

Eating Disorders More Prevalent Among Muslim Teens

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Eating Disorders More Common Among Muslim Teens
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Researchers find that the risk of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction is significantly higher in Muslim teens as compared to Christian teens.

In one of the first studies of its kind to look at the association between [religion and body image/eating disorders](#), experts from the University of Granada in Spain found that there is indeed a correlation between the two. Results of this pioneer study can be found in a news release published online on March 8, 2011.



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Eating Disorders and Body Satisfaction Studied in Multicultural City of Ceuta

Nearly 500 students between the ages of 12 and 30 from a group of three schools in Ceuta, Spain participated in the eating disorders study. The sample group was chosen for the study since it has had a mix of residents from various religious groups including Muslims, Jews and Christians for many years. Approximately 30% of the current population in Ceuta is identified as Muslim.

Researchers from the university including Francisco Javier Ramón Jarne, Manuel Gurpegui Fernández de Legaria and Dolores Jurado Chacón set out to explore the number of teens in the sample group who were identified with eating disorders or body dissatisfaction in various religious groups. They also wanted to examine the relationship between religion and eating disorders.

Eating Disorders Found to be More Than Double Among Muslim Teens

According to the results of the study, Muslim teens were found to have a higher incidence of eating disorders than any of the other groups in the study. In fact, Muslim adolescents were *2.3 times* more likely to have an eating disorder than their Christian

peers. They also found that having problems with body dissatisfaction was *1.8 times* more prevalent among the Muslim students as compared to their Christian counterparts.

Overall, the University of Granada research team discovered that about 1 in every 4 teens in the study suffered from some type of eating disorder and 15% had problems with body dissatisfaction. [Prevalence of eating disorders](#) among teens in other countries, including the US, hovers around 10% according to experts.

Results Show Religion Plays a Role in Eating Disorders

Lead author Francisco Jarne notes that large scale changes in the religious affiliations



[Images](#)

of groups in the region "makes the results of this study very interesting from the point of view of preventive medicine and public health."

Jarne further points out that their results do show an association between religion and eating problems. "Affiliation to the Islamic religion taken as a socio-cultural factor can also be associated to these disorders, even although the thin ideal is not associated to the Islamic culture," he states.

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