

# Performance Anxiety, GI Symptoms and Fear of Food Among Collegiate Student-Athletes

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## BACKGROUND

- Stress is common in collegiate athletes
- Collegiate athletes often suffer from elevated GI symptoms, sport performance anxiety and restrictive eating

## METHOD: STUDY 1

What is the relationship between anxiety about performance in high-intensity athletic training/competition contexts, GI symptoms, and avoidant and restrictive food habits?

### Study Design:

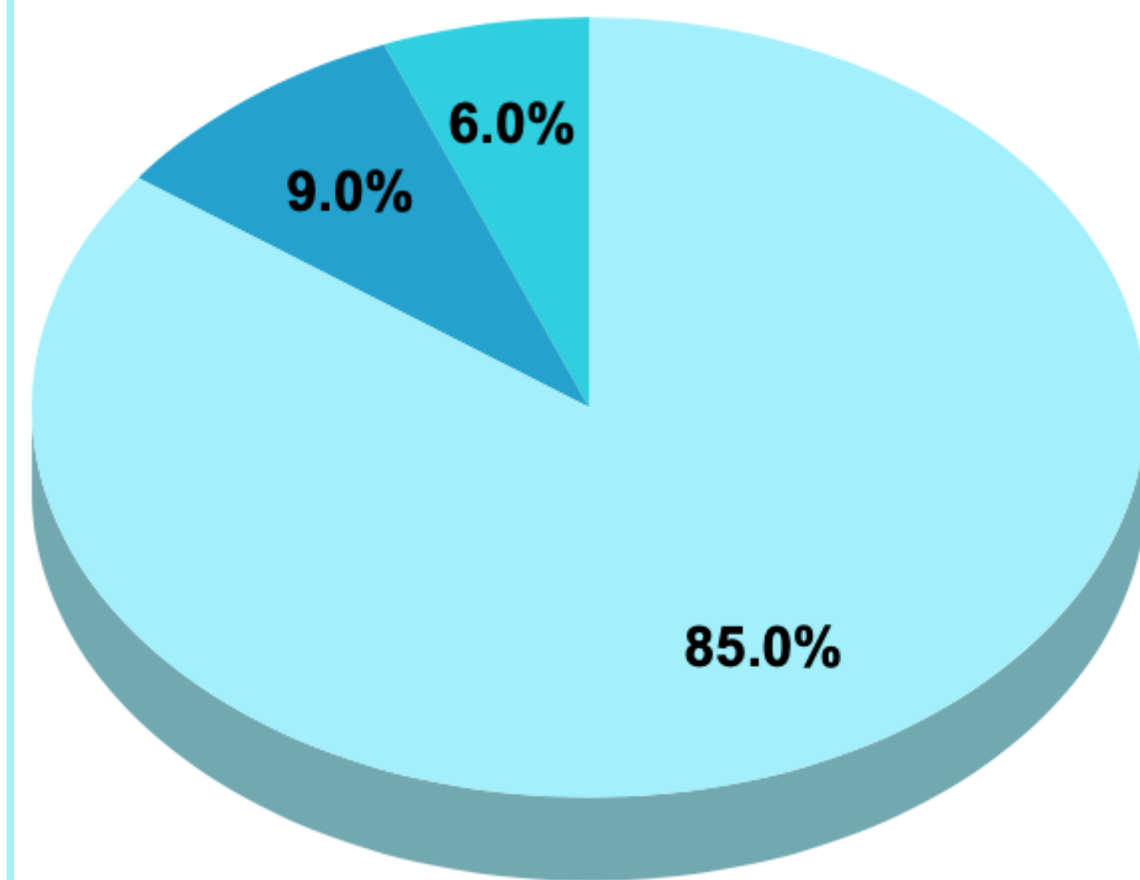
- Cross-sectional study
- n = 147 student-athletes
- 83.7% female
- Mean age = 19.9 years
- 84 undergraduate institutions
- 20 different sports

Participants completed a survey about their sports performance anxiety, GI symptoms, and avoidant/restrictive food behaviors.

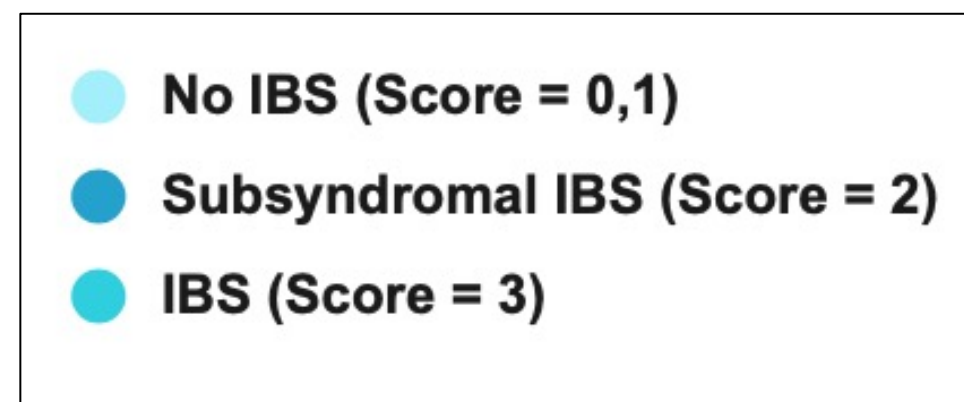
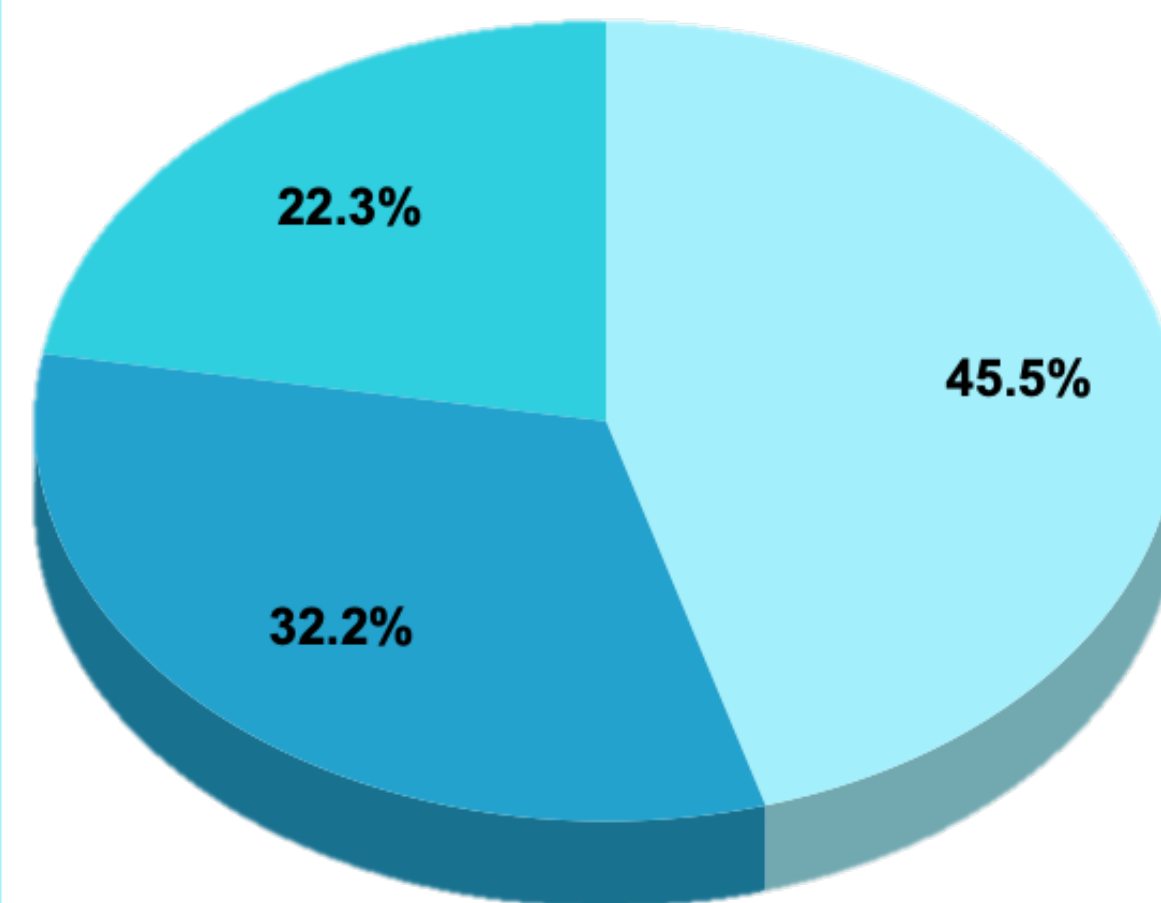
Research funded by the College Alumni Society Research Grant

# Collegiate athletes show significantly high levels of gastrointestinal issues associated with avoidant/restrictive food behaviors and sport performance anxiety

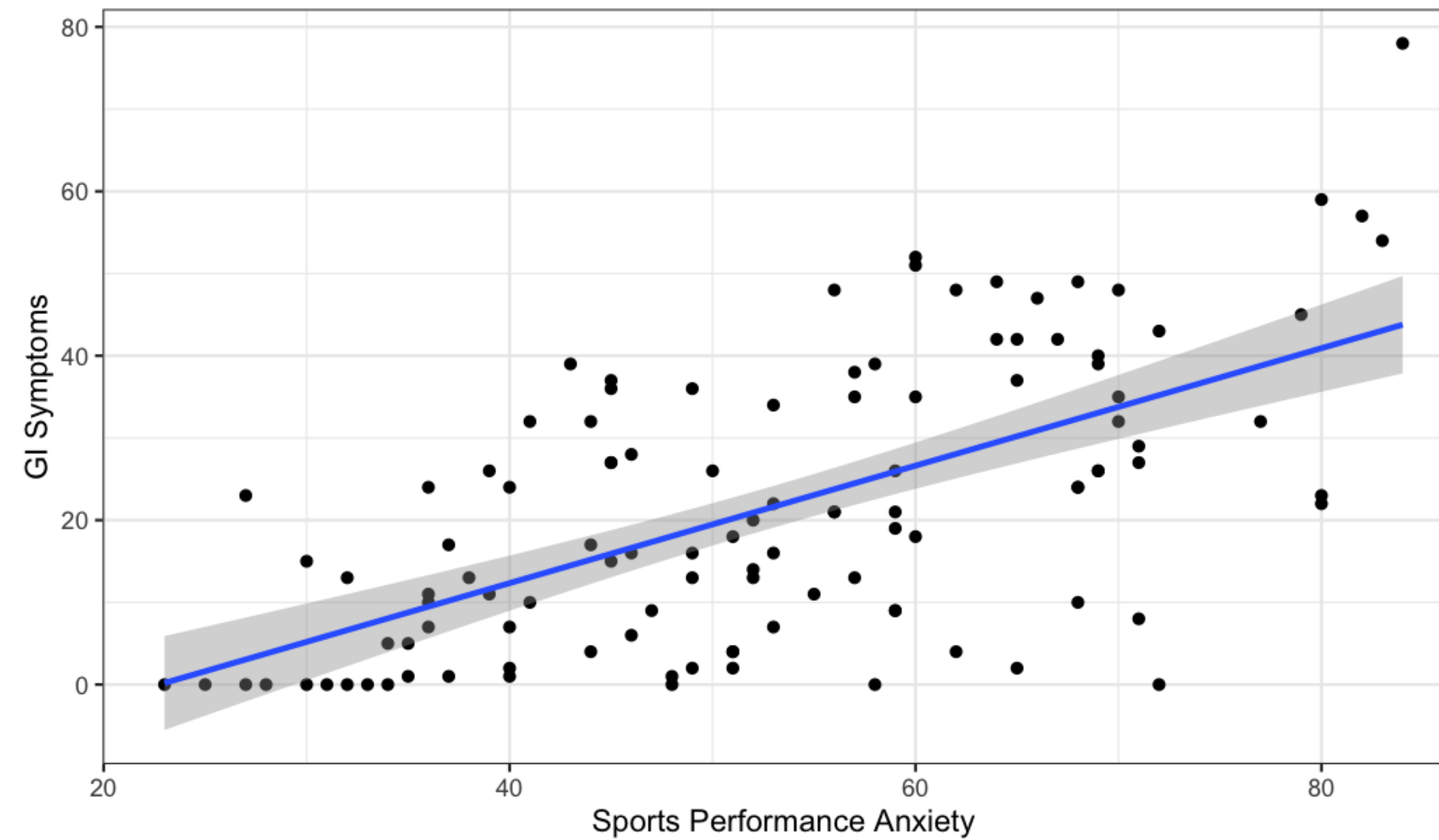
Population Prevalence of IBS



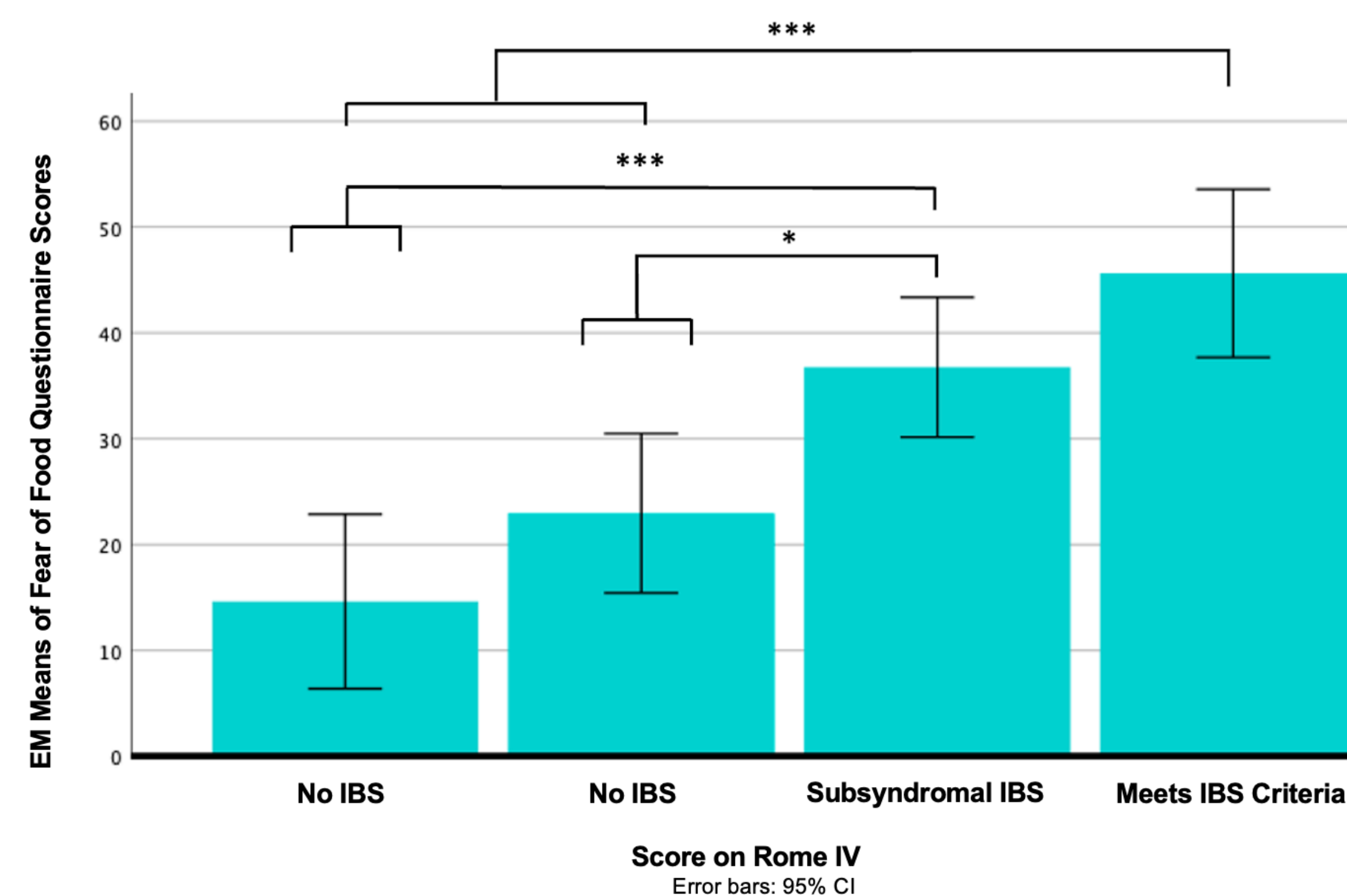
Prevalence of IBS in Athletes



Sports Performance Anxiety Predicts GI Symptoms



Mean Score on Fear of Food Questionnaire by IBS Score



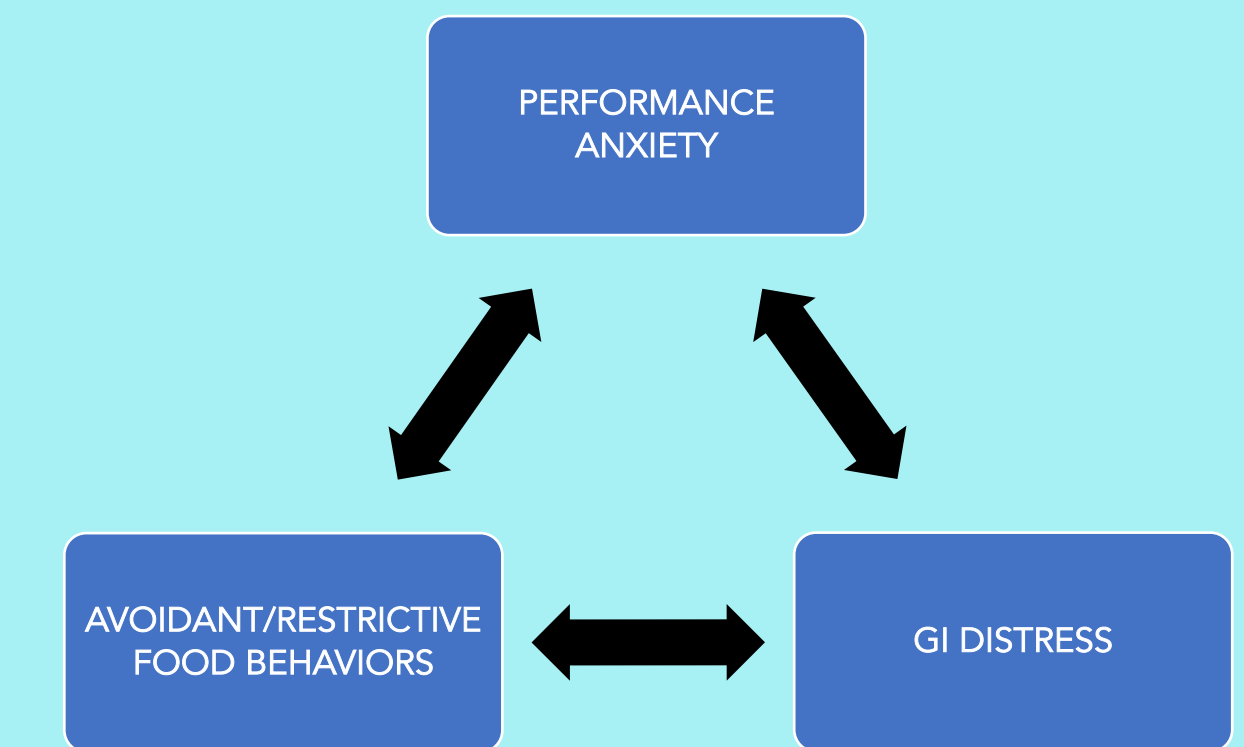
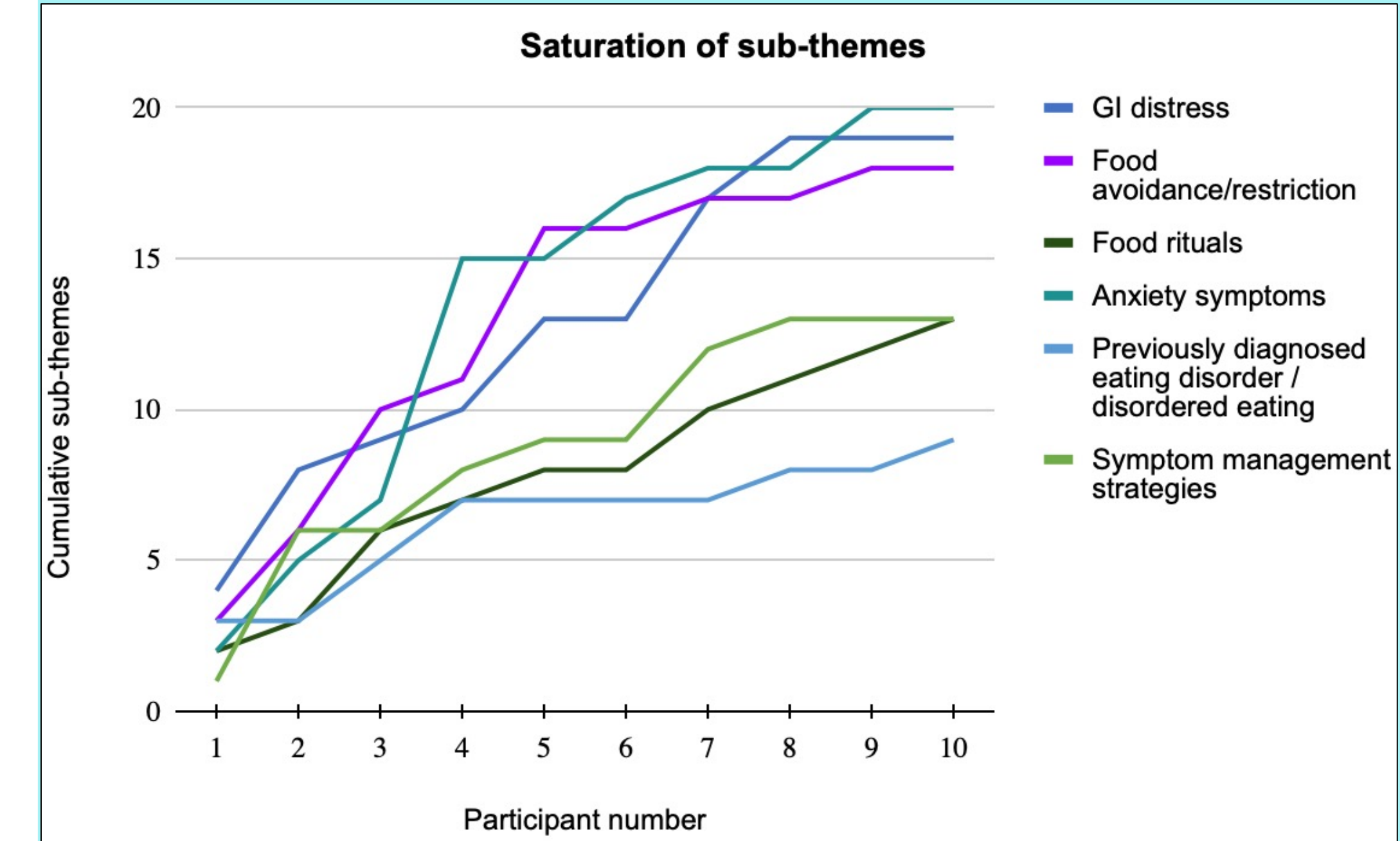
All variables significantly correlated at the  $p < .001$  level (GI symptom severity, fear of food, fear-based ARFID, visceral sensitivity, sport performance anxiety)

Evidence that *sport performance anxiety predicts GI symptoms, and GI distress predicts fear of food*

## METHOD: STUDY 2

We conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with  $n = 10$  student-athletes to identify recurrent themes at the idiographic level in college athletes who experience performance anxiety, GI symptoms, and avoidant/restrictive food behaviors.

## RESULTS: STUDY 2



<b>GI Distress</b>	Nausea/Vomiting, Bloating/Gas, Diarrhea, Constipation, Cramping, etc.	"It just kind of takes over my whole mind. I'm not even thinking about how I'm gonna swim in the race. I'm thinking about how am I not going to poop myself in front of hundreds of people?"
<b>Performance Anxiety</b>	Sweating, Jitteriness/ shaking, increased heart rate, negative self-talk, GI distress, etc.	"The days leading up to like swim meets, I would be using the bathroom like 6 times a day... my stomach would hurt so bad from all the nerves."

"I don't know anyone on the team who doesn't experience this. So I guess... **we all just think this is normal.**"