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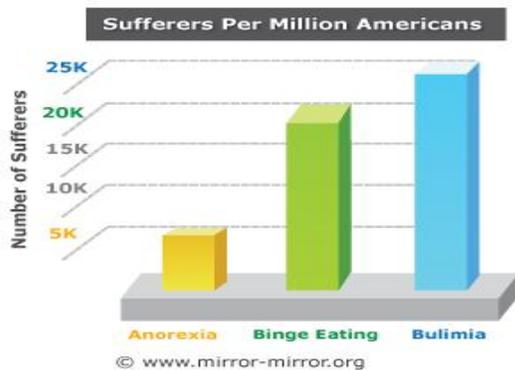
Prof Bown

Statistics of Eating Disorders

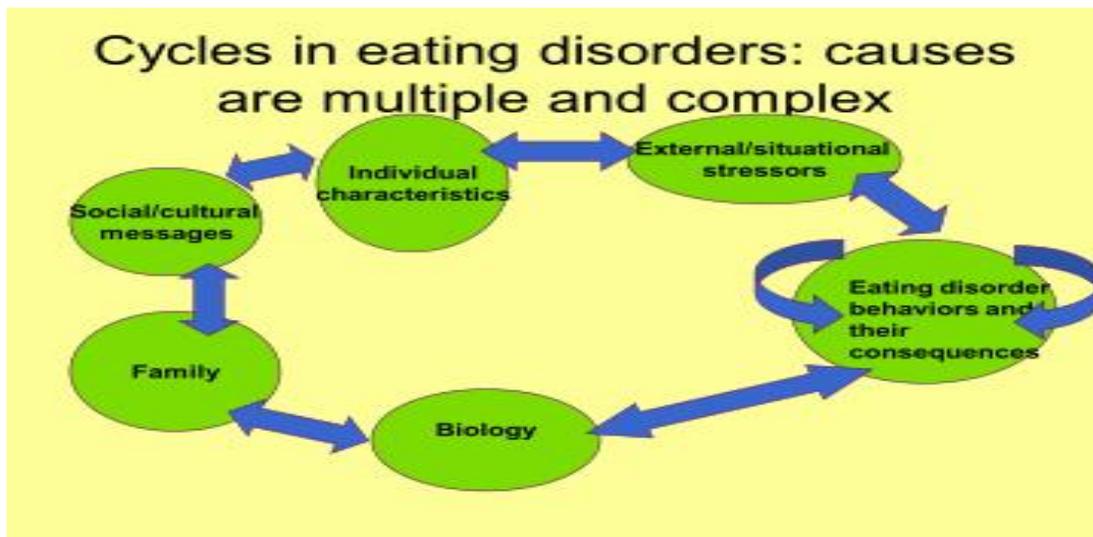
Most of what we know about eating disorders comes from what we've noticed ourselves or have heard from others. However, a second hand account isn't nearly accurate enough when it comes to understanding the prevalence of eating disorders in today's society. What America should be more focused on are the facts and those come directly from numbers. The importance of the statistics of these disorders can help raise awareness and educate for the future. You can look at someone next to you in class who on the outside looks or acts completely healthy, while in reality they are suffering from this illness and without more knowledge, these people may get overlooked. It's important to hear the statistics so that you can be aware that this disorder is around you more than you have probably ever realized.



The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) has estimated that eight million Americans suffer from an eating disorder. Of those eight million, seven million are women and one million are men. It is alarming to hear that so many millions are affected and even more eye opening to hear just how closely we might be related to someone who is suffering. One in every two hundred American women suffers from the disorder anorexia, while three in every one hundred women suffer from bulimia. The SCDMH also says that ten to fifteen percent of anorexia and bulimia sufferers are male. Of those suffering from either bulimia or anorexia, ninety-five percent are between the ages of twelve and twenty-five. Recent research reveals just how ingrained negative body image is, specifically for women. Ninety-seven per cent of women will say something negative about their body every day, such as: "I hate my thighs," "I hate my stomach," or "I'm ugly." Ninety percent of women aged fifteen to sixty-four want to change at least one aspect of their appearance, most of all their body weight. (King)



The most surprising statistic to learn about eating disorders is that it isn't only affecting young women. The illness has spread to a more wide range of people which now includes girls as young as the age of seven and adults over the age of thirty. (O' Farrell) The illness isn't just limited to the stereotypical teenage girl anymore, it never should have ever been. Influence from outside sources is playing such a great factor that now almost everyone is at risk. The male population suffering from eating disorders has risen thirty percent in the last decade. (McVeigh) With the numbers on the rise, is it likely that we will ever see an end to this illness or at least a decrease in numbers?



With resources like the internet, television, and magazines the ideal image has been able to be unrealistically shown to people of all ages. The internet in particular has been a difficult source of influence as of late because of social media sites being so easily accessible. People find it easy to not only feel discriminated

against, but also to do some particularly hurtful damage to others. "It's really an anonymous, online virtual community," said Stephen Haas, an associate professor of communication and lead author of a study in the current issue of *New Media and Society*. Haas also says that social media isn't doing much for seeking help for your disorder either. "It's the anonymity that allows these girls to get online and find each other and support each other in these behaviors." Haas and his colleagues have also studied what they call "pro-ana," which are pro-anorexia websites where members embrace anorexia as a lifestyle choice rather than an illness. (O'Farrell)

How can we expect change when influential places such as the internet are sparking ideas of solidarity and empowerment of eating disorders as a lifestyle choice? Is there anything scarier than the thought of people supporting such a choice, not only for themselves, but in each other?

The mortality rates for those suffering from eating disorders are the highest of any mental illness. (SCDMH) A study by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders reported that five to ten percent of anorexics die within ten years of contracting the disease; eighteen to twenty percent of anorexics will be dead after twenty years. The alarming truth is that only thirty to forty percent ever fully recover. The mortality rate associated with anorexia nervosa is twelve times higher than the death rate of any other causes of death for females fifteen to twenty-four years old. Twenty percent of people suffering from anorexia will prematurely die from complications related to their eating disorder, including suicide and heart problems. (SCDMH)

The statistics that may be the most devastating, though, may be those of the people suffering from eating disorders that are actively seeking help. According to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health only one in every ten people suffering are looking for treatment for their disease. Eighty percent of girls or women who have accessed care for their eating disorders do not get the intensity of treatment they need to stay in recovery—they are often sent home weeks earlier than the recommended stay of treatment for an eating disorder. Part of the difficulty in sustaining treatment may be in part due to the extreme cost. In the US treatment centers for eating disorders can range anywhere from \$500 per day to \$2,000 per day. The average cost for a month of inpatient treatment is \$30,000. It is estimated that individuals with eating disorders need anywhere from 3 – 6 months of inpatient care and health insurance companies for several reasons do not typically cover the cost of treating eating disorders. Then there is the cost of outpatient treatment, including therapy and medical monitoring, can extend to \$100,000 or more. With the price of help so high, it's no surprise that people suffering aren't actively seeking professional treatment.

As you can see from the statistics provided through out one thing is exceptionally clear—eating disorders are prevalent. With eight million Americans suffering from anorexia or bulimia it's not just a small number that can be easily over looked. The number of males with eating disorders has risen thirty percent in the last ten years, while numbers for girls under seven whom are suffering are also on the rise. What these statistics tell us for sure is that eating disorders need to be seen as a very real concern. It is of the utmost importance that society be able to

acknowledge that so that we can really get to root of the problem, start looking for solutions, and get help to those who are in need.

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