



Eating Disorders

January 2001

Purpose

This survey explores student understanding of eating disorders, factors that caused dissatisfaction with weight, and resources for those dealing with eating problems.

Implications/Highlights

In general, respondents felt informed about eating disorders, estimated that twice as many female than male students had problems, and that media and psychological issues influenced the development of eating concerns.

Participation Rate

N = 879 (66%) agreed to participate

N = 461 (34%) did not agree to participate

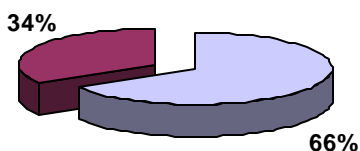


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

A third of the students (34%) said they had a close friend or family member who has an eating disorder, 16% said they had seen another student struggling with an eating disorder, and 3% said they had a problem themselves.

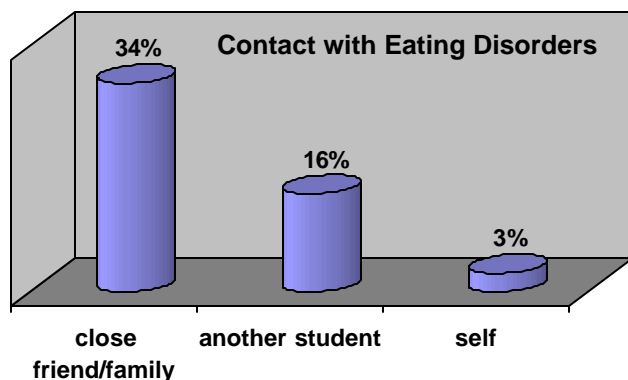


Figure 2. Contact with students who struggle with eating disorders

Half of the students had participated in a discussion about eating disorders.

- 50% discussion with friends
- 48% discussion in class

Students estimated that twice as many female (28%) than male (11%) college students suffer from an eating disorder.

Estimate of College Students Suffering From Eating Disorders

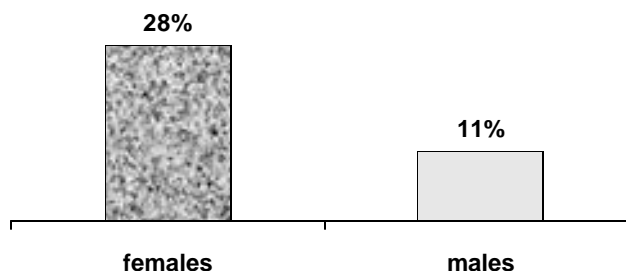


Figure 3. Respondents estimated that 28% of female college students and 11% of male college students have eating disorders

Female respondents, those who had a close friend or family member with an eating disorder, and those who were not satisfied with their own weight thought that a higher proportion of female college students suffer from eating disorders. *

Half of the students (51%) felt informed or very informed about eating disorders. Female students, those with a friend or family member with an eating disorder, and those who belong to a social fraternity or sorority were more likely to say they felt informed. *

Respondents think that media images and psychological issues have a stronger influence on the development of eating disorders for women than for men.

Factors that Influence Development of Eating Disorders for Women and for Men

Influences	Women	Men
media images	87%	41%
psychological issues	66%	46%
friends/significant partner	59%	37%
school/work stress	49%	33%
desire to control life	45%	39%
sexual development issues	35%	30%
family issues	32%	23%

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

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Student Affairs

A third of the respondents (33%) think that students have control over their own eating problems. Those who had a friend or family member with an eating disorder are less likely (26%) than those who did not (42%) to feel students have control over their own eating problems. *

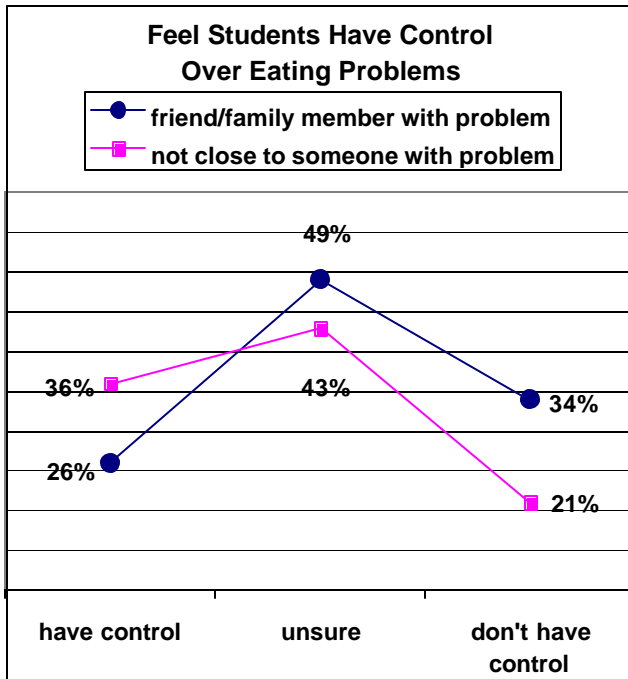


Figure 4. Those close to someone with an eating disorder are *less* likely to feel students have control over their own eating problems

Those who said they had a close friend or family member with an eating disorder were more likely to notice other students struggling with eating problems. *

About half of the respondents would refer friends with eating problems to University Health Women's Services, a private therapist, or a nutrition clinic.

Would Refer Others to Resources For Help

Resource	Would Refer Friend
Counseling & Psychological Services	37%
University Health General Services	39%
University Health Women's Services	54%
a nutrition clinic	49%
Center for Women Students	35%
an RA	20%
Health Works	22%
Ritenour Health Promotion/Education	29%
private therapist	53%

Although most students were satisfied with their own weight, there were significant differences by gender. *

Satisfied With Own Weight

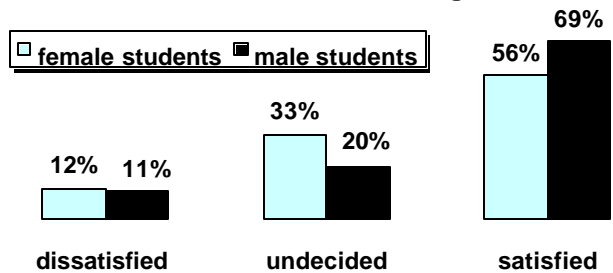


Figure 5. A majority of students were satisfied with their weight

More of those who were dissatisfied with their weight felt there were negative effects.

Satisfaction With Own Weight

	Dissatisfied		Satisfied	
	females	males	females	males
-feel more acceptable to others if thinner	26%	19%	13%	4%
-feel need rather than desire to work out	32%	16%	15%	11%
-feel pressure from friends or family to be thinner	20%	7%	5%	2%
-feel pressure at PSU to fit ideal physical image	29%	15%	14%	7%
-feel body size or shape keeps you from dating	13%	16%	2%	4%
-feel preoccupied with desire to be thinner	34%	12%	11%	3%

Respondents who lived in residence halls were asked about informational materials on eating disorders. Many did not recall noticing them. Of those who had, about a third found them informative.

Materials on Eating Disorders

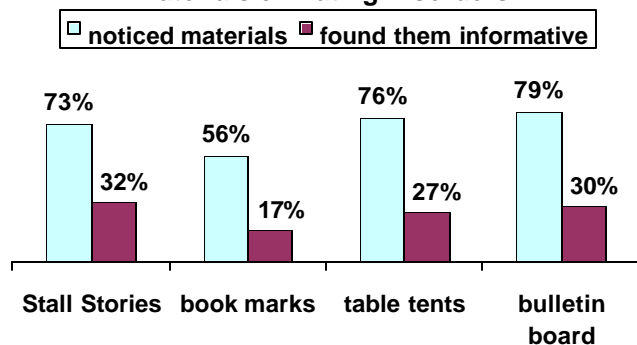


Figure 6. About a third of the students in the residence halls felt that special materials on eating disorders were informative.

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.