

Eastern Connecticut State University Students' Body Size Attitudes

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Introduction

This study was exploratory and designed to analyze Body Size Attitudes Students at Eastern Connecticut State University possess towards short and overweight people. A Body Size Attitudes Scale was administered as a measurement. The first 10 questions were from the "Anti-Fat Attitudes Scale" (Crandall, 1994). The last 10 questions on this Body Size Attitudes Scale were added to include and measure Anti-Short Attitudes. In this study, both graduate and undergraduate students were surveyed. A total of 100 students were surveyed: 50 seniors, 26 juniors, 13 sophomores, 8 freshman and 3 graduates. Both online and hardcopy surveys were provided. An analysis was administered to see if there were any correlations between people's height and weight and Body Size Attitudes. The research question presented for this study was "What Perceptions do Students at Eastern Connecticut State University have of Overweight and Short People?" The intention of this research study is to help bring awareness to heightism and fatphobia. Hopefully, in the future, courses on body size attitudes can be provided at this university to educate people on these social issues.

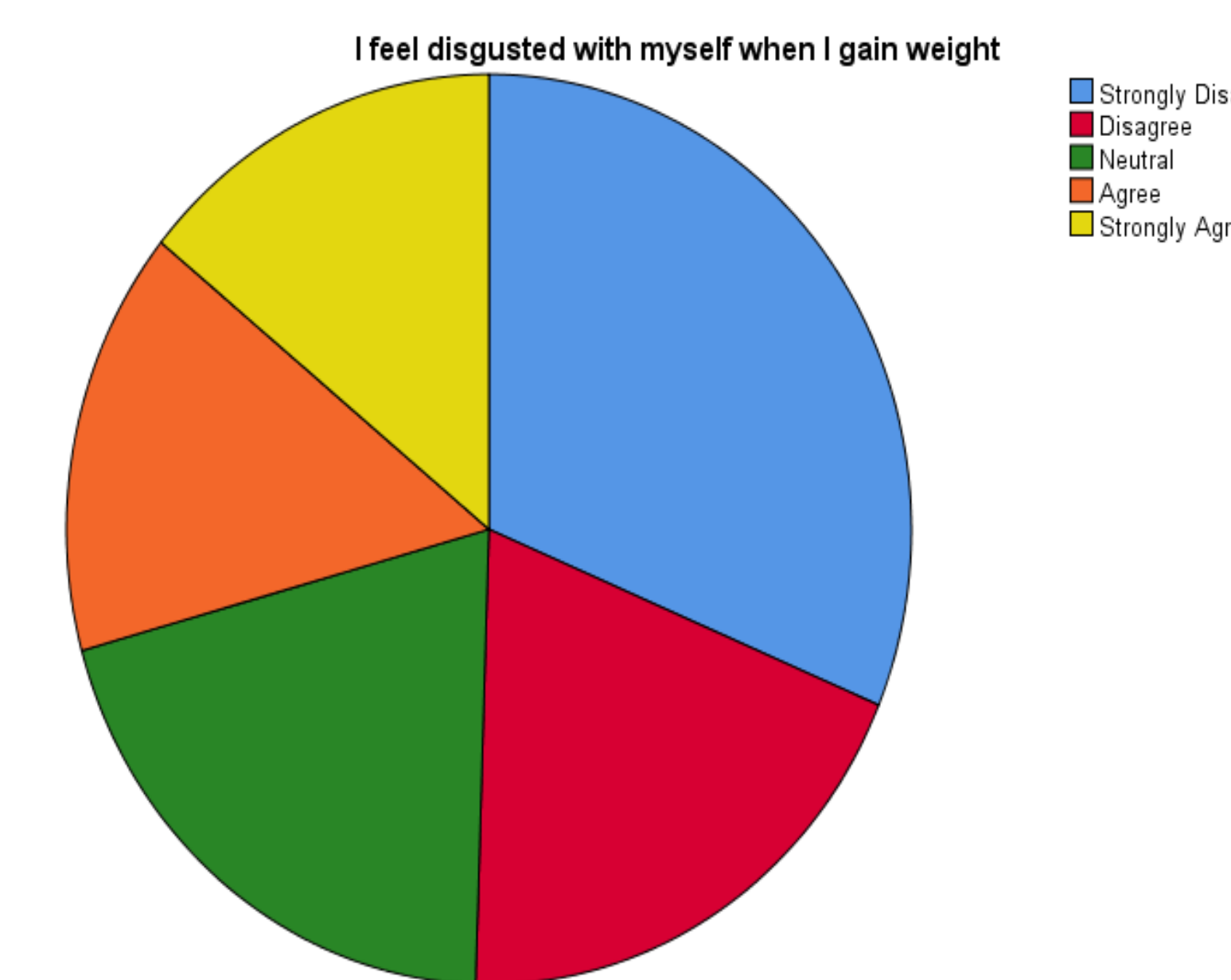
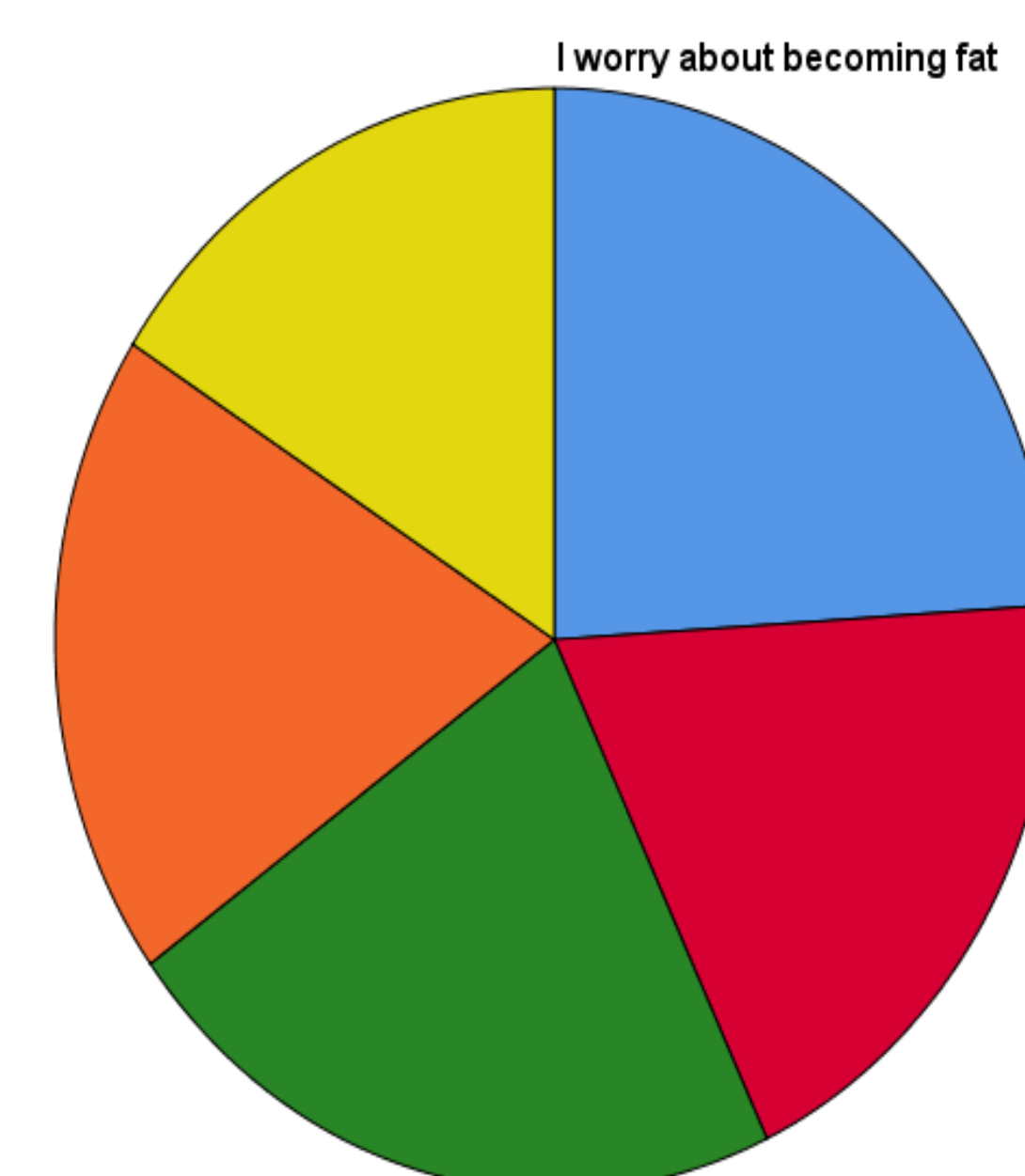
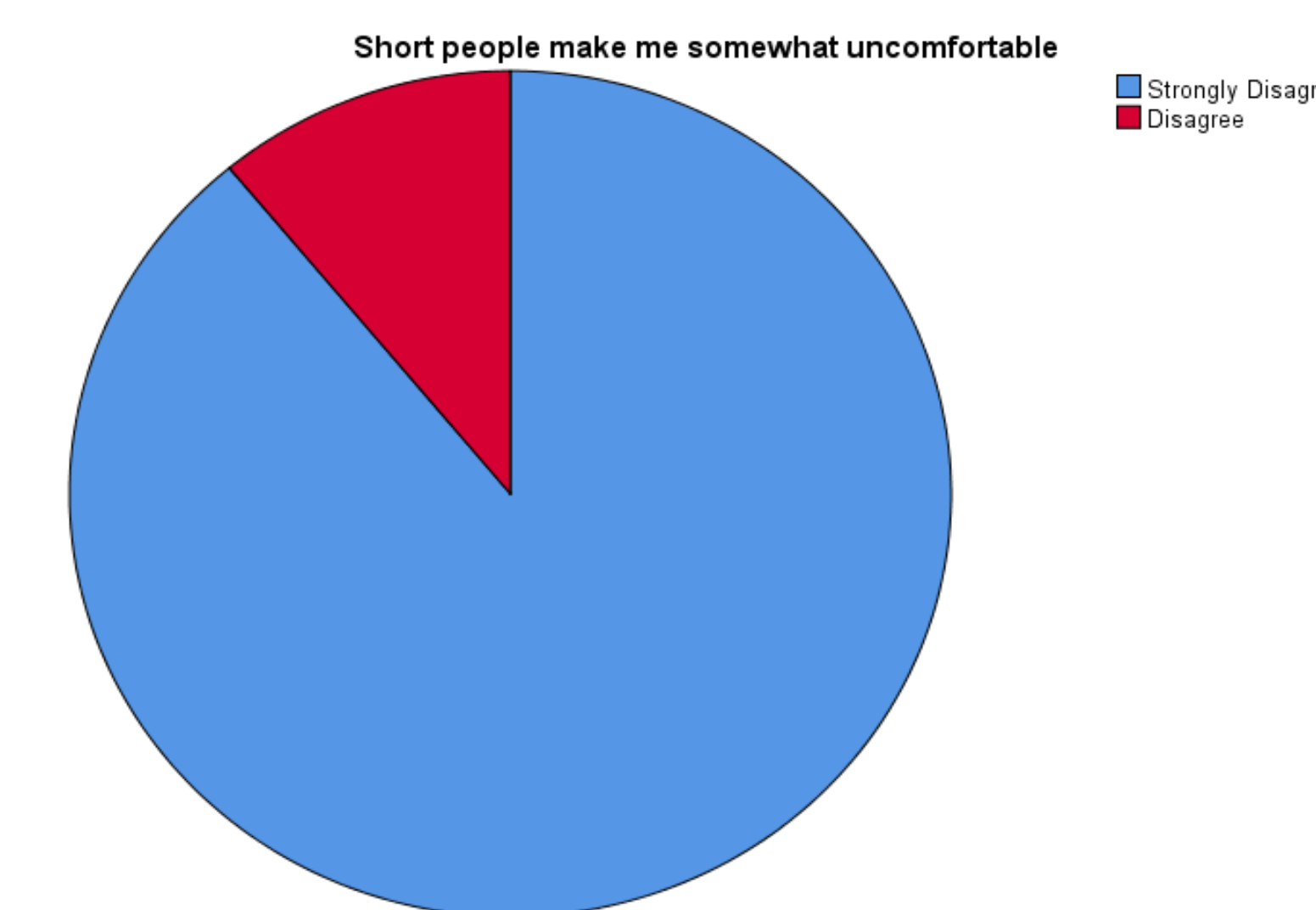
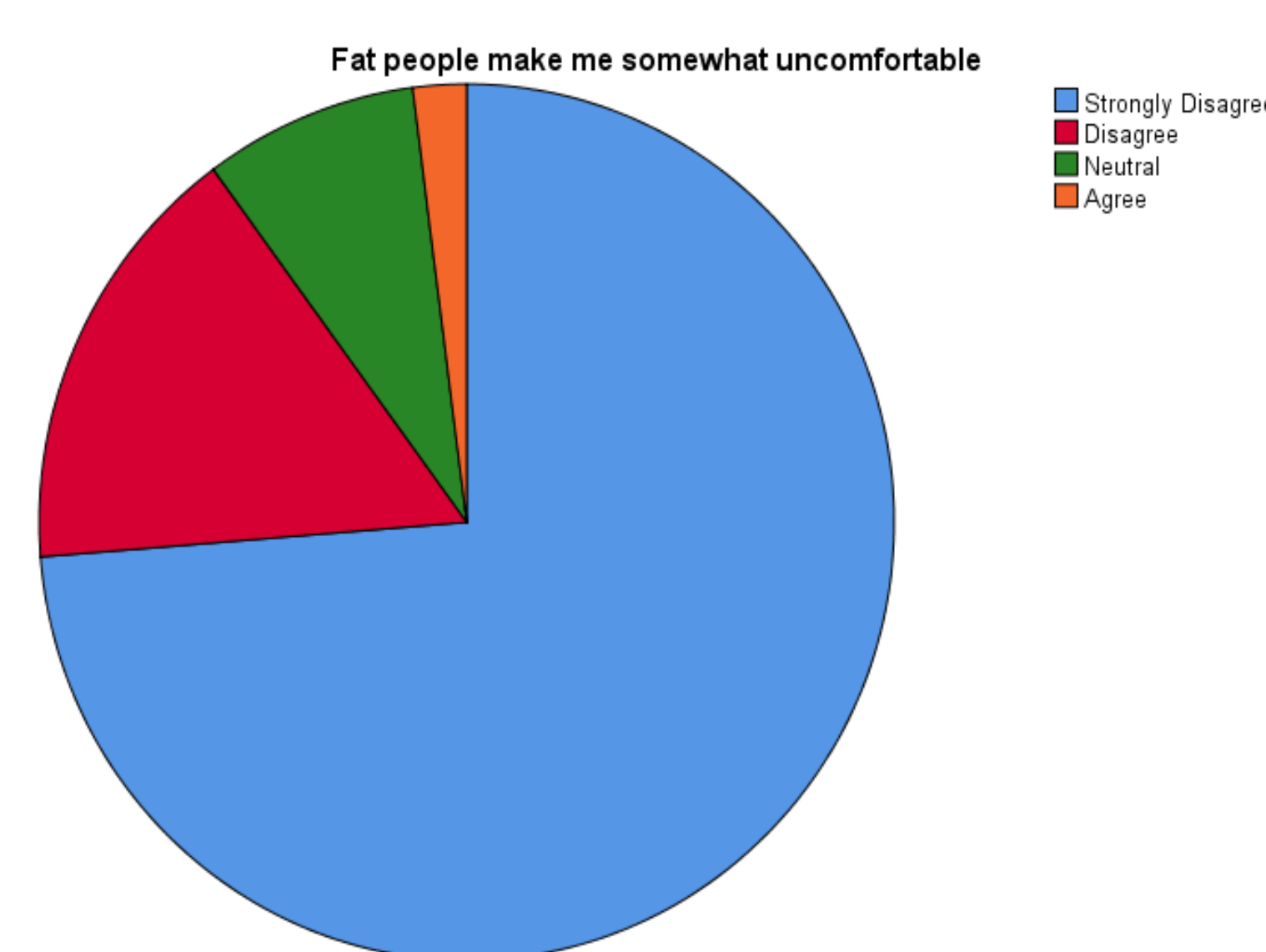
Background Information

Common themes of fatphobia and heightism have been found in previous literature.

- Overweight and short people's body sizes were equated to bad attributes, ex. "inferior, less than."
- Employment Discrimination, short and overweight people are less likely to be employed due to body size.
- Short and overweight people were less likely to be promoted and payed equally in the workplace because of body size. Short height and overweight people were viewed as not possessing leadership qualities because of their body sizes.
- Violence against short and overweight people is common, such as bullying in schools. Reports showed children who were bullied because of weight were often blamed. Overweight women who reported sexual assault were often dismissed.
- Short height and fat is perceived as negative and as something that needs to be fixed in the medical field.

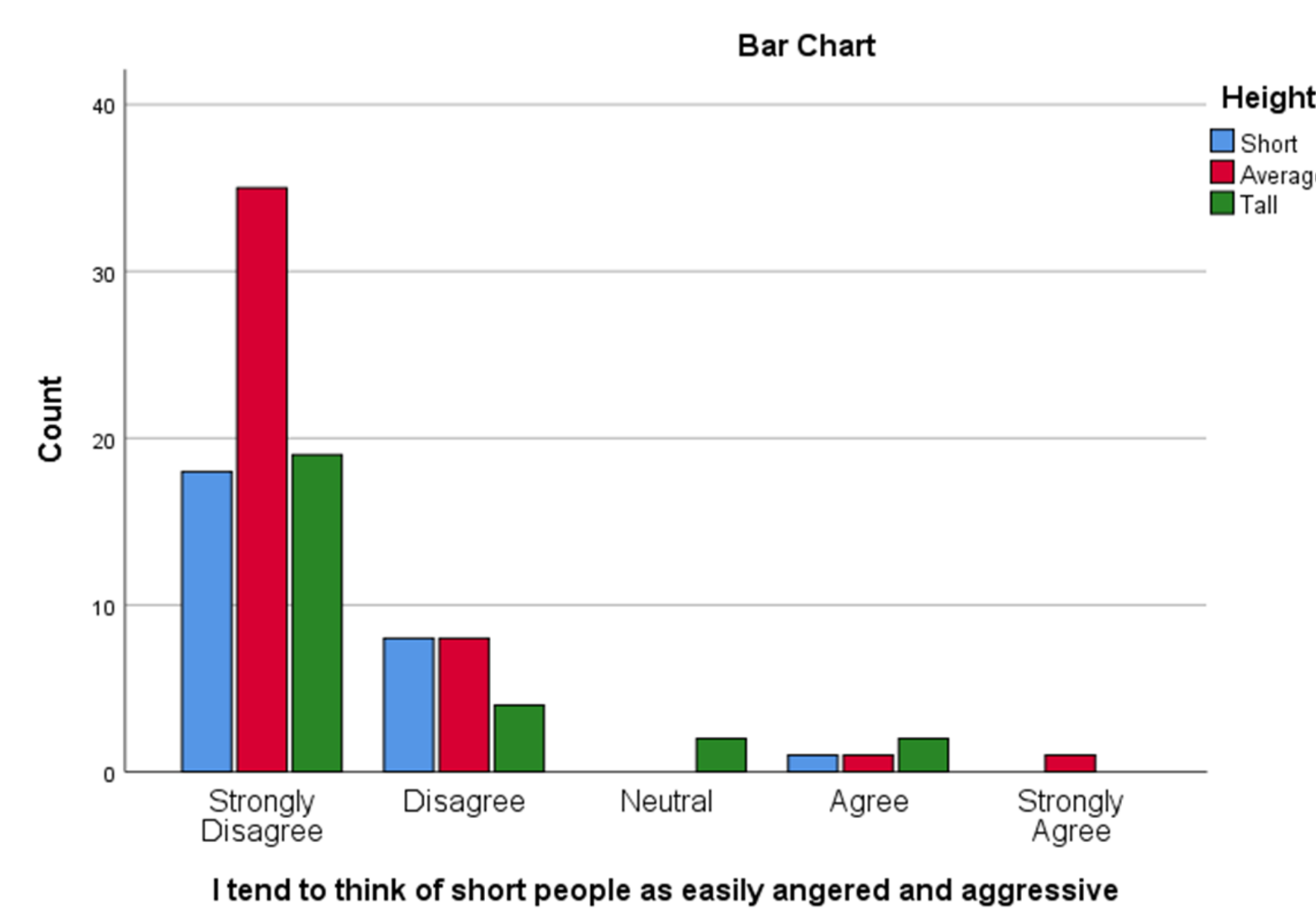
Observations

- Negative body size attitudes are significantly low with most students surveying strongly disagree and disagree
- Even though the negative body size attitude scores are low, students may be less accepting of overweight people than compared to short people, as students were more likely to strongly agree and agree to anti-fat attitudes than to anti-short attitudes.
- Most students selected disagree and strongly disagree to external Anti-Fat Attitude statements, but the statements where most participants answered neutral, agree and strongly agree to was internalized fatphobic statements.



Results

- Overweight students are slightly more likely to possess external anti-fat attitudes; for all 4 of the external anti-fat attitudes, participants that selected strongly agree were overweight.
- Tall and average heighted students are slightly more likely to possess anti-short attitudes.



Conclusions

Policy changes are suggested:

- Counseling and Psychological Services at Eastern Connecticut State University to create an information session(s) on eating disorders and a therapy group for students with eating disorders. Even though this study did not measure eating disorders, the internalized anti-fat attitudes scores are high and out of the 9 students who were underweight, some students selected agree and neutral to internalized fatphobic statements.
- Often there is not a lot of awareness of height and weight discrimination, even though these forms of bigotry happen all too often. Providing education on these social issues is vital and can help combat heightism and fatphobia. Holding a course here at Eastern Connecticut State University on these social issues and in our schools in general, can contribute towards changing the future to become a more inclusive place for overweight and short people.