

...it's very easy to be unhappy with our bodies in today's world. The pressure is on to look a certain way and this comes from many different directions.

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The Body of Public Opinion: Attitudes to body image in the UK

Celebrities, gossip magazines, advertisers, and the fashion and fitness industries - all stand accused of an over-reliance on promoting a body “ideal” which is either unrealistic or unattainable for over 95% of the population. The adulation of certain body types can make many of us feel insecure with who we are and have some damaging consequences:

- Undermining our self esteem and confidence
- Leading to bullying and social exclusion
- Responsible for disordered eating habits:
 - 1 in 4 of us are on a diet at any one time
 - Eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia are at an all time high
- Discouraging some from participating in activities which can be good for their health (e.g. sports and exercise) because they don't feel like they belong.

We think it's time to take a stand! While there's nothing wrong with aspiration – we feel that it's time we became less obsessed with the way we look, particularly when it could damage our overall health and wellbeing.

The Body Confidence Campaign is about tackling society's obsession with body image “ideals” and aiming to change attitudes to bodily perfection.

Ultimately we want everyone to be comfortable with who they are, live out their full potential and to be more **BODY CONFIDENT!**



What do the public think?

Central YMCA and the Centre for Appearance Research at the University of the West of England recently conducted a survey of 810 young people and 759 adults across the UK to explore public attitudes surrounding body image-related issues. Our research had a particular focus on the impact of images in the media and advertising on body image, in addition to finding out what people think about the numerous quick fixes that are available to change people's bodies.

Our research indicates that at least **1 in 4 adults feel depressed about their bodies**. Young people also have issues with their bodies - **over half of the adolescent girls (54.1%) surveyed said that girls at their school have body image problems and about a quarter of boys (23.7%) think that boys have body image problems**.

Due to the widespread use of airbrushing and a lack of diversity in the appearances of people represented in the media, it is virtually impossible for most of us to achieve or maintain the bodies that we see on TV and in magazines. Therefore it's not surprising that our research found that:

- About a quarter of girls (25.4%) compare their bodies to people on TV and over one third (35.2%) would like to look like the models who appear in magazines
- Over a third of men (36.8%) and over half of women (50.4%) report that they compare their bodies to people on TV
- Almost half of men (42.4% of men) and 30% of women said they would like their bodies to look like the models who appear in magazines

Body diversity

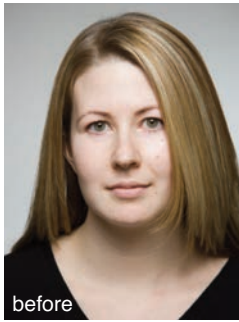
Our research suggests that the public has an appetite for more diverse body images in media and advertising.

Almost half of adults (48.9%) said they wanted to see different body shapes and sizes, varieties of ages, ethnicities and a wider range of physical appearances in the media, advertising and fashion industries and on TV.

The public feel that the media and advertisers are still heavily reliant on using ultra thin or highly muscular body types in advertising and marketing.



Airbrushing



- Almost three quarters of adults (70.6% of men and 80.9% of women) think that consumers are not aware of the extent to which images of people in the media have been airbrushed
- Over half of men were surprised by the extent of airbrushing in images presented to them
- There is broad agreement from men and women that airbrushing has a negative impact on people's body image



What about quick fixes to Body Confidence?

We asked the public to what extent they would be prepared to adopt a quick fix solution to feel better about their bodies.

What do adults think about quick fixes?

- Almost half of men (44.5%) and nearly three quarters of women (70.9%) have been on a diet in an attempt to change their body shape
- Nearly 10% of men (8.5%) would consider taking steroids to change their body shape
- Almost a third of men and women (28.2%, 31.4%) believe that cosmetic surgery is too readily available and should be restricted to those with underlying health issues
- Despite this, if money wasn't an issue a quarter of men (24%) and a third of women (29.5%) would have cosmetic surgery to change their body shape

What do young people think about quick fixes?

- Roughly a third of adolescent boys (34.4%) and half of girls (49.1%) have been on a diet in an attempt to change their body shape or to lose weight
- A fifth of boys (17.7%) have taken protein supplements to make themselves more muscular
- Over one in ten boys (11.1%) would take steroids to build muscle if they were unhappy with the way they looked
- Nearly 10% of boys and girls (8.3% and 7.7%) would start taking laxatives to lose weight if they were unhappy with the way they looked
- Nearly 15% of girls would start taking diet pills to lose weight if they were unhappy with the way they looked

The most desired cosmetic procedures among adolescents were:

- Breast implants (14.7%)
- Rhinoplasty (7.7% of boys and 11.5% of girls)
- Botox (9.8% of girls)

