



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

**Body Image Survey
Results**

**First Special Report of Session
2019–21**

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Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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Publication

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Zereena Arshad (Inquiry Manager), Hannah Barlow (Committee Operations Manager), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Holly Dustin (Committee Specialist), Chloe Freeman (Committee Specialist), Radhika Handa (Deputy Clerk), Mariam Keating (Committee Specialist), Margaret McKinnon (Clerk), and Mandy Sullivan (Committee Assistant).

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You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@Commonswomequ](https://twitter.com/Commonswomequ).

Special Report

The Women and Equalities Committee conducted a survey into body image between 6 and 19 July 2020. We publicised it on Twitter, Instagram and via influencers and stakeholders on their social media platforms. The survey received 7878 responses. The results of the survey can be seen in the Annex of this report. We would like to thank everyone who took part in the survey.

Annex 1

1. Body Image Survey: What We Learned

Who we are

We are the Woman and Equalities Committee in the House of Commons: a group of 11 MPs from different political parties, independent of the Government. We scrutinise the work of the Government on equalities issues.

Our work on body image

We are working on [Changing the Perfect Picture: an inquiry into body image](#). We are investigating the state of people's body image in the UK, what impacts how people feel about their appearance and what changes can be made to improve body image for all.

As part of our work, we ran a survey to find out about how different groups of people feel about their body image and what influences those feelings. The survey was open between 6 and 19 July 2020 and we publicised it on Twitter, Instagram and via influencers and stakeholders on their social media platforms. The survey received 7878 responses. Thank you to everyone who publicised the survey to their audiences.

The survey has been hugely valuable to us; many respondents shared stories about their relationship with their body and their appearance and we thank them for taking the time to help us with our work.

This is a summary of the key themes that emerged from the survey. We will use the information we have learned to help us decide what changes we can recommend to the Government to improve the nation's body image.

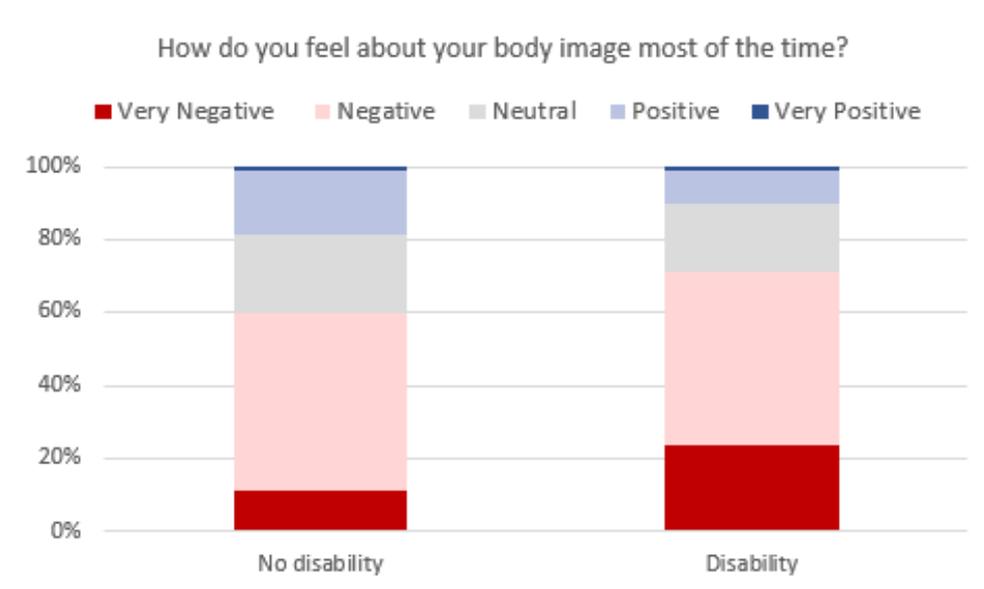
What we learned

1. The majority of people feel negatively about their body image most of the time.
2. Lockdown made people feel worse about their body image
3. Under 18s want to learn about body image in school
4. People don't feel reflected in the images they see in media and advertising
5. Images on social media have a big influence young people
6. People want change

People across the UK from different communities are struggling with poor body image. Young people are more likely to suffer with negative emotions about their appearance; 65% of under 18s thought there was an ‘ideal’ body type compared with 45% of adults. Women, people with a disability and transgender people are at higher risk of experiencing negative emotions around their appearance.

Over 6 in every 10 women feel negatively about their bodies. Diet culture, post-partum pressures, being bombarded with images of photoshopped, edited and sexualised women as well as the aging process and the lack of visual representation of older women are all things that women told us cause them to suffer with poor body image.

71% of people with a disability reported feeling negative or very negative about their body image compared with 60% of people without a disability. People with disabilities told us how negative experiences with healthcare professionals, often focusing exclusively on their weight had impacted their physical and mental health as well as their body image. Additionally, people with disabilities also told us of feeling ignored, judged and isolated about their appearance.



Not a single transgender respondent felt ‘very positive’ about their body image and 23% reported feeling ‘very negative’ most of the time about their appearance compared with 12% of cisgender participants. Transgender people told us their body image is impacted by gender and body dysmorphia, transphobia and the threat of harassment as well as pressures to look ‘cis’. One trans woman said that **“I have gone from hating my body due to dysphoria to hating my body due to pressures on women to conform.”**

BAME respondents told us of that their body image was negatively impacted by lack of representation across media and advertising especially ‘plus size’ BAME women, natural hair and people with dark skin. This is exasperated by both colourism and racism across media channels.

I’m black and fat so feel like I just don’t fit

(Woman 55+)

Men told us of the pressures impacting their body image. Several respondents told us that body image concerns are common in men but discussing them is still taboo. Men spoke of pressures to conform to masculine stereotypes such as being tall and muscular. Men reported suffering from high amounts of targeted advertisements encouraging them to gain muscle mass. Gay men told us that the pressure to conform to these stereotypes are high in their community and they face appearance-based discrimination on social media and dating apps.

“It’s not only women and it’s men too. It affects everything and it sucks”

(Boy 15–17)

Over the last year, over 7 out of 10 adults have felt anxious and shameful about their appearance with less than 3 out of 10 people feeling proud about the way they look. Some people told us what does make them feel more positive about their body image

“Less social media = happier with my body”

(Woman 25–34)

“Positive social media influencers have helped me feel more confident about my body image”

(Woman 18–24)

“Since hosting my own life drawing sessions I’ve come to realise that beauty comes in all shapes/sizes/genders/races. We have such a mixture of people and it’s made me appreciate my own body as well.”

(Woman 25–34)

2. Lockdown made people feel worse about their body image

I really struggle with my body image and I have a fear of putting on weight during lockdown. I am scared of losing all my hard work I have done at the gym and having to start over again

(Woman 18–24)

53% of adults and 58% of people under 18 report that the lockdown made them feel worse or much worse about their appearance.

A significant number of people, the majority of both adults and young people felt worse about their body image as a result of the lockdown. There were lots of different reasons given why people feel worse about their bodies

- People reported consuming more media and seeing more adverts for products to change your appearance, especially weight loss products.
- Widespread discussions in the media of ‘lockdown weight gain’ and the Government’s obesity strategy

- Pressure from social media to focus on weight loss or appearance improvement during the lockdown
- With the closure of gyms and loss of routine people are scared of gaining weight and losing muscle mass
- Less support and treatment for mental health issues and eating disorders

“I feel women constantly have diet and exercise adverts thrown at us on social media and TV and it’s very overwhelming, particularly during this lockdown I’ve noticed it more. It makes you feel like you HAVE to be on some sort of diet”

(Woman 25–34)

A smaller number of people, 14% of adults and 16% of young people reported feeling ‘much better’ or ‘better’ about their body image since the lockdown. People gave a number of different reasons for why the way they feel about their appearance has improved during this time including

- Having the time to exercise, spending time outdoors and eat healthily
- Not having to leave the house meant people felt less pressured to look a certain way or less likely to face appearance-based harassment particularly amongst the transgender community and people with disabilities.

“Lockdown has given me a break from having to scrutinise my appearance every morning to avoid harassment when I go out!”

(Trans-man 25–34)

“Lockdown has seen me embrace exercise like I never have before which has defiantly resulted in a positive when it come to my body image. Seeing muscles I never had before forming has been incredibly empowering.”

(Woman 25–34)

“Lockdown has improved my body image because I’ve had more time to spend outdoors and be active. I don’t think my body has actually changed but I enjoy seeing and feeling what my body can do and I feel proud of it and less shameful.”

(Woman 18–24)

3. Under 18s want to learn about body image in school

“As a 15 year old girl who has extreme struggles with bulimia, I wish I was educated about body image when I was younger.”

(Girl 15–17)

Only 23% of young people told us that they had learned about fostering a positive body image at school but 78% of young people want to learn more about positive body image at school.

28. Would you like to learn more about body image in school?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	283
● No	44
● Don't know	33



Young people are more likely to dislike the way they look, and the majority are not learning about body image in school. Children aged 11+ told us of themselves or their friends struggling with low self-esteem, mental health problems and eating disorders. Young people spoke about feeling insecure about their skin, weight, body shape, hair and muscle size amongst other things and felt like their insecurities around their body image were influenced by a number of factors including being weighed at school, social media and celebrities, friends and family and edited pictures.

“People should be taught that all bodies are beautiful, health does not always correlate with size and that there is so much more to life and our worth than losing weight or being the most attractive person possible”

(Girl 15–17)

“I would say that [body image] is among the most important social issues of my generation”

(Boy 15–17)

Young people expressed a desire to be taught about body image in school, particularly once they get into secondary school as they deemed themselves and their peers to be affected by poor body image in their teenage years. Teenagers told us that at their age comments on their appearance or appearance-based bullying from their friends and family is more common.

“I feel as though, children, especially in secondary school should be taught about body image and how to appreciate your body despite your appearance because it has affected me and my friends very negatively, especially with social media always telling us we need perfect teeth, clear skin, curvy body, toned stomach etc. It makes teenagers not feel good enough”

(Girl 15–17)

Adults also expressed regret at not being taught about issues surrounding poor body image and how this has impacted their lives from refusing to have photos taken, using steroids, lack of self-confidence and even the development of disordered eating, body dysmorphia

and other mental health conditions. Teachers, parents and other professionals working with children raised concerns for young people including the sexualisation of young people, impact of advertising of weight loss organisations and the rise in eating disorders.

“I teach PE in a secondary school. Mainly to girls. The effect social media has on their body image is devastating and extremely dangerous. They want to grow up far too quickly and become over sexualised from a very early age. Its hard to witness.”

(Woman 35–44)

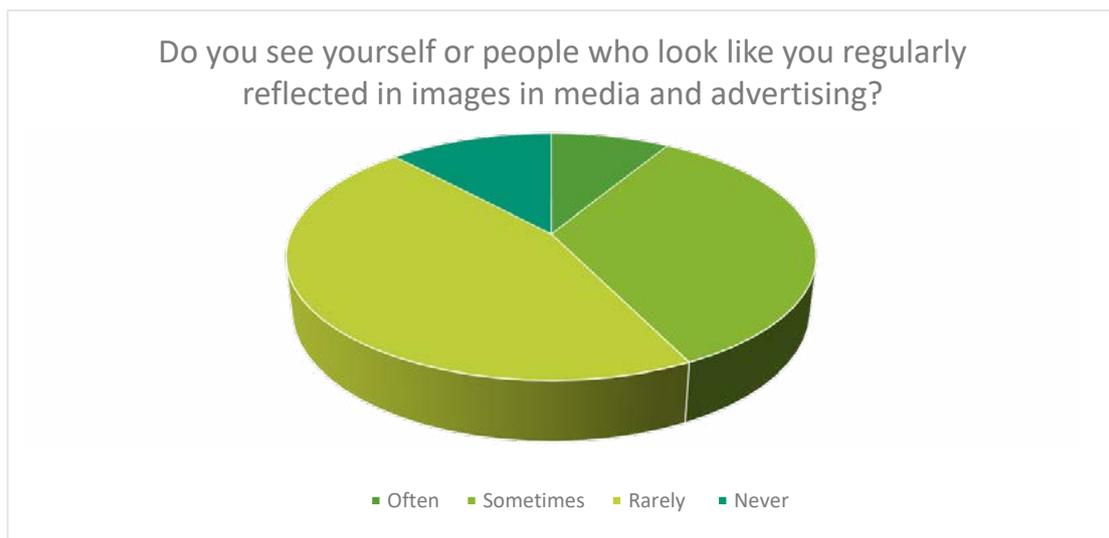
Both adults and young people explained that their school experience can have a negative impact on their body image through being bullied or obsessively counting calories for a lifetime after being weighed aged 10 or 11. Other’s raised concerns over children being given leaflets for weight loss organisations in their folders to take home for their parents and the lack of representation of different bodies in schools.

“Education is needed to both men and women during school to expand the narrow view of what is currently deemed a socially acceptable body image.”

(Woman 25–34)

4. People don’t feel reflected in the images they see in media and advertising

57% of adults reported ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ seeing themselves or people who look like them regularly reflected in images in media and advertising.



1 in 10 people reported ‘never’ feeling represented in media and advertising but this rose to 1 in 5 for people with a disability. Additionally, 69% of BAME respondents told us they either ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ feel represented compared with 56% of White participants and this rose to 80% for Transgender people compared to 57% of Cisgender respondents.

“My image affected by colourism in every media.”

(Woman 45–54)

“I am disabled and have literally never seen a woman with my disability represented in any kind of media”

(Woman 18–24)

“We need more representations of bodies - trans, queer, Black, curvy, disabled”

(Non-binary 25–34)

From our findings it would appear that a majority of people don't feel reflected by the media and the advertising industry but you are even less likely to relate to images around you if you are BAME, transgender or have a disability.

People told us that the images in media and advertising often have a negative impact on their body image. This was particularly the case for women over the age of 55 who reported feeling 'invisible' as if represented in media or advertising at all, often younger women are used or their images are used in connection with how to look younger.

“I'm fat and fifty, and I feel invalidated and invisible. I'm sick of the expectation to look young and the portrayal of older people by youthful actors.”

(Woman 55+)

Men who responded to our survey told us that images of men in media and advertising are stereotypically tall and muscular and men reported feeling pressured by this to gain muscle and achieve this body presented to them as 'ideal'

“I'm a 33 year old Male model and personal trainer. I grew up looking at men's fitness and bodybuilding magazines, fashion models and Male athletes. I now know from having worked in the industry that the vast majority of these people use steroids, suffer enormously with mental health issues and their photos are edited heavily. There has been, and continues to be, huge amounts of pressure on men to look like a certain aesthetic and to take performance enhancing drugs.”

Man (25–34)

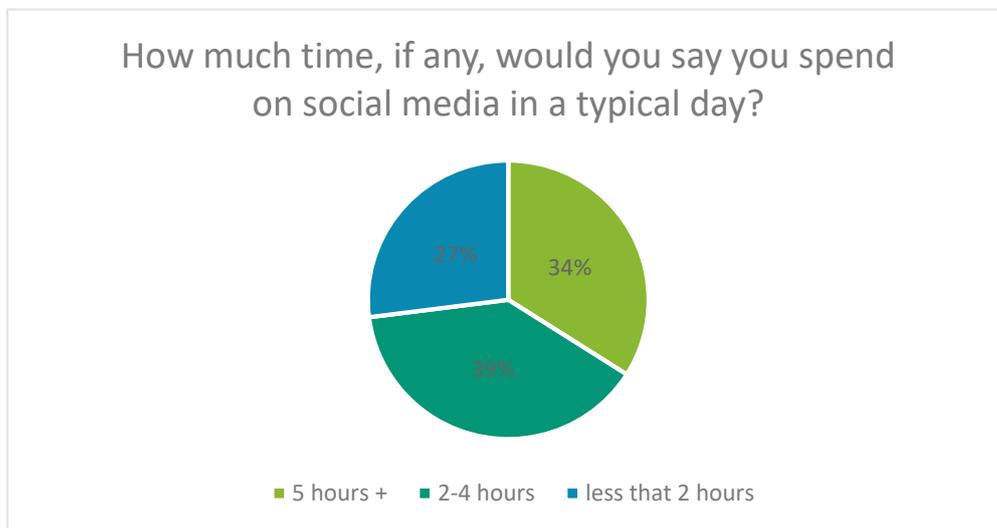
People reported using social media to give them access to range of images and exposure to images of people they feel represent them. This included people curating their Instagram feeds to follow people of different ethnicities, weights, abilities and genders.

“As a plus size, mixed race women there is often limited positive ‘traditional’ media focus. However, there are now a lot more ‘content creators’ who reflect who I am and how I look. Although there are a lot of negative connotations with social media the ability to see people like me on a daily basis is amazing, although you often have to actively seek these people out rather than it being part of the norm.”

(Woman 25–34)

5. Images on social media have a big influence young people

Young people who completed our survey told us that social media had the biggest influence on their body image and the majority of young people spend over 2 hours on a typical day on social media. Most adults also reported spending 2 hours on social media a day and that it was one of the biggest influences on how they felt about their appearance.



Out of the young people who completed our survey

- 95% use Instagram
- 90% use Youtube
- 75% use Snapchat
- 66% use TikTok

We have been told how damaging social media use can be for people’s body image. Respondents told us that how they feel about their appearance was influenced on social media either by ‘influencers’ or adverts. People reported struggling with their body image as a result of constantly looking at edited pictures, or content or advertising which encouraged their body to look a certain way. For women this was often to be slim but curvy and for men this was to be tall and muscular. People told us that whilst they recognised photos and advertisements were edited or ‘influencers’ had undergone cosmetic surgery or used steroids.

“I’m thin and underweight but I am trying to come to terms with the fact I’ll never have a flat stomach because it’s not really possible and the pictures influencers and advertisements take can be altered, have camera angles and tricks to make someone not seem true.”

(Woman 18–24)

The media in particular portrays the ideal that we all must be slim and skinny with perfect muscular bodies or stick thin like models which is totally unrealistic and I personally struggle with my self-confidence so when I see adverts or images online of people promoting a certain body ideal I hate it. It makes me feel awful and I then begin to hate my body even more than I previously did before, no matter what anyone says.

(Girl 15–17)

In the last year, the majority of both adults and young people reported seeing adverts on social media for:

- Weight loss organisations (such as Weightwatchers, Slimming World or Noom)
- Gyms
- Shapewear
- Cosmetic Dental Treatment
- Non-surgical cosmetic treatment
- Muscle building products.

50% of adults and 39% of young people also reported seeing adverts for cosmetic surgery. We also surveyed young people on how they would consider changing their appearance. 8 in 10 young people would use diet and exercise to change their appearance. Half of people would consider using weight-loss products and 3 in 10 would use shapewear, non-surgical cosmetic treatments and cosmetic surgery. Only 5% of under 18s reported they wouldn’t change their appearance.

Both adults and young people told us that they feel pressured to make changes to their bodies and their appearance due to persistent advertising, most commonly, to lose weight. People reported this despite curating their social media feeds to be ‘body positive’ and free from ‘diet culture’. This was also true for people who currently, or have previously had an eating disorder.

“As a clinical Psychologist working with children and young people the impact of [poor body image] is apparent younger and younger. They are less able to ignore the “ideals” pushed via social media. In addition, as someone who has recently become pregnant [...] Social media is already flooding me with “bouncing back” to “pre-baby body” advertisements. Very very unhelpful.”

(Woman 25–34)

It is horrendous that I'm advertised weight loss products and methods every single time I use social media. I have an eating disorder and and trying to recover and actively curate my feed to try and avoid content that might be triggering. It is unacceptable that I should be faced with content that targets my illness.

(Woman 25–34)

Young people and adults also told us that social media could impact their body image in a positive way. People told us that social media gave them the opportunity to 'follow' a diverse range of people and see influencers of a variety of abilities, genders, ethnicities and body shapes. Additionally, people praised that adverts on social media can also be more diverse and more representative, for example showing stretchmarks and body hair compared to adverts in mainstream media.

“Positive social media influencers have helped me feel more confident about my body image”

(Woman 18–24)

“It is worth noting I have curated my social media feeds with body positive influencers. They have single-handedly saved my mental health regarding my body, and prevented me from continuing harmful diets. I worry about young teenagers today who's social media feeds are not as body positive as mine.”

(Woman 18–24)

6. People want change

We asked 'Is there anything else you would like to tell us about body image?' and lots of people told us what would improve their body image or what had damaged their body image in the past. Here are some of the things you would like to see

Schools – both young people and adults told us that school plays a big part in how we feel about our appearance. People told us that their experiences at school including being weighed, appearance-based bullying and the advertisement of weight loss organisations had negatively impacted their body image and often their mental health. People wanted to see the end of the practices above as well as educating children, parents and teachers on the importance of fostering positive body image and diversifying images in schools.

People should be taught that all bodies are beautiful, health does not always correlate with size and that there is so much more to life and our worth than losing weight or being the most attractive person possible. [...] Self-acceptance and appreciation needs to be promoted in institutions such as primary and secondary schools and hopefully one day people of all ages everywhere will realise they are so much more than their bodies.

(Girl 15–17)

Regulation – People told us that they feel bombarded by images and advertising encouraging them to feel lacking in their appearance and to make changes whether that is to lose weight, gain muscles, change face or body shape, change their hair or their skin tone. People told us that they would like to see more regulation of adverts and content particularly on social media to protect people of all ages from harmful content around body image. People told us they would like to see images labelled when they have been edited or when the person in an image has had cosmetic surgery.

I would love to see more representation of different body types in the media and stronger regulations on weight loss products and adverts on social media eg warnings and info on how to lose weight healthily. I also believe there should be support and education provided in schools so that students who are struggling have somewhere to find help easily.

(Woman 18–24)

Health – Many people told us that their body image had impacted their physical and mental health. People told us that poor body image had contributed to their development of eating disorder, body dysmorphia and other mental health conditions. People wanted more funding for mental health services to support early intervention and recovery from these conditions. People also told us that doctors and public health policy is to weight-centric which can ‘shame’ people. People told us this causes them to avoid seeing the doctor, or had led to disordered eating.

“I have so many friends who have had/have eating disorders and so many friends that have been affected by having negative mental health [...] We need more funding for mental health. We need better support for young people. We need to improve the way people see themselves. Fat is not bad and diet culture is toxic. We need help.”

(Girl 15–17)

We need to consider the way our medical professionals also talk about our bodies. I’ve never recovered from a GP telling me they could see how overweight I was just from me sitting in front of them (she then pointed at my arms and made a hefty gesture). I was 8lbs overweight and just 22 years old. This was 10 years ago and I’ve never been to the GP since.

(Woman 25–34)

Diversity – people want to see more diversity in the images that surround us, in all forms of media and advertising. People mentioned seeing more realistic images of people including grey hair, body hair, stretchmarks, skin conditions etc as well as people of a range of ages, shapes and sizes, more BAME people, people with disabilities, people with a visible difference and people of different genders and sexualities. People told us that lack of diversity in the media contributes to discrimination including transphobia, racism and colourism.

“Body image also includes seeing people with disabilities”

(Woman 35–44)

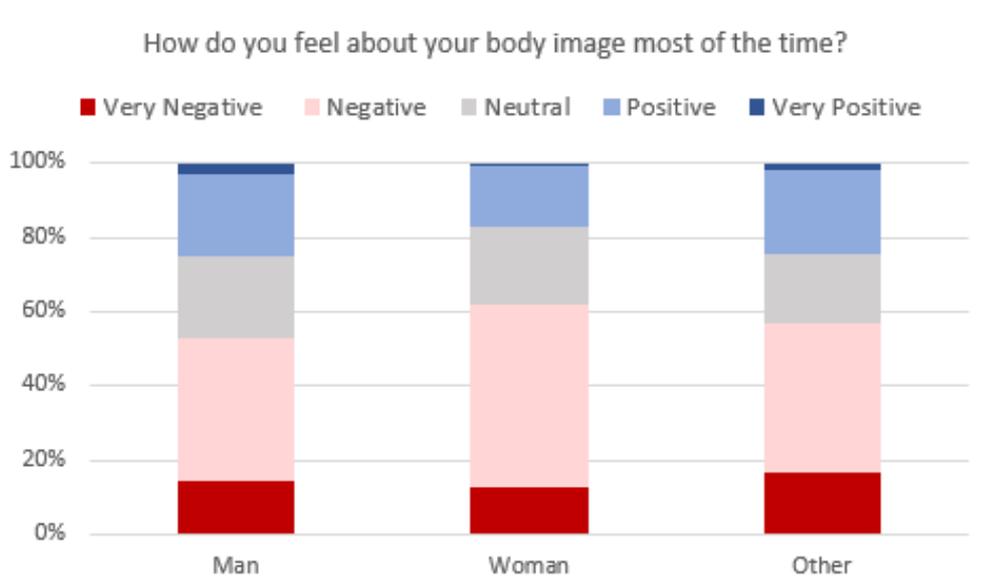
“We need more representations of bodies - trans, queer, Black, curvy, disabled”

(Non-binary 25–34)

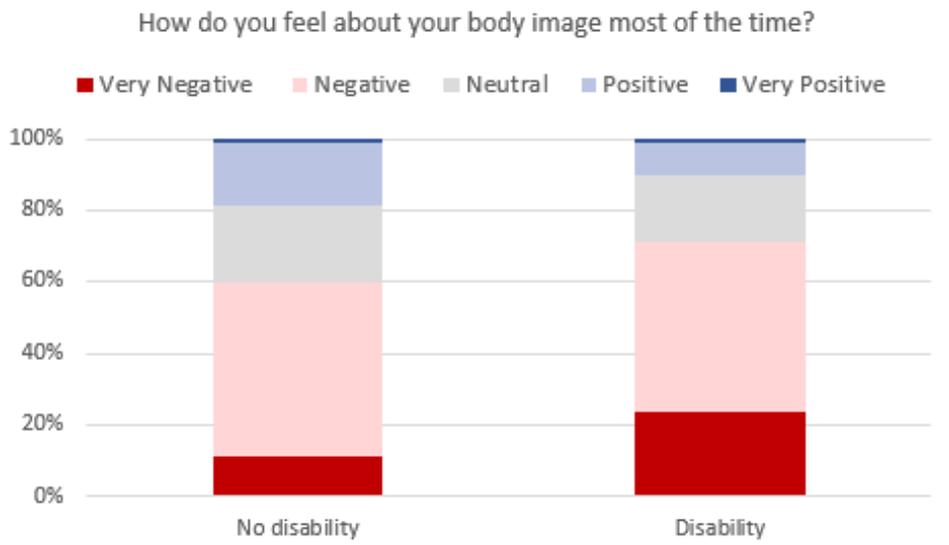
2. Breakdown of Results

How do you feel about your body image most of the time?

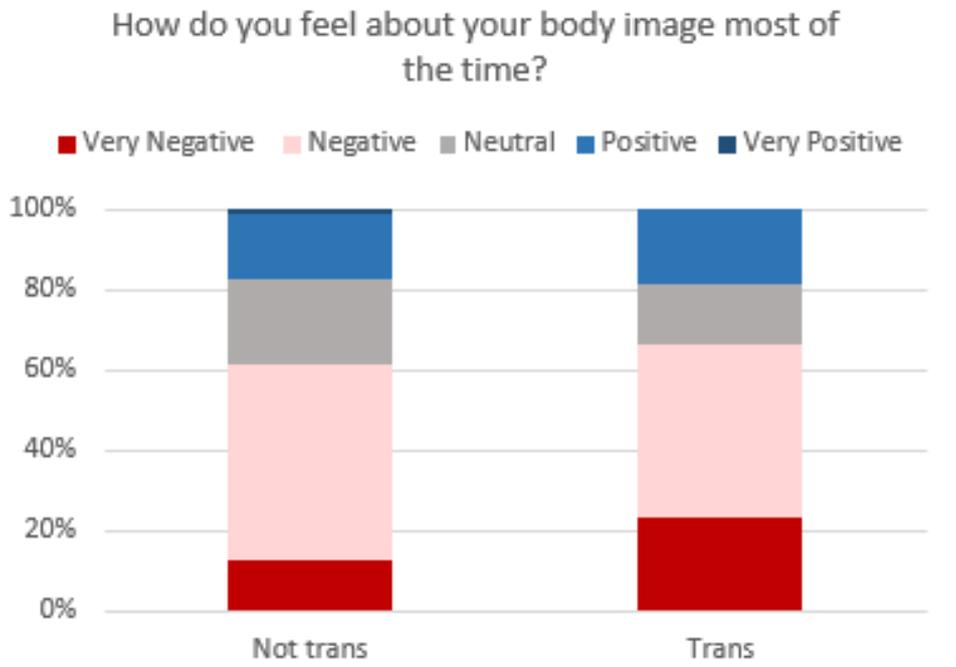
- 61% of adults feel negative or very negative about their body image most of the time; 48% of adults feel ‘negative’ about their body image most of the time, a further 13% feel ‘very negative’.
- 66% of children feel negative or very negative about their body image most of the time. 46% of under 18s/children feel ‘negative’ about their body image most of the time, a further 20% feel ‘very negative’.
- Men reported slightly more extreme feelings relating to their body image with 14% feeling ‘very negative’ and 3% feeling ‘very positive’ compared with 13% and 1% respectively for women. On the whole though 62% of women feel negatively about their body image compared with 53% of men. 57% of those who don’t identify with either as a man or a woman reported feeling negatively about their body image most of the time.



- 71% of respondents with a disability reported feeling ‘negative’ or ‘very negative’ most of the time about their body image compared with 60% of respondents without disabilities.



- 13% of Cisgender respondents reported feeling ‘very negative’ about their body image most of the time compared with 23% of Transgender respondents. Not a single Transgender respondent felt ‘very positive’ about their body image and only 1% of Cisgender responders did.

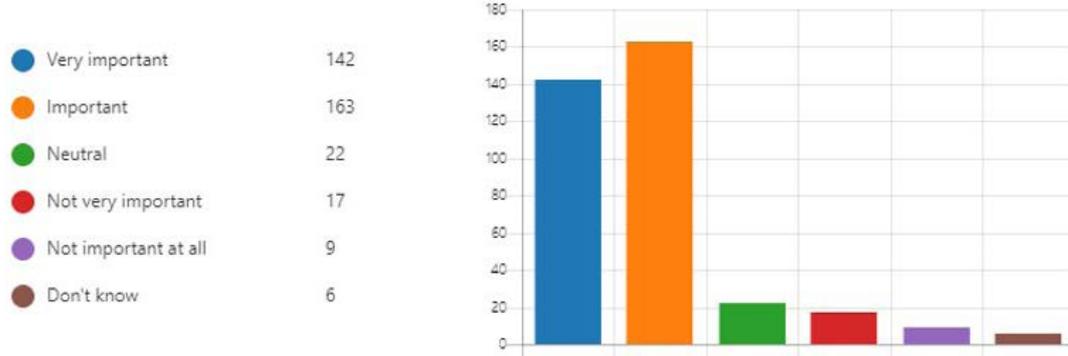


How important do you think appearance is at your age?

- 85% of under 18s thought that appearance was either ‘very important’ or ‘important’.

20. How important do you think appearance is at your age?

[More Details](#)



How much of an influence do the following have on how you feel about your body image?

We asked under 18s “How much of an influence do you think the following have on how people your age feel about their appearance?”

For under 18s, what influenced how they felt about their appearance the most was:

1. Images on social media	4. Physical Exercise
2. Stereotypes	5. Healthy Eating
3. Celebrities	6. Peers and Co-workers

For adults, what influences them the most on how they feel about their body image was:

1. Physical exercise	4. Partners
2. Healthy eating	5. Stereotypes
3. Images on social media	6. Images on TV

How much time, if any would you say you spend on social media in a typical day?

- 34.2% of under 18s spend 5 hours or more on social media on a typical day and a further 39.2% spend between 2 – 4 hours daily.
- 11% of adults spend 5 hours or more on social media in a typical day and a further 49% spend between 2 – 4 hours daily

What social media platforms, if any, do you use?

The most popular social media platforms used by under 18s are as follows

1. Instagram 95%	4. Whatsapp 68%
2. Youtube 90%	5. TikTok 66%
3. Snapchat 75%	6. Twitter 44%

The most popular social media platforms used by adults are as follows

1. Instagram 88%	4. Youtube 61%
2. Whatsapp 84%	5. Twitter 48%
3. Facebook 81%	6. Snapchat 24%

Since 1 January 2020, when using social media, have you ever seen adverts for any of the following? Please select all that apply

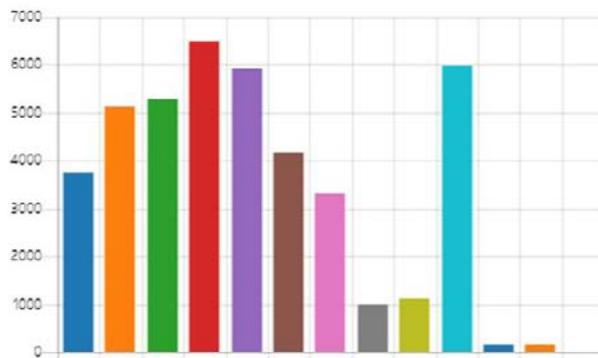
Since January 2020, adults reported seeing adverts for the following on social media:

1. Weight loss organisations (Weightwatchers, Slimming World, Noom etc) 86%	7. Cosmetic surgery 50%
2. Shapewear 79%	8. Permanent make-up 44%
3. Gyms 79%	9. Sun beds 15%
4. Cosmetic dental treatment 70%	10. Skin lightening/bleaching cream 13%
5. Non-surgical cosmetic treatment 68%	11. None of the above 2%
6. Muscle building products 56%	

7. Since 1 January 2020, when using social media, have you seen adverts for any of the following? Please select all that apply.

[More Details](#)

- Cosmetic surgery (e.g. liposuc... 3759
- Non-surgical cosmetic treatm... 5113
- Cosmetic dental treatment 5276
- Weight loss organisations (We... 6498
- Gyms 5928
- Muscle building products 4172
- Permanent make-up 3309
- Skin lightening/bleaching crea... 981
- Sun beds 1106
- Shapewear 5972
- Not sure 155
- None of the above 174
- Other 1



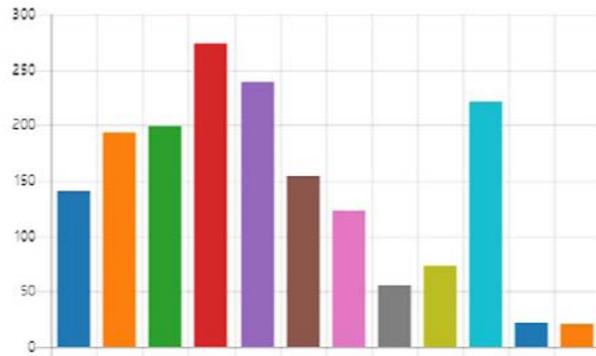
Since January 2020, under 18s reported seeing adverts for the following on social media:

1. Weight loss organisations (Weightwatchers, Slimming World, Noom etc) 76%	7. Muscle building products 37%
2. Gyms 66%	8. Permanent make-up 34%
3. Shapewear 61%	9. Sunbeds 20%
4. Cosmetic dental treatment 55%	10. Skin lightening/bleaching cream 15%
5. Non-surgical cosmetic treatment 54%	11. None of the above 6%
6. Cosmetic surgery 39%	

24. Since 1 January 2020, when using social media, have you ever seen adverts for any of the following? Please select all that apply.

[More Details](#)

- Cosmetic surgery (e.g. liposuc... 141
- Non-surgical cosmetic treatm... 194
- Cosmetic dental treatment 199
- Weight loss organisations (We... 274
- Gyms 239
- Muscle building products 154
- Permanent make-up 123
- Skin lightening/bleaching crea... 56
- Sun beds 74
- Shapewear 221
- Not sure 22
- None of the above 21



Within the last year, have you tried to alter your appearance through any of the following? Please select all that apply.

We asked under 18s “Have you and your friends ever considered changing your appearance through any of the following?”

Within the last year, adults have tried to alter their appearance through the following:

1. Exercise 83%	7. Muscle building products 7%
2. Diet 74%	8. Cosmetic dental treatment 7%
3. Shapewear 35%	9. Permanent make-up 5%
4. Weight-loss products 21%	10. Cosmetic surgery 1%
5. Non-surgical cosmetic treatment 9%	11. Skin lightening/bleaching cream 1%
6. Sunbeds 7%	12. None of the above 9%

Under 18s reported that themselves and their friends have considered changing their appearance through the following:

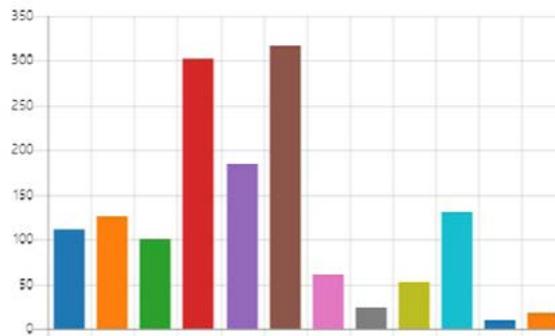
1. Exercise 87%	7. Cosmetic dental treatment 28%
2. Diet 83%	8. Muscle building products 17%

3. Weight-loss products 51%	9. Sunbeds 14%
4. Shapewear 36%	10. Skin lightening/bleaching creams 7%
5. Non-surgical cosmetic treatment 35%	11. None of the above 5%
6. Cosmetic surgery 31%	

25. Have you and your friends ever considered changing your appearance through any of the following? Please select all that apply.

[More Details](#)

● Cosmetic surgery (e.g. liposuc...	112
● Non-surgical cosmetic treatm...	126
● Cosmetic dental treatment	101
● Diet	302
● Weight-loss products	185
● Exercise	316
● Muscle building products	61
● Skin lightening/bleaching crea...	24
● Sun beds	52
● Shapewear	131
● Not sure	10
● None of the above	17

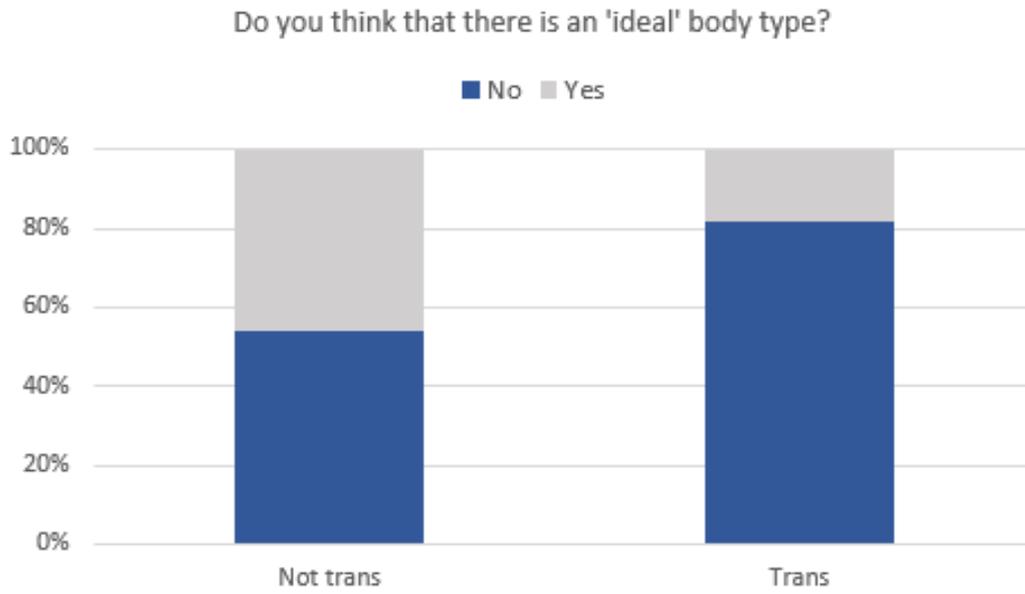


Do you think there is an ideal body type?

- 45% of adults and 65% of under-18s thought there was an ‘ideal’ body type.
- 46% of women and 45% of men believe there is an ideal body type. A few made comments similar to the one below in reference to this question:

“I don’t think there IS an ideal body image but I think in society there is an ideal body image. I think commenting on appearance at all in any way fuels body image problems because a) you don’t know where the person is mentally and how they’ll take your comment even if it is meant positively b) it reinforces the idea that how you look matters”

- Transgender respondents were significantly less likely to think there is an ‘ideal’ body type. 46% of Cisgender people thought there was an ideal body type compared with just 18% of Transgender people.



Do you feel social pressure to look a certain way?

- 89% of adults feel a social pressure to look a certain way

10. Do you feel social pressure to look a certain way?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	6660
● No	844



Has the way you feel about your body ever affected your mental health?

- 86% of adults said the way they feel about their body has impacted their mental health

In the last year, have you felt any of the following emotions due to your appearance?

In the last year, adults reported feeling the following emotions related to their appearance:

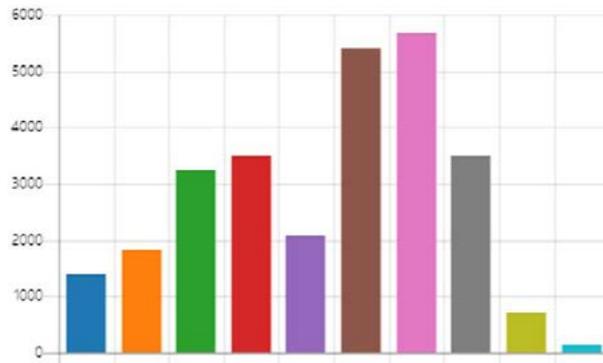
1. Anxiety 76% (5678)
2. Shame 72% (5388)
3. Depression 46% (3494)
4. Acceptance 46% (3482)
5. Confidence 43% (3255)

- 6. Happiness 27% (2068)
- 7. Pride 24% (1838)
- 8. Joy 18% (1378)
- 9. Suicidal thoughts 9% (702)

12. In the last year, have you felt any of the following emotions due to your appearance? Please select all that apply

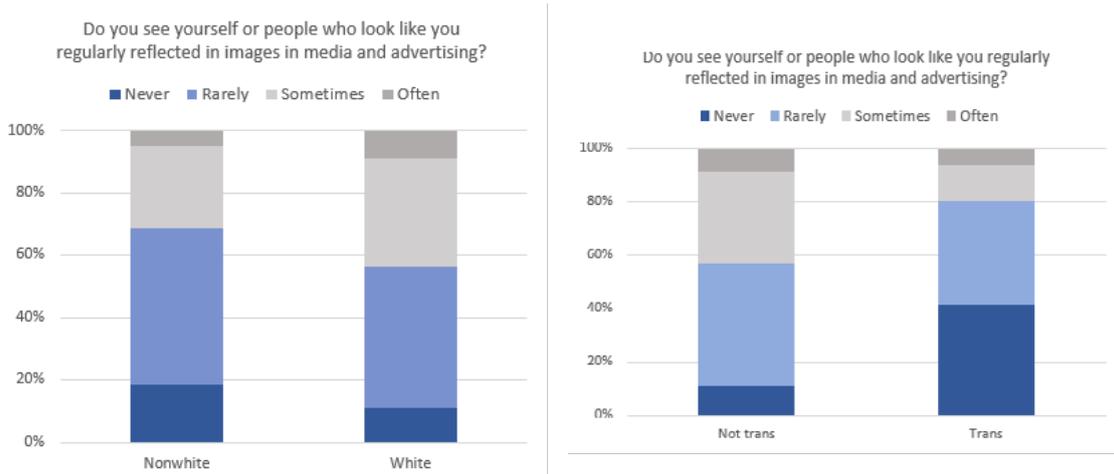
[More Details](#)

● Joy	1378
● Pride	1838
● Confidence	3255
● Acceptance	3482
● Happiness	2068
● Shame	5388
● Anxiety	5678
● Depression	3494
● Suicidal thoughts	702
● None of the above	125

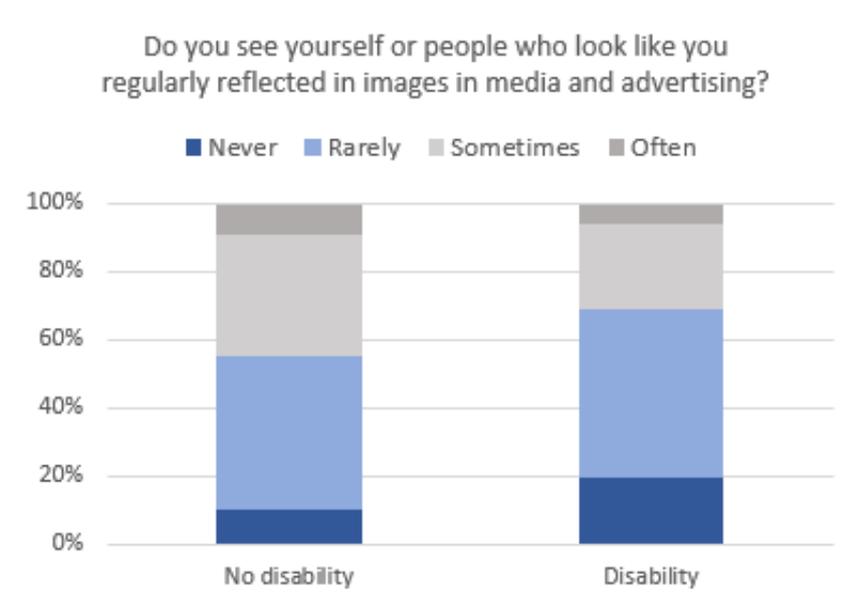


Do you see yourself or people who look like you regularly reflected in images in media and advertising?

- 46% of adults reported ‘rarely’ seeing themselves or people who look like them regularly reflected in images in media and advertising, with 12% reported they ‘never’ do.
- 38% of under 18s reported ‘rarely’ seeing themselves or people who look like them regularly reflected in images in media and advertising, with 18% reported they ‘never’ do.
- 69% of the BAME respondents reported that they were more likely to ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ see themselves reflected in images in media and advertising compared with 56% of White respondents.
- 80% of Transgender respondents reported that they were more likely to ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ see themselves reflected in images in media and advertising compared with 57% of Cisgender respondents.



- 20% of people with a disability report ‘never’ seeing themselves reflected in images in media and advertising compared with only 10% of people without a disability



(For Under 18s) Have you learned about positive body image in school?



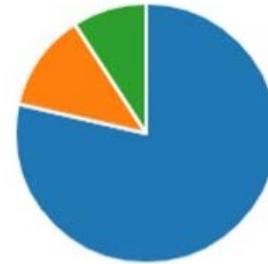
(For Under 18s) would you like to learn more about positive body image in school?

- 70% of under 18s said they hadn’t learned about positive body image at school and 78% of all under-18 respondents said they would like to learn more about body image in school

28. Would you like to learn more about body image in school?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	283
● No	44
● Don't know	33



How has the recent lockdown affected how you feel about your body image?

- 38% of adults reported feeling ‘worse’ about their body image during the lockdown with 15% feeling ‘much worse’. 14% of adults reported feeling ‘much better’ or ‘better’.
- 35% of under 18s reported feeling ‘worse’ about their body image during the lockdown with 23% feeling ‘much worse’. 16% of under 18s reported feeling ‘much better’ or ‘better’

Is there anything else about body image you would like to tell us?

Here is a sample of comments:

<p>My generation is a lost cause, the self hatred is ingrained the younger generations need to be shown images that aren't filtered, photoshopped...basically fake and that bodies can be strong and not necessarily slim...the body is a vessel to carry the person about. It needs care but is not the total of you. The fake quick fix ads and cosmetic changes purely for aesthetic, social acceptance need to stop and those that do carry out these procedures need tighter regulation – Woman (35 – 44)</p>	<p>Firstly I think that social media has a lot to answer for. Particularly tik tok and Twitter often have accounts that include eating disordered behaviours and almost promotes this. Tik tok has a very young audience and this concerns me massively. I also think that young children are way more conscious of their bodies and aren't celebrated for the way they use their bodies or what their bodies can do but it's all about how it looks! Children come home with slimming world leaflets in their book bags. It's sickening. I think that every single person has some part of their body that they are insecure about. And that is due to the constant pressure of diet culture. – Woman (25 – 34)</p>
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<p>As a plus size, mixed race women there is often limited positive 'traditional' media focus. However, there are now a lot more 'content creators' who reflect who I am and how I look. Although there are a lot of negative connotations with social media the ability to see people like me on a daily basis is amazing, although you often have to actively seek these people out rather than it being part of the norm. – Woman (25 – 34)</p>	<p>As a new mum it has been a battle to learn to accept my postpartum body. Postpartum bodies aren't widely represented in the media and don't fit into society's very slim standards of what a body should look like. I'm fortunate that I'm confident and able to step outside of diet culture and embrace my body for what it is. Not everyone has the ability to do that. I would like to see postpartum bodies more widely accepted and to break down the narrative of 'getting your body back/ bouncing back' after having a baby. – Woman (18 – 24)</p>
<p>"I always try to tell myself it doesn't matter, and to think of it neutrally. But my unhappiness with my body image is so pervasive, and I don't think it's all in my head. Society consistently reminds us everyday to look a certain way." (Woman, 25-34)</p>	<p>"Diet companies & "influencers" using lockdown as an excuse to push diet products is incredibly sad & harmful. Especially for myself who is pregnant & already feeling under strain." (Woman 35-44)</p>
<p>CHANGE PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY. Health is a social justice issue not a body type! as a personal trainer I spend more time undoing people's disordered dieting behaviour than anything else. – Woman (25 – 34)</p>	<p>I deleted tiktok from my phone because it was having an effect on my body image and exercise and eating – Male (18 – 24)</p>
<p>There is massive image and body shaming of individuals in the public eye - including in Parliament - and especially on social media. There are also some v specific issues facing the gay male community / expectations / shaming. Man (35 – 44)</p>	<p>Over the years I have put weight on due to health problems and feel embarrassed to show my body. I have tried diet gym and various others but it will not go. Only thing for larger people on advertising is weight loss, surgery or figure hugging clothes I AM LARGE due to health problems and not represented. – Woman (45 -54)</p>
<p>I feel proud of myself for carrying and breastfeeding my babies. I am only 7 months postpartum with my 2nd baby and am at home with a toddler and 7 month old. I constantly get things popping up about celebs who have bounced back into shape, or other celebs looking skinny-pregnant. The sell is constantly on for products and services for getting rid of baby weight and it's depressing. The reality of being a mum of tiny ones with no time to yourself is nothing like what they are portraying. The worst is when they push to sell leggings to hide c-section scars and "mum-tums". It is disgusting the way postpartum bodies are looked on as something to be ashamed of. Sadly, this does often get to me and make me feel dumpy and unattractive. Woman (35 – 44)</p>	<p>Normal looking Black women with Black hair are so rare. Fat Black women are even rarer where I think I can only remember one advert containing them. This worries me for myself and my daughter as we never see our own faces. Even just seeing Black women fills me with joy it's so rare. Also, my 20 year old beloved all the lying adverts that tell her her fat can be massaged away or a gastric band is the answer rather than exercise. She knows calories and BMI are scientifically unreliable but instead wants surgery. This terrifies me. Woman (35 – 44)</p>

<p>Positive social media influencers have helped me feel more confident about my body image – Woman (25 – 34)</p>	<p>i think that everybody in today's society has that 'ideal' body image in their head that they want. but that shouldn't be the case. recently i have seen more things about body positivity but the negative still overpowers it. – Girl (11 – 14)</p>
<p>"Body image should be talked about early on in schools and parents given help and advise to talk about it too. Advertising agencies, fashion magazines, films and tv shows etc should be regulated so they are not allowed to use models or actors/actresses with unhealthy BMIs. The 'weight loss' and diet industry and also the junk food and sugary snacks industries should be regulated too." (Woman 25–34)</p>	<p>When I was 13 I was taken to my first slimming club by a family member and so started my progression into body dysmorphia and anorexia. Going through 2 pregnancies and weight gain resulted in me not looking like what society expects which resulted in depressive episodes. Constantly being surrounded by imagery of people that don't represent myself is impactful and damaging. I mainly feel this impact from websites selling clothes and social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram. It saddens me that 24 years later that this imagery hasn't evolved and is more influential than ever. Please address this – Woman (35 – 44)</p>
<p>I try very hard to follow social media that boosts my body image and shows diversity however I find advertising and news stories still creep through into my feed. I'm particularly concerned about ads on snapchat as most if not all are about "improving your body" and I'm worried about the impact it has on younger users given that i sometimes find it hard and I'm 20. I've not seen this bought to attention anywhere so please do!!!! (Woman 18–24)</p>	<p>It's taken a lot of work to stop comparing myself so much to others, but I still do it somewhat unconsciously/somewhat consciously at times. Most of the time those comparisons are triggered by images in the media and on social media. Part of the work I've done has been to stop following people on Instagram in particular that make me feel inferior (in terms of body image). Yet adverts that appear most noticeably on Facebook and Instagram are often for diet supplements or exercise programmes promising exceptional results. (Woman 18–24)</p>

<p>More This Girl Can type promotions normalising all shapes and sizes exercising. Ban junk magazines shaming sizes. Woman (25 – 34)</p>	<p>The issue with body image is on social media and in magazines its all too easy to edit yourself and others into something they are not. As a British South Asian woman I have very few relatable women and role models I can look at and feel comfortable and confident about my shape and face and colour. Body image is an issue but also you need to look at intersectionality and how BAME women despise themselves for having body hair, darker skin tones and not having the 'slim thick' body many now aspire to as Kim Kardashian sells her shapewear and body makeup - making people believe that will make them look more like her. Influencer culture has meant that coloured women are only seeing fewer role models and developing more self-hate around body image and nurturing low self-confidence rather than embodying joy and self-love. A lot can be done especially for minors and education. – Woman (35 – 44)</p>
<p>I am a Brownie leader and Am concerned about young girls who are influenced negatively by their parents. Aged 7–10 they should be Playing and exploring, not dying hair and worrying about body weight and how they look. I personally am not nor swayed by media but my adult daughters are and to a lesser extent so are these young girls Personally I am obese and know my daughters would like me to lose weight for health. My weight is connected with emotional issues which are never addressed in weight loss programmes. Accessing mental health services would not be sufficient. There should be free/ minimal payment weight loss programmes with psychological input And cooking classes if required, on nhs. It would pay for itself with reduction of fat related illness and medications - Woman (55+)</p>	<p>I'm a 33 year old Male model and personal trainer. I grew up looking at men's fitness and bodybuilding magazines, fashion models and Male athletes. I now know from having worked in the industry that the vast majority of these people use steroids, suffer enormously with mental health issues and their photos are edited heavily. There has been, and continues to be, huge amounts of pressure on men to look like a certain aesthetic and to take performance enhancing drugs. Men are totally excluded from body positivity movements AND I now find myself filling out this paper for 'women and equalities'. Men are subject to no protection in the media and ignored/excluded in processes like this. Men make up 3 out of every 4 suicides and approximately 90% of the prison population. Are you going to continue to exclude men from the conversation? How many other men will fill out this form? – Man (25 – 34)</p>
<p>Often when I open my social media apps, they are filled with advertisements of weight gain</p> <p>- Man (18 – 24)</p>	<p>I'm black and fat so feel like I just don't fit – Woman (55+)</p>
<p>Lockdown has made my body image worse due to being able to spend my time on social media and just having time to sit in front of the mirror for ages (Girl 15–17)</p>	<p>Body image is HUGE and greatly impacts both men and women. I see this first hand in schools. Children as young as in year 4 are affected and it needs to be at the forefront for businesses and social media (Woman 25–34)</p>

<p>I am a gay man. The level of body shame in our community is crazy. It is often steeped in racism, ableism, and misogyny. Brands make money from selling to us images of the perfect muscular and shaped body. It feels unattainable. I have felt so ashamed of my body at times I have struggled to leave the house. I love being queer but the queerness or body positivity and queer spaces are desperately under funded. Man (25 – 34)</p>	<p>I feel like its not the actual main media which we are forced to see on a daily that ever really does any help. E.g. the adverts on youtube, newspapers, tv. Its like we have to pretty much 90% of the time go out and follow those accounts which are body positive we have to do the looking for ourselves and that can be hard when you dont even know theyre out there or where to find them. – Girl (11 – 14)</p>
<p>I think it needs to be taught from a young age that the way you look is perfect. Ads including anything to do with appearance should not be shown to anyone under the age of 18 on social media. Young children are very impressionable.”(Girl 15–17)</p>	<p>“Should be [body image] taught from a VERY young age about caring about personality more than looks. Like when you are learning how to count, so it is drilled into you from a young age” (Boy 15–17)</p>
<p>As a trans woman through transition I have gone from hating my body due to dysphoria to hating my body due to pressures on women to conform. Woman (35 – 44)</p>	<p>I am an overweight wheelchair user. I rarely see younger wheelchair users represented, nor those with chronic illness which can cause weight gain. It’s a sometimes depressing life to lead with no support and no role models. Man (35 – 44)</p>
<p>Body image should be talked about early on in schools and parents given help and advise to talk about it too. Advertising agencies, fashion magazines, films and tv shows etc should be regulated so they are not allowed to use models or actors/actresses with unhealthy BMIs. The ‘weight loss’ and diet industry and also the junk food and sugary snacks industries should be regulated too. Woman (25 – 34)</p>	<p>I think social media has a LOT to answer for and there is no filter for this harmful content on any social media platform - it’s not regulated. For someone like me who has suffered with eating disorders and issues with body image it is detrimental to the well-being of anyone who has suffered with similar. Woman (18 – 24)</p>
<p>As a plus size, mixed race women there is often limited positive ‘traditional’ media focus. However, there are now a lot more ‘content creators’ who reflect who I am and how I look. Although there are a lot of negative connotations with social media the ability to see people like me on a daily basis is amazing, although you often have to actively seek these people out rather than it being part of the norm. (Woman 25–34)</p>	<p>I deal with Body Dysmorphia (BDD). I think there needs to be more awareness raised of this condition, especially for men, as it can be extremely debilitating. [...] I think that in general social media and social pressures, including unhealthy and unrealistic beauty standards, created, or at least imposed by the media, are a huge issue. (Man 25–34)</p>
<p>I would love to see more people online and on the TV that look normal. I would also love to see no more adverts on all Platforms for weight loss, and extreme exercise. I want to see normal people my age with real bodies of all shapes, sizes and abilities & colour! (Woman 45 -54)</p>	<p>I deleted tiktok from my phone because it was having an effect on my body image and exercise and eating (Man 25–34)</p>

<p>The media DESPERATELY need to be more inclusive, with different body types, different races, people with different disabilities even down to showing people with hearing aids being shown. Major change need to happen to allow everyone in society to feel body positive(Woman 18-24)</p>	<p>It is from the medical community that I feel most shamed for my size 16-18 figure. BMI should be abandoned as a measure and all GPs and health professionals should receive training on Health At Every Size. (Woman 35-44)</p>
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