

Study shows why underrepresented men should be included in binge eating research

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Binge eating is a disorder which affects both men and women, yet men remain underrepresented in research. A new study published in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders* has found that the medical impact of the disorder is just as damaging to men as it is to women, yet research has shown that the number of men seeking treatment is far lower than the estimated number of sufferers.

"Binge eating is closely linked to obesity and [excessive weight gain](#) as well as the onset of hypertension, diabetes and [psychiatric disorders](#) such as depression," said lead author Dr Ruth R. Striegel from Wesleyan University, Connecticut. "However most of the evidence about the impact of binge eating is based on female samples, as the majority of studies into eating disorders recruit women."

As so few studies have included men there is concern that men may be reluctant to seek treatment, or [health care providers](#) may be less likely to detect a disorder in a male patient, because eating disorders are widely seen as female problems. Health services report that the number of men who receive treatment for binge eating is well below what would be expected based on estimates of prevalence.

Dr Striegel's team used cross-sectional data from a sample of 21743 men and 24608 women who participated in a health risk self-assessment screening. The team analyzed any differences within the group for obesity, hypertension, dyslipidemia, diabetes, depression and [work productivity](#) impairment.

The team found that out of the 46351 people questioned 1630 men and 2754 women were found to binge eat, defined as experiencing at least one binge episode in the past month. The impact on clinical and mental health as a result of binge eating was found to be comparable between men

and women.

This study also indicated that binge eating has an impact on work productivity in both men and women, suggesting the need for employers to recognize binge eating as a damaging health risk behavior alongside stress or depression.

"The underrepresentation of men in binge eating research does not reflect lower levels of impairment in men versus women," concluded Striegel. "Efforts are needed to raise awareness of the clinical implications of [binge eating](#) for men so they can seek appropriate screening and treatment."

Provided by Wiley

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