

K. Cobiella: It wasn't long ago that the shape of America's stomach could make us giggle⁽¹⁾ but it's not so funny any more. Especially not for people like Tracy Boulay. At 5'6"⁽²⁾ and 280 pounds (lbs)⁽³⁾, she's the heaviest she's ever been.

Boulay: I'm a dental hygienist, and as I've put more and more weight on, it's affected my job. I had a hard time, you know, getting out to the patients to clean teeth.

Cobiella: Boulay is one of nearly seven million Americans who fit the definition of severely obese. That's a hundred pounds or more overweight. In the past five years, their numbers increased by 50%, twice as fast as the number of those who are moderately obese.

Dr Sterm: It's mind-boggling⁽⁴⁾, isn't it?

Cobiella: Dr Roland Sterm studied government data on one and a half million Americans.

Dr Sterm: It's no longer a rare phenomenon. Yes, 20 years ago, it was very unusual, one in several hundred maybe, but now we're down to three in a hundred and that is not a rare condition at all.

Cobiella: Doctors blame the same old causes: not enough exercise and too much of the wrong foods. Tracy Boulay says she's tried dieting but always gains back the weight. So she's having surgery to make her stomach smaller.

Boulay: It really limits the amount you can eat at each meal, and I think that that will be a big key.

Cobiella: It's been the key for thousands of overweight Americans. In the last decade, the number of bariatric surgeries has shot up⁽⁵⁾ from 13,000 to 200,000 a year. It may be the answer for people like Tracy Boulay, but it's not enough to slow the trend⁽⁶⁾ of America's rapidly expanding waistlines⁽⁷⁾.

Kelly Cobiella, CBSnews.

Lexical helpline:

1. **giggle (v):** laugh lightly
2. **foot ('): 32 cm, 12 inches**
3. **inch ("): 2.54 cm**
4. **pound (lb): 0.454 kg**
5. **mind-boggling:** very surprising and difficult to comprehend
6. **shoot up (v):** increase suddenly and considerably
7. **a trend:** a general tendency, direction
8. **waistline:** measurement around the narrowest part of the waist