

Odds for an eating disorder may vary by income

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(HealthDay)—Young Americans from low-income homes are more

likely than those whose families are better off to be unhappy with the way they look and to have an eating disorder, a new study finds.

University of Minnesota researchers examined 2010-18 data from Project EAT, a long-running study tracking the [general health](#) and well-being of teens as they move into adulthood.

"Our study found that high body dissatisfaction and some disordered eating behaviors are more prevalent among [young people](#) from low socioeconomic ... backgrounds," said study co-author Nicole Larson, a researcher in the School of Public Health in Minneapolis.

Her team reported that high body dissatisfaction and unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals were more common among low-income girls. They were also less apt to rely on regular use of healthy weight management strategies such as exercise than their counterparts from middle- and high-income families.

Thinness-oriented eating, unhealthy and extreme weight control behaviors such as taking diet pills were also more common among low-income guys.

The findings were published recently in the journal [Eating Behaviors](#).

Larson noted that most published research that guides the treatment and prevention of eating disorders is conducted in middle- and upper-class populations. She said there is a need to increase the reach and relevance of efforts to prevent body dissatisfaction and disordered eating to include other groups.

"In particular, it is important that intervention curricula designed to promote healthy eating and activity behaviors include messages regarding the health consequences of disordered eating," she said.

Further study is needed to determine reasons for the social and economic patterns in body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and regular use of lifestyle behaviors, according to Larson.

For example, limited access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity may lead poorer people to use unhealthy weight control behaviors, she suggested.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more on [eating disorders](#).

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