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# The Language of Obesity

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# Language

*What language should we use to describe a person with increased adiposity?*

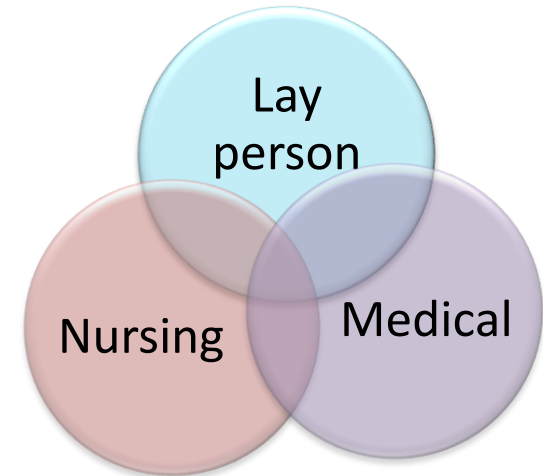
*“Within earshot of the patient I talk about obesity and I don’t generally tend to use the word fat” (George-nurse)*

*“...I’d use the word fat rather than obese” (Helen-nurse)*

*“It’s actually a lot worse to call someone obese than just fat...obese is more of a dramatic term of saying you’re beyond fat and morbidly obese, it’s like hammering the nail in the coffin” (Lee-nurse)*

*“A friend of mine had called a patient obese in her nursing notes and the patient read the notes and was massively offended by it” (Florence-nurse)*

Hales, C. (2015). Misfits: An ethnographic study of extremely fat patients in intensive care. Doctoral thesis. Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.



Puhl et al. (2013)  
Stigmatising language

- Morbidly obese
- Fat
- Obese
- Chubby
- Heavy

- 
- High BMI
  - Weight

# Language

## **Implications for Practice**

We wanted to engage in open debate about what is acceptable, respectful, appropriate and meaningful language in the delivery of patient care

We wanted to better understand the impact of the language we use during patient care

We wanted to explore appropriate language that is meaningful to the care interaction in NZ

# Language of Obesity Study

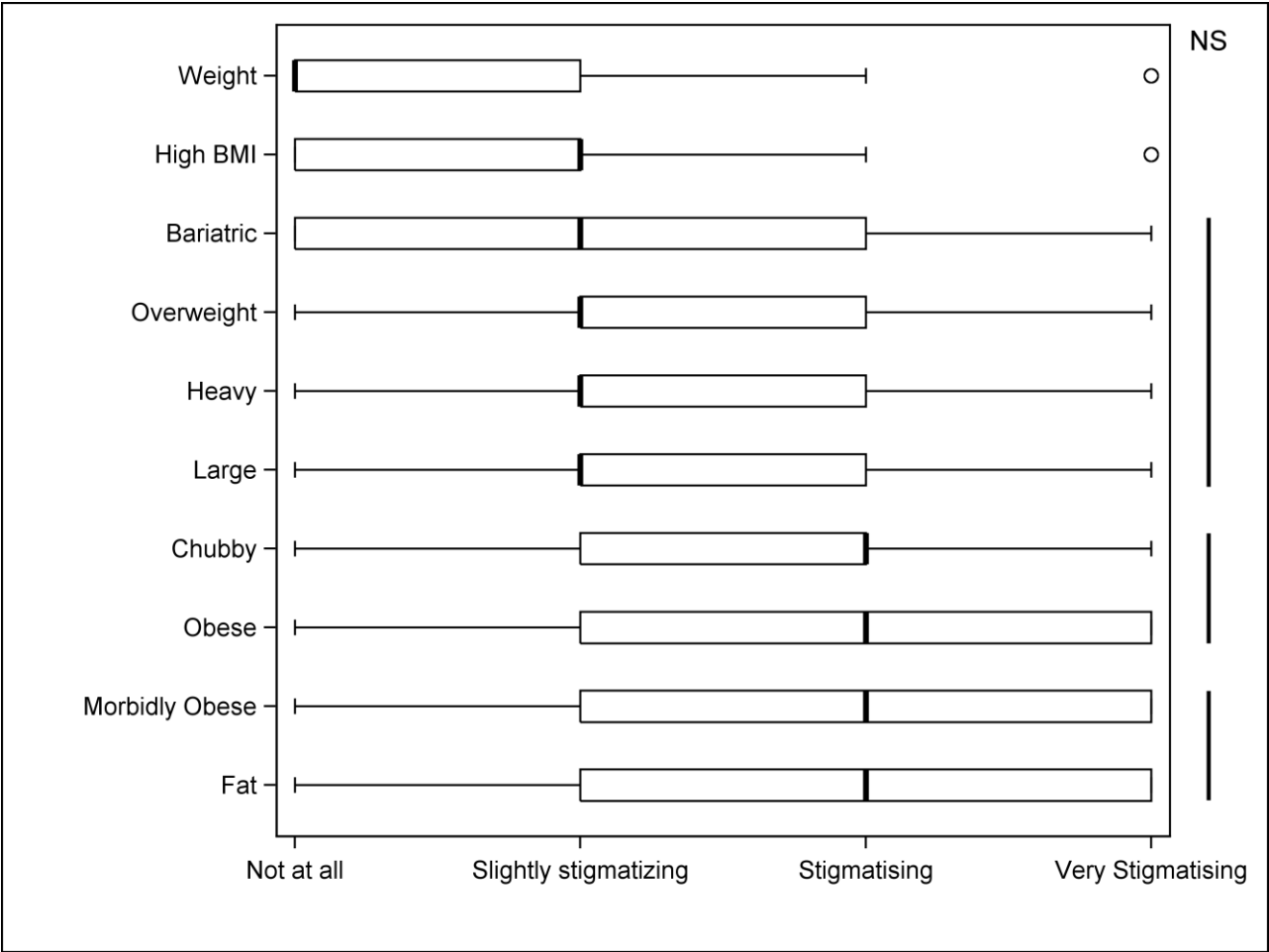
**Table 1: summary of sample characteristics** **N = 779**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	<b>574</b>	<b>74</b>
Male	<b>199</b>	<b>26</b>
Other	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Pakeha/European	<b>530</b>	<b>68</b>
Māori	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>
Pacific Peoples	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>
Asian	<b>87</b>	<b>11</b>
Other	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>
? & multiple	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Health professionals	<b>329</b>	<b>42</b>
Lay Person or student	<b>444</b>	<b>57</b>
Not stated	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

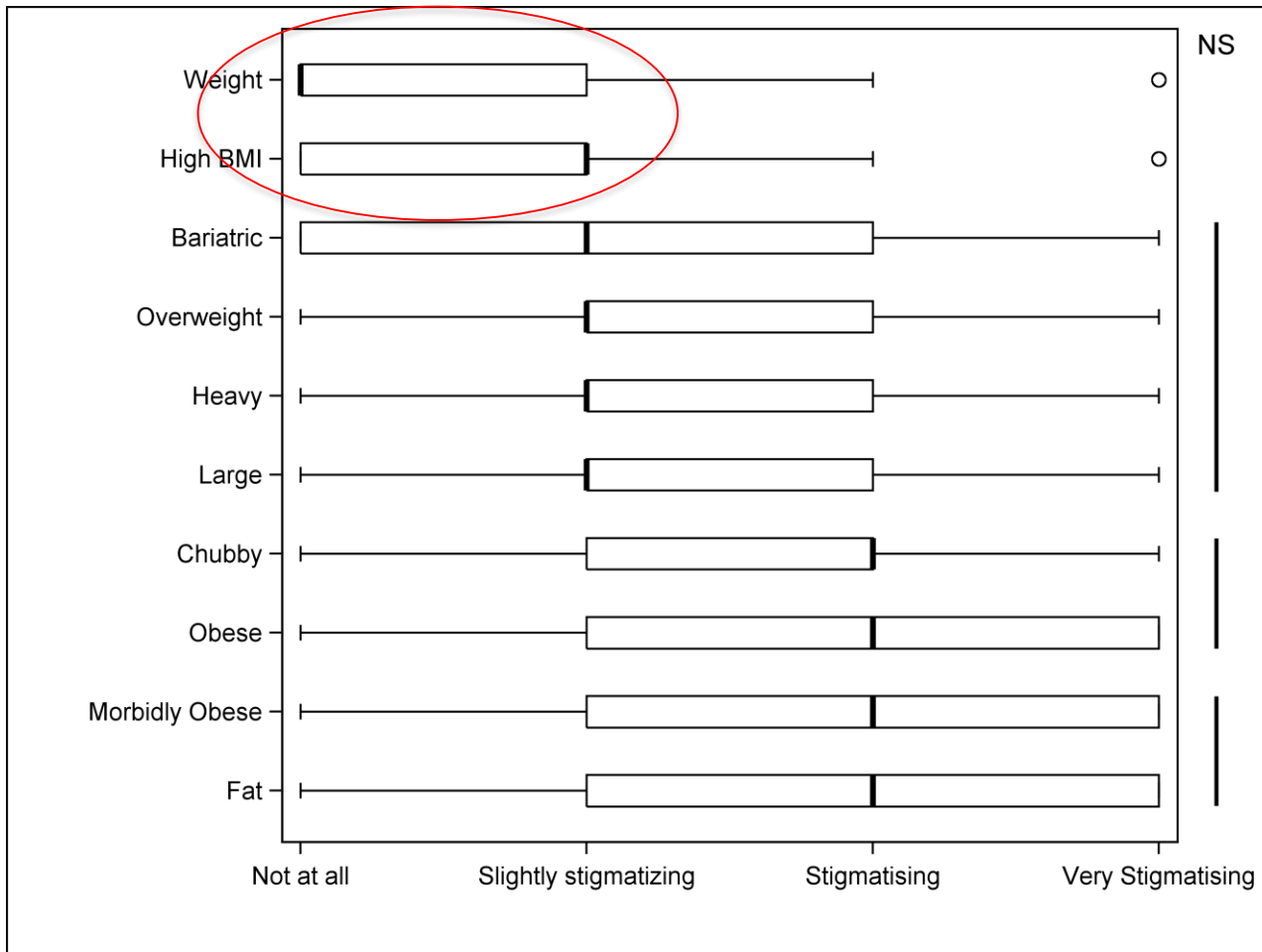
We administered a self report questionnaire in 2016 at BMI 2016 seminars, at local supermarkets, hospital foyers and University public areas.

We wanted to better understand perceptions and preferences of commonly used words.....

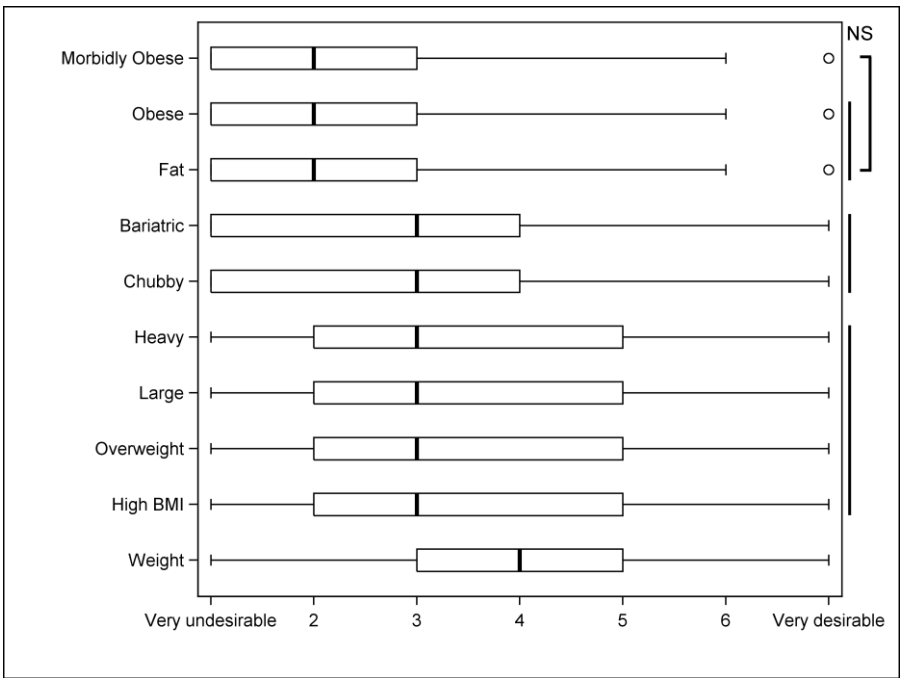
# Stigmatising Terms



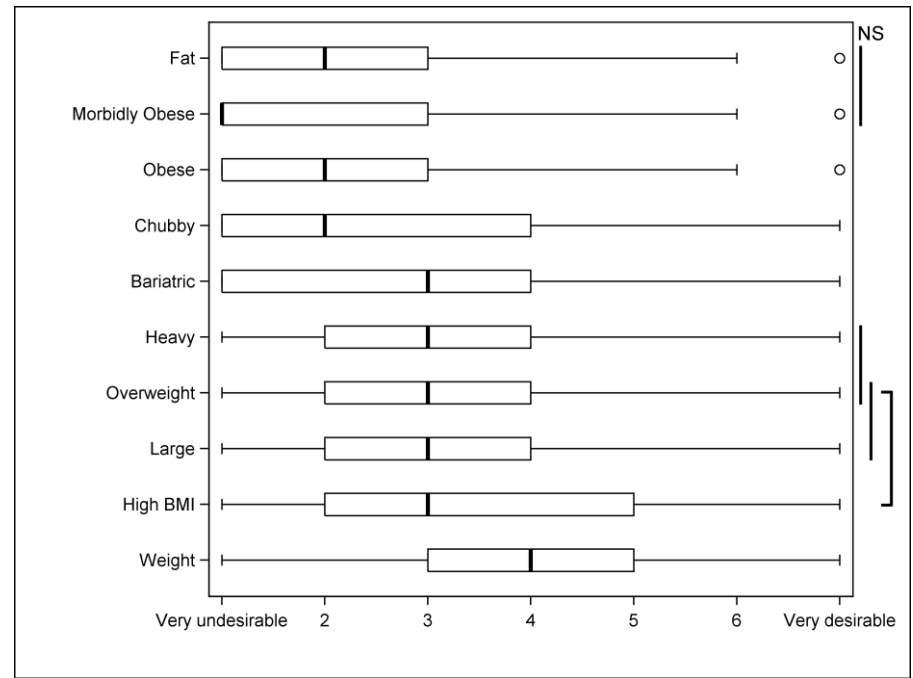
# Least Stigmatising



# Desirable and Undesirable Terms: people you know vs people do not know

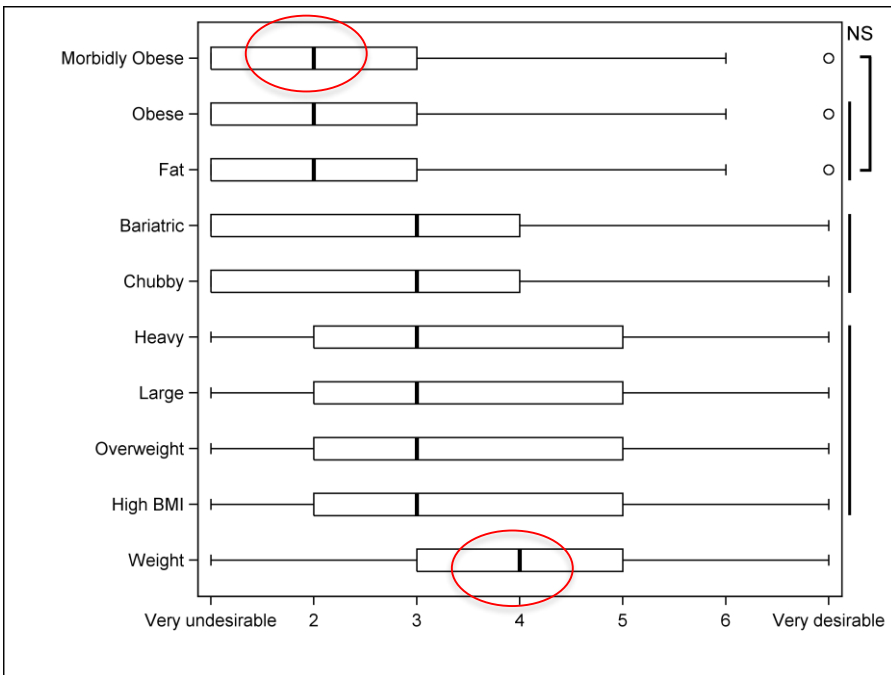


Know

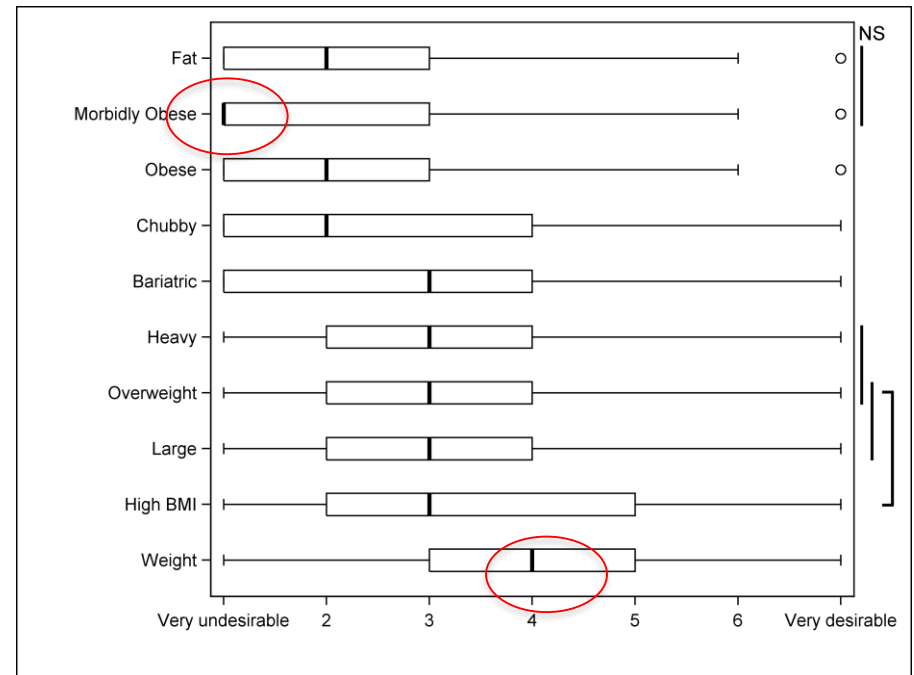


Do not Know

# Desirable and Undesirable Language: people you know vs people do not know



Know

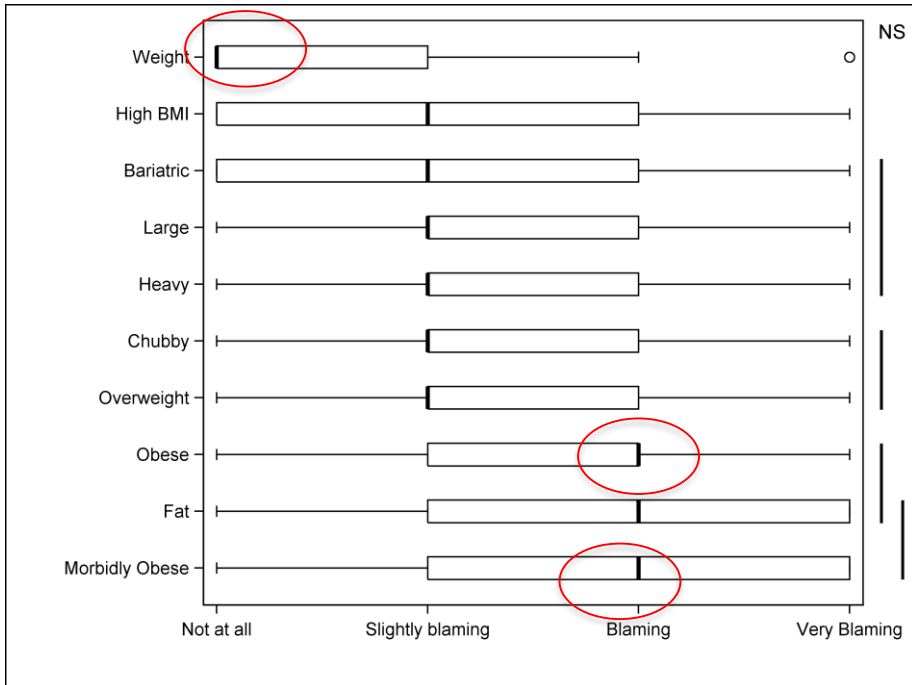


Do not Know

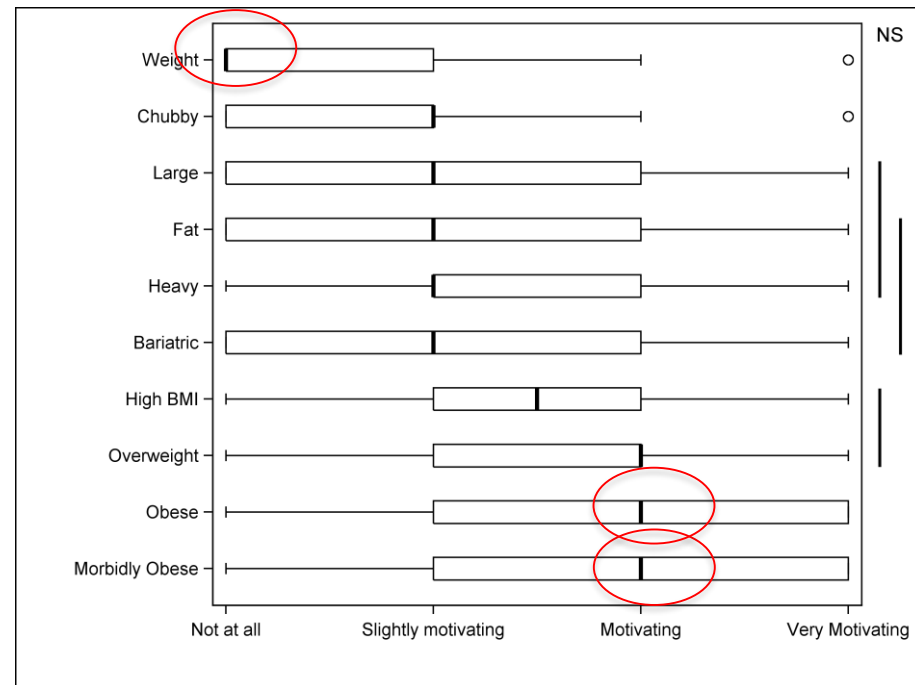


# Motivating and Blaming Language

## people you know vs do not know



Blaming



Motivating

# Language of Obesity Study

Take home messages about language from our analysis so far.....

**Weight** is but one indicator when caring for very large patients and as a preferred term it is limited in its ability to convey size, shape and actual care needs.

**Bariatric** is a poorly understood term.

Responses showed a 'dissonance' between terms we believe to be more blaming and more motivating.

Health professionals may benefit by developing a 'language toolkit' of terms that are appropriate to/with the patient and the particular service need at any particular point.



We would like to sincerely thank all the people who took the time to think about and complete a language study questionnaire for us.