

BodyKind YOUTH SURVEY

Your Body Image, Your Voice.

2022
SNAPSHOT
for Educators

Overview

Butterfly Foundation's first BodyKind Youth Survey aimed to explore and better understand the body image experiences of young Australians aged 12 to 18 years. The survey was anonymous, ethics approved and conducted online from September to November 2022.

The 2022 BodyKind Youth Survey findings show that body dissatisfaction and body image concerns are exceptionally high in young people in Australia, with over 90% of young people reporting some level of body image concern, with 1 in 3 being very or extremely concerned.

Body dissatisfaction was experienced across all demographic groups but females, gender diverse youth and those in the LGBTQIA+ community were most affected. Poorer body appreciation was related to a greater desire for thinness, life disengagement and social media making young people feel dissatisfied about their body.

An overwhelming proportion (68.7%) of young people have experienced appearance-related teasing, which was mostly reported as occurring at school. The majority of young people want schools to do more to stop it from happening. Young people also believe that more should be done to help young people develop a positive body image through programs at primary and secondary schools.

We learned about young people's social media use, with almost 50% of young people saying that social media made them feel dissatisfied about their bodies. However, young people rarely asked for help if they were struggling. Young people said that they want to see changes in the way social media presents body ideals and beauty standards, as well as stricter guidelines around harmful content.

Body dissatisfaction carries a significant cost for young people, with a significant number limiting their involvement in sport, social activities, schoolwork, and speaking up about what matters to them.

Snapshot of findings from key questions

Almost half (45.2%) of young people reported being dissatisfied with how their body looks.

How satisfied are young people with how their body looks?

- Close to 1 in 3 reported being mostly or completely dissatisfied with how their body looks.
- Body dissatisfaction was highest amongst those reporting their gender as anything other than male.
- LGBTQIA+ youth reported high rates of body dissatisfaction (>40% mostly or completely dissatisfied), compared with 18.4% of heterosexual young people.
- Body dissatisfaction was highest for 14-year-olds (58%), and lowest for 12-year-olds (26%), followed by 18-year-olds (35.4%).

WHO PARTICIPATED?

1635 responses (12-18 years)

- 61.4% Female, 28% Male, 4.5% Non-binary, 4.8% Other gender term
- 4.9% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 30.4% LGBTQIA+*
- All Australian states and territories represented

**Young people who identified as gay/lesbian, bisexual and those identifying under a term not listed.*

How concerned are young people about their body image?

- Over 1 in 3 (38.3%) young people were very or extremely concerned about their body image.
- Those reporting their gender as anything other than male reported a high level of concern about their body image (>40% very or extremely concerned).
- LGBTQIA+ youth reported high level of body image concern (>40% mostly or completely dissatisfied), compared with 16.7% of heterosexual young people.
- 12-year-olds were the least concerned about their body image, while 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds were most concerned (with 45.4% and 42.4%, respectively, reporting a high level of concern).

90% of young people had some level of concern.

To what extent do young people appreciate their bodies?

- A quarter reported never or rarely respecting their body.
- Nearly 4 in 10 young people are never or rarely comfortable with their body nor able to appreciate their body's differences and uniqueness.

Over a third of young people never or rarely feel good in their body.

Are young people being kind to their bodies?

> 50% never or rarely spoke positively about their own body or spoke to someone if they were not feeling good about their body or appearance.

BUT:

- Most reported often or always valuing other people for who they are rather than how they look.
- Nearly two thirds surround themselves with people who like them for who they are, rather than how they look.
- 71.8% said they avoided saying unkind things about other people's bodies or appearance.

What are the body ideals of young people?

62% of young people wished they were thinner/leaner.

- Those who identified as female (69.4%), non-binary (73.1%) and those using a different gender term (76.7%) reported a significantly greater desire for thinness compared with males (36.4%).
- 72% of young people in the LGBTQIA+ community reported a desire to be thinner, compared with 52.9% of heterosexual youth.
- Desire for thinness peaked at age 13, with 73% of 13-year-olds wanting to be thinner.

63.7% of young people wished they were more muscular.

- No significant differences for desire for muscularity were apparent across age and sexuality groups.
- Desire for muscularity was high amongst all gender groups, but those identifying as non-binary (70.2%) and those who preferred a different gender term (72.6%) reported a greater desire to be more muscular.
- No significant differences for desire for muscularity were apparent across age and sexuality groups.

How does body image feelings impact young people?

Around 50% of young people said their body image had stopped them to some extent from raising their hand in class, focusing on schoolwork and going to school.

It also stopped them 'quite a bit' or 'all the time' from:

- Going to the beach (45.2%)
- Going shopping for clothes (38%)
- Doing a physical activity/sport (37%)
- Giving an opinion/standing up for themselves (35.7%).



What is the impact of social media on young people's body image?

Almost 50% of all respondents said social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body.

- There was a relationship between reporting body dissatisfaction as a result of social media use and also the desire to be thinner/leaner, to have lower body appreciation and higher life disengagement.
- The impact of social media on body dissatisfaction was less for 12-year-olds, males and heterosexual respondents.
- Nearly a third of young people reported never or rarely seeing their bodies represented on social media.

Over 70% of respondents thought the media and social media platforms need to do more to help young people have a positive body image.

Are young people Being Body *Kind* Online*?

64.8% reported never or rarely taking a break from social media because it was affecting how they felt about their bodies.

41.6% reported they never or rarely posted unfiltered or unedited photos of themselves.

Nearly 50% of young people said they never or rarely unfollowed pages or people that made them feel bad about their bodies.

BUT:

- 6 in 10 often or always commented kindly and honestly on friends' post, and followed pages and people that inspire them (that have nothing to do with appearance).
- 35.7% reported often or always taking action against appearance bullying and teasing, online.
- Overall, 12-year-olds were least likely to be engaging in media literacy strategies to support their body image.*

**Practicing media literacy and self-care strategies to support their own and other people's body image.*

What is young people's experience of appearance-related teasing?

Appearance-teasing was:

- Frequent across all ages, with 13-year-olds most frequently reporting ever have being teased (79%) and 18-year-olds the least frequently (57.7%).
- Frequent across all genders, but was more frequently reported by young people using a different gender term (87.1%), those who identified as non-binary (79.3%) and females (70.3%), compared with males (54.6%).
- Frequent across all sexualities but was more frequently reported by young people reporting their sexual identity as bisexual (84.5%), using a different term (82.1%), and gay/lesbian (74.1%), compared with heterosexual respondents (59.5%).

The other most frequently reported locations for appearance-teasing were:

- At home (33.8%)
- On social media (31.1%)
- At family events (24.3%).

Almost 7 in 10 young people have received negative comments or teased about how they look.

72.5% reported that they experienced appearance teasing at school.

What do young people think about the role of schools when it comes to body image?



Nearly 8 out of 10 agreed that:

- Those working in schools should be trained in how to support body image.
- More resources should be available for students struggling with body image.
- Schools need to do more to stop bullying and teasing around appearance.

7 in 10 agreed primary schools should do more to support positive body image.

Young people's top 3 preferences for delivery of school-based body image education were:

- Delivery by a person who has overcome their own body image concerns (44.4%)
- Included in normal lessons as part of the curriculum (40.8%)
- Delivered by other young people who have been trained (38.9%).

8 in 10 agreed secondary schools should do more to support positive body image.

How do young people want information about body image?

43.6% thought social media was the best way for young people to get information about body image.

The other most frequently indicated responses were:

- From people who have overcome body image issues (41.0%)
- Other young people more generally (38.9%)
- School counsellor/student wellbeing team (38.1%)
- Parents (36.3%).

What can parents and family members do in home settings?



Support your child to develop a positive relationship with their body, eating and physical activity early in life.



Learn about body image and how you can be a positive body image role model for your child. If you need support – it's never to late.



It is important that parents of gender diverse and LGBTQI+ young people are aware of their increased risk of body dissatisfaction.



Foster a Body *Kind* home environment where all bodies are respected and accepted. Make your home a safe place for your child to thrive in their body.



When setting up social media accounts for your child, know the platforms yourself and teach them the safety feature tips and tricks.



Empower and support your child to develop social media literacy skills so they can source helpful, and filter out harmful body image, and health information, online.



Adopt a zero-tolerance to appearance teasing in your home. Avoid nicknames that body shame, embarrass or reinforce body ideals.



Reduce appearance talk and compliments within your home – use positive language when describing all bodies and encourage extended family to do the same.



Learn the warning signs of body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and eating disorders so you can act early if concerned about your child.

Butterfly resources to support parents/families:



Butterfly Body Bright Families (U12)



Body Kind Families (13+)



Butterfly Education Services



Butterfly National Helpline



To access the full 2022 Body Kind Youth Survey Report:
www.butterfly.org.au/bodykind