

Disordered eating may affect 10 to 15 percent of women

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Several maladaptive eating behaviors, beyond anorexia, can affect women. Indeed, some 10 to 15 percent of women have maladaptive eating behaviours and attitudes according to new study from the Université de Montréal and the Douglas Mental Health University Institute published in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*.

"Our results are disquieting," says Lise Gauvin, a professor at the Université de Montréal Department of Social and Preventive Medicine. "Women are exposed to many contradictory messages. They are encouraged to lose weight yet also encouraged to [eat](#) for the simple pleasure of it."

Some 1,501 women took part in the phone survey on eating disorders and disordered eating. Not one participant was classified as anorexic. The average age of these urban-dwelling participants was 31, the majority of respondents were non-smokers and university graduates.

Dr. Gauvin says the study sheds new light on binge eating and bulimia, which are characterized in part by excessive eating accompanied by feelings of having lost control. "About 13.7 percent of women interviewed for this study reported binge eating one to five days or one to seven times per month," she says, noting 2.5 percent of women reported forcing themselves to vomit, use laxatives, or use diuretics to maintain their weight or shape.

The investigation also established a link between problematic eating

behaviours and self-rated health. In other words, deviant eating behaviours are more likely to occur in women who perceived themselves to be in poor health.

Another finding of the study was that 28 percent of [women](#) complete intense exercise twice a month with the sole objective of losing weight or influencing. "We practice a sport for the pleasure it provides, to feel good, but when the activity is done to gain control over one's weight and figure, it is indicative of someone who could be excessively concerned about their [weight](#)," says Dr. Gauvin. "Our data suggests that a proportion of the female population displays maladaptive eating patterns."

More information: www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/jid/121483381/PDFSTART

Provided by University of Montreal

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