



Fitness v. Physique: Is Body Image Harming Our Health?

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Introduction

Social media has become a massive part of our daily lives with apps like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram all at our fingertips. Thousands of images cross our screens daily of celebrity beach bods, selfies from popular influencers, and pictures of glamorous people in size zeros. This unspoken form of operant conditioning has been shown to lead to feelings of low self-esteem, incompleteness, and depression which in turn can lead social media users to risky behaviors that endanger their wellbeing like anorexia, bulimia, body dysmorphia, and steroid abuse.

- At least 30 million people suffer from an eating disorder in the US.
- Sufferers of anorexia nervosa can lose between 15-60% of their body weight and experience absent menstruation, dry skin, excessive hair on skin, and thinning of scalp hair.
- Every 62 minutes someone dies as a direct result of an eating disorder.
- Anabolic steroid use can lead to heart problems, acromegaly, and testicular dystrophy.
- Regular aerobic exercise decreases risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and obesity.
- Physical activity can lead to reduced feelings of depression and anxiety.

Purpose

- Determine how important health and fitness is to college aged individuals and whether they valued body image or personal fitness higher.

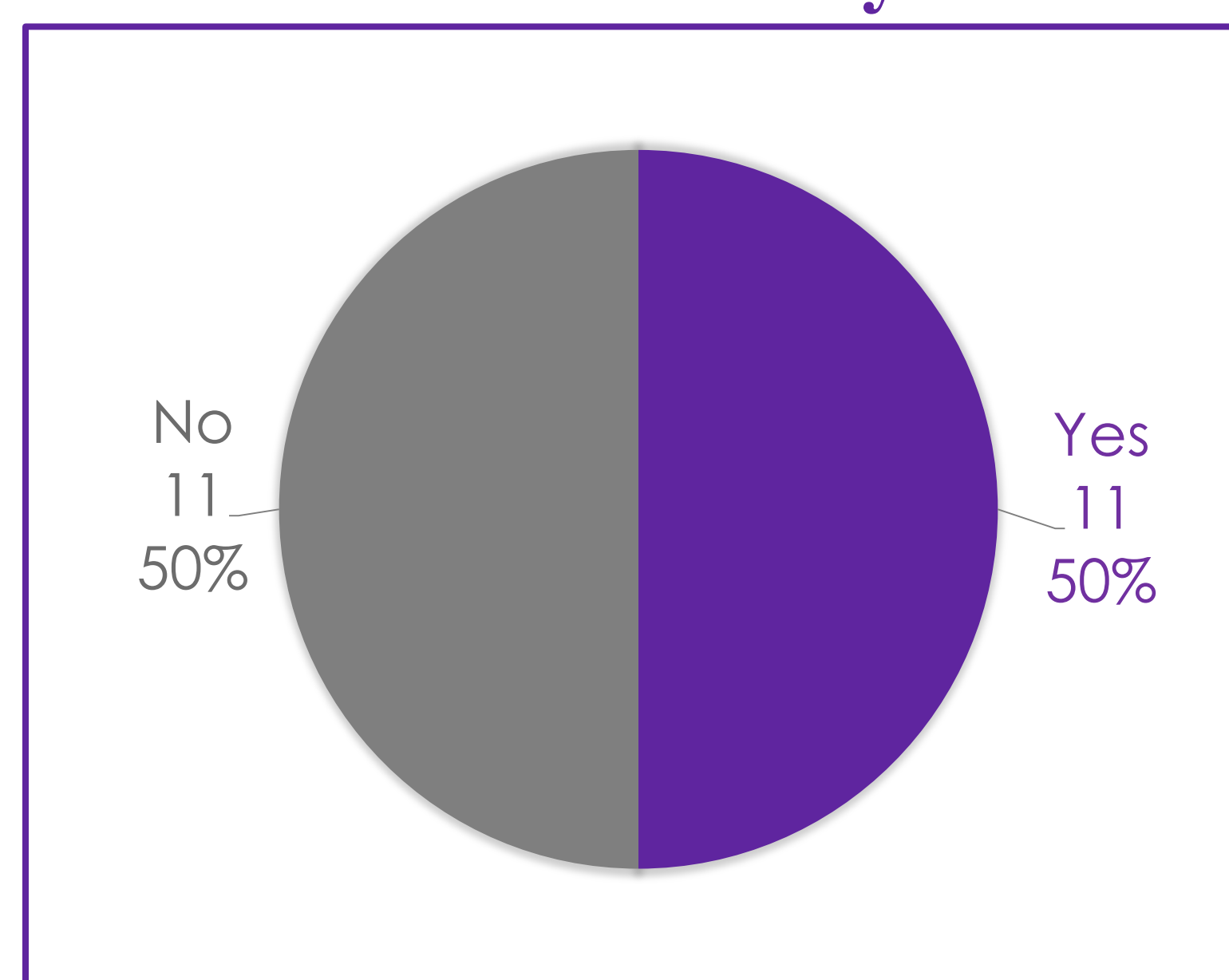


Methods

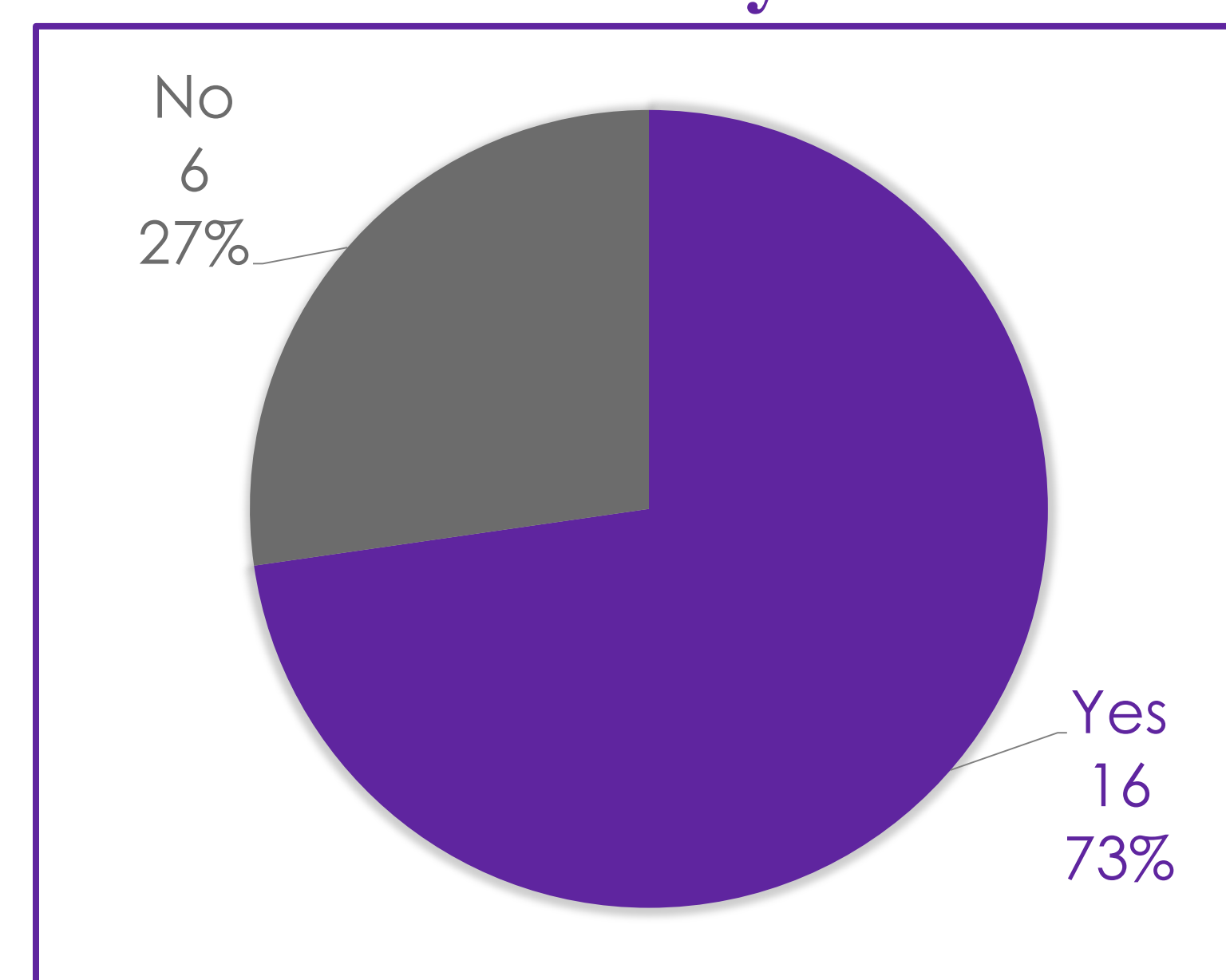
- Subjects: 7 males, 14 females; college-aged (18-21) students at SFASU
- Survey administered via surveymonkey.com
- Subjects were asked four questions:
 - Q1. Do you take your physical fitness seriously?**
 - Yes or No
 - Q2. Do you take your health seriously?**
 - Yes or No
 - Q3. What weight group do you see yourself as?**
 - Underweight, Moderate, Overweight, Obese
 - Q4. In your opinion, what is more important?**
 - A Fit Body or a More Desirable Physique?

Results

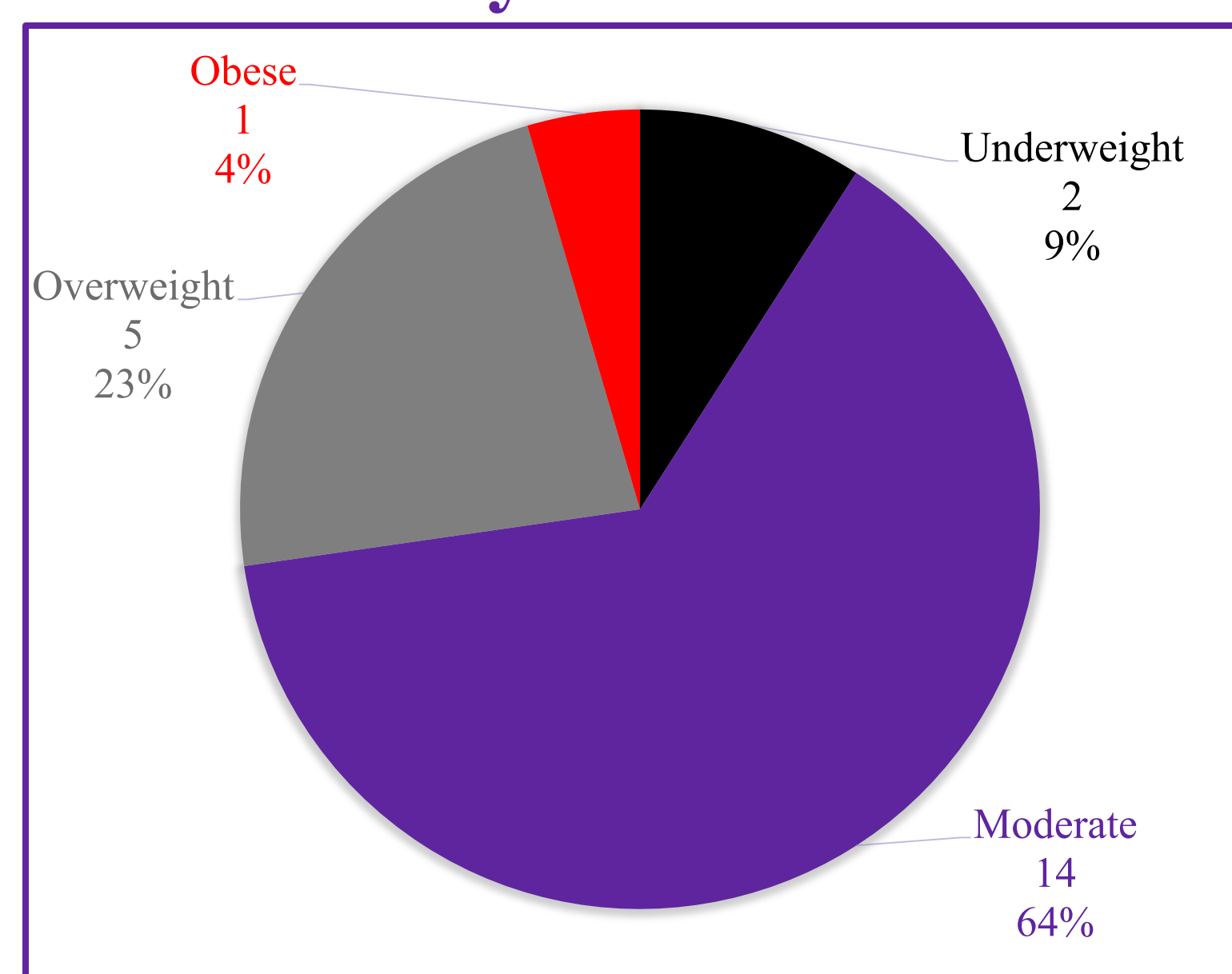
Q1. Do you take your physical fitness seriously?



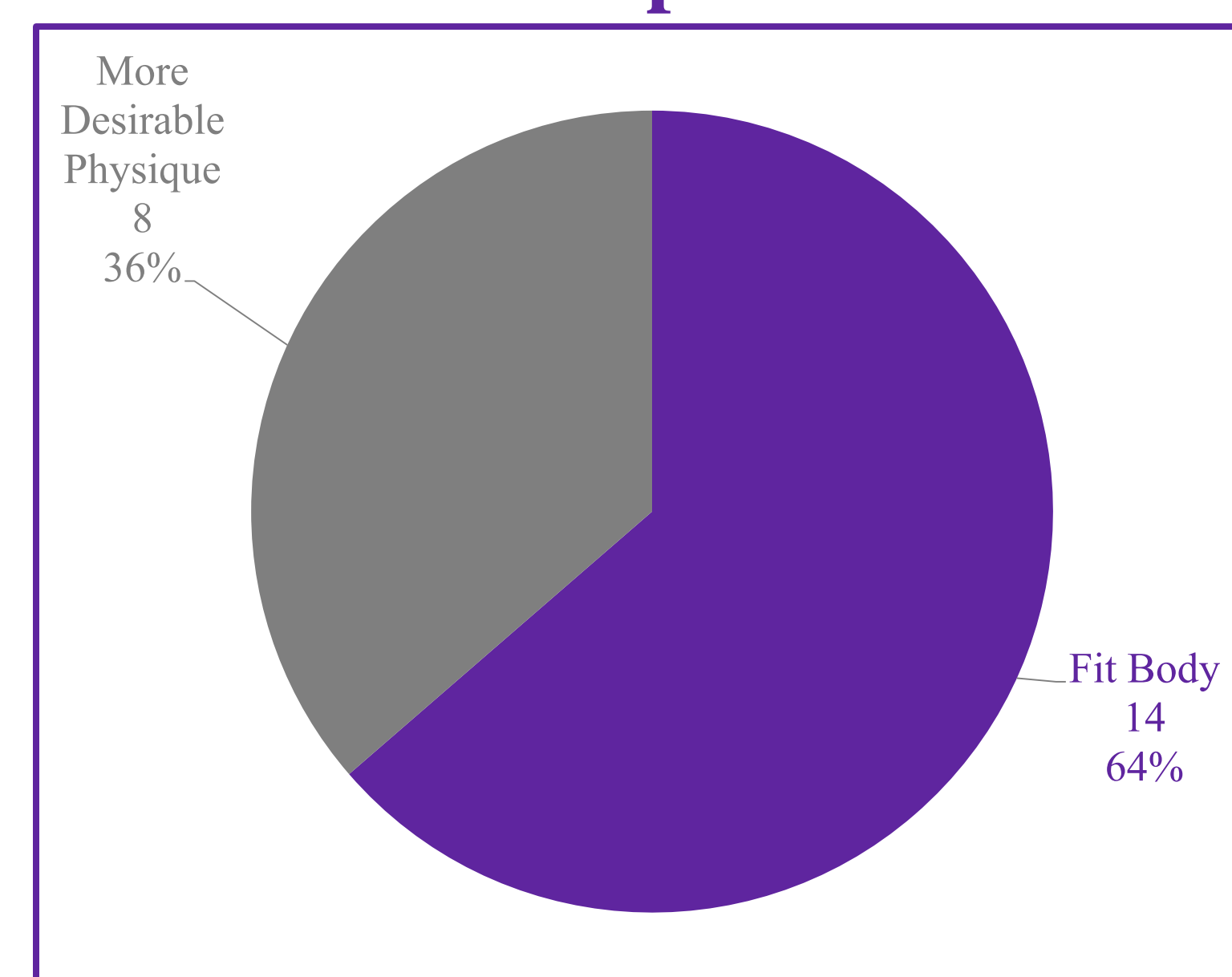
Q2. Do you take your health seriously?



Q3. What weight group do you see yourself as?



Q4. In your opinion, what is more important?



Conclusions

Health is a priority to college aged students, but they don't value their fitness, which presents a disconnect. Since fitness plays an integral part to our health, this lack of acknowledgment could create health issues in the future for those who don't recognize and strive for personal fitness. The other alarming conclusion is that although 64% of the surveyed population chose fitness over vanity in Q4, there were still over a third of respondents who were more motivated by looks than fitness. This dedication to appearance over wellbeing could prove to be detrimental to their health and leave them feeling incomplete and longing for an appearance that is hard to obtain. In the future, research could be used to evaluate the reasons why people value physique over fitness/health and what interventions/education might get people to focus on attainable health-oriented goals.