

ORAL PRESENTATION

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The prevalence and impact of eating disorder behaviours in Australian men

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Objective

To determine sex differences in the prevalence and associated impairment of eating disorder (ED) features over time.

Method

Cross-sectional surveys of randomly selected adults were carried out in 1998 (n = 3010) and 2008 (n = 3034). Outcomes included self-reported health-related quality of life (HRQoL), objective and subjective binge eating, extreme dieting, purging, and overevaluation of weight or shape.

Results

Men represented 23 - 41% of participants who reported ED features. Objective binge eating was associated with greater reductions in mental HRQoL in men compared to women ($p < 0.05$), whereas overevaluation of weight or shape was associated with greater reductions in HRQoL in women compared to men ($p < 0.05$). The prevalence of extreme dieting and purging increased at a faster rate in men compared to women ($p = 0.03$), whereas the rate of increase in objective binge eating was similar between the sexes ($p > 0.05$). Mental HRQoL impairment associated with binge eating had increased over time for men but not for women ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions

The gender gap in the prevalence and impact of ED behaviours may be closing. Implications include the need for more gender-neutral public health campaigns and interventions, and the active inclusion of male participants in ED research.

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