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Background

- Eating disorders are any range of psychological disorders characterized by abnormal or disturbed eating habits¹
- Young people, especially college students, are often vulnerable to eating disorders. Estimated prevalence:
 - ~1.9% of students have anorexia²
 - ~1.5% of students have bulimia²
 - ~1-9.6% of students diagnosed w/ binge eating disorder³
- Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness⁴
- Existing research has also shown that stress is an important factor that might contribute to the development of an eating disorder⁵
- Further research is needed to establish this relationship, as stress and eating disorders are relevant health crises that college students face.

Objectives

- To examine the perceived level of stress in college students.
- To examine if higher stress levels in college students are associated with eating disorders.

Methods

- We used Google forms to create a cross-sectional online survey to be completed by college students at UCSD. The survey was posted on Facebook and emailed to public health students
- 86 responses
- Survey comprised of 13 questions, sectioned into 3 parts:
 - 1) Demographics
 - 2) Exposure of interest-stress
 - 3) Outcome-eating disorders
- P-value was calculated for exposure and outcome using Pearson's Chi Square

Demographic Characteristics

GENDER	Female: 82%
	Male: 16%
	Prefer not to answer: 1%
	Non-binary: 1%
MAJOR	Public Health: 56%
	Non-Public Health: 44%
AGE	18-20: 42%
	21-23: 49%
	24-26: 7%
	27+: 2%
ACADEMIC STATUS	Undergraduate 1st year: 19%
	Undergraduate 2nd year: 9%
	Undergraduate 3rd year: 26%
	Undergraduate 4th year: 37%
	Undergraduate 5th year: 1%
	Graduate or professional: 6%
	Not a student: 2%

Table 1: Demographic information.

Results (N=86)

Survey Results

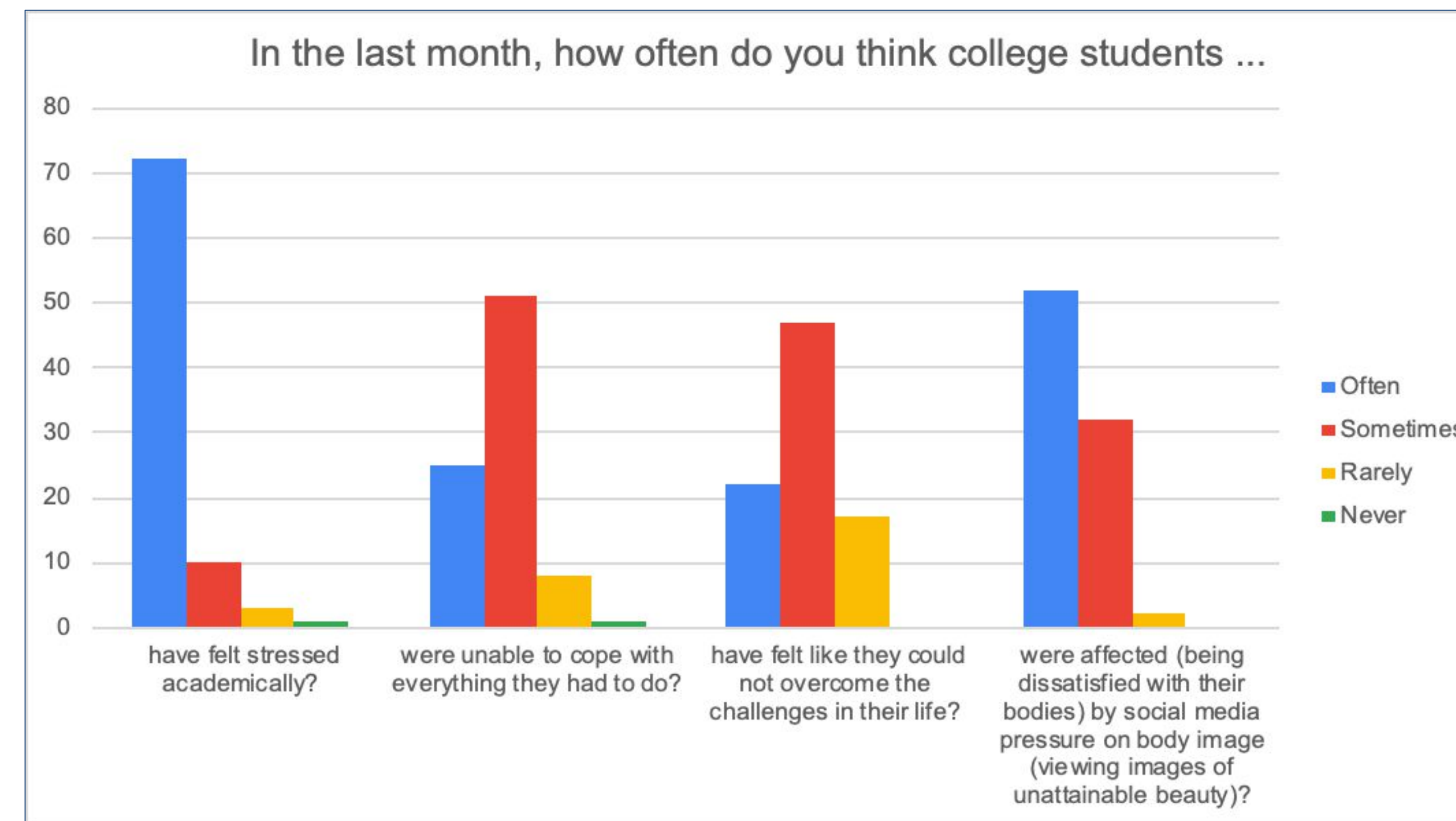


Figure 1: Self-reported stress levels in college students.

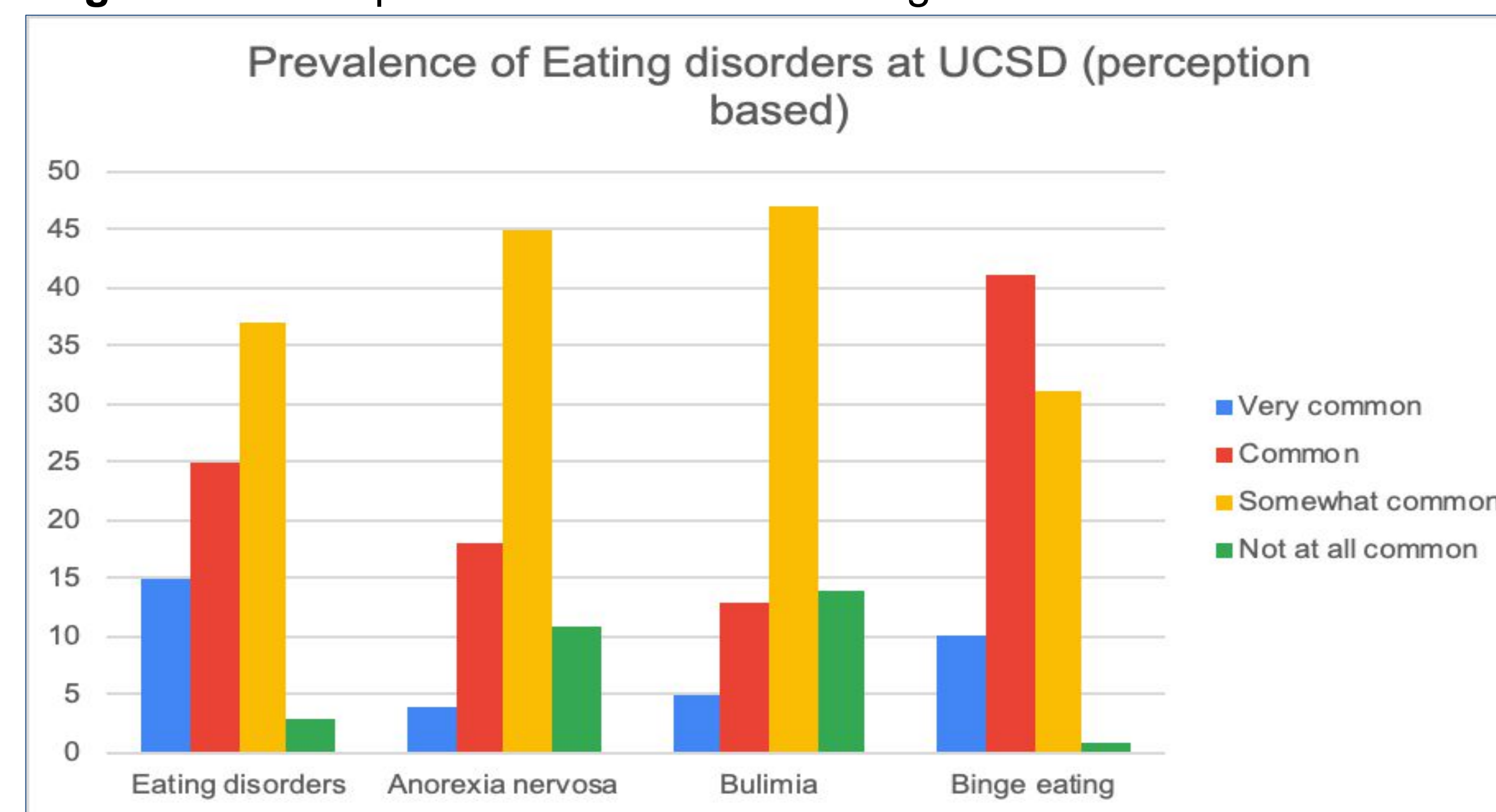


Figure 2: Perceived prevalence of eating disorders at UCSD.

		Prevalence of Eating Disorders			Pearson Chi-Square p-value
		Very common/Common	Somewhat common/Not at all common	Total	
Stress level	Often	37	31	68	0.06
	Not Often	3	9	12	
	Total	40	40	80	

Table 2: Crosstab of stress levels and perceived prevalence of eating disorders with Pearson Chi-Square p-value

Conclusions

- Stress and eating disorders are not significantly correlated (p=0.06)
- Although this value does not confirm the relationship between these 2 variables, our data did show that majority of college students are stressed
- Our sample size was relatively small and comprised mostly of public health students, which might limit our generalizability
- Research at other universities is needed to further investigate this relationship

Policy Implications

- We propose policy changes to be implemented by the administration at UCSD
- The university's curriculum should mandate that there is 1 dedicated lecture/quarter in each class discussing stress management techniques.
 - Programs should also be instituted by student organizations to generate awareness about eating disorders. This will ensure the health and wellbeing of all students.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our special thanks to Dr. Romero and all the people who participated in our survey. This research was supported in part by the Public Health Department at UCSD.

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