Individuals with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) are highly distressed and impaired due to defects they perceive in their physical appearance that are not noticeable to others. The disorder seems to be relatively prevalent, affecting about 1-2% of the general population. Nevertheless, BDD is an under-recognized and under-studied disorder. Prior to this thesis there were no known data on the occurrence of BDD in Sweden.

The condition is treatable with psychotherapeutic and psychopharmacological interventions. However, individuals with BDD usually do not recognize that they are suffering from a psychiatric disorder. Instead, in an attempt to relieve their symptoms by correcting their perceived defects, a majority of BDD patients seek non-psychiatric medical care, most commonly dermatological or surgical treatment. Dermatological treatments or cosmetic surgery usually do not result in any decrease in BDD symptom severity, but can rather aggravate the symptoms. Therefore, it is crucial that health care professionals recognize BDD in order to offer adequate care.

In this thesis, the prevalence of BDD is estimated in the general female population and in female dermatology patients in Sweden. Moreover, BDD patients’ experiences of living with the disorder, including their experiences of the health care system, are explored.