

# Eating disorders linked to increased risk of theft and other criminal behavior

August 9 2017

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In an analysis of nearly 960,000 females, individuals with eating disorders were more likely to be convicted of theft and other crimes.

The incidences of theft and other convictions were 12% and 7%, respectively, in those with anorexia nervosa, 18% and 13% in those with [bulimia nervosa](#), and 5% and 6% in those without eating disorders. The associations with theft conviction remained in both anorexia and bulimia nervosa even when adjusting for psychiatric comorbidities and for [familial factors](#).

The findings indicate that research is needed to investigate the potential mechanisms underlying the relationship between crime and eating disorder psychopathology, as well as efforts to determine how best to address this relationship in treatment.

"Our results highlight forensic issues as an adversity associated with eating disorders. Criminal convictions can compound disease burden and complicate treatment," said Shuyang Yao, lead author of the *International Journal of Eating Disorders* study. "Clinicians should be sure to conduct routine reviews of criminal history during assessments for eating disorders."

**More information:** *International Journal of Eating Disorders* (2017). [DOI: 10.1002/eat.22743](https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.22743)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Eating disorders linked to increased risk of theft and other criminal behavior (2017, August 9) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-08-disorders-linked-theft-criminal-behavior.html>

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