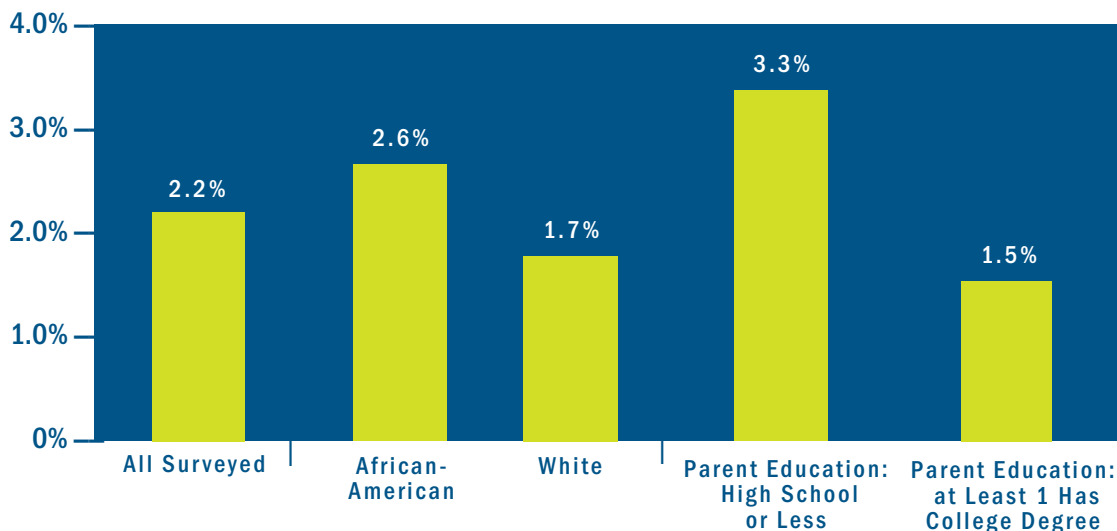




Bulimia Underreported Among African-American and Lower-Income Girls, Girls With Less-Educated Parents

Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia have long been perceived as primarily afflicting wealthy, White girls whose parents are well-educated. However, findings from a new study suggest that bulimia has been underreported among African-American and lower-income girls and girls whose parents have received less education. Using survey data collected over 10 years from more than 2,300 girls in California, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., researchers¹ found that African-American girls were 50% more likely than White girls to exhibit bulimic behavior² (2.6% vs. 1.7%). Girls whose parents had achieved a high-school education or less were more than twice as likely to exhibit such behavior as those having at least one parent with a college degree (3.3% vs. 1.5%). Additionally, girls in the lowest income bracket were one and one-half times more likely to exhibit bulimic behavior than those in the highest income bracket. The researchers suggest that a reason for the discrepancy with previous findings could be due to this study's inclusion of undiagnosed African-American, lower-income girls, who tend to lack access to treatment and health insurance and have previously been excluded from studies examining only diagnosed individuals.

Percentage of Girls Exhibiting Bulimic Behavior, by Race/Ethnicity and Parental Education Level



Source: Wu, S. (20 March 2009). Press Release: "Report Reveals Surprising Data on Bulimia." *University of Southern California News: Health*. Retrieved March 20, 2009, from http://uscnews.usc.edu/health/report_reveals_surprising_data_on_bulimia.html.

Notes:

¹ Goeree, M., U. of Southern California; Ham, J., U. of Maryland; Iorio, D., U. de Autonomia Barcelona, Spain

² Binging and purging

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to build, enhance, and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, trainings, and technical assistance in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

To receive *Facts on Youth* from CHJ, please send an email to research@tasc-il.org with "Join Facts on Youth" typed in the subject line, and your name, title, organization, and email address in the body of the message.