

Investigating motivations for weight loss and benefits of attending a commercial weight management organisation post-natally



J.Barber, C.Pallister, A.Avery, J.Lavin
Slimming World, Derbyshire, DE55 4RF

Introduction

Previous reports have indicated that women feel pressure from celebrity culture and wider society to lose weight swiftly after having a baby (Netmums and The Royal College of Midwives, 2010). The aim of this study was to investigate the motivations that women have to lose weight post-natally, weight change whilst attending Slimming World and also the impact of weight retention and weight loss following pregnancy on self-esteem.

Methods

An online survey of women who had given birth in the last 2 years was hosted on Slimming World's website during September 2013. The survey used quantitative and qualitative questions to determine the motivation for joining Slimming World after having a baby, lifestyle behaviours, self-esteem related to post-pregnancy weight and also asked for self-reported weight and height data.

Results

1015 postnatal women responded to this survey. The majority of participants (n=533, 52.5%) had been members for less than 3 months, with a joining BMI of 33.3kg/m² (SD 5.85) and BMI at the time of survey of 30.5kg/m² (SD 5.86). Women reported retaining a range of excess weights in pregnancy, the most commonly reported being between 1-2 stone (n=374, 36.8%). 71% (n=611) of those who already had children reported having retained weight from a previous pregnancy. 82% said retaining weight post-natally had affected their self-esteem.

After losing weight with Slimming World following this pregnancy:

- 78.6% expressed improvements in self-esteem
- 70.1% reported feeling better about their body size/shape since joining Slimming World
- 38% were now lighter than their pre-pregnancy weight

The most commonly reported reasons for wanting to lose weight were (Figure 1):

- 'to improve how I feel about my body size and shape' (85.2%)
- 'to improve my confidence' (76.6%)
- 'to lose weight I gained during my pregnancy' (66.5%)

When asked about whether they felt media/social pressure to be an ideal weight after having a baby, 31% of respondents agreed that they did. However, only a combined 12.5% of members cited media/social pressure as a contributor to initiating weight loss.

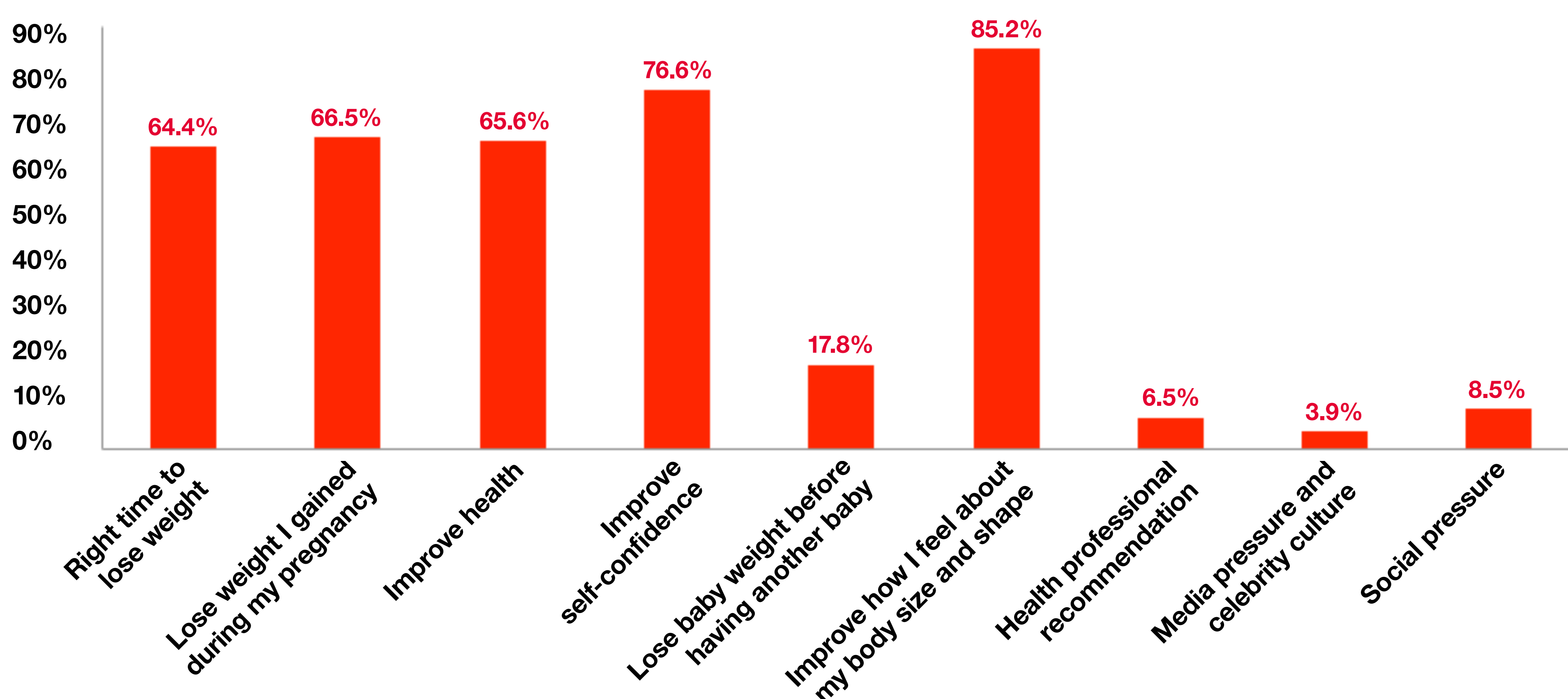


Figure 1. Factors influencing the initiation of weight loss

Conclusion

Although around a third of women report there is pressure from celebrity culture and the media to be an ideal weight post-natally, this survey indicates that social/media pressure and celebrity culture only plays a minimal role in a woman's actual decision to engage in weight loss at this time. Motivation to lose weight appears to be far more personal, related to feelings about body shape, the impact of weight retention on self-confidence and to improve health. Attendance at Slimming World resulted in weight loss, improved self-esteem, and improved satisfaction with body size and shape in the post-natal women surveyed.

References
Netmums and The Royal College of Midwives, 2010. *A growing problem: does weight matter in pregnancy?*
(Accessed at <http://www.netmums.com/home/netmums-campaigns/maternity-services-experiences-of-mums/a-growing-problem-weight-in-pregnancy>)