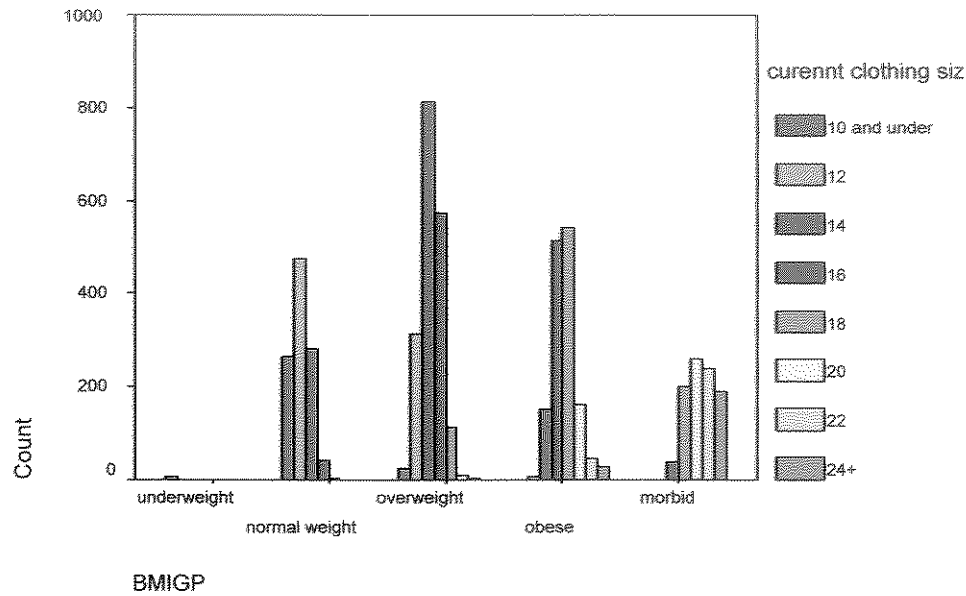


Figure3: Clothing size by bodymass grouping

Participants ideal clothes size was identified as being generally within the 10 – 12 sizes, with 27% opting for alternate sizes (10% size 8, 11.6% size 14, 3.2% size 18 or above).

This was a similar pattern across all age groups. Size 8 was most popular with 18 – 25 year olds; 54.5% of total. Size 10 – 14 within the age group 26 – 35, 46.6% of total; Size 16 within the 36 – 45 year age group, 22.1%, and size 18+ in the 56 and older age group, 19% of total. These results indicating that one’s ideal size significantly increased incrementally with age ($\chi^2 = 560.26, df = 20, p < .001$)

Table 3:
Percentage of respondents selecting “Ideal clothes” size by age group

	8	10	12	14	16	18+	Total
18 - 25	27.1%	30.5%	33.0%	7.8%	1.5%	0.2%	1,156
26 - 35	9.1%	40.0%	35.4%	12.5%	2.7%	0.4%	1,932
36 - 45	5.7%	31.0%	43.0%	15.2%	4.7%	0.6%	1,201
46 - 55	3.0%	24.5%	43.8%	21.0%	7.0%	0.7%	568
56 and over	0.7%	15.3%	51.3%	21.3%	10.7%	0.7%	150

As shown below, normal to overweight participants thought a size 10 or 12 would be most preferable. Those classified as obese or morbid increased this sizing slightly to include size 14 as the most preferred. Size 16 and 18+ were only recorded by those classified as obese or morbidly obese.

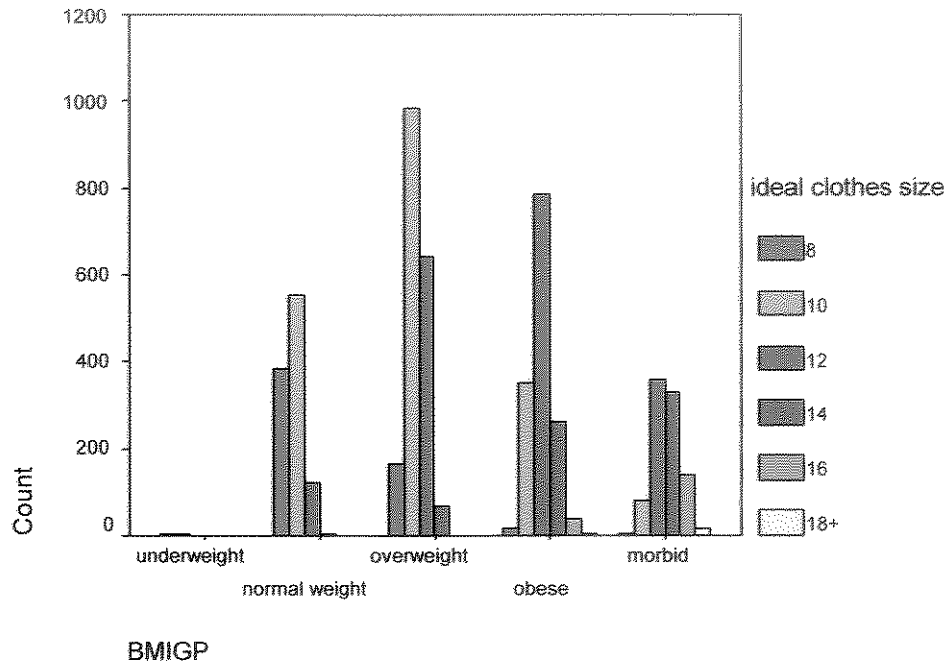
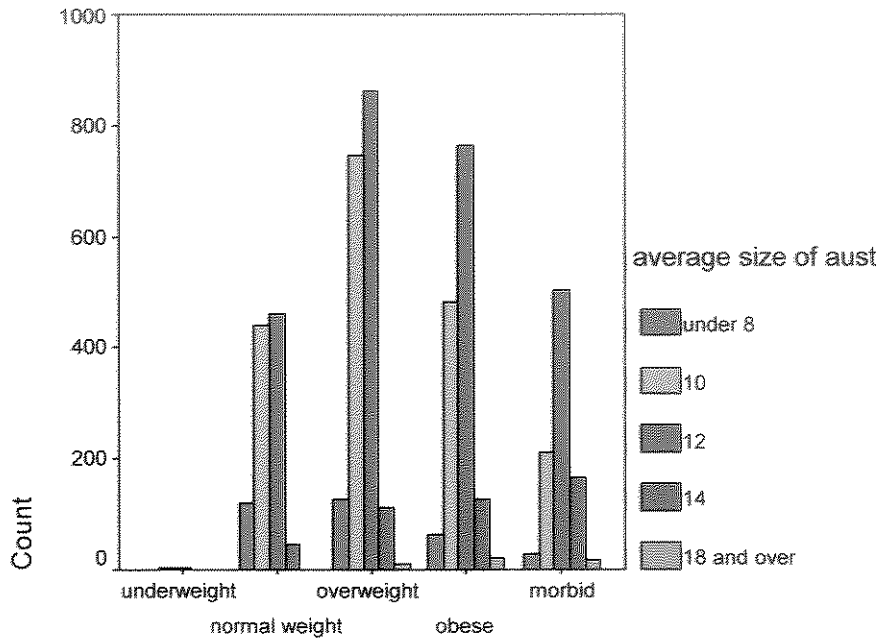


Figure 4: *Ideal clothes size by body mass*

The average size of Australian women today was reported to be size 14 (45.3%) followed by size 12 (32.9%). The perception of Australian women's average size was found to vary as the respondents weight classification increased, indicating that those who were heavier had a slightly higher perception of the average weight. Similarly, average Australian women's sizes were found to increase slightly as the women advanced in age, with older women having slightly higher perceptions of average weights.

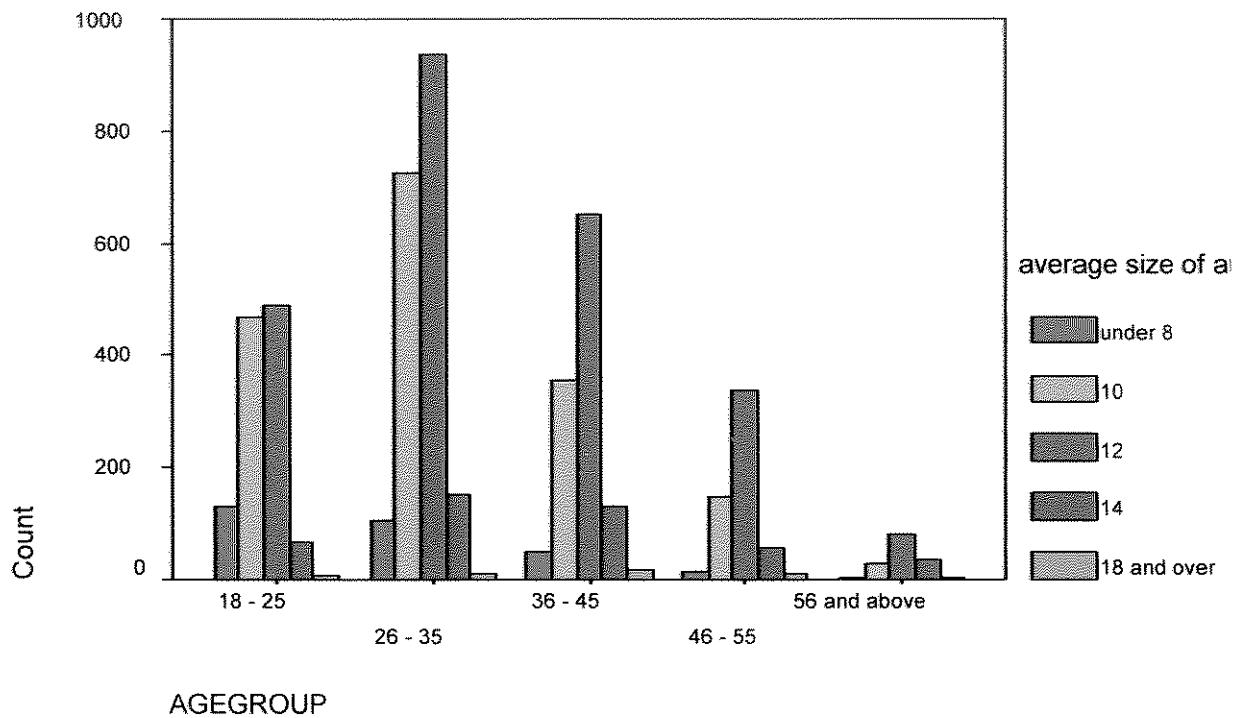
Table 4:
Perceived average size of Australian women.

	10	12	14	16	18+
N	339	1882	2596	453	48
%	5.9	32.9	45.3	7.9	.8



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Figure 5: Average size of Australian women by body mass of respondents



AGEGROUP

Figure 6: Perceived average size of Australian women by agegroup of respondents.

Satisfaction with weight

When asked to define their weight status, 90% of respondents indicated that they were overweight, 1.4 percent said they were underweight and 8.6% did not respond. In the 18 – 25 year age group 96.4% said they were overweight in contrast to 32.3% being classified as normal weight. Similarly in the 26 – 35 age group 98.9% said they were overweight with 18.6% classified as normal weight, 36 – 45 age group 99.2% said they were overweight whereas 13.5% were classified as normal weight, and in the 46 – 55 age group 98.6% said they were overweight whilst 13.2% normal weight. For those respondents in the 56 and above age group 100% said they were overweight, however 8.7% were classified as normal weight. These findings indicate that perceptions of weight are overestimated amongst all age groups, with many who are within normal weight ranges also perceiving themselves as overweight.

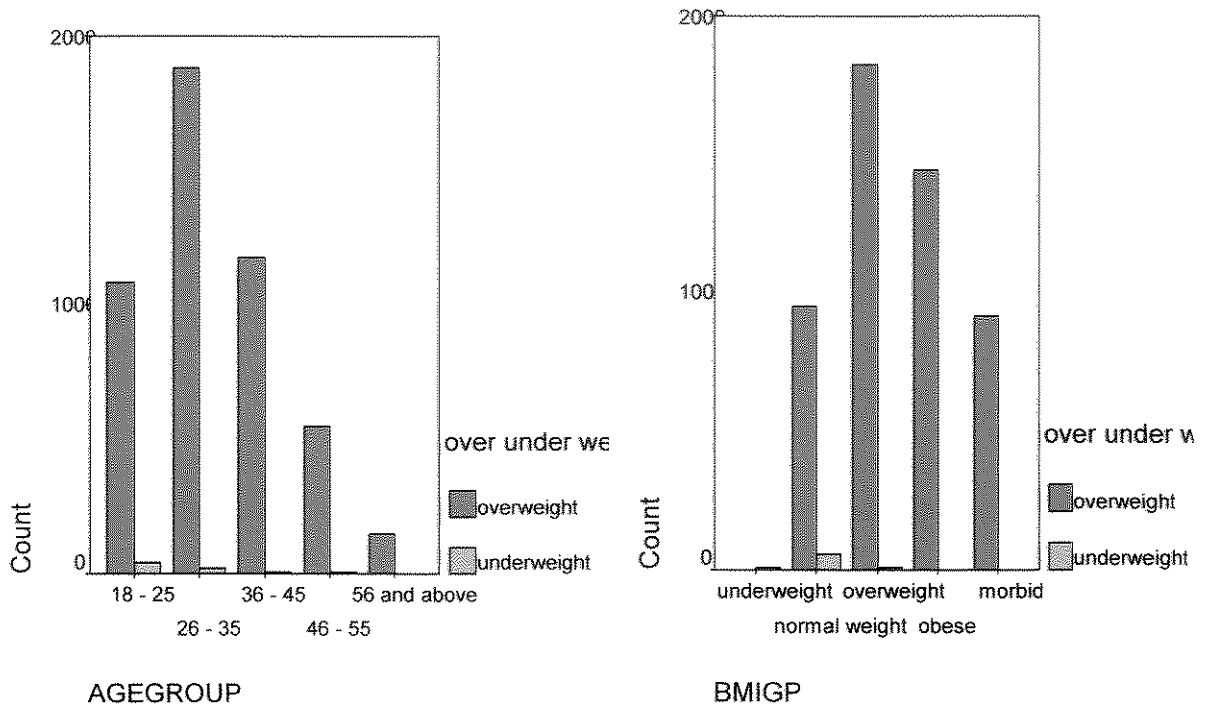


Figure 7: Satisfaction with weight by age group Figure 8: Satisfaction with weight by body mass

Whilst it is a reality for those persons classified as being overweight, obese or morbidly large, the finding that 22.2% of the participants classified as underweight and 94.3% of respondents who were classified as normal weight also reported being overweight indicates that there is a significant dysfunctional relationship between one's actual weight and one's perceptions of weight ($\chi^2 = 504.45$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$).

Over 80% of participants indicated that they felt they were constantly battling with their weight, with over 20% saying they had always battled with their weight

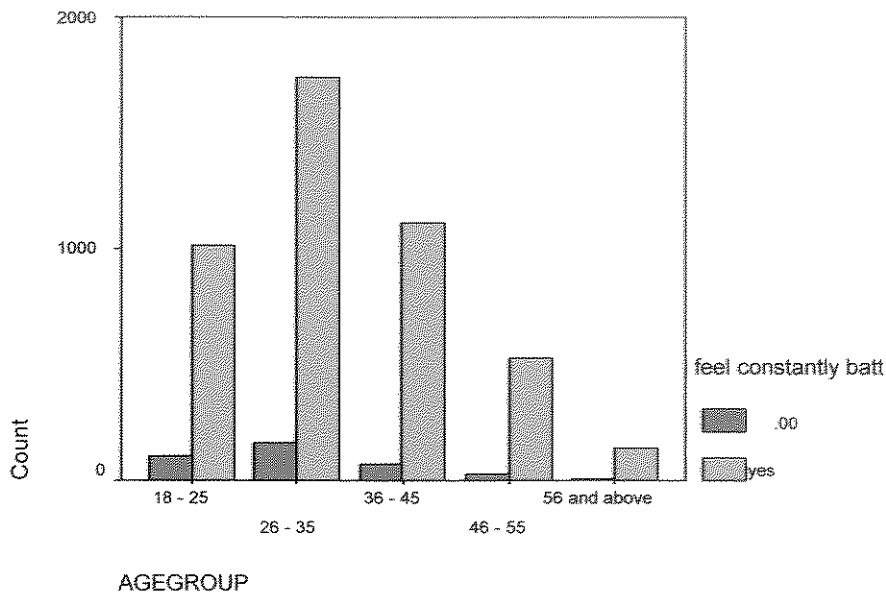


Figure 9: *Battle with weight by agegroup.*

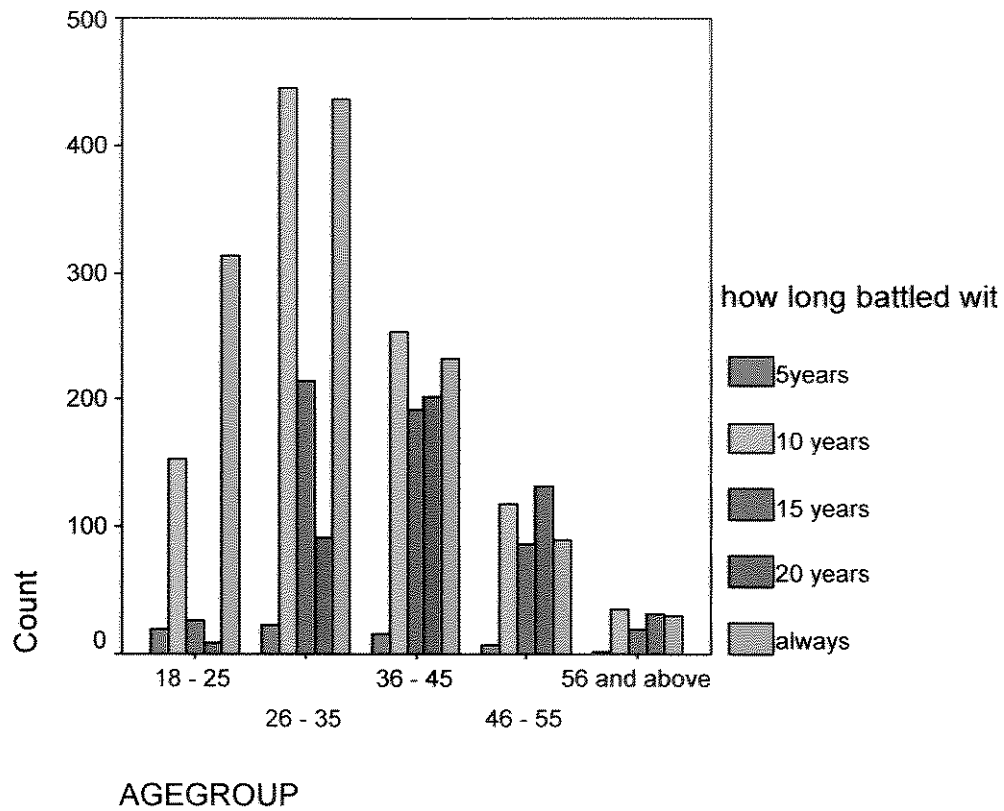


Figure 10: *Battle with weight by bodymass classification*

Reasons for current or ongoing weight problems was related to one or several of the other factors: pregnancy/childbirth n = 1711, a hectic family life n = 1351, busy career n = 1603, unmotivated to exercise n = 3332, overindulging in snacks or take away (n = 3051), being intimidated to exercise in public (n = 1878), or other reasons (n = 1274).

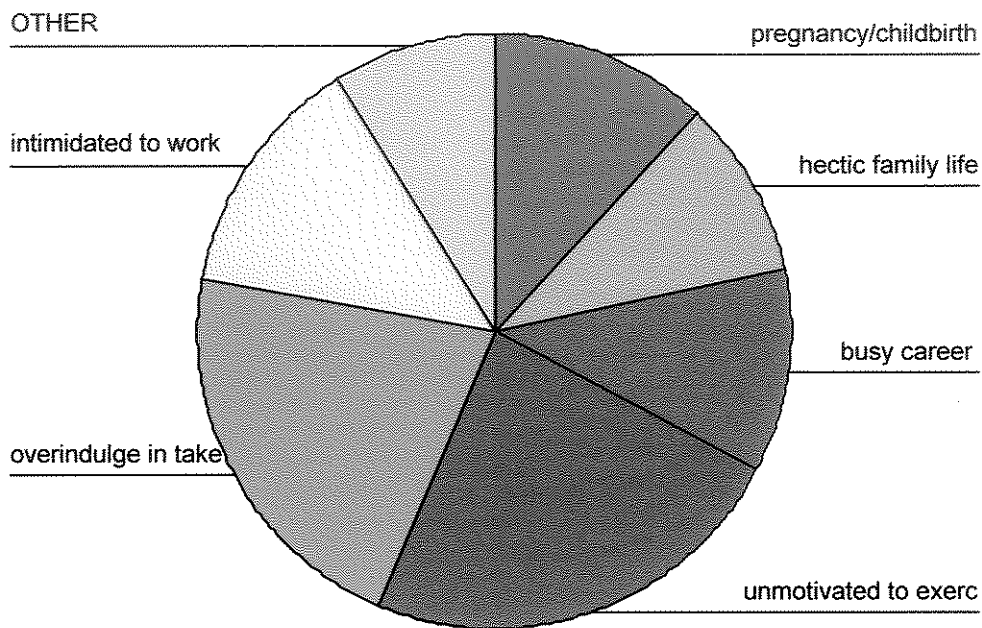


Figure 11: *Reasons for weight problems*

As shown above the larger proportion of reasons for being overweight were cited as overindulging in snacks and takeaway foods and being intimidated to work out in public.

The distribution of reasons for one's weight were similar across agegroups and bodymass groupings.

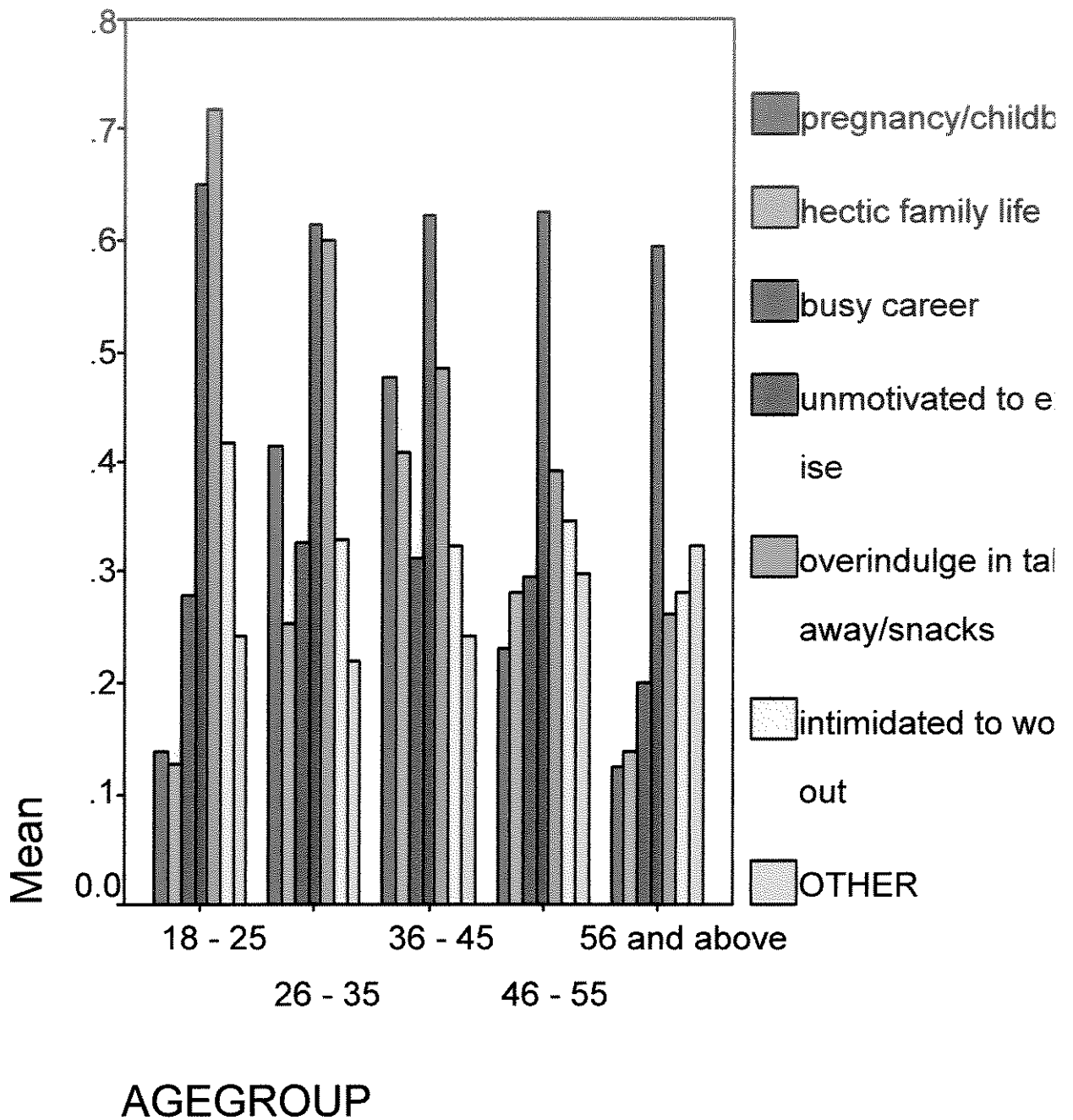


Figure 12: *Reasons for weight problems by agegroup.*

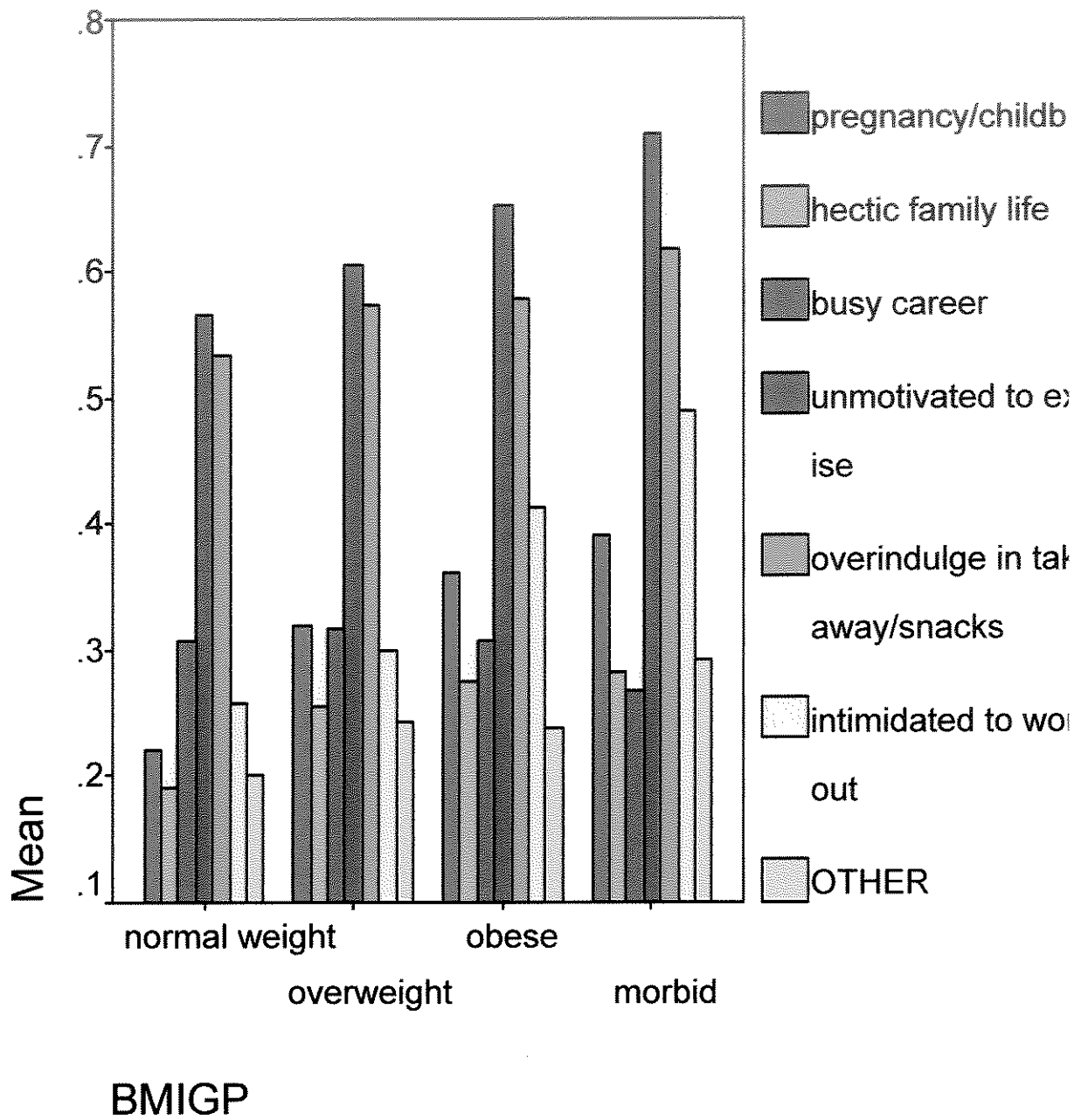


Figure 12: *Reasons for weight problems by body mass classification*

Dieting

Over 77% of respondents indicated that they dieted: 75.1% of 18 – 25 year olds, 86% of 26 – 35 year olds, 90.5% of 36 – 45 year olds, 91% of 46 – 55 year olds and 94.6% of 56 year old and over.

Figure 14: *Dieting behaviour by agegroup*

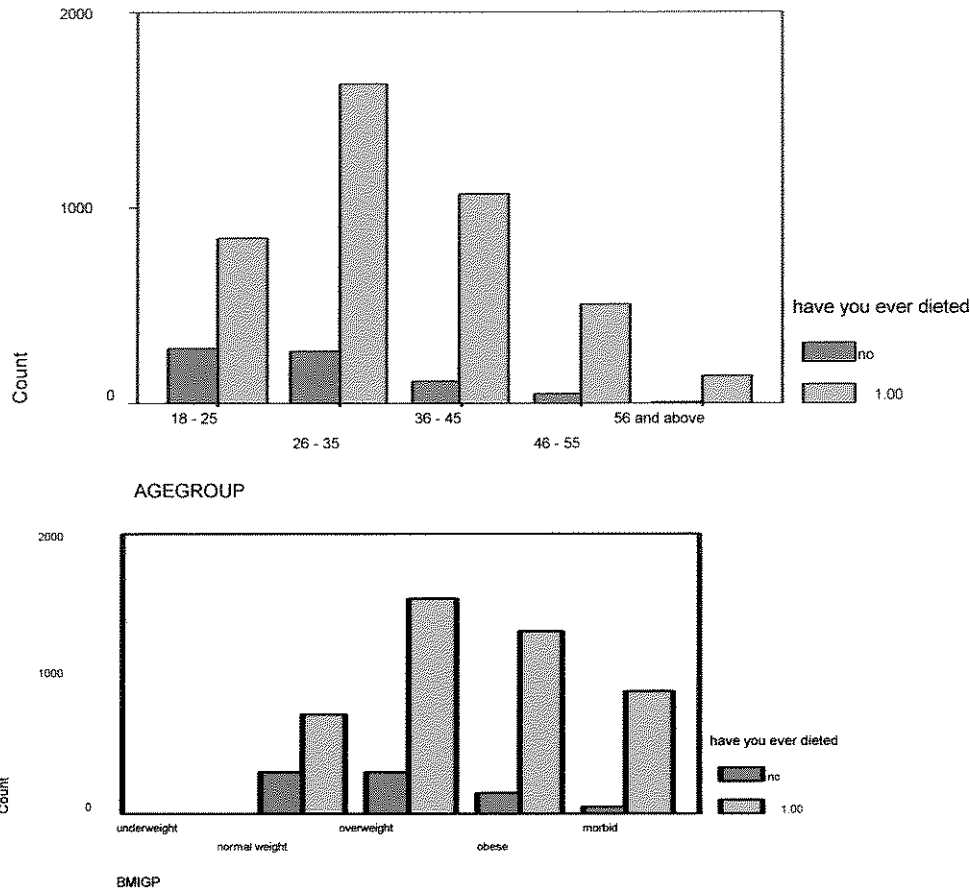


Figure 15: *Dieting behaviour by bodymass classification*

A higher level of participants within all bodymass groupings indicated that they had dieted, including those who were underweight (44.4%) and normal weight (69.9%). The percentage of respondents who indicated they dieted increased significantly with bodymass grouping: overweight 83.6%; obese 89.8%, morbid 94.6% ($\chi^2 = 279.90$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$). Those respondents who had dieted had often tried several variance on the theme, with 1025 having tried Jenny Craig, 2533 weight watchers, 742 Lite n' Easy, 859 Aitkens, 492 CSIRO, 614 Sure Slim and 2388 others types of diet. Comments from respondents indicated that whilst on occasion the diet had been successful in assisting with weight loss, lack of motivation or regaining weight when one finished the diet were major problems. Many went on to put on more weight than they had originally carried.

Appearance

The majority of all respondents indicated that they were either unhappy (n = 3031, 64.3%), or depressed (n = 1403, 29.88%) with their overall appearance. This was common sentiment across all age groups. Only 278 (5.9%) of respondents said they were content with their overall appearance.

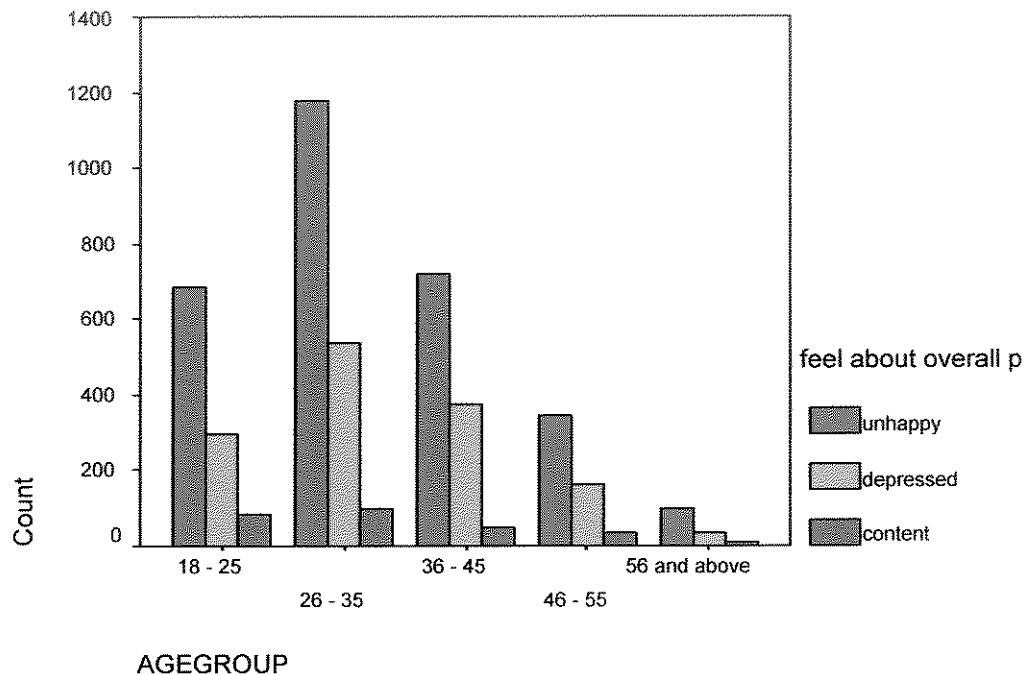


Figure 15: *Affect related to overall appearance by age group*

Table 5: *Affect by agegroup*

Agegroup	unhappy	Depressed	Content
18 - 25	64.2%	27.7%	8.1%
26 - 35	64.9%	29.7%	5.3%
36 - 45	63%	32.5%	4.5%
46 - 55	64%	29.9%	6.1%
56 +	69.2%	23.1%	7.7%

The main areas of life affected by one's weight were reported to be personal issues such as grooming oneself 3413, dating and intimacy 1907, socialising or spending time with friends 1713, being able to enjoy an active family life 1455, and not being respected by colleagues 494.

Clothing Size

Comparison of one's current clothing size with ideal size indicated that the majority of respondents had a high level of dissatisfaction with their current size; ranging from 1 size difference to 6 sizes. Only 56 respondents said they were smaller than the ideal size (4 underweight, 41 normal weight, 9 overweight, 1 obese and 1 morbid).

Table 6:

Difference between current and ideal clothing size by bodymass classification

BMI	No diff	1 larger	2 larger	3 larger	4 larger	5 larger	6 larger	N
underweight	55.6%							9
normal	60.6%	60.6%	1.8%	0.1%				1068
overweight	22.7%	61.7%	13.6%	1.2%	0.3%			1858
obese	42.9%	42.9%	39.2%	11.7%	2.3%	0.3%		1456
morbid	0.2%	33.6%	33.7%	33.7%	16.5%	6.1%	0.1%	928

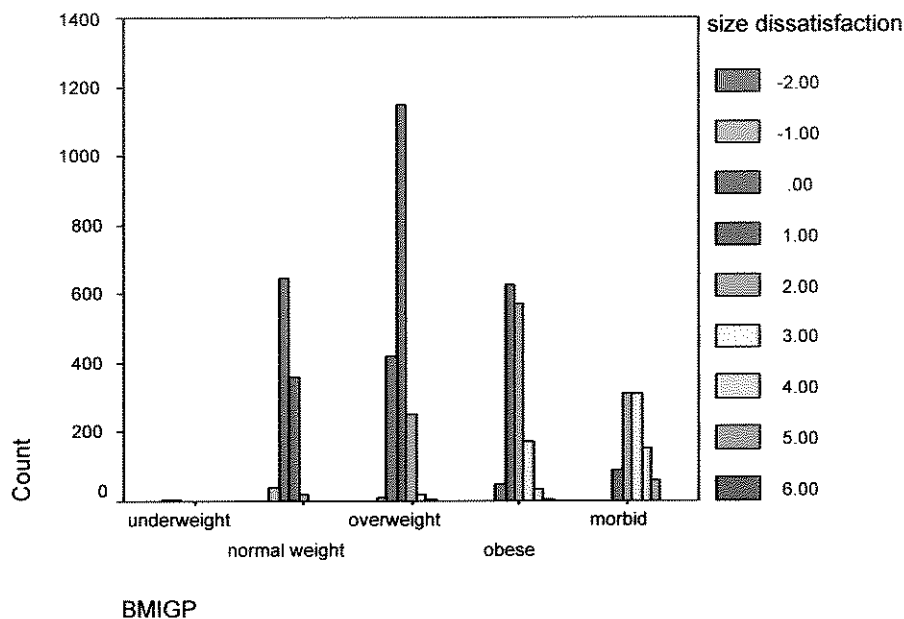


Figure 17: *Comparison of current and ideal clothing size by bodymass classification.*

Size dissatisfaction was found to significantly increase with increases in bodymass ($\chi^2 = 4230.35$, $df = 32$, $p < .001$)

A similar pattern of dissatisfaction was reported for one's size in relation to Australian women's perceived average size. However in this instance a slightly higher proportion of participants did indicate they thought they were smaller than average sizes (underweight 9, normal weight 480, overweight 226, obese 27, morbid 4).

Table 7:

Difference between current clothing size and average Australian women size by bodymass classification

BMI	Less than	same	1 larger	2 larger	3 larger	4 larger	5 larger	6 +larger	total
underweight	100%								9
normal	43%	34.1%	18.2%	2.5%	0.2%				1067
overweight	12.3%	27%	39.6%	17.9%	2.8%	0.5%	0.1%		1858
obese	1.8%	5.2%	27.9%	37.3%	19.8%	5.3%	1.9%	0.7%	1456
morbid	1.1%	0.6%	26%	18.6%	26.3%	28.8%	15.3%	47.9%	928

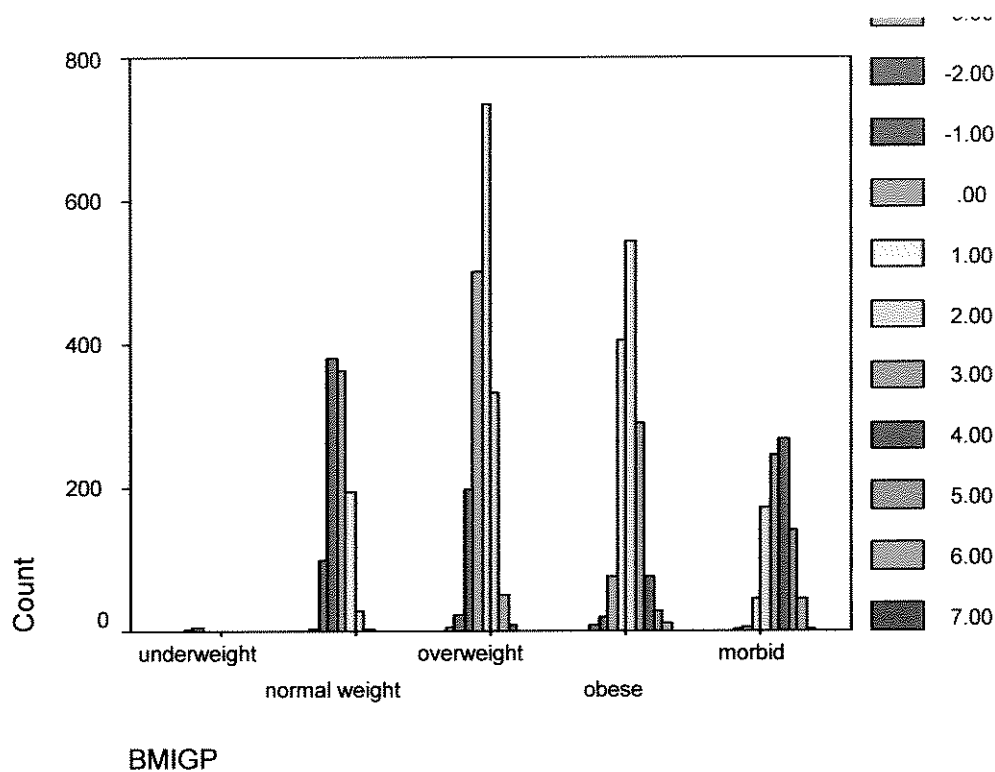


Figure 18: Comparison of current size with average Australian women's size by bodymass grouping.

Interpersonal relationships

The majority of respondents indicated that they made negative comments about their own weight, with 4,582 (80%) indicating yes.

When asked about the people around them, 2,867 (n=50%) said others made negative comments about their weight, and that these comments affected how they felt.

Forty five percent (2,591) of the respondents also indicated that they felt as if they were treated differently by society because of their weight. This was more pronounced for those respondents in the obese and morbid weight ranges, however it also affected overweight women and some normal weight women.

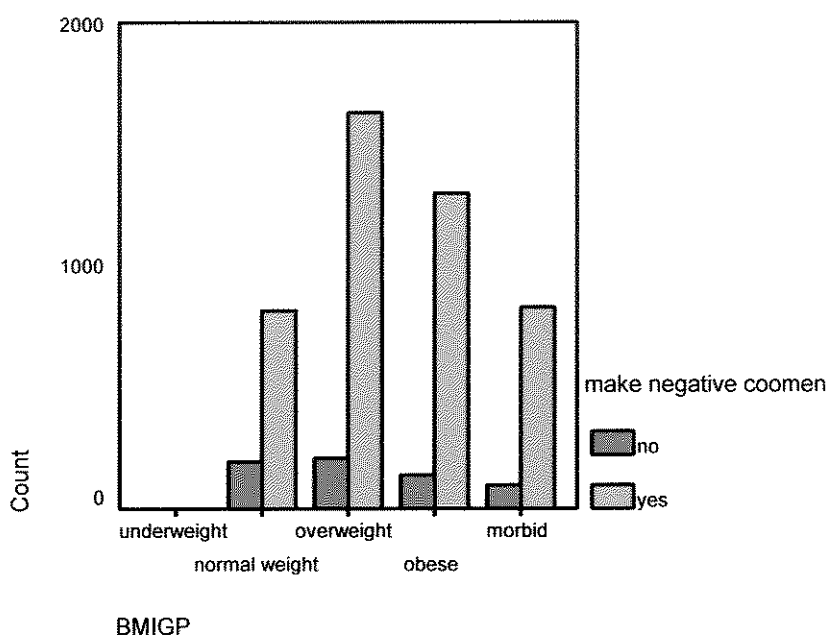
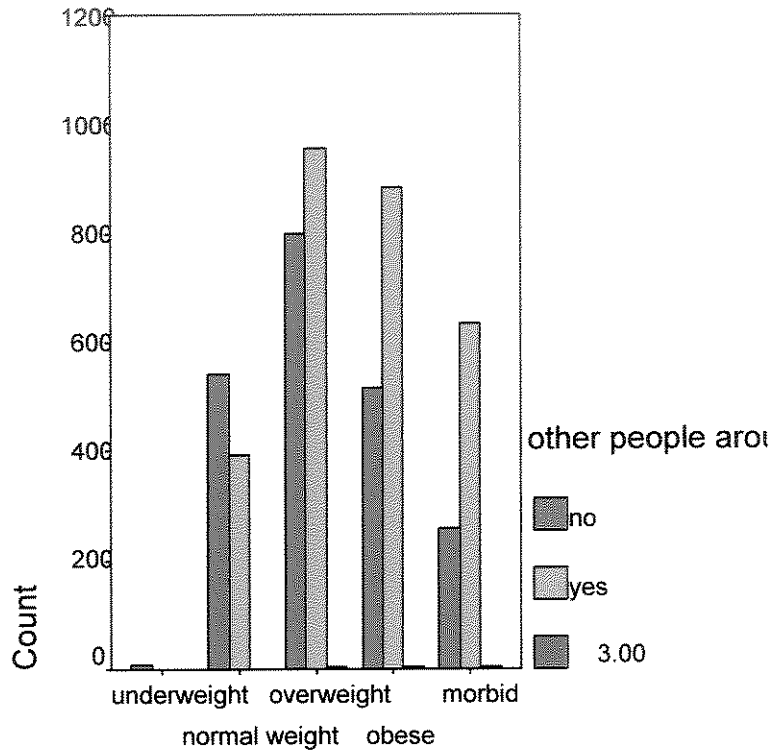


Figure 19: Number of respondents who make negative comments about their weight.

Other people around included partners, husbands, mothers, friends, children neighbours shop assistants, boyfriends and one's in-laws.

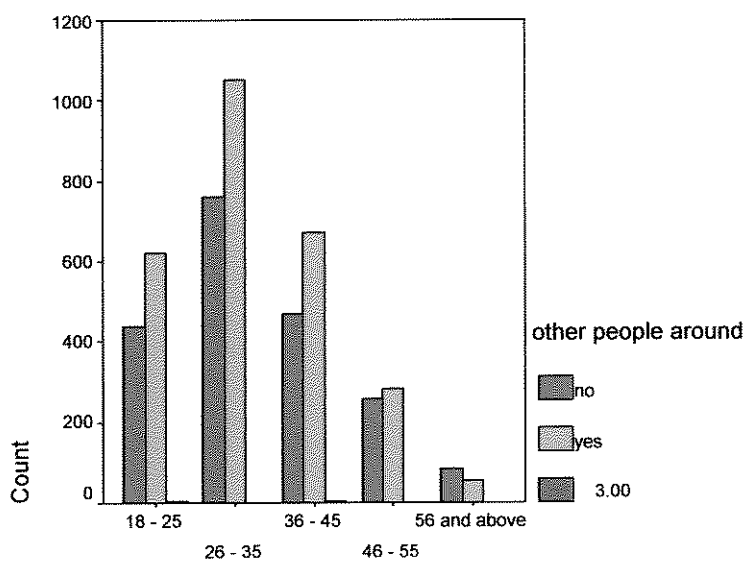
Comments made by others include direct assertions about the respondent needing to lose weight, to cover themselves up, being asked if they were pregnant, called derogatory names (fat cow, fat lazy bitch, tuckshop lady, fat stuff/chick, elephant, flat slut). Similarly it seemed common for people to comment on the respondents clothing and suggest it was too tight, or not flattering. Respondents were also told they shouldn't be eating certain foods, or asked if they really wanted to eat that, that they could be beautiful if only they lost weight, they used to be so pretty when they were slimmer, they had such a pretty/beautiful face shame about the body, that they had let themselves go. Conversely some of the respondents said that it wasn't what they said, but rather the way they were looked at, or patronised by words such as Oh well its in your family, this happens after you have had kids, you look gorgeous ANYWAY, sexy despite

your weight. Respondents also indicated that their children and partner often said or made them feel as if they were an embarrassment to be with. Over 50% of the respondents indicated that these negative comments affected the way they felt about themselves (2,866 of respondents).



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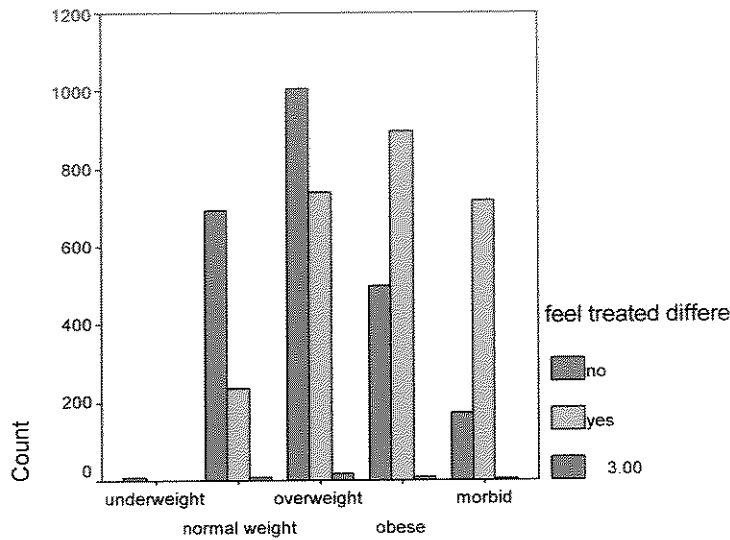
Figure 20: *Negative comments made by others about one's weight by body mass grouping.*



AGEGROUP

Figure 21: *Negative comments made about one's weight by others by age group.*

A large proportion of respondents also indicated that they felt they were treated differently by society because of their weight (45.2%; n= 2591 respondents).



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Figure 22: Proportion of respondents who felt they were treated differently by society because of their weight.

Table: 8: Percent of respondents who felt they were treated differently by society because of their weight by bodymass classification

BMI group	No	yes
underweight	88.9%	11.1%
Normal weight	74%	25.3%
overweight	57.1%	42.1%
obese	35.6%	63.8%
morbid	19.4%	80.3%
Total	47.5%	51.8%

Respondents indicated that simply going about one's normal day to day activities was stressful. People were prone to stare at, snigger, whisper behind their backs (sometimes noticeably), watch whilst they ate, and sometimes made them feel as if they had a disease. People made negative assumptions about them, such as lazy, slack, unmotivated, slob; and they were often pitied, not taken seriously. Some said they felt they had missed out on a job, or were not taken seriously in the profession. Others felt that job opportunities were diminished. They were never complimented on their appearance, nor considered sexy or desirable. Guys were not likely to give them a second look. One major issue for these women was trying to buy clothes, they felt that shop assistants were rude, impatient, discourteous. It was difficult to find 'trendy' stores that catered for larger women, and often the clothes that were available did not

fit well or look nice. They had difficulty fitting in with the group, and felt they were often invisible or not taken seriously by others because of their size.

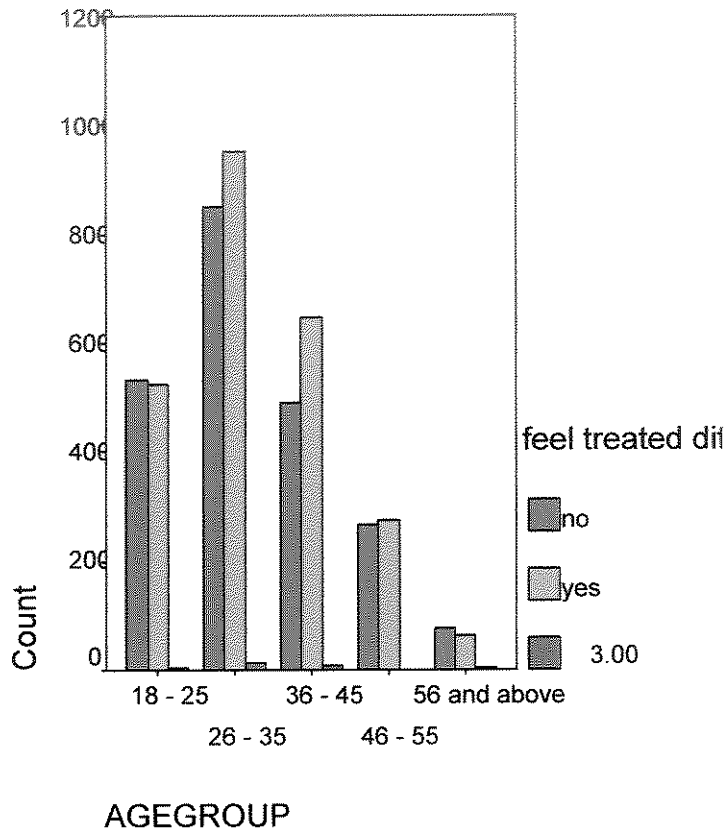


Figure 23: Proportion of respondents who feel they are treated differently by society by agegroup.

Table 9: Percent of respondents who feel they are treated differently by society because of their weight.

Agegroup	no	yes	underweight
18 - 25	41.4%	58.3%	0.4%
26 - 35	41.8%	58%	0.1%
36 - 45	41%	58.6%	0.3%
46 - 55	47.8%	51.8%	0.4%
56 +	60.1%	38.5%	1.4%

Motivation to loose weight

For respondents the main reason that they would loose weight was said to be because it felt time to take control of their lives (n= 2,823). 703 said it was for health reasons,

710 said they wanted to get active, 635 wanted to change their appearance and 10 said it was because of others comments or concerns.

Their perceived motivation for maintaining weight loss once it occurred would be to stay health (n=2,286), keep their new look (1,300), pride in having achieved a goal (1,111) and 179 would do it because of encouragement from family.

The main road block that would stop them from achieving their goal or putting it all back on was considered to be a lack of motivation to exercise (n=2,346), having a busy lifestyle (n=1,345) their lack of willpower and love of junk food (n = 806), living in a non supportive environment (n = 806).

The main reasons respondents gave for wanting to join a “get gorgeous program” were seen to be based on external goals, such as fitting into a wedding dress, looking good for others (partner, boyfriend, husband, children), to have someone encourage them, looking good for son’s/daughter’s wedding, too be able to buy/fit into nice clothes. Others blamed years of marriage and eating with their husband, having had children and no time, not being able to afford to do it themselves, getting older or lack of time generally for their current state and felt the programme would change this. Others felt that a kick start would give them more confidence, make them feel healthier, enable them to take control of their life, help them to loose weight, to look beautiful, improve their self-esteem, and give them the motivation they needed.

Many of the respondents said “they wanted to loose weight”, “ wanted to be fit and healthy”, “wanted to get back on track”, “wanted to get fit and healthy”, “ wanted to be gorgeous” “wanted to fit into real clothes”, “wanted to feel good about themselves” or “wanted to change their lives”. They knew it was time to do something, but felt that they couldn’t do it themselves. However, it appears that unless someone external to them takes control nothing is going to happen!