

Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2023-24

Eating Disorder estimates for Kent

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Produced by

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1.1 Introduction

This report summarises data on eating disorders published by NHS England in November 2025 as part of the 2023-24 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS) [1]. The APMS is England's national mental health survey series that, since the 1990s, measures the prevalence of both treated and untreated psychiatric disorders in adults (aged 16+) and tracks changes in mental health and service use over time.

The following analysis prevalence estimates for England, as published in the APMS, to the most recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates for Kent. Where available, upper and lower bounds are presented to reflect published uncertainty in the underlying data due to survey sample sizes.

Eating-disorder features were first screened using the SCOFF questionnaire, a brief self-report tool for identifying possible anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. In phase two, a subset of participants were assessed by trained interviewers using the SCAN-ED module, which measures ICD-11 eating-disorder diagnoses. These SCAN results were then weighted to estimate the prevalence of diagnosable eating disorders in the adult population [1].

1.2 Key Findings

- Based on survey responses to SCOFF questions, it is estimated that **between 107,000 and 134,500** adults age 16+ in Kent screened positive for a possible eating disorder, with **between 23,000 and 38,000** saying it has a significant impact on their lives.
- **Females and younger adults age 16-24** were more likely to report possible eating disorders.
- Increases have been seen between the **2007 and 2023-24** surveys, with an **estimated increase of 12,000** reporting a significant impact in Kent.
- The largest increases were seen in the **younger age group 16-24**, which **nearly doubled between 2007 and 2023/24**. Females in this age group increased more than males.

- Estimates from the SCAN-ED questions suggest **between 10,000 and 29,000** adults age 16+ in Kent in 2023/24 had a probable eating disorder.
- For these questions, rates were nearly **four times higher in women** than men, and nearly **double in the 16-24 age group**.
- Ethnic categories may indicate rates are higher in **White and Black / Black British** ethnic groups, although there was a wide degree of error.

- Other characteristics showed rates were significantly higher in the unemployed, and higher in economically inactive.
- Those in the least deprived IMD quintile were higher.
- Those with a limiting physical health condition, or a common mental health condition were also higher.

1.3 Characteristics of eating disorders by ages and sex

1.3.1 Screen positive for signs of eating disorder by age and sex

There are five questions designed to screen for possible eating disorders, rather than to provide definitive diagnosis (SCOFF). Participants were asked in the last 12 months:

- have you lost more than one stone in a three month period?
- have you made yourself be sick because you felt uncomfortably full?
- did you worry you had lost control over how much you eat?
- did you believe yourself to be fat when others said you were too thin?
- would you say that food dominated your life?

A score of 2 indicates 'Yes' answers to two or more questions, and indicated a possible eating problem. 'Significant impact' was assessed by asking participants with a score of 2 or more whether their feelings about food interfered with their ability to work, meet personal responsibilities and/or enjoy a social life.

Tables 1a and 1b below shows estimated national prevalence and estimates for Kent. Rates have been shown to be higher in women, and the younger age group 16-24. It is estimated between 23,000 and 38,000 adults in Kent had significant impact from their eating habits. Rates in women were higher than men, and around treble in the 16-24 year age group than all adults aged 16+.

Table 1a – Prevalence of possible eating disorders (SCOFF), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 applied to Kent population 2024, ages 16+

Age 16+	England prevalence	Kent estimate	Kent lower estimate	Kent upper estimate
Men - score of 2 or more	6.1%	38,533	31,225	47,849
Men - significant impact	1.2%	7,660	4,608	12,506
Women - score of 2 or more	11.8%	81,657	72,084	93,016
Women - significant impact	3.2%	22,040	16,689	29,441
Adults - score of 2 or more	9.1%	120,438	107,460	134,400
Adults - significant impact	2.2%	29,576	23,151	37,915

Table 1b – Prevalence of possible eating disorders (SCOFF), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 applied to Kent population 2024, ages 16-24

Age 16-24	England prevalence	Kent estimate	Kent lower estimate	Kent upper estimate
Adults 16-24 - score of 2 or more	20.1%	30,726	23,761	39,591
Age 16-24 - significant impact	6.7%	10,241	6,342	16,475

1.3.2 Eating disorder characteristics comparison between 2007 and 2023/34

Table 2 below shows comparisons between the 2007 and 2023/24 APMS survey. Adults scoring 2 or more positive questions increased from 6.4% to 9.1%, and those reporting significant impact increased from 1.6% to 2.2%. Those reporting a significant impact in ages 16-24 nearly doubled between 2007 and 2023/24, with females aged 16-24 (not shown) more than doubling from 5.4% to 12.2%.

Table 2 - Prevalence of possible eating disorders (SCOFF), England estimated prevalences 2007 and 2023/24 applied to Kent population 2007 and 2024, ages 16+ and 16-24

Category	England prevalence	Kent estimates	Lower	Upper
Adults - score of 2 or more - 2023/24	9.1%	120,438	107,460	134,400
Adults - score of 2 or more - 2007	6.4%	72,655	65,534	80,490
Adults - significant impact - 2023/24	2.2%	29,576	23,151	37,915
Adults - significant impact - 2007	1.6%	17,663	14,273	21,843
Age 16-24 - significant impact - 2023/24	3.5%	10,241	6,342	16,475
Age 16-24 - significant impact - 2007	6.7%	5,432	3,509	8,350

1.4 Probable eating disorder in last year

1.4.1 Probable clinical eating disorders by age and sex

The SCAN ED questions cover DSM-5 criteria and ICD-11 clinical descriptions for eating disorder and subtypes (e.g. bulimia, anorexia). A positive assessment was defined as probable eating disorder.

Tables 3a and 3b below shows estimated national prevalence and estimates for Kent. Rates have been shown to be higher in women, and the younger age group 16-24. It is estimated between 10,000 and 29,000 adults had a probable eating disorder in the last year in Kent. Rates in women were 3 to 4 times higher than men, and nearly double in the 16-24 year age group than all adults aged 16+.

Table 3a - Prevalence of probable eating disorders (SCAN-ED), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 applied to Kent population 2024, ages 16+ and 16-24

Age 16+	England prevalence	Kent estimate	Kent lower estimate	Kent upper estimate
Men 16+	0.5%	3,476	1,187	10,109
Women 16+	1.9%	13,411	7,341	24,319
Adults 16+	1.3%	16,936	9,986	28,618

Table 3b - Prevalence of probable eating disorders (SCAN-ED), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 applied to Kent population 2024, ages 16-24

Age 16-24	England prevalence	Kent estimate	Kent lower estimate	Kent upper estimate
Adults 16-24	2.5%	3,869	1,286	11,253

1.4.2 Ethnic category

Table 4 below represents positive assessments from the SCAN ED questionnaire, showing age-standardised probable eating disorders in the last year by ethnic category. Confidence intervals were wide, consequently estimates for Kent have not been calculated, but may show higher rates amongst White and Black / Black British groups.

Table 4 - Prevalence of probable eating disorders (SCAN-ED), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 by ethnic group, ages 16+

Ethnic category	England prevalence	England lower confidence interval	England upper confidence interval
Adults Asian/ Asian British	0.3%	0.0%	2.0%
Adults Black/ Black British	1.7%	0.3%	8.0%
Adults Mixed/ multiple/ other	0.6%	0.1%	4.4%
Adults White	1.4%	0.8%	2.5%

1.4.3 Other characteristics

Table 5 below shows other characteristics of survey respondents from the SCAN ED questions. The unemployed survey respondents showed higher rates of likely eating disorder. The least deprived IMD quintile also was higher than the other

demographic quintiles. Those with a limiting physical health condition, or a common mental health condition were also higher.

Table 5 - Prevalence of probable eating disorders (SCAN-ED), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 by economic or social category, ages 16+

Status	England estimated prevalence
Employed	1.0%
Unemployed	11.4%
Economically inactive	2.8%
Least deprived	2.9%
Most deprived	1.5%
Limiting physical health condition	2.7%
Common mental health condition	4.5%

1.4.4 BMI status

BMI status was also recorded as part of the survey. Table 6 below shows the proportion of survey respondents in each category, and estimates for those with probable eating disorders. The ‘underweight’ category had low counts of responders, but it’s safe to assume that rates of eating disorder are high in that category.

Table 6 - Prevalence of probable eating disorders (SCAN-ED), England estimated prevalences 2023/24 by BMI status, ages 16+

BMI status	Proportion of survey respondents	% with eating disorder in last year
Underweight	1.6%	NR
Healthy weight	33.9%	1.5%
Overweight	34.6%	0.9%
Obesity, excluding severe obesity	25.0%	1.1%
Severe obesity	5.0%	2.9%

1.5 References

- [1] “Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2023/4 - Chapter 13: Eating disorders,” November 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey/survey-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing-england-2023-24/eating-disorders>.

