

Women More Concerned About Losing Weight Than Men

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More than two decades of research indicates that women are at a higher risk than men for developing problems related to body image and satisfaction. Now, researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia and University of Missouri-St. Louis found that even when both men and women want to lose weight, women choose to lose more and are more dissatisfied with particular body parts. Most of the women in the study who wanted to lose weight were not overweight.

"This study examined gender differences in satisfaction with body parts and eating disorders," said Laurie Mintz, associate professor and director of counseling psychology at MU, who conducted the study along with Susan Kashubeck-West, associate professor in the Division of Counseling and Family Therapy at the UMSL. "Results indicated that while men and women exhibit similar concerns in overall body satisfaction, women are less satisfied with specific body parts, such as the abdomen, hips and thighs."

The study examined 300 students from a large west coast university who were divided into two groups, one that consisted of people wanting to lose weight and another that consisted of people who did not. Both groups completed questionnaires focused on binge eating, self-esteem, concern with weight and appearance, weight discrepancy and demographics.

Mintz and Kashubeck-West found that in the overall sample group, participants felt at least somewhat satisfied with most body parts. Men

did not report dissatisfaction with any body part. Also, respondents felt at least a moderate concern with weight and appearance, and said that it affected their sense of themselves and other aspects of life.

In the group wanting to lose weight, participants reported at least moderate satisfaction with many body parts. Women were more dissatisfied with general muscle tone and their weight, specifically in the abdomen, buttocks, hips/upper thighs. They reported wanting to lose an average of 11 pounds. In contrast, men reported very slight dissatisfaction with their weight, wanting to lose only 9 pounds. The alarming point, the researchers said, was that the majority of the women who wanted to lose weight were not overweight and that there was a stronger relationship between self-esteem and body satisfaction for women than for men.

"More women than men want to lose weight, which is related to many body image and eating issues," Mintz said. "Naturally, more women suffer from these issues and, in turn, face problems relating to body image, eating and dieting."

Ingrid Bayer of Texas Tech University also contributed to this study.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

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