



FOODADDICTIONINSTITUTE.ORG

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NEWS FROM

# *The Food Addiction Institute*



## Is It Possible To Say How Many People Experience Food Addiction?

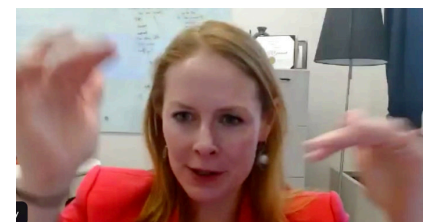
Recently, the institute received an email from Norway, asking about studies that assess how many people experience food addictions, including sugar addiction:

*“As part of a project we are working on, I need to reference sources and studies. I often hear people refer to the claim that approximately 25% of the population suffers from food and sugar addiction. Are there sources to support this statement? What do you consider to be a reliable estimate?”*

## We are “Food Addiction Informed”

What do we mean when we talk about Food Addiction? We start with these three tenets:

1. Food Addiction is a substance use disorder.
2. Abstinence from binge and trigger foods and behaviors is required for recovery.
3. An action plan that includes substantial support is highly recommended.



*"Are there any new studies on food and sugar addiction that you believe are important to include in presentations going forward?"*

Our board member Daria Green provided what we thought was a substantial reply and would be worth sharing.

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Thank you for reaching out to the Food Addiction Institute. Could you please share more about your project and scientific work? It's important for us to be aware of such work being done, and we are inviting you to cooperate with us as well. Let us know if you have any questions on how to team with FAI.

I'm happy to provide some references and insights based on the current state of knowledge and research in this area.

Generally speaking, there is a problem with having such statistics when we deal with an officially unrecognized phenomenon. What you've referred to as 25% of population comes probably from the YFAS based studies and it does depend on what population they were held (general population vs. clinical populations) and which country. A reliable estimate for the general population is likely closer to 15–20%, based on YFAS studies. However, in specific groups, such as those with obesity or eating disorders, the prevalence can be significantly higher, as high as up to 56%.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu6104552>

If you are looking for an authoritative source to support the 25% claim, it may be best to frame it as an estimate within specific high-risk populations rather than a general population figure.

In a recent study by Dr. Ashley Gearhardt from 2023 it says: "A recent analysis of two systematic reviews including 281 studies from 36 different countries found the overall pooled prevalence of food addiction using YFAS was 14% in adults

## Gearhardt Makes The Case Clear

Ashley Gearhardt, a hero of the Food Addiction Institute for her work in the fields of Food Addiction research and education, recently presented to about 70 Johns Hopkins University students. In it, she stated the clear case for Food Addiction in almost a lawyerly way, from one concept to the next.

WATCH VIDEO

Passcode: Bu=7gYK



## Sachir Ajlouni's Amazing Journey

Sachir Ajlouni, founder of Aglon Recovery in Amman, Jordan, is the subject of a new episode of the [Food Addiction](#)

and 12% in children." doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2023-075354>

As for recent studies, there has been growing research into the neurobiological basis of Food Addiction, particularly examining how ultra-processed foods (UPFs) interact with dopamine pathways similarly to addictive substances. There may be some new and different statistics about the prevalence.

So to sum up we can say that the YFAS is a key tool for assessing Food Addiction, other studies using different methodologies or adapted versions of the YFAS have found prevalence rates ranging from 5% to 25%, depending on the population and context. The 25% figure often cited likely refers to high-risk populations (e.g., individuals with obesity or eating disorders).

Generally here's a list of references you can work with for your project:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2008.12.003>

<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu6104552>

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0117959>

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-nutr-110420-111710>

<https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.2725>

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13668-022-00414-3>

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2011.08.017>

<https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.2189>

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0074832>

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2018.00545>

<https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.113.068965>

<https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.114.195735>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743716673320>

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13679-024-00569-w>

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*The institute is proud to help researchers, nutritionists, educators, treatment providers, and others whenever it can.*

[The Problem and the Solution podcast](#), a production of the INFAC School in Iceland.

Like many Food Addicts, Ajlouni struggled with weight for decades, once reaching 450 pounds. Then he encountered Phil Werdell at one of Werdell's treatment intensives, and his life started to transform. Only one facet of his transformation is that he's maintaining a 250-pound loss.

Unlike many Food Addicts, Ajlouni founded a treatment center, Aglon Recovery in his native Jordan, so that he could share what he'd learned with others. His workshops help people realize that overcoming Food Addiction requires acceptance that they are not normal eaters. He incorporates spinning classes and Food Addiction education, including its emotional and psychological aspects.

Ajlouni is a member of the Food Addiction Institute board of directors, its former treasurer, and still a member of the organization's executive committee.

*If we can be of service to you, please ask.*

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## What is Recovery?

*By Michael Prager, FAI Chair*

It's not enough to inform the public about Food Addiction. The more important point is **there is recovery from Food Addiction**.

The uninitiated may wonder, just what does that mean? Before I can answer that, I have to paint the “before” picture. I am what our founder, Phil Werdell, called a low-bottom Food Addict. My highest weight was 365, recorded in October 1991. I got to that weight with strategies like the fast food double play.

I worked until midnight or so as a newspaper editor. Often, I'd leave the paper upset about one interaction or another and head to the local junk-food junction, home of the drive-throughs. I'd go to a window, get a meal, pull into a parking space, and polish it off. Then I'd go to the next one and repeat myself.

And one time, ladies and gentlemen, I achieved the fast food \*triple\* play, though I concede, it was a struggle near the end.

I could portray at least a half dozen other scenarios like those, but we're here to talk about recovery. Mine began because colleagues observed that I was an unhappy person and went to my boss. They



didn't want to get me in trouble; they wanted to get me *in help*. But figured if they said anything, the only thing that would change would be my ire at them.

And the boss didn't say, you'd better straighten up or else. He said, "I've done therapy. It helped me and it might help you." It was a therapist who broached the idea that I might be a Food Addict. He had several suggestions, all of which I adopted only after much kicking and screaming: regular support groups and even rehab, in addition to work with him.

While continuing my kicking and screaming, I eventually opened to the guidance of others. Crucially, this wasn't me, evaluating their suggestions, concluding they made sense, and only then adopting them. I began following the ideas of others because they seemed to be experiencing growth I hoped for.

Today, I devote a lot of time to service, to my son, to my community, and yes, to the cause of Food Addiction. Also, extending love has become a continuous pursuit for me, not only among family and friends, but in the supermarket, on the road, and wherever else I get the chance. Just like with service, it's good all around, and just great for me.

Sure, I'm maintaining a triple-digit weight loss for 35 years-plus, and that is fabulous! But it's these other things that have changed me from that brittle, grumpy editor to someone eager to add to the glorious stream of life.

I experienced Food Addiction as cutting, isolating, confining, mocking, and miserable. I wouldn't wish it on anyone, period.

But when the pain got bad enough and the right guides appeared, it also led me to a freer and more fulfilling existence.

Recovery does that.

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## Follow Us on Social





## Registration Open for IFACC 2025

Registration for the International Food Addiction and Comorbidities Conference IFACC 2025, the next international conference on Food Addiction put on by England's Collaborative Health Community, is now open.

The venue, previously planned for Mexico City, has been moved back to London, where the first instance of the conference was held in 2024.

This year's speakers will include Dr. Georgia Ede, Dr. David Unwin, Dr. Kim Dennis, researcher and author Nicole Avena, and Prof. Adrian Soto-Mota. The conference will occur over two days this year, September 4 and 5.

[Go here](#) to purchase tickets to attend in person or by livestream, and to learn more details about the conference.

*For those coming to London, please plan on attending a reception hosted by the Food Addiction Institute on Sept. 3, the eve of the conference.*



## Experimental Intervention Cuts UPF Consumption in Half



## This Month on Our Social Media

This month, the institute's social media committee warmly invites you to “march forward” in your recovery journey. Remember, every step you take, no matter how small, signifies progress. Recovery isn't about achieving perfection; it's about consistently moving forward, one step at a time. Food Addiction can indeed feel overwhelming, but remember, you are not alone. Together, we can break the cycle, heal, and create a healthier future — not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come.

### Resources for your journey

We encourage you to explore the insightful articles on spring cleaning your family's eating habits, meditations to reduce stress, and understanding junk food as a public villain. These resources are designed to support you in your recovery journey and help you make positive changes in your life.

### Share your experience

Do any of the following statements resonate with you?

Researchers from Drexel University's **College of Arts and Sciences** have tested a two-month intervention involving 14 adults who were obese or overweight and on average, participants reduced their intake of ultra-processed foods by half.

In addition to providing education about UPFs, the program integrated mindfulness and acceptance-based strategies to help participants cope with cravings; one-on-one meal planning; a focus on improving the home food environment by involving a household member in the intervention; and financial support to help participants purchase healthy foods, which can be more expensive.

*“Reducing UPF intake can be extremely difficult, because the food industry wants us to be hooked on UPFs,” said lead author **Charlotte Hagerman, PhD**, an assistant research professor. “The industry designs UPFs to be ultra-delicious, convenient, cheap, and constantly present in the US — even if not directly in front of us, then on our TVs, phones, and roadside signs.”*

Drexel University is in Philadelphia, PA. A paper recapping the intervention was recently published in **Obesity and Science Practice**.

### Source:

<https://drexel.edu/news/archive/2025/February/What-Happens-When-a-Diet-Targets-Ultra-processed-Foods>

- I used longer than I planned
- I could not cut down or go on the wagon
- I have binged when I didn't want to
- I physically/emotionally/verbally hurt others

If so, we invite you to share your experiences on our social media platforms. Your responses could inspire others who are facing similar struggles.

### **Be a part of our recovery community**

If you're interested in sharing your Food Addiction recovery journey in an interview, please contact us at

[info@foodaddictioninstitute.org](mailto:info@foodaddictioninstitute.org) Another option is a three to five-minute share about how you came to know you are a Food Addict and what impact that had on your life. Please contact us at [info@foodaddictioninstitute.org](mailto:info@foodaddictioninstitute.org). Your story could provide hope for others on their recovery journey.

If you're interested in joining the social media committee, we'd love to hear from you. We are always looking for passionate individuals who want to make a difference in the lives of those struggling with Food Addiction.

### **Take the next step**

What's one action you can take right now to move forward in your recovery? Remember, every step, no matter how small, is a step towards a healthier, happier you. Let's march forward together, supporting each other every step of the way. Your journey matters, and we're here to support you.



## **Food Addiction Professionals Invited to Join the FAI Partnership Program**

We invite researchers, educators, treatment providers, nutritionists, and others who help food addicts to join our FAI Partnership Program. Your information will be shared in detail on our website and in the newsletter, reaching thousands of people interested in Food Addiction.

For a fee, our partnership program offers additional benefits, including exposure on our website homepage, social media, and newsletters, plus discounted advertising rates. We will highlight your events, create a profile story, and promote books. This partnership benefits FAI and you as we expand the resources for food addiction support.

Email [info@foodaddictioninstitute.org](mailto:info@foodaddictioninstitute.org) for more information about this program.



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