

KiGGS – The German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents

Abstract Principal Publication

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Eating disorders in children and adolescents. First results of the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (KiGGS)

Abstract Eating disorders are included in the category of mental and behavioural disorders (ICD 10). They are among the most common chronic health problems encountered in children and adolescents. A total of 7,498 children and adolescents (weighted) aged 11 to 17 years answered the SCOFF questionnaire, a screening instrument to identify cases of suspected eating disorder. Parallel to the SCOFF questionnaire, further factors for possible eating disorders, such as the Body Mass Index (BMI), information on abnormal behaviour (using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, SDQ) smoking, sexual and body self-image assessment, were gathered to substantiate the results. In total, 21.9 % of the children and adolescents in Germany aged 11 to 17 years showed symptoms of eating disorders. With 28.9%, girls are more frequently affected than boys (15.2 %); this difference is highly significant. In the presence of almost identical initial values, the rate of subjects with abnormal SCOFF scores increases, starting from age 11 years, in girls as they age, while it drops in boys. Children and adolescents with low socioeconomic status (SES) are, with 27.6 %, almost twice as often affected than those with high SES (15.6 %). Migrants have an approx. 50 % higher rate compared to nonmigrants. A 2.5-fold increase in the percentage of individuals with normal weight who perceive themselves as too fat is found among those with abnormal SCOFF scores. Individuals with abnormal SCOFF scores smoke more and report more frequently about sexual harassment. Because of the severity, the tendency to chronification and the protracted therapy of the clinically apparent disorders, effective concepts for prevention should be developed.

Keywords Health survey - Children - Adolescents - Eating disorders - SCOFF - Socioeconomic status
