

# Support for Laws to Prohibit Weight Discrimination in the United States: Public Attitudes from 2011 to 2013

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**Objective:** Public attitudes about three proposed laws prohibiting weight discrimination in the US, from 2011 to 2013 were examined.

**Methods:** An online survey using a diverse national sample of US adults to assess their level of support for three specific laws against weight discrimination was conducted. Data collection occurred between June and July in 2011 ( $n = 1,098$ ), 2012 ( $n = 1,202$ ), and 2013 ( $n = 1,202$ ).

**Results:** Between 2011 and 2013, support for laws prohibiting weight discrimination remained consistent, and in some cases became increasingly supportive, primarily in 2012-2013. At least 75% of participants consistently favored laws prohibiting weight discrimination in the workplace. Individuals became increasingly supportive of extending disability protections for individuals with obesity (62% in 2011 to 69% in 2013) and adding body weight as a protected class in Civil Rights statutes (70% in 2011 to 76% in 2013). Analyses highlight specific predictors of support (gender, race, education, and political affiliation).

**Conclusions:** There is strong, consistent support for policies prohibiting weight discrimination. These findings have important implications for developing specific antidiscrimination legislation to protect Americans with obesity and improve their quality of life.

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## Introduction

More than two-thirds of adults in the United States are affected by overweight or obesity (1), and are vulnerable to stigma and discrimination as a result of their excess weight. However, efforts addressing obesity have left this social injustice largely unchallenged. National estimates indicate that the prevalence of weight discrimination increased between 1995 and 2005 and is comparable to rates of racial discrimination, especially for women (2). Negative stereotypes of persons with obesity as lazy, undisciplined and lacking willpower (3-5) are pervasive across multiple domains of living including health care, employment, media, education, and interpersonal relationships (3,5). Such prejudice leads to inequities and unfair treatment for individuals with overweight or obesity, and reduces their quality of life (3,5).

Weight discrimination is particularly visible in employment settings and perpetuates social and economic inequalities for employees with obesity. Despite comparable job qualifications and demographics, these employees face unequal opportunities including unfair hiring practices, wrongful termination, lower wages, and biased job performance evaluations (3,6,7). Experiences of weight stigma can lead to adverse emotional and physical health outcomes by increasing risk for depression, anxiety, substance use, suicidality, avoidance of

health care, unhealthy eating and physical activity behaviors, elevated physiological reactivity, and increased risk of obesity and remaining obese over time (3,8-12).

With growing recognition of the pervasiveness and harmful consequences of weight discrimination, there have been increasing calls for clear and effective legal measures to help reduce this form of prejudice (13-15). Currently, only one state (Michigan) and several localities across the US (San Francisco and Santa Cruz in CA, Washington, DC, Madison, WI, Urbana, IL and Binghamton, NY) have passed laws to prohibit weight discrimination, most of which include weight or appearance as a protected class in their existing civil and human rights statutes. With few legal options available, some individuals have attempted to seek legal recourse under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but rulings in favor of these plaintiffs are historically sparse (13,16) and have not provided a viable avenue for most people who have been discriminated against because of their weight. Nevertheless, the promise of legal remedies to address weight discrimination has been recently demonstrated in a study that reported lower prevalence rates of weight discrimination in Michigan compared to that of the other 49 U.S. states without legislation, and an attenuation of sex differences in reports of weight-based employment discrimination (17).

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**TABLE 1** Wording of statements to assess support for legal measures to prohibit weight discrimination<sup>a</sup>

1. Obese persons should be subject to the same legal protections and benefits offered to people with physical disabilities.
2. My state should include body weight in their civil rights law in order to protect people from discrimination based on their body weight, similar to laws that protect against discrimination due to race, religion, and sex.
3. It should be illegal for an employer to do all of the following:
  - (i) Refuse to hire a qualified person because of his/her body weight.
  - (ii) Fire a qualified employee because of his/her body weight.
  - (iii) Deny a promotion or appropriate compensation to a qualified employee because of his/her body weight.

<sup>a</sup>Participants indicated agreement with each statement on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = "definitely would oppose"; 10 = "definitely would support").

Public support is key in efforts to help advance weight-based anti-discrimination policy initiatives. However, few studies have measured relevant public attitudes about legal measures to address weight discrimination (18,19) and only two have examined how receptive the public is towards specific types of laws (20,21). These studies have documented moderate public support for laws that prohibit weight discrimination, with the greatest support found for laws that address weight discrimination in the workplace. Although these studies provide initial evidence of support for legislation to address weight discrimination, no research has examined public attitudes over time, and it is not known whether support is declining, remains consistent, or is increasing. Documenting these trends is important to better understand the public mindset about relevant policy strategies, and to identify attitudes among different subsets of the population toward specific legal measures that can increase protections for individuals affected by obesity. Thus, the present study aimed to examine changes and consistency of public attitudes about different types of proposed weight-based antidiscrimination laws in a diverse national sample of Americans in 2011, 2012, and 2013. We also investigated differences in the extent of policy support by demographic characteristics.

## Methods

### Data source

During June-July in each of the years 2011, 2012, and 2013, online surveys were administered to three independent, national samples of US adults. These surveys were part of a larger study examining public attitudes about various policy strategies to address obesity (22). Participants ages 21-65 earning an annual income of at least \$15,000, were recruited through Survey Sampling International (SSI; <http://www.surveysampling.com>), a provider of consumer panels for survey research. Participants are broadly recruited from thousands of websites that reach millions of users, such that the sample is representative of the online population. Multiple quality checks are in place to minimize fraud and ensure respondent integrity and information accuracy. Panelists receive rewards (including research feedback, charitable donations, and monetary and points rewards) as compensation for their general involvement with SSI rather than for completing individual surveys. To obtain samples that approximated

US general population demographics, quotas were established for gender, income groups, and black participants. To augment the number of Hispanic participants, additional Hispanic adults were recruited from Offerwise's online panel (<http://www.offerwise.com>). Through optimized recruitment procedures that reach US households across all acculturation levels (Spanish-dominant, bicultural, and acculturated), Offerwise provides researchers with access to one of the largest and most representative online sample of US Hispanics. All participants from both SSI and Offerwise were invited to complete the survey through e-mail invitations, and participant responses were anonymous. Of those who were invited to complete the survey, the participation rates for 2011, 2012, and 2013 were 86, 80, and 81%, respectively, yielding a final sample of 1,098, 1,202, and 1,202 participants, respectively.

## Measures

*Demographic information.* Participants were asked to report their age, race, sex, household income, marital status, and education level. Participants were also asked their political orientation, as previous studies have observed political ideology to moderate the extent of policy support for weight-related antidiscrimination laws (20,21). Additionally, as an individual difference factor observed to be correlated with anti-fat attitudes and weight bias (23,24), investigating political orientation can provide insight about preferences for particular antidiscrimination legislatures.

*Assessing support for measures to prohibit weight discrimination.* In the online survey, participants were provided with the following brief introduction to the topic of weight discrimination: "Currently, there are no laws to protect obese people from discrimination based on their body weight. Different types of laws are being considered to help protect obese individuals from discrimination based on their weight. We are interested in your opinion about whether you would support or oppose these proposed laws." Participants were asked three questions (in random order) that quantified the extent of their support for three weight-related antidiscrimination laws. These questions were largely guided by research on existing and proposed legal measures to address weight discrimination (20,21) including protections for people with disabilities (Law 1), civil rights statutes (Law 2), and legislation specifically pertaining to reducing weight-based workplace discrimination (Law 3) (Table 1). Question 2 has been proposed by legal scholars as a plausible law for prohibiting weight discrimination in the workplace (25), while Question 3 mirrors antidiscrimination legislature involving the addition of a new weight category into Civil Rights legislation that has been successfully enacted in Michigan and various local jurisdictions. The content and wording for each question has been tested in previous research, and the development and piloting of these questions are described elsewhere (20). Participants indicated their level of agreement to each statement on a 10-point Likert scale from 1 = "definitely would oppose" to 10 = "definitely would support." To ensure valid comparisons between the samples across three years, the content and wording of questions, and response scales were identical.

## Analysis

Chi-square of significance analyses were used to compare percentages of support for legal measures to prohibit weight discrimination over time with Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons

TABLE 2 Sample characteristics

Variables	Overall		2011		2012		2013		US general population	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	% <sup>d</sup>	
Total sample	3502	100.0	1098	100.0	1202	100.0	1202	100.0	100.0	
Gender										
Female	2167	61.9	710	64.7	743	61.8	714	59.4	50.8	
Male	1335	38.1	388	35.3	459	38.2	488	40.6	49.2	
Race/ethnicity										
White	1951	55.7	690	62.8	640	53.2	621	51.7	63.2	
African American	590	16.8	198	18.0	197	16.4	195	16.2	12.2	
Hispanic	798	22.8	196	17.9	298	24.8	304	25.3	16.6	
Mixed/others <sup>a</sup>	163	4.6	14	1.3	67	5.6	82	6.8	8.0	
Household income										
\$15,000-\$25,000	333	9.5	100	9.1	129	10.7	104	8.7	12.7	
\$25,000-\$49,999	1466	41.9	450	41.0	510	42.4	506	42.1	27.9	
\$50,000-\$74,999	807	23.0	263	24.0	272	22.6	272	22.6	20.8	
\$75,000-\$99,999	424	12.1	135	12.3	146	12.2	143	11.9	13.7	
\$100,000+	472	13.5	150	13.7	145	12.1	177	14.7	24.9	
Education level <sup>b</sup>										
High school or less	702	20.1	224	20.4	248	20.7	230	19.2	42.4	
Some college/Technical or vocation degree	1240	35.5	408	37.2	424	35.3	408	34.1	29.1	
College graduate or higher	1552	44.4	465	42.4	528	44.0	559	46.7	28.7	
Age										
21-34	1319	37.7	390	35.5	428	35.6	501	41.7	34.2	
35-49	1317	37.6	408	37.2	458	38.1	451	37.5	33.5	
50-65	866	24.7	300	27.3	316	26.3	250	20.8	32.3	
Marital status <sup>c</sup>										
Single	592	16.9	170	15.5	202	16.8	220	18.3	32.4 <sup>d</sup>	
Single, living with another as a couple	348	9.9	105	9.6	114	9.5	129	10.8	-	
Married	2152	61.5	676	61.6	739	61.6	737	61.4	48.4	
Divorced/Separated	345	9.9	127	11.6	117	9.8	101	8.4	13.2	
Widowed	60	1.7	19	1.7	28	2.3	13	1.1	6.0	
Political orientation <sup>e</sup>										
Liberal	762	21.8	220	20.0	271	22.6	271	22.6	28.0	
Moderate	1547	44.2	495	45.1	518	43.1	534	44.4	29.3	
Conservative	1193	34.1	383	34.9	413	34.4	397	33.0	42.7	

<sup>a</sup>Mixed/other is excluded from regression analysis.  
<sup>b</sup>There are eight participants who selected "prefer not to answer."  
<sup>c</sup>There are five participants who selected "prefer not to answer."  
<sup>d</sup>Includes all "single" individuals surveyed by US Census Bureau.  
<sup>e</sup>Comparison data extracted from the 2008 American National Election Study (NES).

adjustment. We also examined the association between sociodemographic variables and support for legal measures. As previous studies have documented individual differences (i.e., gender, income, education, age, and race/ethnicity) (18-21) in the extent of policy support against weight discrimination, each of these demographic variables were assessed in our analyses. Given that the intention of the study was to assess changes over time (rather than to produce precise population estimates) and assess comparisons between groups, the over-sampling of Hispanics was not adjusted. The

Hosmer-Lemeshow test determined model fit, and all models fit the data well (all  $P > 0.6$ ); multicollinearity between independent variables were checked, and no significant multicollinearity problems were present (correlation values were  $< 0.35$ ). Using the same predictor variables, multiple logistic regression models were conducted to determine the salient predictors of support for each of the three proposed antidiscrimination laws. Reported level differences are at least  $P = 0.05$ . All data were analyzed in this study using SAS software (version 9.3).

**TABLE 3** Extent of agreement and ratings of support for antidiscrimination laws within total and independent samples

	Overall		2011		2012		2013	
	%	Mean (±SD)	%	Mean (±SD)	%	Mean (±SD)	%	Mean (±SD)
<b>Law 1:</b> Obese persons should be subject to the same legal protection and benefits offered to people with physical disabilities.	63.8	6.4(±3.1)	61.6 <sup>a</sup>	6.3(±3.1)	60.7 <sup>a</sup>	6.2(±3.2)	69.0 <sup>b</sup>	6.7(±3.0)
<b>Law 2:</b> My state should include body weight in their civil rights law in order to protect people from discrimination based on their body weight, similar to laws that protect against discrimination due to race, religion, and sex.	72.2	7.0(±2.9)	70.1 <sup>a</sup>	6.9(±3.0)	70.0 <sup>a</sup>	6.8(±3.0)	76.3 <sup>b</sup>	7.2(±2.8)
<b>Law 3:</b> It should be illegal for an employer to do all of the following: (a) Refuse to hire a qualified person because of his/her body weight. (b) Fire a qualified employee because of his/her body weight. (c) Deny a promotion or appropriate compensation to a qualified employee because of his/her body weight.	78.1	7.6(±3.0)	81.0 <sup>a</sup>	7.8(±2.8)	74.7 <sup>b</sup>	7.4(±3.1)	78.9 <sup>a</sup>	7.6(±2.9)

Participants who selected 1 to 5 on the rating scale were coded as “not supportive” of the law; respondents who selected 6 to 10 were coded as “supportive” of the law. Superscript letters indicate percentages that are significantly different from each other across 2011, 2012, and 2013, after Bonferroni corrections were applied.

## Results

### Sample characteristics

The initial total sample of 3,502 adults includes: 1,098 adults in 2011; 1,202 adults in 2012, and 1,202 adults in 2013. Participants were excluded from regression analyses if they did not report any data on a demographic variable ( $n = 8$ ) or selected the “mixed or other” racial category ( $n = 163$ ), yielding a final sample of 3,331 adults. The racial distribution of this sample closely resembles that of the general US population. Slight variations from national averages emerged for distribution of age, gender, income, and education (26). In light of goals of the larger study to oversample females, and Hispanic and African American parents with children 2-17 years, such differences and overall sample distribution are consistent with expectations. Additionally, these sampling quotas offset large expected variation in participation rates to produce a sample with adequate representation by particularly vulnerable subpopulations such as ethnic minorities and low-income households.

Sociodemographic characteristics of the total sample and independent samples for each year are presented in Table 2. The total sample consisted of 2,167 women (61.9%) and 1,335 men (38.1%). Over half of participants identified their race/ethnicity as white non-Hispanic (55.7%), followed by Hispanic (22.8%) and black (16.8%). Forty-four percent of participants reported having a moderate political affiliation, followed by 34.1% Conservatives, and 21.8% Liberal. As anticipated from the identical sampling frame and methodology across 3 years of data collection, similar sample sociodemographic characteristics are reflected in each year.

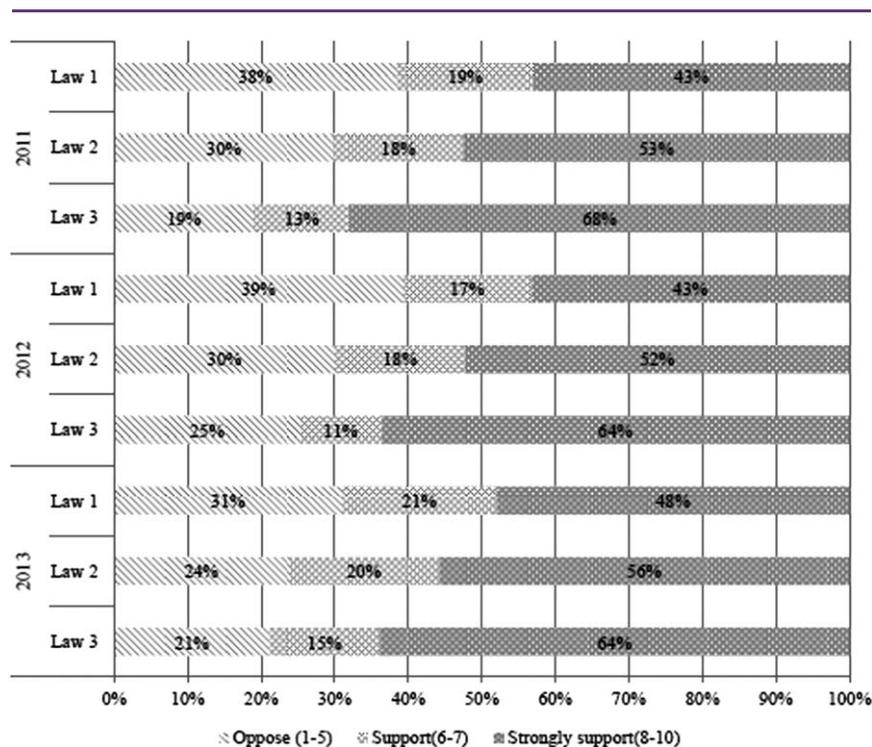
### Descriptive analyses of support from 2011 to 2013

Table 3 shows the percentage of agreement and mean ratings of support for each of the three proposed antidiscrimination laws within the total

and independent samples. Overall, there was a moderate-to-high level of agreement for the three proposed legal measures to prohibit weight discrimination between 2011 and 2013, suggesting that in general, a considerable majority of participants consistently agree that legal measures are necessary to protect individuals against weight discrimination.

However, there was variation in the extent of agreement and ratings of support for each proposed law. Across the three years, Law 3 (a law that makes it illegal for an employer to refuse to hire, fire or deny a promotion to a qualified person because of his/her weight) received the highest level of agreement by more than three-quarters of participants (78.1%), followed by 72.2% of participants who supported Law 2 (including weight as a protected category in Civil Rights laws) and 63.8% of participants who expressed support for Law 1 (that people with obesity should be subject to the same protections offered to people with other physical disabilities).

From 2011 to 2013, individuals became increasingly supportive or remained consistent in their support for the three proposed laws. Specifically, participants’ extent of agreement and ratings of support increased for Laws 1 and 2, and remained relatively consistent for Law 3 across the three years. In comparing consecutive years, the extent of support remained consistent for Laws 1 and 2 from 2011 to 2012, but then significantly grew from 2012 to 2013. Compared to those surveyed in 2011 and 2012, participants in 2013 indicated greater agreement for laws that would extend disability benefits to individuals who are obese (61.6% in 2011 and 60.7% in 2012 versus 69% in 2013) and legal measures to add body weight as a protected category in Civil Rights laws (70.1% in 2011 and 70.0% in 2012 versus 76.3% in 2013). Evaluating consecutive years also revealed a notable pattern of fluctuations in the level of support for workplace-specific antidiscrimination measures (Law 3). From 2011 to 2012,



**Figure 1** shows the strength of support for each of the three laws to prohibit weight discrimination by year. A rating of 8 to 10 was considered strong support; a rating of 6 or 7, support; and a rating of 1 to 5, oppose.

level of agreement in support for Law 3 decreased (81.0% to 74.7%), but from 2012 to 2013, this measure of support significantly increased (78.9%) and returned to a level comparable to that of 2011.

Figure 1 provides a closer evaluation of the growing strength of support for weight-related antidiscrimination laws. Over the past three years, an increasing percentage of participants expressed stronger levels of support (as indicated by ratings of 8, 9, or 10 on the 10-point Likert scale) for legislative actions against weight discrimination. In particular, more individuals expressed higher ratings of support for laws to extend disability protections to obesity (43% in 2011 and 2012 versus 48% in 2013) and of adding body weight as a protected category in Civil Rights laws (53% in 2011 and 52% in 2012 versus 56% in 2013). Between 2011 and 2013, the strength of support for Law 3 slightly diminished, but this law remained the most supported of the three measures assessed. Thus, although individuals showed increasingly receptive attitudes toward Laws 1 and 2, these results indicate that the participants consistently favored antidiscrimination laws specific to the employment setting (Law 3). Taken together, these measures of public attitudes about laws (i.e., extent of agreement, ratings of support, and proportion of participants who express the highest levels of support) indicate consistent support for legal measures protecting employees against weight discrimination.

### Sociodemographic predictors of support for antidiscrimination laws

The percentage of participants' agreement with each antidiscrimination law varied according to sociodemographic variables. In general,

women endorsed more support for each of the three laws compared to men (Law 1:  $\chi^2 = 4.72, P = 0.03$ ; Law 2:  $\chi^2 = 19.38, P < 0.01$ ; Law 3:  $\chi^2 = 35.28, P < 0.01$ ), and African Americans endorsed more agreement for each three laws compared to white non-Hispanics and Hispanics (Law 1:  $\chi^2 = 44.41, P < 0.01$ ; Law 2:  $\chi^2 = 40.56, P < 0.01$ ; Law 3:  $\chi^2 = 18.63, P < 0.01$ ). Support for Laws 1 and 2 were stronger among participants with lower versus higher household income level ( $\chi^2 = 6.09, P = 0.01$  and  $\chi^2 = 3.81, P = 0.05$ , respectively), as well as those with lower education (high school or less) compared with higher education ( $\chi^2 = 11.35, P < 0.01$  and  $\chi^2 = 8.90, P < 0.01$ , respectively). Age of participants also predicted their support for laws; older adults were more supportive of Law 1 than younger participants ( $\chi^2 = 8.11, P < 0.010$ ); on the contrary, younger participants expressed more support for Laws 2 and 3 than older participants ( $\chi^2 = 4.74, P = 0.03$  and  $\chi^2 = 9.97, P < 0.010$ , respectively). Finally, participants' political orientation revealed those with a Liberal orientation expressed more support for Laws 2 and 3 compared to Moderates or Conservatives ( $\chi^2 = 18.35, P < 0.01$  and  $\chi^2 = 17.57, P < 0.01$ , respectively).

Multiple logistic regression results pertaining to predictors of support for each of three laws are presented in Table 4. Overall, the likelihood of support for antidiscrimination laws was higher among individuals who were female, African American, those with lower education (high school or less) and with a political orientation identified as Liberal or Moderate. In addition, participants who were 50-65 years of age (vs. 21-34 years of age) were two times more likely to agree with Law 1, while participants who were 35-65 years of age (vs. 21-34 years of age) were less likely to support Law 3.

**TABLE 4** Multiple logistical regression results about predictors of support for each of the three antidiscrimination laws

Variables	Adjusted OR (95% CI)		
	Law 1	Law 2	Law 3
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	1.0	1.0	1.0
Male	0.9 (0.7-1.0)*	0.8 (0.6-0.9)***	0.7 (0.5-0.9)***
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
African American	1.0	1.0	1.0
White	0.5 (0.1-0.6)***	0.6 (0.5-0.8)***	0.7 (0.5-0.9)***
Hispanic	0.8 (0.6-1.0)	1.0 (0.7-1.2)	0.6 (0.5-0.8)***
<b>Household income</b>			
\$15,000-\$25,000	1.0	1.0	1.0
\$25,000-\$49,999	1.0 (0.8-1.3)	1.2 (0.9-1.5)	1.0 (0.8-1.4)
\$50,000-\$74,999	1.0 (0.7-1.3)	1.2 (0.9-1.6)	1.0 (0.7-1.4)
\$75,000-\$99,999	1.2 (0.9-1.7)	1.3 (0.9-1.9)	0.9 (0.6-1.2)
\$100,000+	0.8 (0.6-1.1)	1.0 (0.7-1.5)	0.9 (0.6-1.3)
<b>Education level</b>			
High school or less	1.0	1.0	1.0
Some college/Technical or vocation degree	0.7 (0.6-0.9)***	0.9 (0.7-1.1)	1.2 (1.0-1.5)
College graduate or higher	0.7 (0.6-0.9)***	0.8(0.6-0.9)**	0.3 (1.0-1.6)*
<b>Age</b>			
21-34 years	1.0	1.0	1.0
35-49 years	1.2 (1.0-1.4)	1.0 (0.8-1.2)	0.8 (0.7-1.0)**
50-65 years	1.6 (1.3-1.9)***	1.0 (0.8-1.2)	0.8 (0.6-1.0)**
<b>Political orientation</b>			
Conservative	1.0	1.0	1.0
Moderate	1.1 (0.9-1.3)	1.3 (1.1-1.5)**	1.2 (1.0-1.4)
Liberal	1.0 (0.8-1.2)	1.3 (1.0-1.6)***	1.5 (1.2-1.9)***

Note: CI = confidence interval; OR = odds ratio. \* $P = 0.05$ ; \*\* $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $P < 0.01$ .

Household income level did not predict likelihood of support for any of the laws after controlling for other socio-demographic variables in this study.

## Discussion

To our knowledge, this study is the first to document public attitudes about legal measures to address weight discrimination over time. Our findings indicate that from 2011 to 2013, at least 60% of individuals supported proposed measures to address weight discrimination. In addition, public attitudes generally became increasingly supportive or remained consistent over time for these legal measures through existing civil rights statutes, disability protections, and workplace discrimination legislation.

Similar to findings from the limited previous research in this area (20), support was consistently highest for laws that would prohibit weight discrimination in the workplace (supported by at least 75% of participants), followed by support for adding body weight as a protected category to civil rights statutes, and finally for measures extending disability protections to individuals with obesity. Although both the present and previous findings suggest that laws extending

the same legal protections to persons with obesity as those offered to people with physical disabilities may receive the least support, it is noteworthy that support for disability protections was substantially higher in the present study (60-69% of participants) than in previous research (27-32% of participants) (20). Although pursuing legal recourse for weight discrimination through existing disability laws has not proven to be an effective strategy for most people, Congress recently passed the ADA Amendments Act, which expands the definition of what constitutes a disability and may increase protection for individuals with severe obesity who experience discrimination based on actual or perceived disability (13).

Furthermore, support in the present study increased over time for both disability protections (61% in 2011 to 69% in 2013) and for measures to add body weight as a protected class in Civil Rights statutes (70% in 2011 to 76% in 2013). Although it is not directly evident what reasons might account for these increases observed in 2013, one possible contributor to these findings is the announcement by the American Medical Association (and resulting national media attention) pertaining to the classification of obesity as an official "disease" (27). This announcement and media coverage occurred in June 2013, shortly before the scheduled data collection for the present study. Given that this announcement and accompanying news media addressed the medical basis for obesity being classified as a

disease, the chronic effects of obesity on health, and the importance of increased resources (such as insurance reimbursement) for obesity intervention and treatment (28), it is possible that this information shifted perceptions in ways that reduced attributions of blame toward persons with obesity and/or became more consistent with policy and legal measures that would justify their legal protection. As no research has examined public opinions about obesity being classified as a disease, it would be informative for future work to explore this issue and associations with support for anti-weight discrimination policies.

Like previous research in this area (20,21), the present study similarly found that support for antidiscrimination laws was higher among women, African Americans, and those with lower education and with a political orientation identified as Liberal or Moderate. Gender differences may be partially attributable to heightened vulnerability of women to weight discrimination (2), who may be more perceptive of weight-based inequities and the need for measures to address this issue compared to men. Prior research has additionally demonstrated that political conservatism is positively correlated with expressions of weight bias (24,29,30), and may explain in part why there was higher agreement for anti-discrimination laws among liberals and moderates. It is not clear why support for laws was higher among individuals of lower education, especially given the lack of effect of income level on participants' ratings, or why support was higher among African Americans given rates of weight discrimination are present across racial/ethnic groups, and especially among Whites (2). These findings suggest a need for additional research to clarify potential demographic difference related to support for anti-discrimination measures.

The present study identifies several limitations and directions for future research. Data on participants' body weight or personal experiences with weight stigma were not collected in this study; however, given findings from comparable previous research (20,21) we expect that individuals with obesity or those reporting experiences of discrimination and stigma would independently have greater odds of supporting the three laws examined in this study. Furthermore, considering previous findings that among persons with overweight, women (18,20,21) and African Americans (18) endorse greater support for weight-related antidiscrimination laws, we anticipate race and gender to similarly moderate the association between body weight and policy support in this sample. Thus, it will be important for future work to examine whether individuals' own body weight or personal experiences of weight stigma affect their support for antidiscrimination measures over time.

Additionally, there are other potential policy strategies to address weight discrimination that were beyond the scope of this study, but should be assessed, such as measures involving state and local policies to address workplace bullying, weight-based bullying in schools, or other government protections for persons with obesity. In light of some research indicating that differential framing of messages about weight discrimination can influence public attitudes (21), it would be informative for future work to identify whether message frames can influence opinions about antidiscrimination measures over time.

Finally, the present findings offer several policy implications and may be particularly informative as interest in weight discrimination continues to increase among policy makers in the US. In 2013, Mas-

sachusetts proposed a law to prohibit weight discrimination, and for the first time in 15 years the bill successfully made it through the Labor and Workforce Development Committee (31). The sponsor of the legislation indicated that the favorable committee vote was in part a result of policy makers learning about research evidence of the nature and extent of weight discrimination (32). If the law is passed in 2014, Massachusetts will become the second state in the country to have legislation prohibiting weight discrimination. Thus, the present study offers evidence that can inform these and future related policy initiatives, and indicates that support is clearly established for policy changes to improve the quality of life for individuals with obesity through legal measures to prohibit weight discrimination. **O**

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YS conducted the literature search, and led the data interpretation and writing of the manuscript. RP conceived and designed the study, and led the revisions of the manuscript. SL conducted the data analysis and generated tables and figures. FF carried out the data collection and contributed to the survey design. All authors were involved in writing the manuscript, data interpretation, and had final approval.

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