



# BodyKind

## YOUTH SURVEY

Your Body Image, Your Voice.

REPORT 2023

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## Acknowledgment of Country

Butterfly acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

## Acknowledgment of Lived Experience

Butterfly recognises and values the knowledge and wisdom of people with lived experience, and their supporters.

## Acknowledgment of Supporters

Butterfly would like to thank the nib foundation for their generous support of the BodyKind Youth Survey and acknowledge all those who contributed to the development, collection and analysis of the survey and data.

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## Message from our CEO



I am very proud to share these insights from the second Body *Kind* Youth Survey. This valuable initiative, kindly supported by the nib foundation, provides an important snapshot of the complexities of body image among young people in Australia aged 12 to 18. With responses from almost 3,000 young people across diverse backgrounds and identities, this survey sheds a much-needed light on the continued challenges faced by our young people.

The findings of the 2023 Body *Kind* Youth Survey paint a sobering picture. Body dissatisfaction remains a significant challenge for a large proportion of young people in Australia. More than half of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their bodies, with females, gender diverse and LGB+ youth bearing the brunt of this distress. The desire for thinness and muscularity persists, indicating the powerful and pervasive influence of narrow and unrealistic body ideals. The survey also highlights the pivotal role of social media in shaping young minds and feelings towards the body.

Of particular concern is the profound impact of body dissatisfaction on various aspects of young people's lives. Existing research has shown the detrimental effects of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem and mental health, particularly eating disorder risk. However, insights from the Body *Kind* Youth Survey underscore the far-reaching consequences of body dissatisfaction on social relationships, participation in sports, engagement in learning and even school attendance. Quite simply, body dissatisfaction has the power to stop our young people from being all they can be in life.

The recent release of the second edition of Butterfly's [Paying the Price Report](#) on the prevalence of and economic impact of eating disorders in Australia,

highlighted the escalating impact of eating disorders and the gravity of the situation. There has been a horrifying 86% rise in eating disorders among young people aged 10 to 19 years since 2012. The Paying the Price Report also outlines the massive economic implications of eating disorders, to individuals, to employers, the healthcare system and to Government, but behind every dollar is of course a life in turmoil.

Prevention and early intervention are paramount. Not only do they make economic sense, but we owe it to our youth to create a society where all people in all bodies can thrive mentally, emotionally and physically. Prevention has the power to shift the trajectory of countless lives and it is time for prevention to take centre stage in our approach to tackling eating disorders.

Butterfly will continue to advocate for increased funding and resources for prevention, work to raise awareness about the importance of education and early intervention, and deliver our programs, resources and workshops to schools, communities, sporting and activity groups across Australia.

Thank you to all those involved in the Body *Kind* Youth Survey, but most importantly the young people who took the time to respond and commit to create a Body *Kind* future for themselves, their peers and future generations.

*Jim Hungerford*

CEO  
Butterfly Foundation

## Message from our Head of Prevention



At Butterfly Foundation our Prevention Services, which include the Body *Kind* initiative, are at the forefront of our efforts to support young people's mental health and wellbeing. Through our education and early intervention presentations, workshops and resources we have the privilege of connecting with over 200,000 young people annually. Our goal is to provide knowledge, skills and evidence-based strategies to support young people's body image in an increasingly challenging, appearance-focused world.

Our work is guided by the belief that young people are not just recipients of information and support but active participants in their own journey towards a positive relationship with their body. Unsurprisingly, one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of our work is listening to and learning from young people themselves. It's one of the reasons that the Body *Kind* Youth Survey holds great significance for us. It's a platform designed to amplify the voices of young people in Australia, allowing them to share their experiences and ideas around body image.

So, what have the respondents of this year's survey shared with us?

Consistent with 2022 findings, young people are calling on both primary and secondary schools to boost their efforts in supporting positive body image. This includes a desire for education involving those with lived experience, integrated curriculum-based content, more resources for those struggling with body image concerns and proactive measures to prevent appearance-related bullying and teasing, experienced by nearly 80% of respondents.

In addition to school supports, the Body *Kind* Youth Survey delves into several themes. Of course, a body image survey would not be complete without an exploration of the role of social media, given it is such a strong socio-cultural influence. While platforms offer connectivity and inspiration, they also perpetuate harmful appearance, eating and exercise ideals and drive unhelpful comparisons. The Body *Kind* Youth Survey, in line with global research, highlights the profound impact of social media on young people's body image with over 60% of respondents reporting that social media made them feel dissatisfied with their appearance.

It's clear more needs to be done to equip young people with the tools to navigate social media in a healthy and positive way. Developing social media literacy is pivotal to navigating the online world. It involves developing awareness and skills in identifying and managing problematic content, as well as strategies to promote self-care and seek support when needed. With funding from Australia's e-Safety Commissioner, we are developing a new Body *Kind* Online Education digital learning program for Australian secondary schools, which we are excited to launch later this year. We also led a roundtable discussion, hosted by Zoe Daniel, MP, to improve the safety of young people on social media platforms. Academics, clinicians, eating disorder organisations, social media platforms and young people with lived experience from the roundtable then worked together to develop evidence-based recommendations, which will be delivered to parliamentarians and other decision makers, social media platforms, and the media. These recommendations will form the framework for continued advocacy for transformative changes to promote positive body image and mental health outcomes in online environments.

Youth voice is a powerful force for change. By listening to the concerns of young people, understanding the challenges and championing their ideas, we can collectively work towards a future where all bodies are treated with kindness and respect in a more Body *Kind* Australia.

*Danni Rowlands*

Head of Prevention  
Butterfly Foundation



# About the Survey

The survey forms part of the *Body Kind* initiative.

Being *Body Kind* is about how we nourish, nurture and move our bodies.

It's about the language we use, out loud, online and in our heads. It is about finding ways to like, accept, and feel positive about our body and take actions to challenge the impact of unhelpful influences.

**The *Body Kind* Youth Survey is an activity of Butterfly Foundation's Prevention Services. It is the first large-scale survey of body image among young people living in Australia, launched in 2022 and now in its second year.**

## Background

Body dissatisfaction occurs when an individual experiences a discrepancy between what they actually look like, and what they want to look like, with consequent negative feelings about their body (Vinkers et al., 2012). Body dissatisfaction is an important risk factor for negative physical, mental and social outcomes, including poor self-esteem, anxiety, and engaging in risky health behaviours, such as tobacco smoking (e.g., Howe et al., 2017; Paxton, et al., 2006; Rohde et al., 2015). It has been found that young people with clinically significant levels of body dissatisfaction are 24 times more likely to report depressive episodes (McLean et al., 2021). Individuals with body dissatisfaction are also at increased risk of engaging in disordered eating behaviours (e.g., Loth et al., 2014), such as unhealthy dietary, weight loss or muscle building behaviours, and excessive exercise to alter their body and appearance. Recent global data has indicated that 1 in 5 children and adolescents (aged 6-18 years) are engaging in disordered eating (Lopez-Gil et al. 2023). Body dissatisfaction is also a leading modifiable risk factor for the development of eating disorders (Prnjak et al., 2021; Rohde et al., 2015).

Eating disorders are in the top 10 leading causes of non-fatal disease burden for adolescent and adult women (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Butterfly's new report, *Paying the Price*, Second Edition highlights that an estimated 1.1 million Australians were living with an eating disorder in 2023, of which 27% are individuals aged 19 years and younger (an increase of 86% in this age group since 2012) (Butterfly Foundation,

2024). The economic and social cost of eating disorders in 2023 was estimated at \$66.9 billion, which is a 36% increase from 2012. These findings highlight the increasing need for prevention efforts, as recognised as a key priority in the National Eating Disorders Strategy (NEDC, 2023).

Adolescence is a crucial time in the development of a young person's identity, thoughts and feelings about their body, and in health-related attitudes and behaviours. Negative attitudes and health-compromising behaviours formed during adolescence can have long-term ramifications on health and wellbeing. A 15-year longitudinal study following 1,455 Canadian adolescents into adulthood revealed that 95% of individuals experienced relatively stable body dissatisfaction from mid-adolescence through adulthood (Wang et al., 2019).

Previous research provides some insight into the prevalence of body dissatisfaction in young people. However, these studies are either based on international samples, or on specific geographical locations in Australia. A recent study has shown that approximately 40% of 11-to-15-year-old boys and girls, from Melbourne, Victoria, have reported moderate to severe levels of body dissatisfaction (McLean et al., 2021). In this study, body dissatisfaction was highest among girls and young people aged 13-14.

Prior to Butterfly's 2022 *Body Kind* Youth Survey, there was no recent national data on the body image experiences of young people aged 12 to 18 years in Australia, which made it difficult to answer

the fundamental and frequently asked question 'how many young Australians are satisfied/dissatisfied with their bodies'? The 2022 *Body Kind* Youth Survey heard from 1,635 young people living in Australia, of which almost half reported some level of body dissatisfaction and nearly a third reported a high level of body dissatisfaction (Butterfly Foundation, 2022). The survey revealed the significant impact that body image is having on how young people engage in their world every day. (For more on the 2022 findings, visit [www.butterfly.org.au/previousreports](http://www.butterfly.org.au/previousreports))

With the increasing incidence of eating disorders in young people in Australia, identifying ways to prevent the modifiable risk factors has never been more important. Thus, the *Body Kind* Youth Survey continues for a second year so that we can learn more about how young people think and feel about their bodies, to ensure suitable investment, advocacy and resources in prevention and early intervention.

## Aims

The *Body Kind* Youth Survey was designed to explore, and better understand, the body image experiences of young people living in Australia, aged 12 to 18 years. It is Butterfly Foundation's nationwide survey to explore the levels of body satisfaction in a large sample of young people. Of particular focus was the impact of some of the known key influences on young peoples' body image, how feelings about their bodies impact their everyday lives, and the ways in which young people are being kind to their bodies to support a positive body image. The survey also explored young peoples' levels of concern about their body image, their preferred sources to obtain information and education on body image, and what they feel needs to change to create a more *Body Kind* Australia. Now in its second year, the *Body Kind* Youth Survey provides a snapshot of the body image experiences of 12-to-18-year-olds in 2023.

**Body image is the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs a person has about their body and how they look, including their shape, size, weight and the way their body functions for them.**

## Survey Design

The *Body Kind* Youth Survey was an anonymous online survey developed under the guidance of a Working Group in 2022, which included leading body image researchers, professionals working in the body image and eating disorder sector, educators, and a young person with lived experience of an eating disorder. For consistency, the content of the 2022 *Body Kind* Youth Survey remained the same, with only small changes made in 2023 to improve some items.

The survey's development in 2022 was informed by an extensive review of the scientific literature and available assessment tools to measure body image and its determinants. The survey was also informed by lived experience, including members of the *Butterfly Collective* – Butterfly's online community of Australians with a lived/living experience of disordered eating, eating disorders or body dissatisfaction. Twenty members of the Butterfly Collective provided information on the influences on, and changing nature of, their body image, the support they believed may have changed their body dissatisfaction, and questions they believed should and should not be included in the survey.

**A key priority during development was to ensure the survey was informed by a 'do no harm' approach, in which questions were worded positively wherever possible.**

Following a review of the available standardised measures for body image and its determinants, validated, reliable and age-appropriate measures were included in the survey. When such measures did not exist, past Butterfly surveys were explored for options and decisions were made amongst research members of the Working Group.

Standardised measures used in the study included the Body Appreciation Scale-2 for Children (Halliwell et al., 2017), with the addition of a 'not sure' option and some wording simplified for comprehension, and the Body Image Life Disengagement Questionnaire (Atkinson & Diedrichs, 2021), with wording modified on two items to make them more appropriate for an Australian audience and one activity item added. A question about concern about their body image was used from Mission Australia's Annual Youth Survey (Leung et al., 2022). For the purpose of this survey, a series of multiple choice and open-ended questions were created to ask young people about appearance comparisons, importance of appearance, social media use, experience of appearance-related teasing, body image education, and what can be done to help young people feel better about their bodies.

Prior to commencement of data collection in 2022, the survey was piloted with a small group of young people aged 12 to 18 to ensure readability and comprehension.



# About the Survey

## Procedure

### Ethics Approval

The 2023 survey received Human Research Ethics Committee approval from The University of Melbourne.

### Data Collection

Data collection was conducted between September and November 2023. Recruitment of 12- to 18-year-olds, living in Australia was through a number of avenues. A social media campaign (organic and paid) was run by Butterfly Foundation, which targeted young people, and their parents, from diverse groups and geographical locations. Two social media influencers, who align with the work of Butterfly, promoted the survey on their channels. Schools, families and sporting clubs registered for Butterfly's Body Kind initiatives in 2023 were also encouraged to share the survey with young people they work with and support. Organisations and individuals working with young people and families were also invited to share the survey through their networks. Participants were offered the opportunity to enter a draw to win one of 20 \$50 gift cards in recognition of their time and effort.

### Data Analysis

Analysis was undertaken on a total of 2,942 responses. Where missing data were identified for different items, only the available data were analysed. Descriptive statistics were used to characterise the data (i.e., group percentages, and means and standard deviations). Statistical analyses to explore group differences (e.g., gender) involved analyses of variance, and Pearson correlations to explore relationships between variables (statistical significance of a <0.01). Responses to open-ended questions were summarised by identifying themes and using frequency analyses. Analyses of variance and chi-square tests were conducted to compare 2022 and 2023 data for key variables (statistical significance of a <.001)

## Reporting

This report contains a summary of findings from the Body Kind Youth Survey 2023. The findings of key questions are first presented for the whole sample, followed by comparisons between age, gender identity, sexual identity and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people. For the key body image variables and level of concern about their body image, comparisons were also highlighted between state and territory, and socioeconomic status.

Due to the relevance to body image, snapshot reports for young people who have received an eating disorder diagnosis and young people who identified as autistic will be available on the survey findings website, alongside snapshot reports for demographic groups.

Comparisons to 2022 data were made for key variables and reported for the whole sample in this full report. Differences within demographic groups between 2022 and 2023 results are presented in each snapshot report.

Care should be taken in the interpretation of state and territory level comparisons and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander data, due to the small sample sizes.

Note, the acronym LGB+ will be used throughout the report to capture data provided by young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or use a different term. In this survey, data was not collected to adequately report on trans and gender diverse young people or those born with innate variations of sex characteristics.





# Executive Summary

Body dissatisfaction continues to be a relevant experience for young people in Australia and affects how young people engage in their everyday lives. It is a leading risk factor for the development of disordered eating and eating disorders, and is related to poor self-esteem, depressive symptoms, difficulties in social relationships, academic challenges, and engagement in risky behaviours. The prevention and early intervention of significant body dissatisfaction in young people is critical, but we need to continue to build a clearer understanding of who is experiencing body dissatisfaction and what impact it might be having on today's young people living in Australia.

Now in its second year, Butterfly Foundation's Body *Kind* Youth Survey provides a nationwide glimpse of body image in a large sample of Australian young people. In the 2023 survey, responses were analysed from 2,942 young people, aged 12-18 years, living in states and territories across Australia. Most respondents were aged 15-18 years (82.5%) and while respondents were diverse in their gender and sexual identity, most identified as female (83.2%) and heterosexual (65.2%). Notably, with the larger number of respondents this year, it appears we heard from more female and heterosexual youth, however, in many areas, findings are similar to the 2022 survey.

Overall, the findings from the Body *Kind* Youth Survey 2023 suggest that body dissatisfaction continues to affect a significant proportion of young people in Australia, and the impact on their lives is evident. More than half of all young people reported being dissatisfied with how their body looks. While young people in all demographic groups are experiencing body dissatisfaction, females, gender diverse and LGBTQ+ young people are still reporting the highest levels; however, a greater proportion of males reported a high level of body dissatisfaction this year compared with 2022 (see snapshot for males for more information).

When asking young people about their levels of body appreciation, on average, respondents reported feeling 'rarely' or 'sometimes' positive about their

bodies. It was found that poorer body appreciation was related to a greater desire for thinness/leanness, life disengagement, and social media making young people feel more dissatisfied about their body. Nearly half of young people reported never or rarely feeling comfortable with their body, a quarter never or rarely respecting their body, and over a third never or rarely feeling good about their body.

Of concern, nearly 7 in 10 young people reported never or rarely speaking to someone if they were not feeling good about their body or appearance, suggesting improvements in help-seeking are necessary. Despite their personal feelings, the majority of young people reported engaging in Body *Kind* actions towards others, such as valuing people for their personality over appearance and avoiding saying unkind things about other people's body or appearance.

Similar to 2022 findings, an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.3%) reported some level of concern about their body image. Almost 1 in 2 respondents reported being very or extremely concerned about their body image. This highlights that, irrespective of their level of body satisfaction, their body image is a highly relevant consideration for young people. Males tended to be the least concerned about their body image, but also tended to experience less frequent body dissatisfaction.

Although representing a small proportion of respondents (2.1%), Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people shared their body image experiences and concerns. The proportions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth experiencing body dissatisfaction and concerns about body image were overall similar to non-Indigenous youth in this sample.

Of the total sample, more than two thirds of respondents wished they were thinner/leaner, and more muscular, while nearly half wished to be taller. Compared with 2022 findings, 2023 respondents reported a statistically greater desire for thinness/

leanness. We may speculate that this may be due to the larger proportion of female respondents in the survey this year, who reported a high desire for thinness.

A high proportion of young people (72.6%) very frequently compared their bodies to their friends, which was greater than the proportion in 2022 (54.9%). Over half of young people very frequently compared their bodies to celebrities and social media influencers.

Young people were asked about the frequency in which their body image stopped them from engaging in a range of activities. Like 2022, going to the beach, clothes shopping, doing physical activity/sport, and giving an opinion or standing up for themselves were frequently affected. Notably, body image frequently impacted almost a third of young people's ability to focus on schoolwork and willingness to raise their hand in the classroom, while body image frequently affected nearly a quarter of young people's school attendance.

When exploring some of the known risk factors for body dissatisfaction results from both years highlight the high prevalence of appearance teasing. In the 2023 survey it was found that the majority (77.7%) of young people have experienced appearance-related teasing, which was a statistically greater proportion than in 2022 (67.8%). Consistent with 2022 findings, teasing most frequently occurred at school, at home, on social media, and at family events. It's therefore not surprising that 88.8% of young people want schools to do more to stop it from happening. Young people from the LGBTQ+ community were most likely to take action against appearance teasing and bullying online.

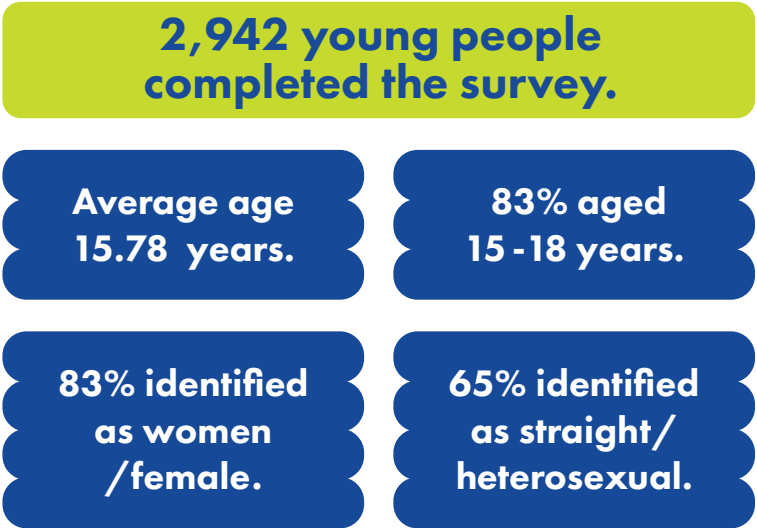
Young people were also asked about their social media use, of which over 80% are using. While 7 in 10 young people said they are spending more time on social media than they would like to, more than 60% reported that social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body. This demonstrates that young people

are aware of the negative impacts of social media. Despite this, just over half of social media users reported never or rarely unfollowing pages or people that made them feel bad about their bodies, but 65% frequently followed pages and people that inspire them (and have nothing to do with appearance). It was not surprising to hear that young people want social media platforms to take more responsibility for helping young people have a more positive body image, by changing the way body ideals and beauty standards are presented and having stricter controls in place. Interestingly, young people also saw it the responsibility of social media platforms to promote more positive messages around bodies and have better inbuilt controls and ways to manage the content young people are exposed to.

Across the two years of the survey, young people have consistently called for more body image support at school, at both primary and secondary levels. Young people reported wanting more resources to improve their body image, including content delivered by a person who has overcome body dissatisfaction, and having body image content as part of their classroom curriculum. Nearly half of young people want to receive strategies for positive body image through social media.

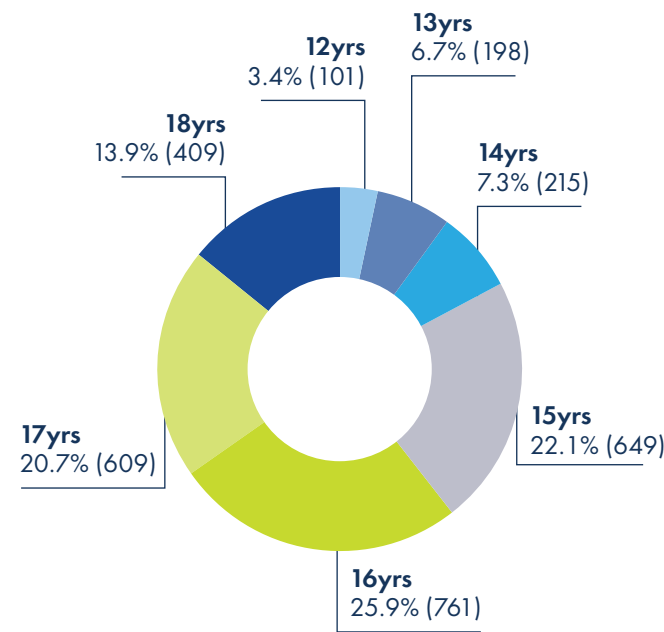
The Body *Kind* Youth Survey findings shed light on the important body image experiences and related issues for young people living in Australia, which are critical to inform the further development of resources, support services, and advocacy to support young people's relationship with their body. We must continue our important work to make Australia more Body *Kind* for our young people.

# Demographics



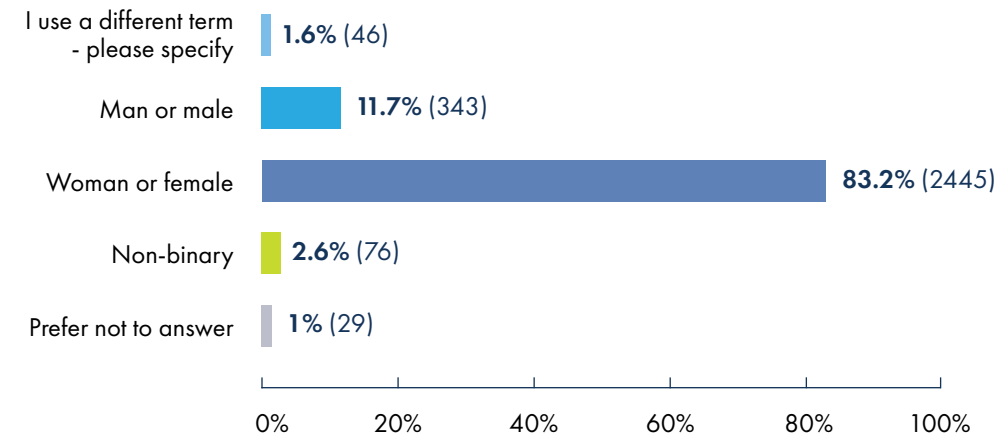
The majority of respondents were aged between 15 and 18 (82.6%; n = 2,628).

Figure 1. Age of respondents (N = 2942)



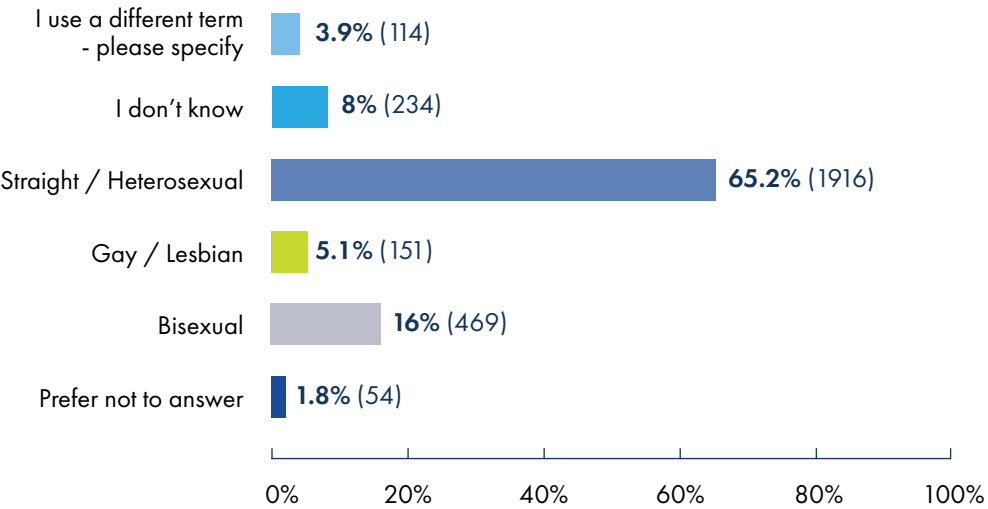
Of the 2,939 young people who responded to the question about gender, the majority identified as woman/female (83.2%), followed by man/male (11.7%). Notably, significantly more young people who identified as female participated this year (n = 2445), compared with 2022 (n = 787), however, participation from other genders was fairly consistent with 2022 responses.

Figure 2. Gender identity of respondents (n = 2939)



Of the 2,938 young people who responded to the question about sexuality, more than half of young people identified as straight/heterosexual (65.2%).

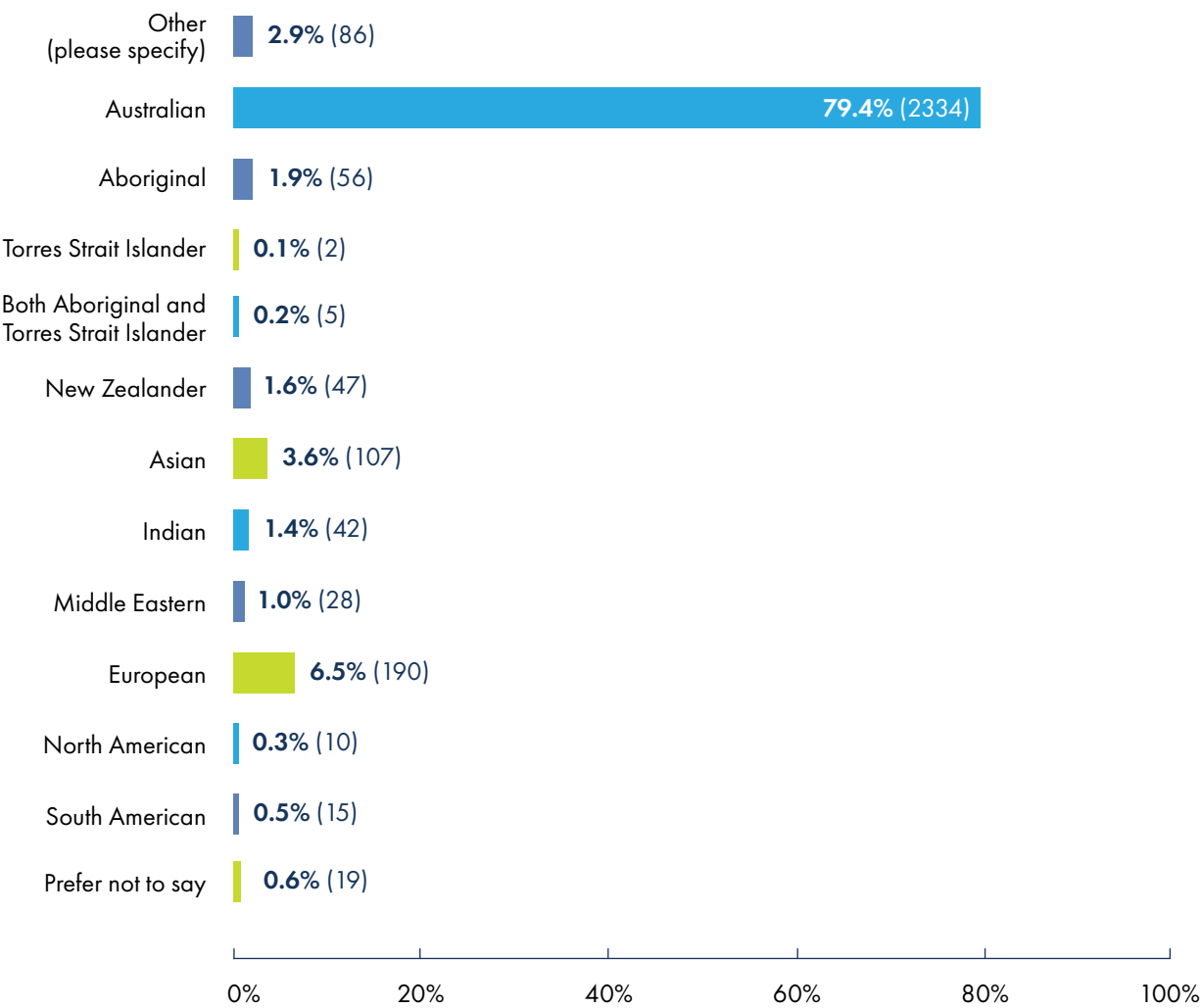
Figure 3. Sexual identity of respondents (n = 2938)





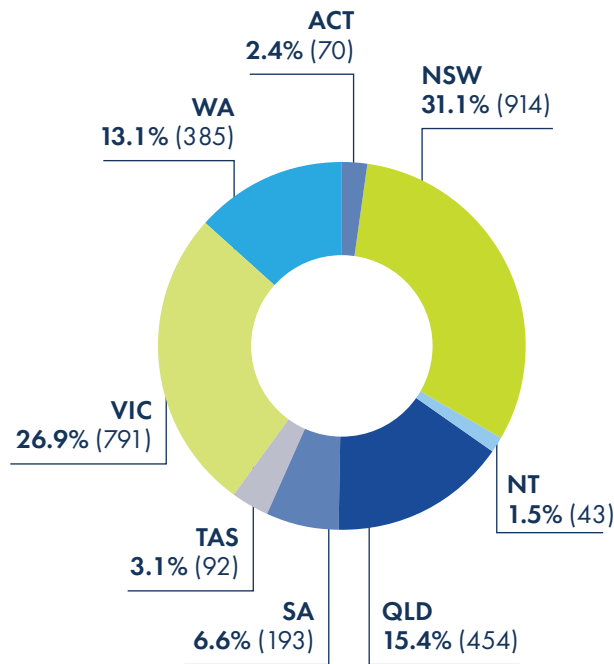
There was diversity in the cultural background of respondents. 79.4% identified as Australian and 2.1% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, which is lower than the national population (3.3%; ABS, 2021). Other most frequently reported cultural backgrounds were European (6.5%), Asian (3.6%), New Zealander (1.6%) and Indian (1.4%).

Figure 4. Cultural background of respondents (n = 1635)



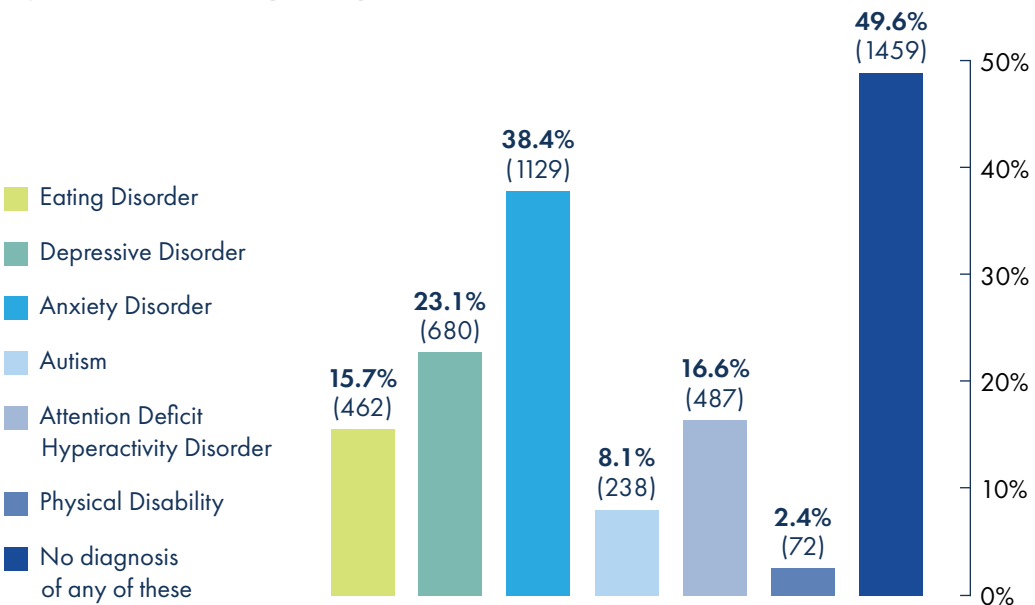
Respondents from each state and territory of Australia were represented in the data, the majority of whom resided in NSW (31.1%), VIC (26.9%) and QLD (15.4%). Across Australia, over two thirds (71.5%) of young people resided in metropolitan areas and 28.5% in regional/rural areas. Postcode data were used to identify the socioeconomic status of respondents, which identified that 16.0% of young people were living in more disadvantaged areas, while 45.4% were living in more advantaged areas (ABS, 2016).

Figure 5. Location of respondents (N = 2942)



Respondents were asked to report whether they had received a diagnosis from a list of mental health and other conditions, with the option to select more than one condition. Nearly half (49.6%) reported that they had not been diagnosed with any of the specified conditions/disorders, 38.4% reported a diagnosis of anxiety, 23.1% depression, 15.7% an eating disorder, 16.6% attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and 8.1% Autism.

Figure 6. Health history of respondents (n = 1635)



# Key Findings

## How satisfied are young people with how their body looks?

More than half of young people reported being dissatisfied with how their body looks.

More than 1 in 3 young people reported being mostly or completely dissatisfied with how their body looks.

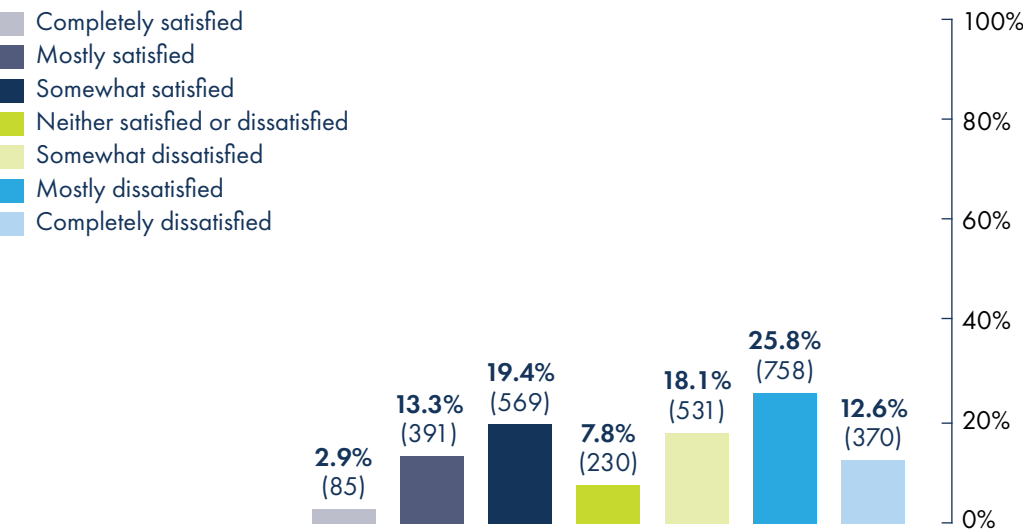
To measure their body image, young people were asked to rate how satisfied they were with how their body looks using a 7-point scale, ranging from *completely satisfied* to *completely dissatisfied*. Some level of body dissatisfaction was defined as the cumulative proportion of *somewhat*, *mostly* and *completely dissatisfied* responses. A high level of body dissatisfaction was defined as those who self-reported being *mostly* or *completely dissatisfied* with how their body looks.

Of the 2,934 young people who responded to this question, 35.6% reported some level of **body**

**satisfaction**, while 56.5% reported some level of body dissatisfaction. More than 1 in 3 (38.4%) self-reported a high level of **body dissatisfaction**. Overall, the mean score was 4.53 (SD = 1.75), indicating that the sample on average reported feeling ‘**neither satisfied nor dissatisfied**’ to ‘**somewhat dissatisfied**’ about how their bodies look.

Whilst the 2023 sample was statistically more dissatisfied than the 2022 sample (M = 4.11, SD = 1.83), the effect size was small (p < .001, d = 0.23) suggesting that the comparison between years is not very meaningful.

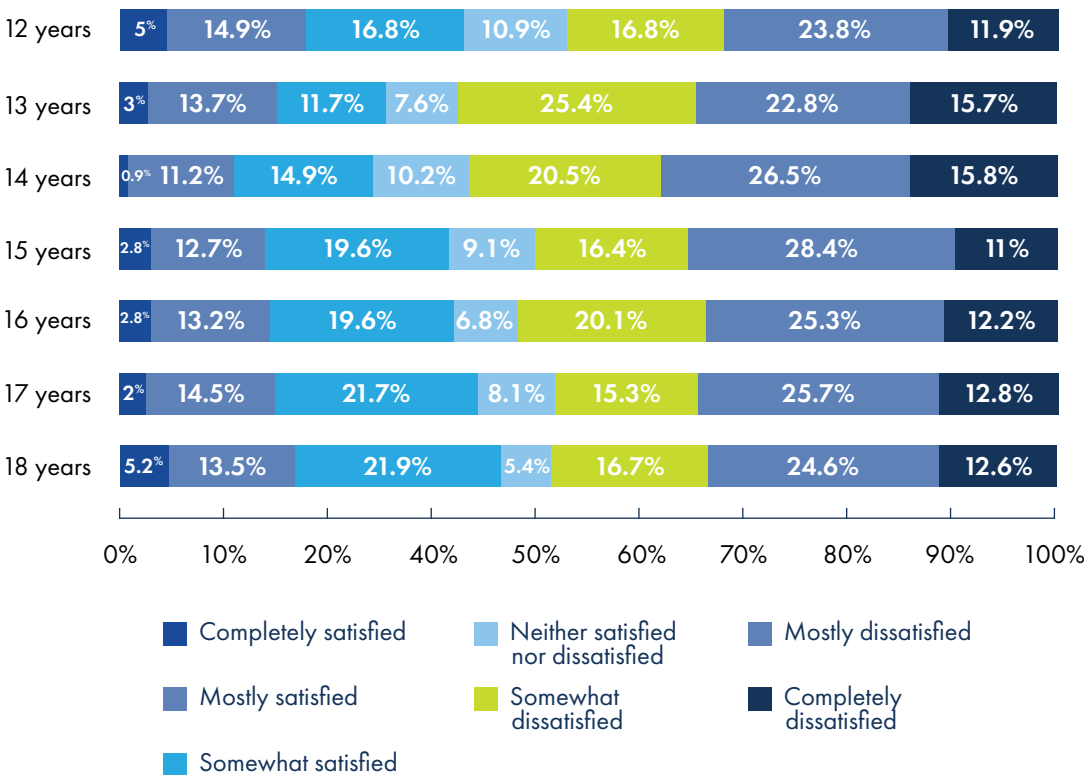
Figure 7. Level of body satisfaction– all respondents (n = 2934)



## Age differences

**Body dissatisfaction** appeared to be highest for 13- and 14-year-olds, with 63.9% and 62.8% respectively reporting some level of **body dissatisfaction**. Similar rates of **body dissatisfaction** were found across the other ages (with between 52-57% reporting some level of **body dissatisfaction**).

Figure 8. Level of body satisfaction (%) by age





Gender differences

More than half of males (57.9%) reported some level of **body satisfaction** compared with 33.1% of females and 18.4% of non-binary young people.

Some level of **body dissatisfaction** was reported by 59.3% of females, 34.2% of males, 68.4% of those who identify as non-binary, 60.9% of those who preferred a different term, and 58.6% of those who preferred not to answer.

Half of young people identifying as non-binary self-reported a high level of **body dissatisfaction**, followed by 48.3% of those who preferred not to answer, 43.5% of young people who preferred a different term, 40.0% of females and 23.7% of males.

Figure 9. Level of body satisfaction (%) by gender

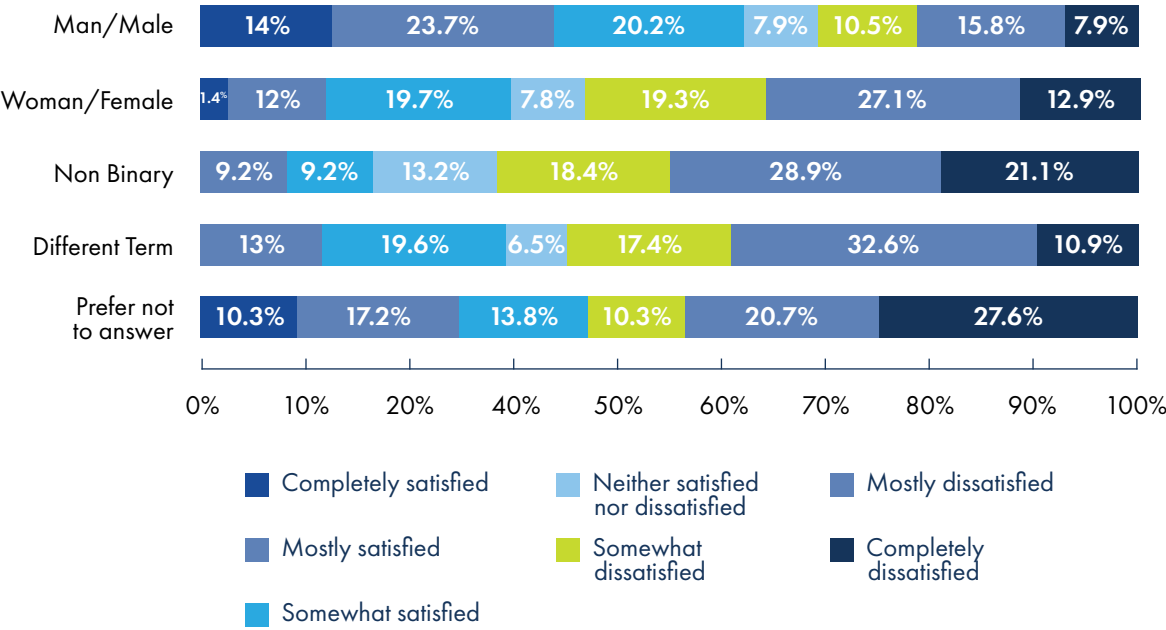
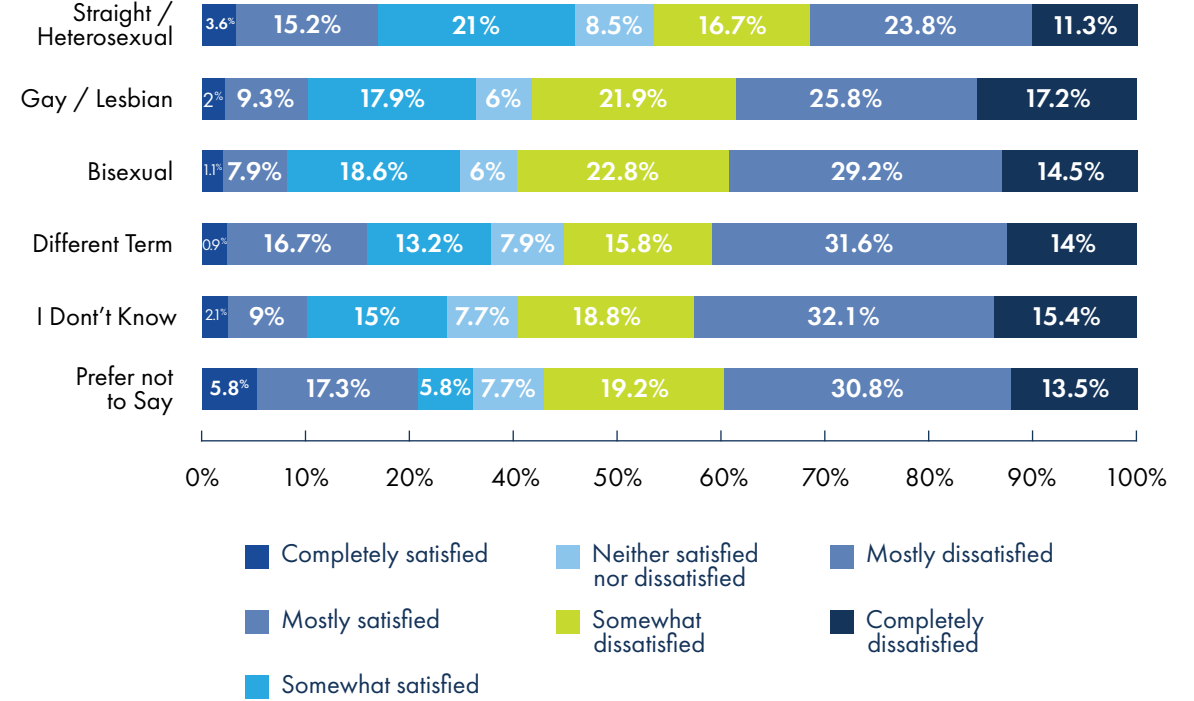


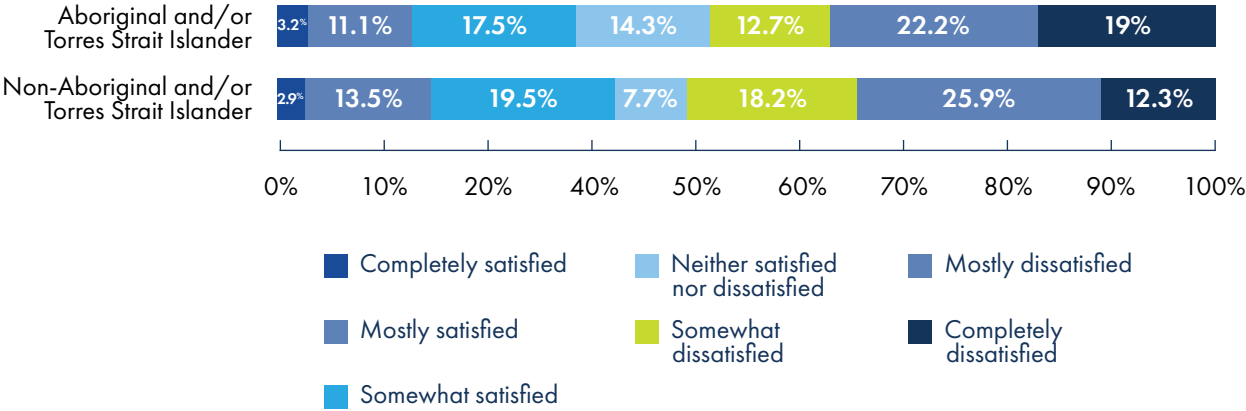
Figure 10. Level of body satisfaction (%) by sexuality



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people

Overall, body image was similar for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth and non-Indigenous youth. Slightly less Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth reported some level of **body satisfaction** compared with non-Indigenous respondents (31.8% and 35.9%, respectively). Slightly more non-Indigenous respondents reported some level of **body dissatisfaction** (53.9% and 56.4%, respectively), while a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth self-reported high **body dissatisfaction** (41.2% and 38.2%, respectively). Notably, the sample of respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander was very small.

Figure 11. Level of body satisfaction (%) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people

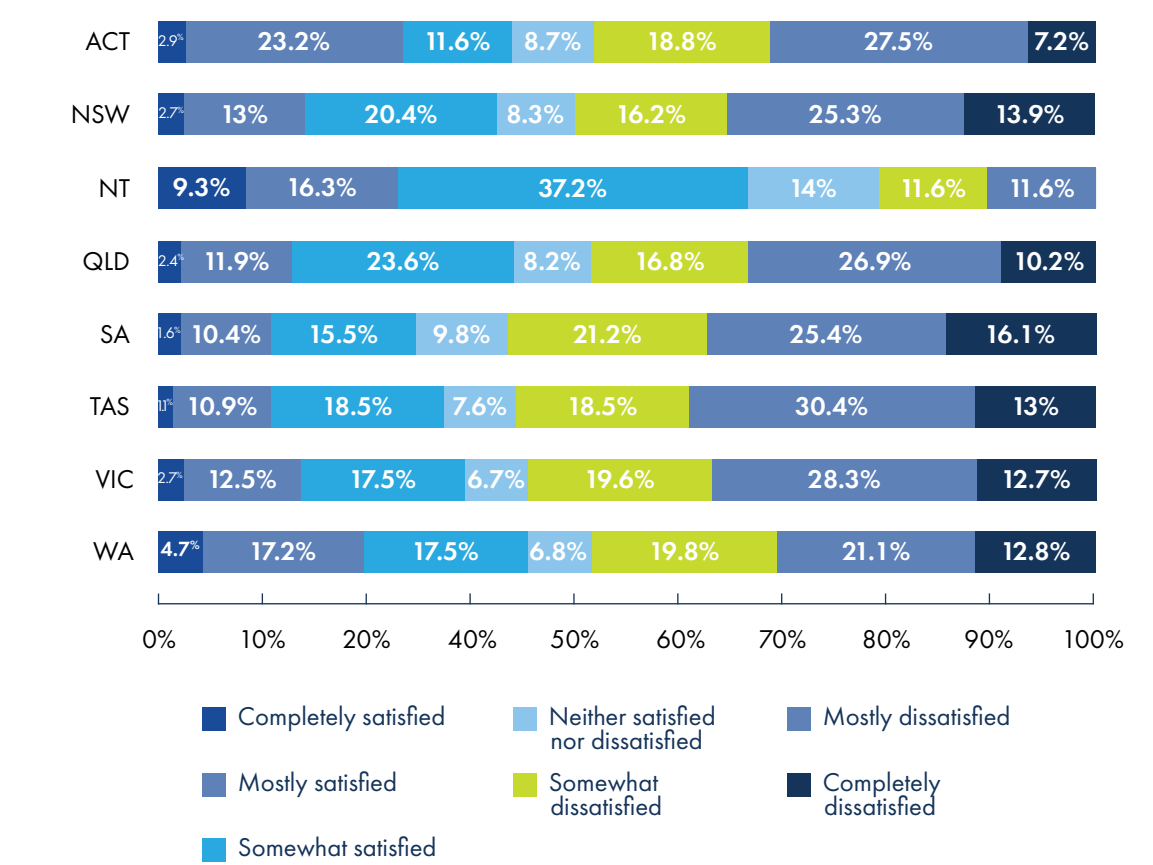


### State and territory differences

Across most states, only about 30-40% of respondents reported some level of **body satisfaction**, except for NT whereby around 60% reported **body satisfaction** (Note: the sample of NT youth was very small, n = 43). Young people from SA, TAS and VIC reported the highest levels of **body dissatisfaction** with over 60% reporting some level of **body dissatisfaction** and over 40% reporting a high level of **body dissatisfaction**.

Greater proportions of young people from TAS (43.4%), SA (41.5%), VIC (41.0%) and NSW (39.2%) reported high levels of **body dissatisfaction**, compared with the total survey sample (of which 38.4% reported a high level of **body dissatisfaction**).

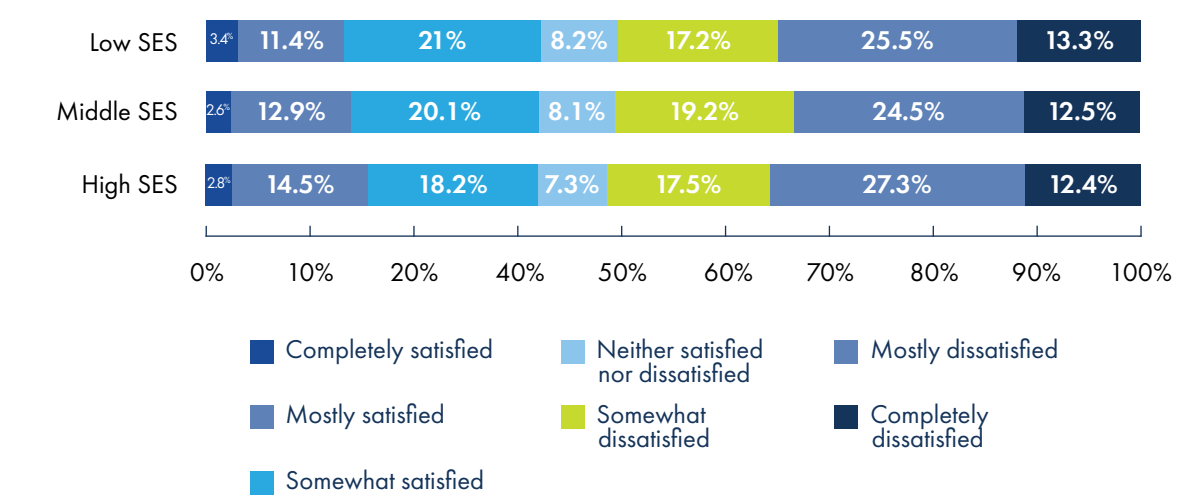
Figure 12. Level of body satisfaction (%) by state and territory



### Socioeconomic status differences

When examining the reporting of any level of **body dissatisfaction**, it was similar among High (57.2%), Middle (56.2%) and Low (56%) socioeconomic status (SES) respondents. Similarly, high levels of **body dissatisfaction** were similar across High (39.7%), Middle (37.0%) and Low (38.8%) SES.

Figure 13. Level of body satisfaction (%) by socioeconomic status





## How do young people perceive others' body satisfaction?

When young people were asked how satisfied they thought other young people are with how their body looks, half (57.6%) thought that others experienced some level of **body dissatisfaction**, which is consistent with the actual proportion of young people in the survey who reported some level of **body dissatisfaction** (i.e., 56.5%). In contrast, 24.6% of respondents thought that other young people experienced high levels of **body dissatisfaction**, which is less than the proportion of young people in the survey who reported high levels of **body dissatisfaction** (i.e., 38.4%). Almost a third (28.1%) thought that others experienced some level of body satisfaction, which is less than the actual proportion of young people who reported some level of **body satisfaction** (i.e., 35.6%).

## To what extent do young people appreciate their bodies?

Body appreciation was measured using the 10-item Body Appreciation Scale-2 for Children (BAS-2C; Halliwell et al., 2017). Young people were asked to indicate how frequently each statement was true for them, using a 5-point scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5). Respondents were also given the option to respond *not sure*. Scores are averaged across responses (scores range from 1-5), with higher scores indicating higher levels of body appreciation (i.e., more positive body image).

For the 2,316 young people who responded to this scale, the mean score was 2.89 ( $SD = 0.93$ ), indicating that the sample on average reported feeling 'rarely' to 'sometimes' positive about their bodies.

### Comparison to 2022

Whilst the 2023 sample was statistically less appreciate than the 2002 sample ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), the effect size was very small ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.16$ ), suggesting that the comparison between years is not meaningful.

## Poorer body appreciation was associated with:

### Wishing to be thinner/leaner

( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

### Wishing to be musclier

(note: a very weak correlation,  $r = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

### Social media making young people feel more dissatisfied about their body

( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

### Greater life disengagement.

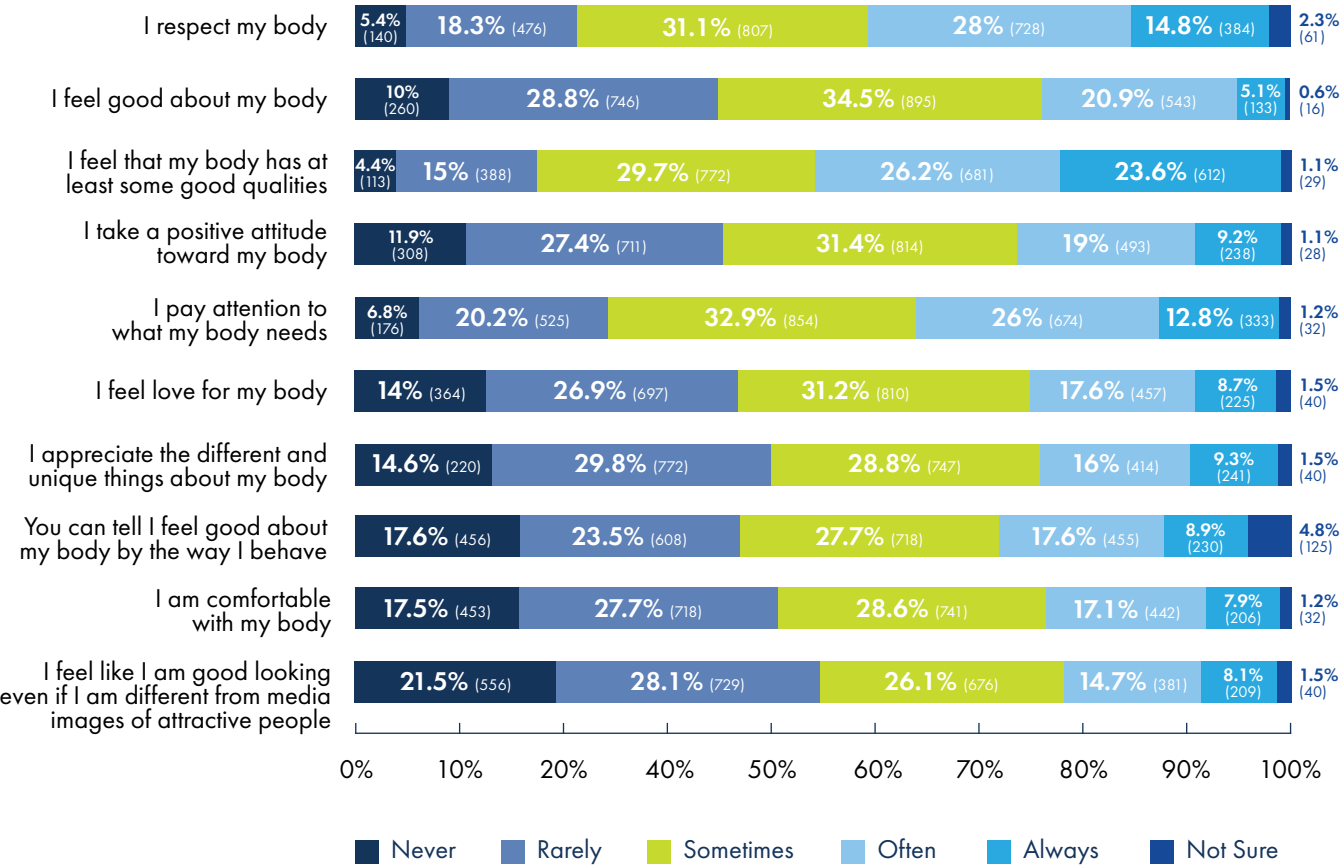
( $r = -.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

### Nearly a quarter of young people reported never or rarely respecting their body.

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

### Nearly half of young people never or rarely are comfortable with their body.

Figure 14. Level of body appreciation of young people



Group comparisons showed that males reported greater body appreciation than all other genders. No notable differences were found between different sexual identities, age, and state and territory groups, nor between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people. A summary of group statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Body Appreciation Scale scores by demographic groups

Gender	n	Mean	Std Dev
Man/Male	238	3.48	1.04
Woman/Female	1961	2.38	0.89
Non-Binary	61	2.58	0.86
Different Term	39	2.78	0.96
Prefer not to answer	16	2.80	1.09

Age	n	Mean	Std Dev
12	78	3.09	1.03
13	147	2.81	0.96
14	172	2.73	0.97
15	508	2.93	0.92
16	606	2.90	0.94
17	491	2.89	0.94
18	314	2.90	0.88

Sexuality	n	Mean	Std Dev
Straight / Heterosexual	1491	2.98	0.95
Gay/Lesbian	128	2.63	0.85
Bisexual	375	2.73	0.85
Different term	98	2.81	0.97
I don't know	186	2.75	0.93
Prefer not to answer	36	2.84	0.98

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people	n	Mean	Std Dev
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	2249	2.90	0.930
Non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	54	2.67	1.01

State and Territories	n	Mean	Std Dev
ACT	55	3.03	0.91
NSW	700	2.89	0.92
NT	39	3.49	0.83
QLD	360	2.83	0.89
SA	149	2.83	0.93
TAS	77	2.89	0.98
VIC	637	2.85	0.95
WA	299	2.99	0.98



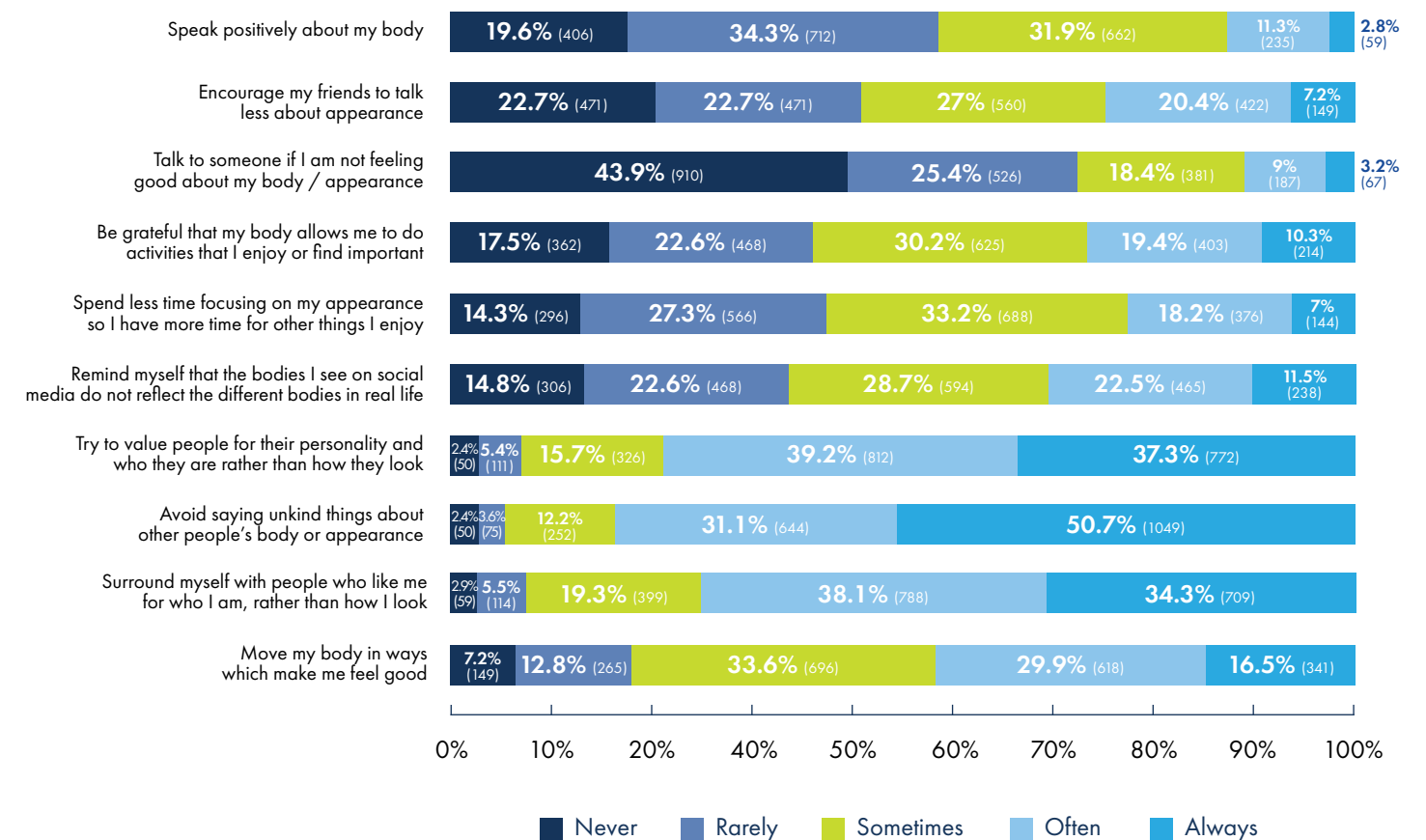
## How are young people being Body *Kind*?

Young people appeared to be kinder to others than themselves.

8 in 10 young people often/always avoided saying unkind things about other people's body or appearance.

Nearly 7 in 10 young people reported never/rarely talking to someone if they were not feeling good about their body/appearance.

Figure 15. Ways in which young people practice being Body *Kind*



Young people were asked a series of questions about the frequency in which they were practicing being Body *Kind* (i.e., engaging in actions to support their body image), on a 5-point scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5).

Of the approximate 2,070 young people who responded to these questions, the majority reported often/always:

- Valuing people for their personality over appearance (76.5%).
- Avoiding saying unkind things about other people's body or appearance (81.1%).
- Surrounding themselves with people who like them for who they are over appearance (72.4%).

Despite 46.4% reporting that they often/always move their body in ways that make them feel good, a fifth (20%) reported never/rarely doing this.

Of concern, around half of young people reported never/rarely:

- Speaking positively about their body (53.9%).
- Encouraging friends to talk less about appearance (45.4%).
- Nearly 7 in 10 (69.3%) reported never/rarely talking to someone if they were not feeling good about their body/appearance.

Compared to other age groups, 12-year-olds reported often or always (37.5%) spending less time focusing on their appearance, so they have more time for other things they enjoy. There were no other obvious age differences.

More notable differences were apparent across gender groups. Compared to young people of other genders, males and people who preferred not to report their gender were more likely to speak positively about their body. Further, males were more likely to be grateful that their body allows them to do activities that they enjoy or find important, spend less time focusing on their appearance, and talk to someone if they were not feeling good about their body/appearance (notably, it was not the majority of males, with 27.2% often or always reporting talking to someone, however, this was a larger proportion than other genders). Compared to males (54.4%) and females (78.6%), young people who identified as non-binary, preferred a different term, and preferred not to report their gender, were

more likely to always or often (>90%) try to value people for their personality and who they are rather than how they look. Just over half of males (59.6%) always or often avoided saying unkind things about other people's body or appearance, whereas >85% of young people of other genders avoided saying unkind appearance-based comments. Young people who preferred a different term (92%), females (75%) and non-binary young people (75%) reported that they surround themselves with people who like them for who they are, rather than how they look; whereas only half of males and young people who preferred not to report their gender took this action. No obvious sexuality group differences were apparent.

Compared with 58.3% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth, 72.7% of non-Indigenous young people reported that they often or always surround themselves with people who like them for who they are, rather than how they look. There were no other obvious differences.

## How concerned are young people about their body image?

**95% of young people reported some level of concern about their body image.**

**Almost 1 in 2 reported being very or extremely concerned about their body image.**

**25.1% reported being slightly or not at all concerned about their body image.**

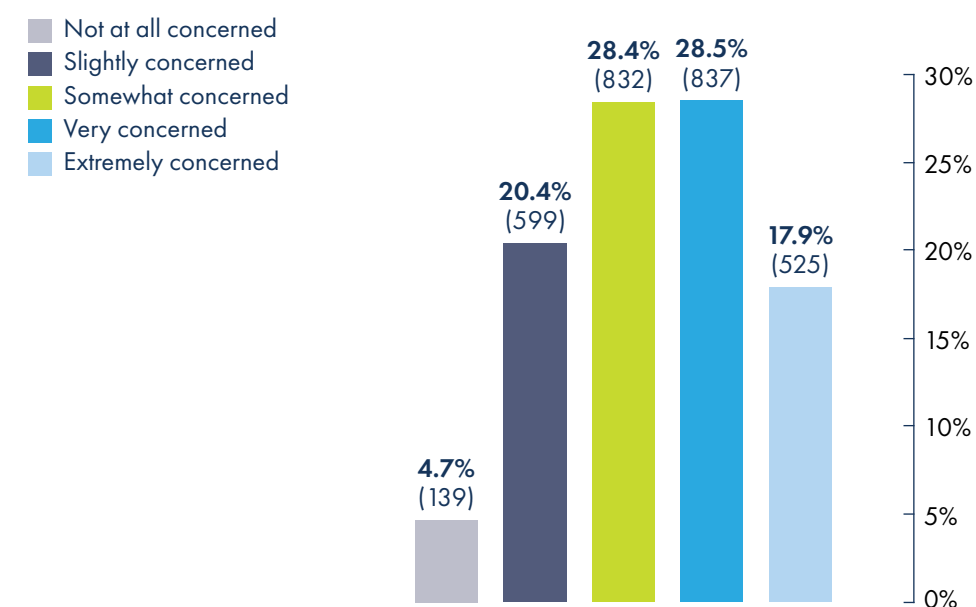
Young people were asked to rate how concerned they were about their body image using a 5-point scale, ranging from *not at all concerned* to *extremely concerned*. Some level of concern was defined by the cumulative proportion of all responses other than *not at all concerned*. A high level of concern about body image was defined as those who reported being *very* or *extremely concerned*.

Of the 2,932 who responded to this question, 95.3% reported **some level of concern** about their body image, leaving only 4.7% who were not at all concerned. Almost one in two (46.4%) reported a **high level of concern** about their body image, which is somewhat higher compared to last year's Body Kind Youth Survey findings (38.3%) and higher than Mission Australia Youth Survey 2023 findings (29.0%) (McHale et al., 2023).

### Comparison to 2022

Whilst the 2023 sample ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) was statistically more concerned about their body image than the 2022 sample ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ), the effect size was somewhat small ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.21$ ), suggesting that the comparison between years is not very meaningful.

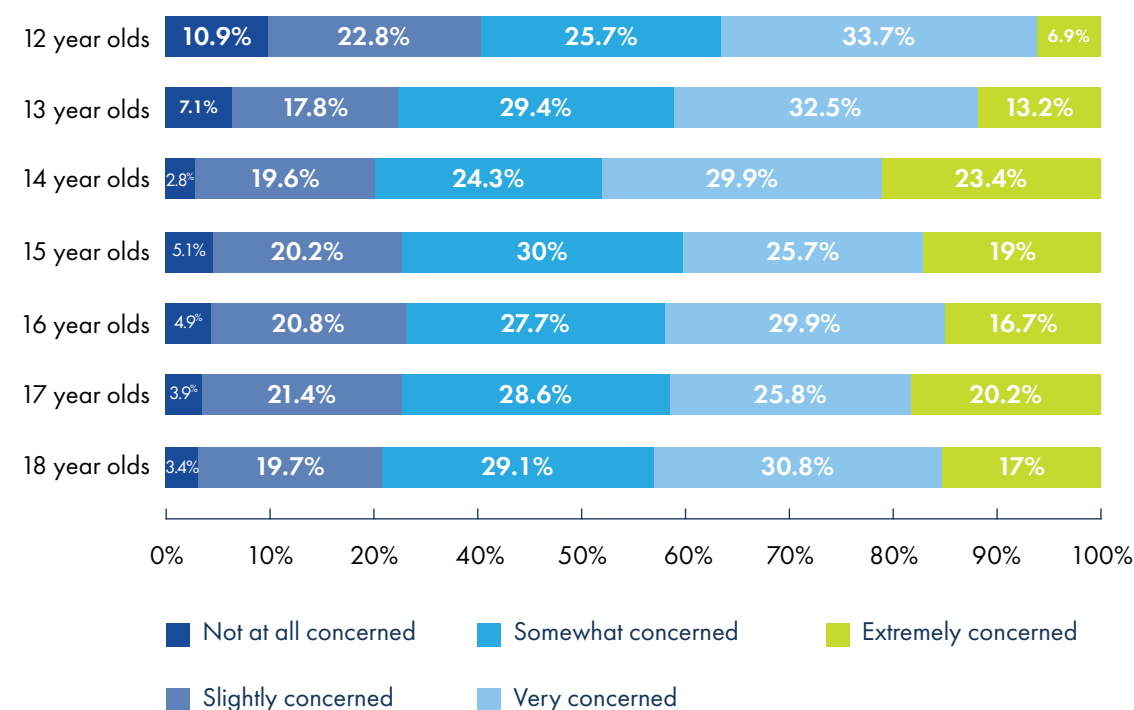
Figure 16. Level of concern about body image – all respondents (n = 2932)



### Age differences

When exploring age differences, it appears that 12-year-olds were **the least concerned** about their body image (33.7% slightly or not at all concerned), while 15-year-olds were the **most concerned** (with 53.3% reporting that they were very or extremely concerned).

Figure 17. Level of concern about body image (%) by age

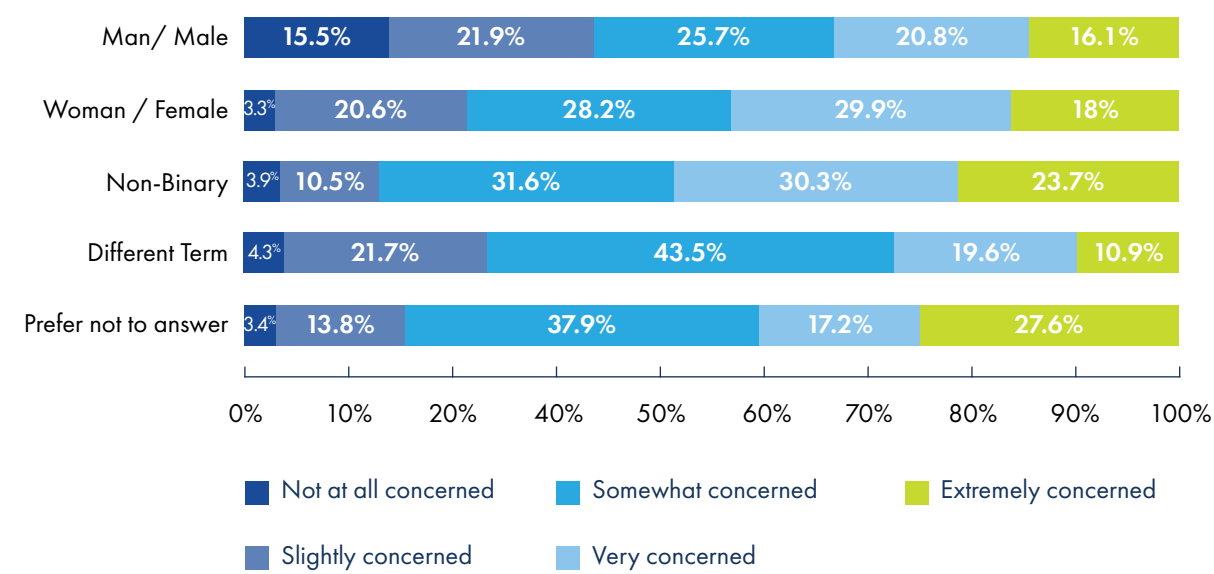




Gender differences

When exploring gender differences, males reported the highest frequency of **no concern** (15.5%) compared with other genders. Young people who identified as non-binary (53%) and females (47.9%) reported a **high level of concern** about their body image.

Figure 18. Level of concern about body image (%) by gender.

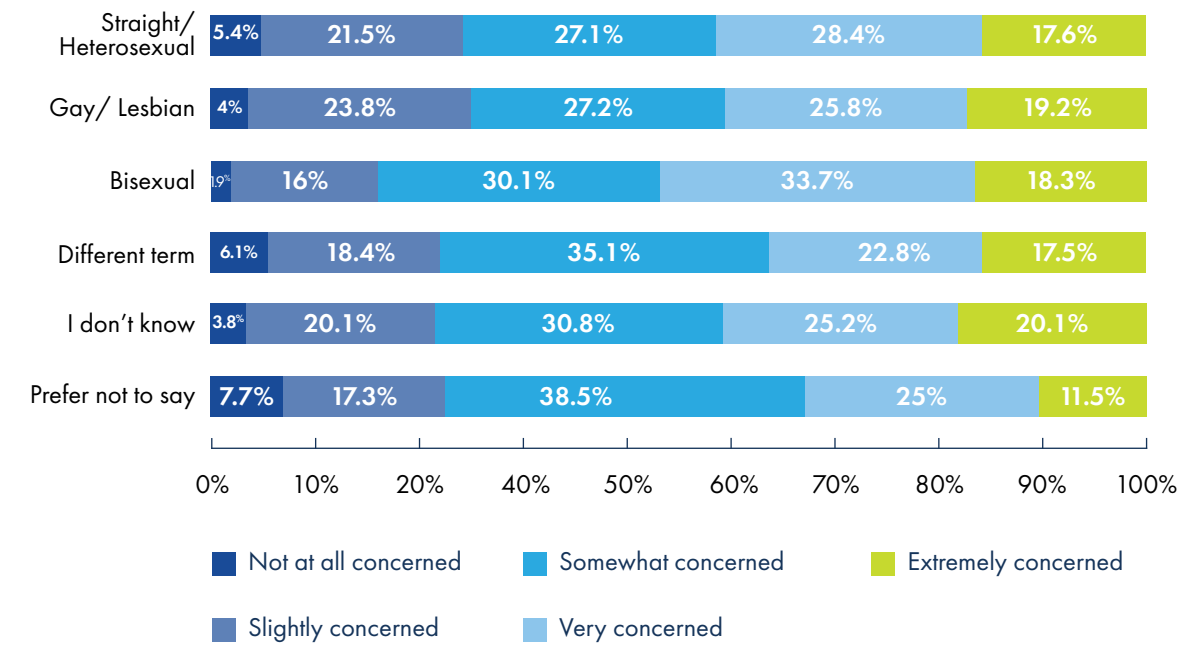


Sexuality differences

Across sexual identity groups, young people who preferred a different term and those who preferred not to report their sexual identity reported the highest frequency of **no concern** about their body image (6.1% and 7.7%, respectively) compared with other sexual identities.

A similar proportion of young people who identified as heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, and those who didn't know their sexual identity, reported a **high level of concern** about their body image (>45.0% very or extremely concerned).

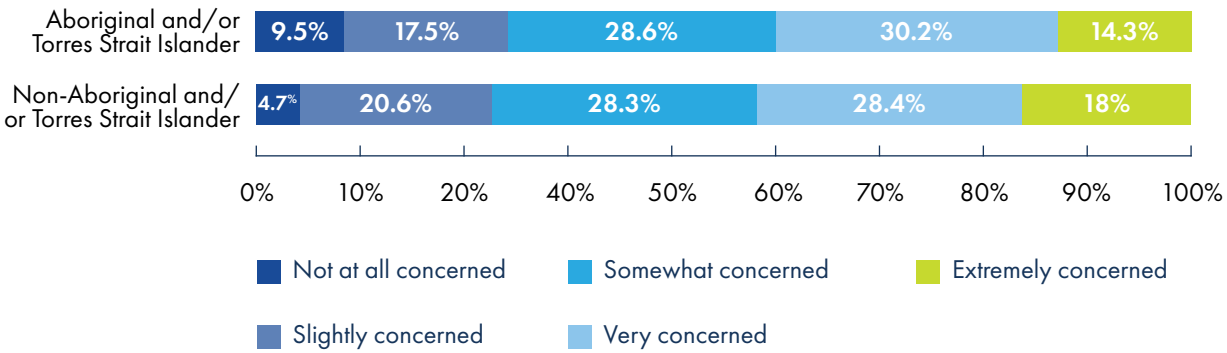
Figure 19. Level of concern about body image (%) by sexuality



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people

**High levels of concern** about body image were similar between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents and non-Indigenous respondents (44.5% and 46.4%, respectively).

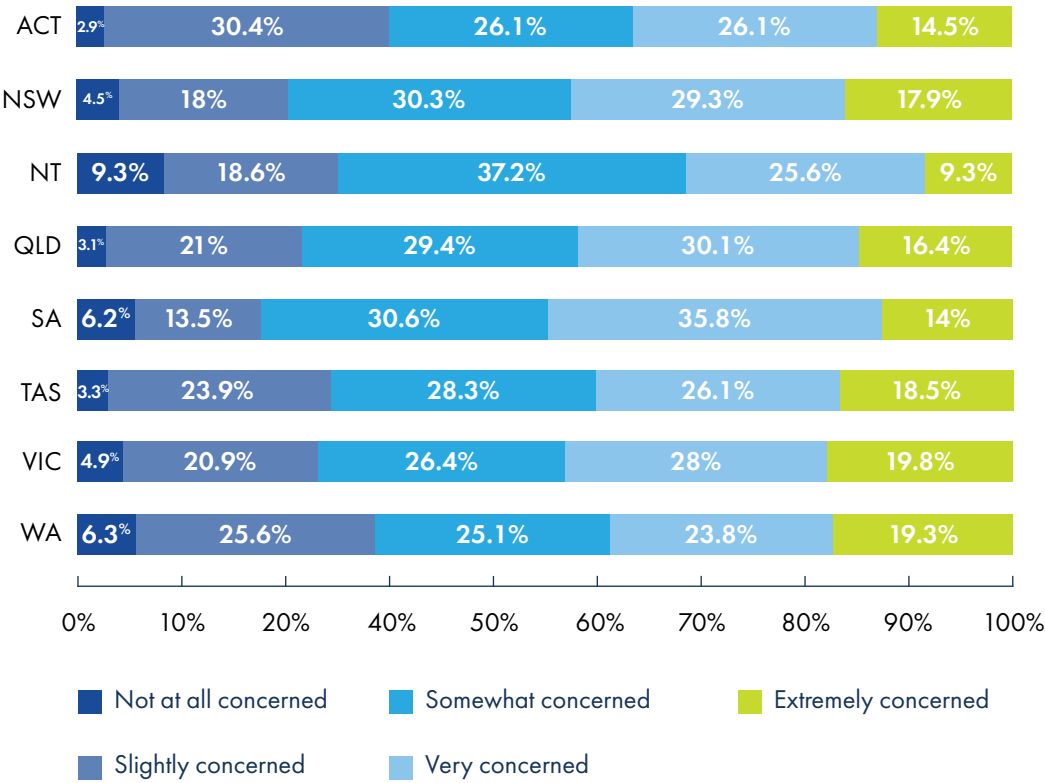
Figure 20. Level of concern about body image (%) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people



# State and territory differences

A **high level of concern** about body image was reported by approximately 40%-50% of young people across all states and territories, with the exception of the Northern Territory.

**Figure 21. Level of concern about body image (%) by state and territory**

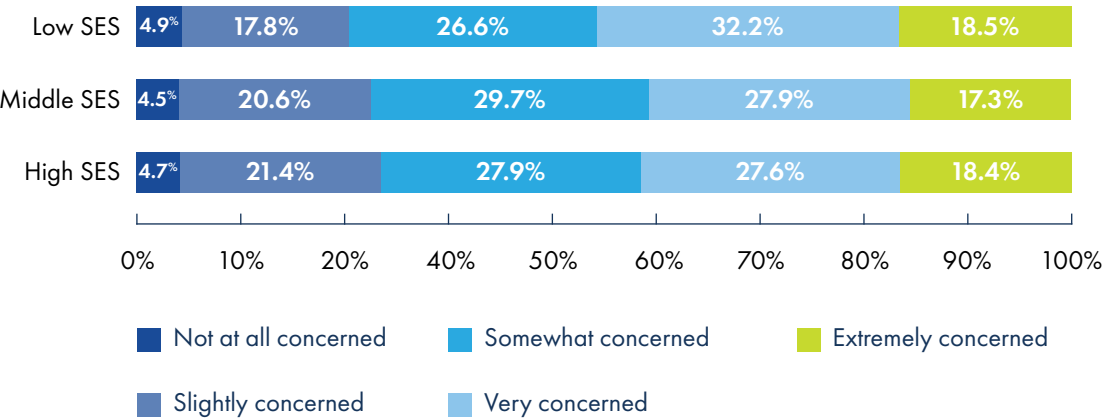


# Socioeconomic status differences

Across all socioeconomic groups, only a small portion of young people reported **no concern** about their body image (4.5%-4.9%).

A slightly greater proportion of young people from Low SES areas reported a **high level of concern** about their body image (50.7% very or extremely concerned) compared with Middle (45.2%) and High (46.0%) SES areas.

**Figure 22. Level of concern about body image (%) by socioeconomic status**



# How do young people perceive others' concern about body image?

When young people were asked how concerned they thought other young people are with their body image, 96.7% reported some level of concern, leaving a mere 3.3% that thought other young people would have **no concern** about their body image. Interestingly, 36.1% of respondents thought that other young people have a **high level of concern** about their body image, while the proportion of young people reporting a **high level of concern** about their body image was 46.4% in the current report.





## What are the body ideals of young people?

**78.1% of young people wished they were thinner/leaner.**

**71.3% of young people wished they were more muscular.**

**47.2% of young people wished they were taller.**

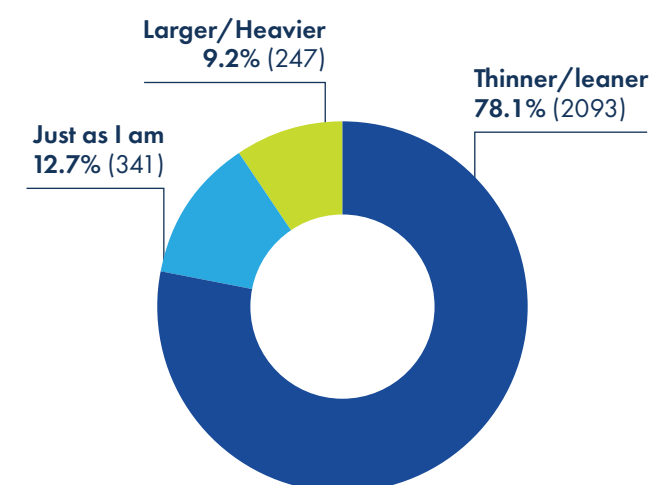
Young people were asked to indicate on a scale from 0 – 100 if they wished they were thinner/leaner (0) or larger/heavier (100); less muscly (0) or more muscly (100); and shorter (0) or taller (100). The data were split to indicate thinner/leaner, less muscly or shorter as <40 and larger/heavier, more muscly and taller as >60, and 'just as I am' in between.



## Desire for thinness/leanness

Of the 2,681 young people who indicated their ideal weight, the majority wished they were **thinner/leaner** (78.1%) compared to only 9.2% who wished they were **larger/heavier**. 12.7% of young people were satisfied with their weight.

Figure 23. Ideal weight – all respondents (n = 2681)



## Comparison to 2022

Overall, the 2023 sample ( $M = 23.05$ ,  $SD = 23.19$ ) statistically reported a greater desire for thinness than the 2022 sample ( $M = 31.31$ ,  $SD = 24.41$ ), with a small to moderate effect size ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.35$ ).

Desire for thinness/leanness appeared to peak at age 13, with 80.9% of 13-year-olds wanting to be **thinner/leaner** than they are. Desire to be **thinner/leaner** persisted from the ages 14-17, with 78.0%-79.7% of young people expressing a desire to be **thinner/leaner**. There was no significant relationship between desire for thinness/leanness and age.

Across gender groups, young people who identified as female (76.5%), non-binary (76.5%) and preferred a different gender term (75.0%) reported a greater desire for thinness compared with males. About a third of males (32.7%) desired to be **thinner/leaner**, while 29.2% desired to be **heavier**. 13.2% of non-binary young people also reported a desire to be heavier.

Over 77% of young people in the LGB+ community reported a desire to be **thinner/leaner**, compared with 68.5% of heterosexual young people.

Desire for thinness/leanness was reported by a similar proportion of non-Indigenous young people (78.0%) and young people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (76.2%).

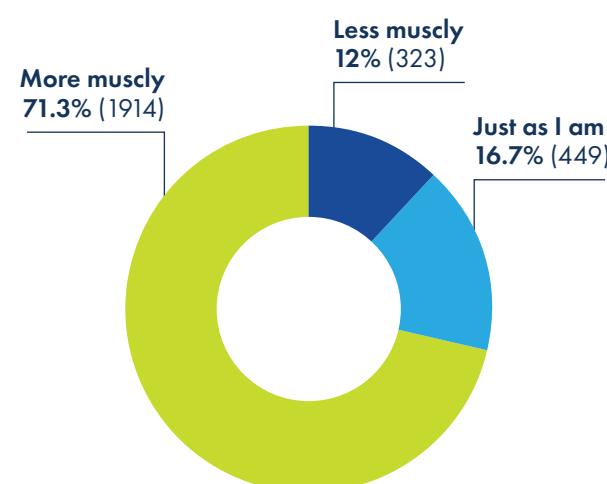
**Wishing to be thinner/leaner was associated with poorer body appreciation ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ )**

**and social media making them feel more dissatisfied about their body ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ )**

## Desire for muscularity

Of the 2,686 young people who indicated their ideal muscularity, the majority wished they were **more muscly** (71.3%) compared to only 12.0% who wished they were less muscly. Only 16.7% of young people were satisfied with their muscularity. No significant differences were found between the 2023 sample ( $M = 66.74$ ,  $SD = 24.40$ ) and the 2022 sample ( $M = 64.59$ ,  $SD = 23.98$ ) ( $p = .006$ ).

Figure 24. Ideal muscularity – all respondents ( $n = 2686$ )



No notable differences for desire for muscularity were apparent across the age, sexuality, and cultural groups.

Desire for muscularity was high among all gender groups, but males (82.4%) and young people who preferred a different gender term (88.6%) reported the greatest desire to be **more muscular**. 69.3% of females, 74% of young people who identified as non-binary, and 65.4% of young people who preferred not to answer, desired to be **more muscular**.

**Wishing to be more muscular was associated with wishing to be taller ( $r = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ ),**

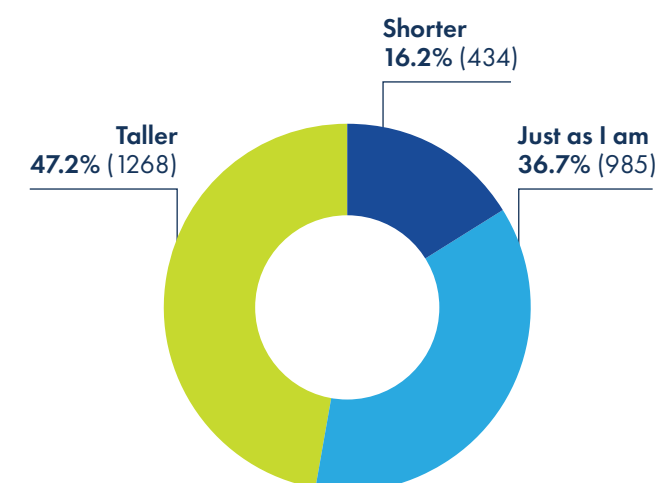


**and social media making them feel more dissatisfied about their body ( $r = 0.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ).**

## Desire for height

Of the 2,687 young people who indicated their height ideal, approximately half (47.2%) wished they were **taller**, compared to only 16.2% who wished they were **shorter**. Just over a third of young people (36.7%) were satisfied with their height.

Figure 25. Ideal height – all respondents ( $n = 2687$ )



### Comparison to 2022

Overall, the 2023 sample ( $M = 59.79$ ,  $SD = 24.97$ ) reported less desire to be taller than the 2022 sample ( $M = 63.14$ ,  $SD = 23.28$ ), however the effect size was very small ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.14$ ) and the results indicate that, on average, young people still desire to be taller than they are.

More 12-year-olds expressed a desire to be **taller** (58.8%) compared to other age groups (which ranged from 45-51%).

Across gender groups, more females (18.3%) than young people of other genders (<11.5%) wanted to be **shorter**. Young people who identified as male (69.1%) and non-binary (69.9%) had a greater desire to be **taller** compared with other genders (females (43.2%), preferred a different term (54.5%), and preferred not to answer (50.0%)).

No differences for desire to be **taller** were apparent across sexuality groups. Around 40-55% of all sexual identities reported a desire to be **taller**.

No differences were noted between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people (48.3%) and non-Indigenous young people (47.1%) in their desire to be **taller**.



## Who are young people comparing their bodies to?

Young people were asked how frequently they compared their body or appearance to a varied list of people (see Figure 26). Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *never* (0) to *always* (5). Some level of comparison was defined as the cumulative proportion of *sometimes*, *often* and *always* responses. A very frequent comparison was defined as *often* or *always* responses.

**Young people very frequently compared their body and appearance to their friends (72.6%) and other teenagers (51.8%).**

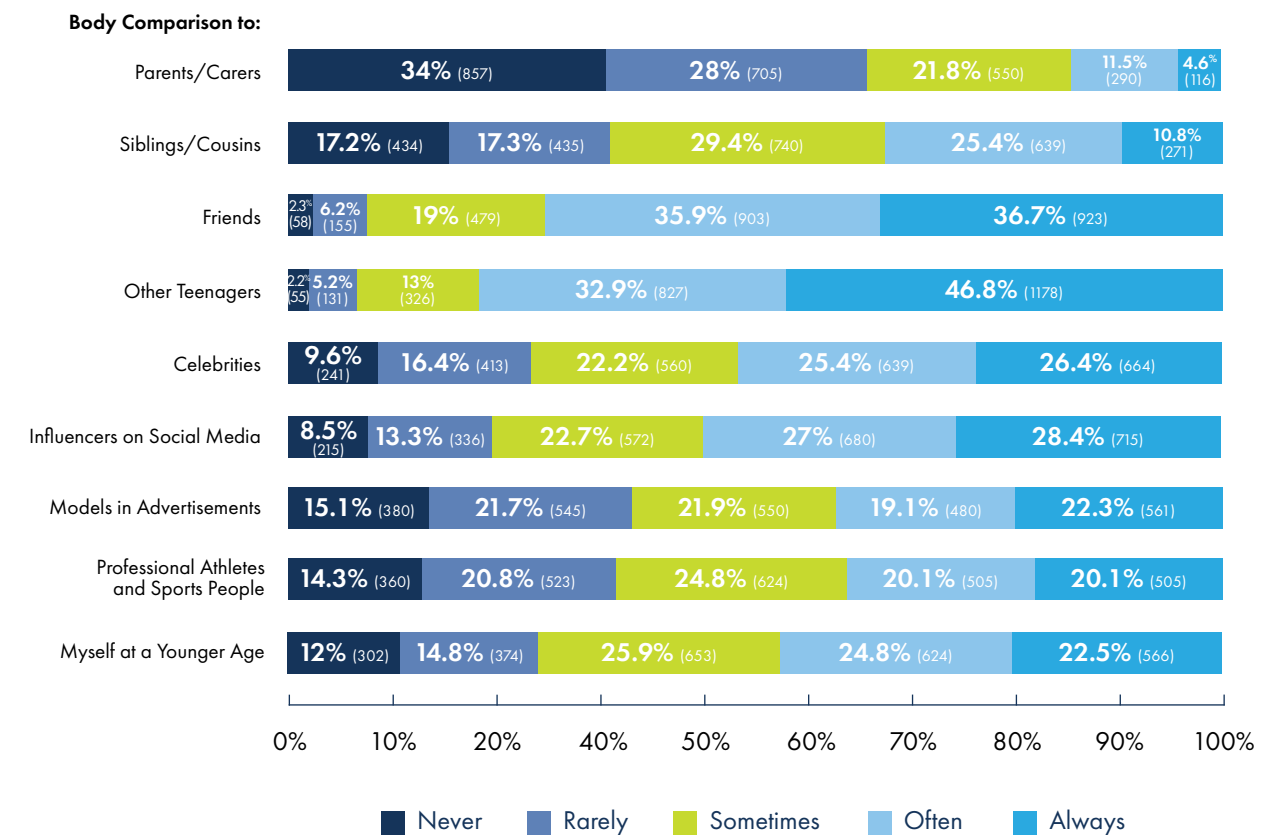
**Over half of young people very frequently compared their body and appearance to celebrities and social media influencers.**

**2 in 5 young people very frequently compared their body and appearance to models in advertisements.**

Very high proportions of young people compared their body and appearance at least *some of the time* to friends (91.5%) and other teenagers (92.6%), while three quarters compared their body and appearance at least *some of the time* to celebrities (74.0%), influencers on social media (78.2%) and their younger self (73.2%).



Figure 26. Frequency of body comparisons – all respondents (n = 2519)



When exploring demographic group differences, 12-year-olds appeared to differ from other age groups the most. For example, a larger portion of 12-year-olds (51.1%) never or rarely compared their appearance to models, compared with 34-39% of other ages who never or rarely did. Approximately half of young people across all age groups very frequently (i.e., often or always) compared their appearance to themselves at a younger age, with the exception of 12-year-olds (31.1%). While a substantial proportion of 12-year-olds very frequently compared themselves to other teenagers (66.7%), this was lower compared to the other age groups (74-84%). Overall, appearance comparisons with parents/guardians were uncommon.

Young people who identified as female and non-binary were more likely to very frequently compare their appearance to their friends, other teenagers, celebrities, and models. Further, females were most likely to very frequently compare their appearance to influencers on social media. 43.5% of non-binary young people compared their appearance with their siblings/cousins, which was somewhat higher than females (37.5%) and males (27.6%). Appearance comparisons with parents/guardians, professional athletes and sports people, and oneself at a younger age occurred at similar frequencies across different genders.

Young people who identified as bisexual were more likely than young people of other sexualities to compare their appearance to other teenagers. Young people who identified as straight/heterosexual were more likely than other sexualities to compare their appearance to professional athletes and sports people. Appearance comparisons with parents/guardians, siblings/cousins, friends, oneself at a younger age, models, and influencers on social media occurred at similar frequencies across different sexualities.

There were no obvious differences between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people and non-Indigenous young people in how frequently they compare their body and appearance to others.



## How does body image impact young people?

### Has body image ever stopped young people from doing certain activities?

Young people completed a modified Body Image Life Disengagement Questionnaire (BILD; Atkinsons & Diedrichs, 2021). Respondents were asked the degree to which their feelings about how their body looks has ever stopped them from doing 10 different life activities using a 4-point scale ranging from *hasn't stopped me* (1) to *stopped me all the time* (4). Respondents were also given the option to respond *not sure*. Scores were averaged across responses (scores range 1-4), with higher scores indicating greater life disengagement. A high level of disengagement was defined by the proportion of *quite a bit* and *all the time* responses.

For the 2,169 young people who responded to this scale, the mean score was 2.04 ( $SD = 0.68$ ), indicating that the sample on average reported their body image stopping them engaging in life activities only 'a little bit', which was statistically similar to the 2022 sample ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ;  $p = 0.44$ ).

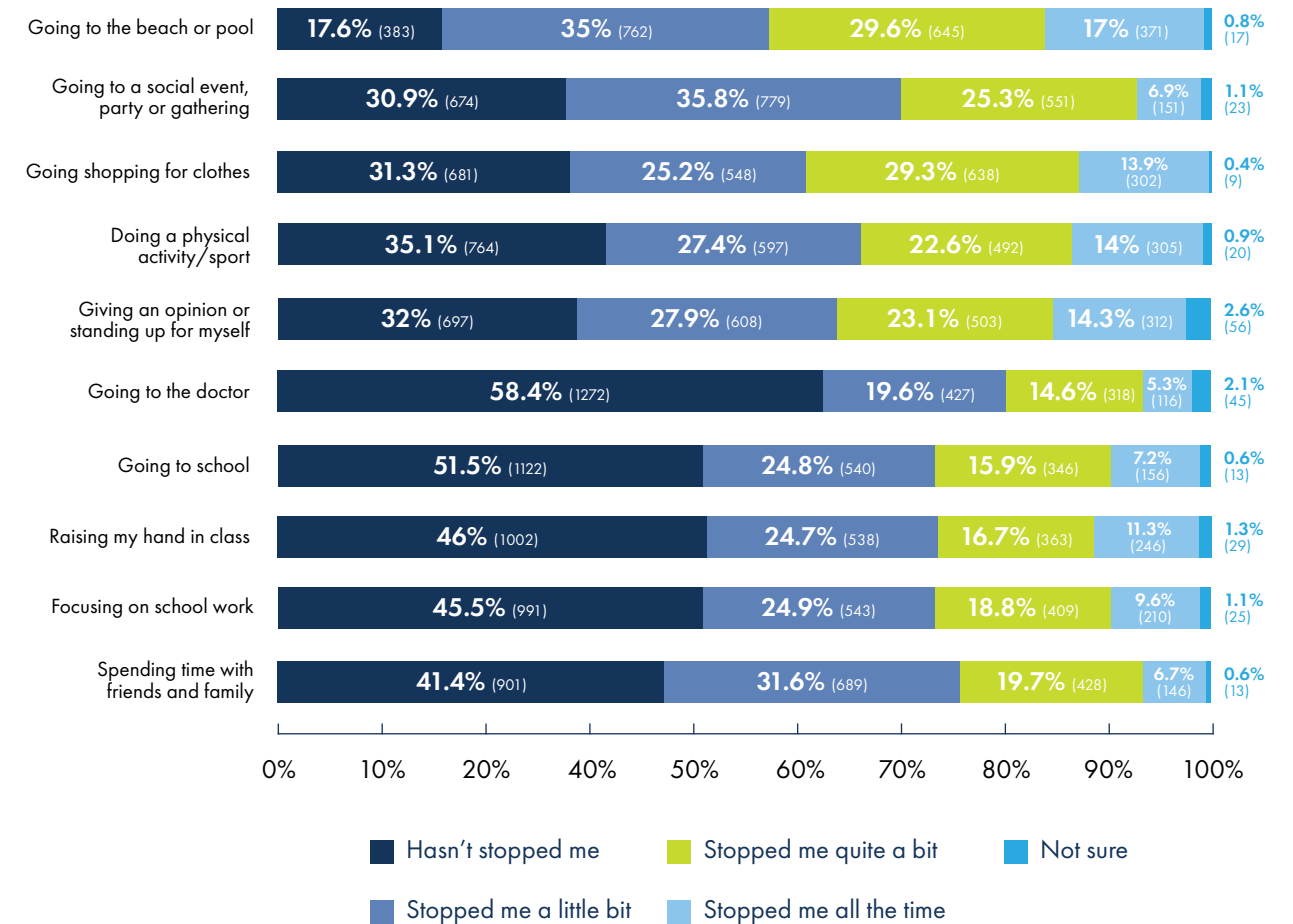
However, when exploring the activities independently, feelings about their bodies frequently stopped young people from engaging in a number of activities.

- 46.6% of young people reported a high level of disengagement from going to the beach.
- 43.2% of young people reported a high level of disengagement from going clothes shopping.
- 36.6% of young people reported a high level of disengagement from doing a physical activity/sport.
- 37.4% of young people reported a high level of disengagement from giving an opinion or standing up for themselves.

**Impact on school was also notable, with almost a third of young people reporting their body image impacted their ability to focus on schoolwork and willingness to raise their hand in the classroom, quite a bit or all the time, and 23.1% reporting it stopped them from going to school quite a bit or all the time.**



Figure 27. Level of disengagement from life activities



Life disengagement was similar across age groups. Life disengagement was significantly greater for young people reporting their gender as anything other than male. Young people who identified as gay/lesbian appeared to report greater life disengagement compared to young people of other sexualities. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people reported greater life disengagement compared to non-Indigenous young people.

## How much do young people value appearance?

Young people were asked to order what is most important to them from a list of being healthy, sporty, good looking, smart and kind.

On average, respondents placed higher importance on being healthy, kind, and smart over being good looking and sporty. Only 13.6% of young people ranked being good looking as most important to them.

There were no notable differences in the importance of appearance between gender, or sexuality groups, nor between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people. However, a quarter of 13-year-olds ranked being good looking as most important to them, which tended to decrease with age.

## Young people's social media use

**83.2% of respondents reported using social media.**

**7 out of 10 said that they spend more time on social media than they would like to.**

**Most frequently used platforms:**  
**Instagram (81.4%), TikTok (60.6%), Snapchat (70.5%)**

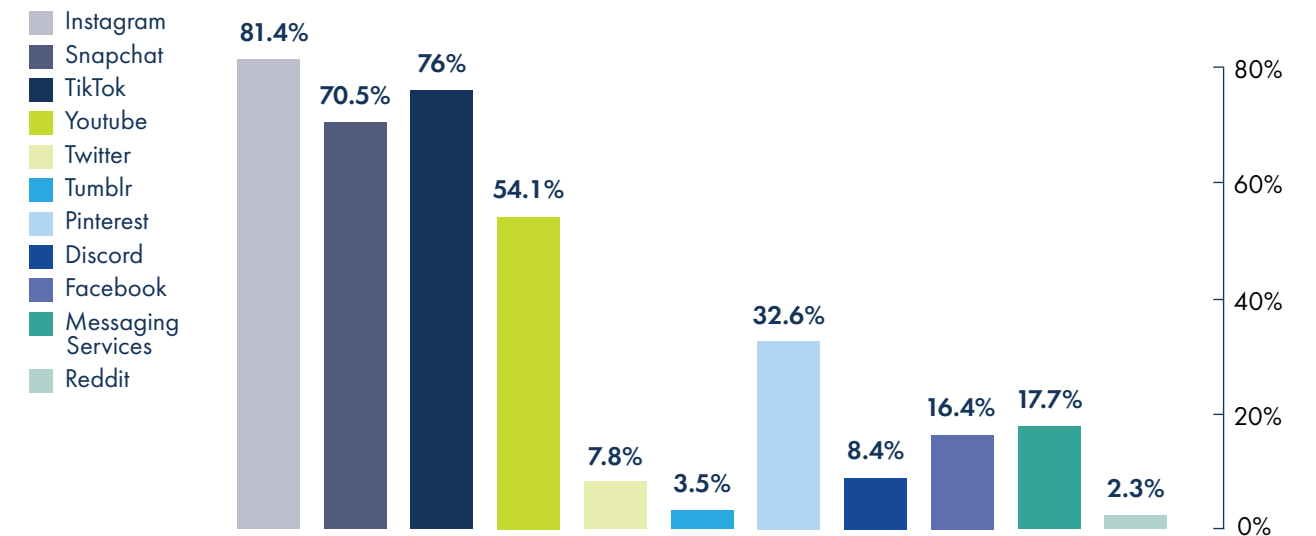
**Almost two thirds of respondents (61.7%) reported social media made them feel dissatisfied about their body.**

**8 in 10 respondents thought that media and social media platforms need to do more to help young people have a more positive body image.**

## What platforms are young people using?

Of the 2,448 young people using social media, over 80% of young people are using Instagram, 76% are using TikTok and around 70% are using Snapchat.

**Figure 28. Proportion of young people using social media platforms (%) – all respondents (n = 2448)**



Instagram was more popular with older adolescents. Around 30% of 12-year-olds reported using Instagram, compared with 72-75% of 16- to 18-year-olds. Snapchat, Tik Tok, and YouTube use was common across all ages (40-60% of young people).

## What do young people think about their social media use?

Overall, 70.5% of young people reported spending more time on social media than they would like. Little differences were seen between age groups. Compared to other genders, males were least likely to report that they spend too much time on social media. Further, young people who identified as bisexual were most likely to report that they spend too much time on social media. Slightly more non-Indigenous respondents (58.1%) reported spending too much time on social media than Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth (47.6%).



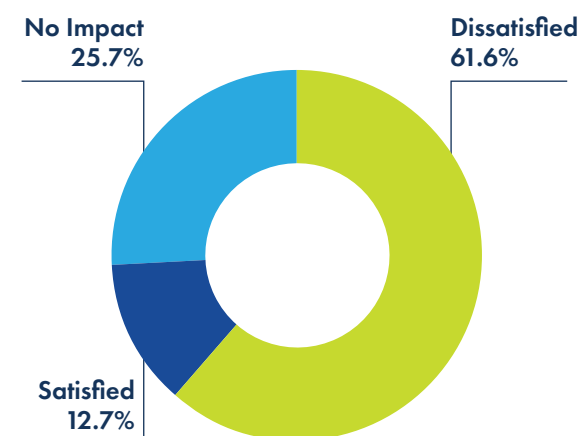


## How satisfied does social media make young people feel about how their body looks?

Young people were asked to rate how satisfied social media made them feel about how their body looks on a scale from *completely dissatisfied* (0) to *completely satisfied* (100). The data were split to indicate dissatisfied as <40 and satisfied as >60, and 'no impact' in between.

Almost two thirds (61.7%) of young people reported social media made them feel **dissatisfied** with their bodies ( $M = 34.39$ ,  $SD = 21.06$ ).

**Figure 29. The impact of social media on how young people feel about how their body looks – all respondents (n = 2411)**



### Comparison to 2022

Whilst the 2023 sample was statistically more **dissatisfied** than the 2022 sample ( $M = 40.56$ ,  $SD = 20.98$ ), the effect size was small ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.29$ ), suggesting that the comparison between years is not very meaningful, but rather that, overall, social media is having a negative impact on young people's body image.

There was a relationship between young people reporting that social media made them feel more **dissatisfied** about their bodies and desire to be **thinner/leaner** ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), poorer body appreciation ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and greater life disengagement ( $r = -.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There was also a relationship between feeling more **dissatisfied** and older age ( $r = 0.05$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and desire to be **taller** ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but these were very weak correlations.

### Group Differences

When exploring demographic group differences, a quarter of males (26.4%) reported that social media made them feel **dissatisfied** with their body, compared with over 55% of respondents of other genders.

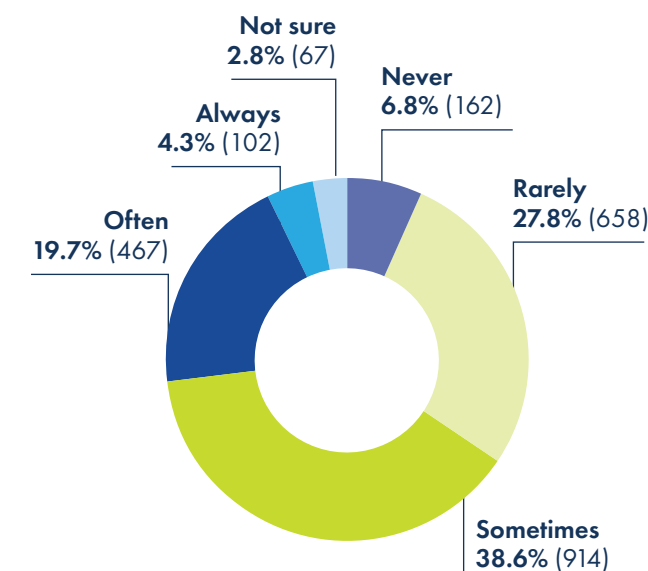
Over half of all respondents, regardless of sexuality, reported that social media made them feel **dissatisfied** about their bodies. However, a slightly higher proportion of straight/heterosexual young people (15.2%) reported social media made them feel **satisfied** with their body, compared with less than 7% other sexual identities.

There were no apparent differences across age groups in how social media impacted young people's body satisfaction, nor between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents and non-Indigenous respondents.

## How often do young people see their body, shape or size represented on social media?

34.6% young people reported never or rarely seeing their bodies represented on social media.

**Figure 30. Frequency with which young people see their body presented on social media – all respondents (n = 2370)**



Across age groups, more 13-year-olds (44.7%) reported never or rarely seeing their body presented on social media, followed by 12-year-olds (43.2%). The proportion decreased with increasing age. Across gender groups, young people who preferred not to report their gender (38.14%) most frequently reported not seeing their body presented on social media. Approximately one third of respondents across all gender groups reported not seeing their body presented on social media. There were no apparent differences across sexual identities. More non-Indigenous respondents (24.2%) reported often or always seeing their body presented on social media compared with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents (19.6%).

## Do young people think social media platforms need to do more to help them have a more positive body image?

8 in 10 agreed that social media platforms need to do more to help young people have a more positive body image.



## What can social media platforms do?

### Greater diversity in body sizes and shapes

"Validate that every body type is a good body type or a swimsuit worthy body type. Not just the flat stomach and perfect body shape."

"They could post videos explaining how people of all body shapes and sizes are beautiful and how everyone deserves the most/best in life."

"STOP ONLY SHOWING THE SKINNY PRETTY GIRLS!! Show everyone fat, skinny, tall, short and everything in between."

### Provide more positive messaging

"Provide educational content about positive body image to encourage young people to develop positive self-image perceptions."



"Promote body positivity across all age groups and genders to get the message to sink in early and altering the algorithm to be what certain ages need to hear rather than the stereotypes of what a teenage boy / girl 'should' be seeing."

"They can start promoting more about kindness to our body's and not comment of other body types."



### Realistic unedited/filtered images

"Show realistic photos and models, show unedited next to edited so you can understand nobody is absolutely perfect. spread awareness on the fakeness behind some platforms. Show unedited skin types more."

"Show how easy it is to edit bodies and have people of all sizes showing how they like themselves. Not having as much hate comments on larger peoples' posts."

"I think it would be good if there was some sort of photoshop detector where it would let users know if something has been edited so they would know it's unrealistic."

### Stricter Guidelines

"We need some ground rules! Let's set clear standards for what's okay to post so we don't see fake or hurtful stuff about body image."

"To do more to stop comments that are negative because they deter those who are more relatable from creating content while promoting and rewarding those who fit the standards."

"Stop body-shaming posts or accounts. I think there should be consequences for those that post, comment, or share hurtful things."

### Better controls and management

"They should stop letting disordered and pro ED accounts proliferate. Additionally, so many accounts promote behaviours like overeating and bingeing but their accounts aren't taken as seriously as accounts that promote undereating. Both issues are equally bad and personally, overeating always end in more unhealthy restrictive habits in the end, so fact checks on certain 'body positive' accounts would be beneficial, as would the banning of pro ED accounts generally."

"They need to be really careful about what kinds of things can be promoted on their apps. I see diet fads and all kinds of things which pretty much promote disordered eating and nothing is done by these apps to reduce it."

"TAKE DOWN WEIGHT LOSS ACCOUNTS!!! I've seen so many accounts on tiktok and twitter romanticising eating disorders and malnourishing your body, and nothing happens to them?? the accounts are spewing information like 'don't eat more than X calories a day' and stuff like that, and I feel like it can really harm people who are recovering from eating disorders or are low self-esteem."

## What about advertisers?

**8 in 10 agreed that advertisers need to do more to help young people have a more positive body image.**

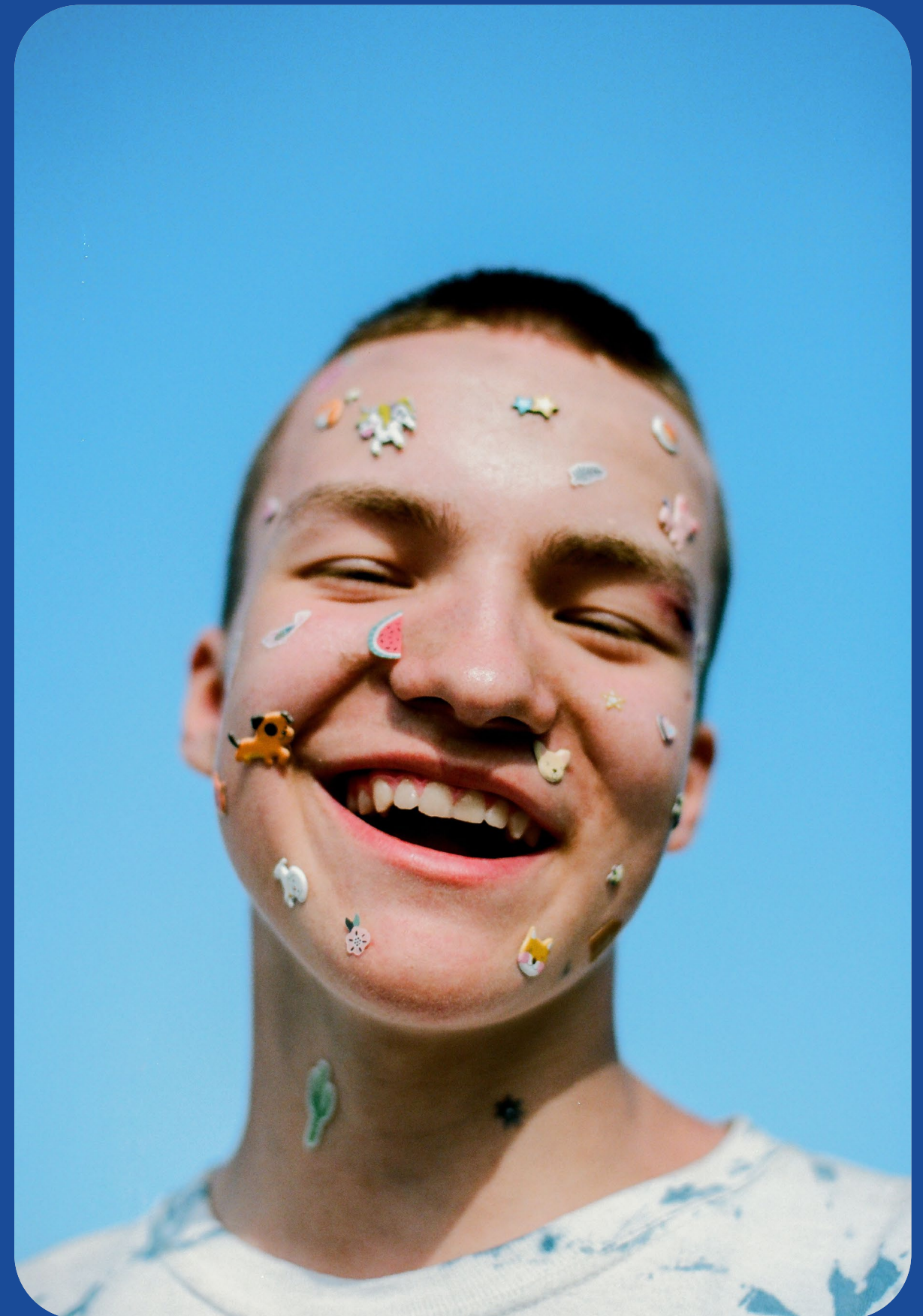
### Here's how...

**// Use diverse models, including people of all shapes, skin tones and ages, to show the true diversity of beauty."**

**// They could use less photoshop and makeup and just show us younger people what a real/normal body may look like."**

**// They should put up ads that motivate people that they are beautiful just the way they are. And also should be proud and they do not need to cover themselves with products they don't like to use."**

**// Emphasise the importance of self-esteem and self-confidence in advertisements, encouraging young people not to be influenced by external standards and fostering a positive self-image."**



## How are young people being Body *Kind* online?

Young people were asked a series of questions on the frequency of actions they had taken in the last 12 months in relation to their social media use and feelings about their bodies, as shown in Figure 31. Responses were rated on a 5-point from *never* (1) to *always* (5). Young people were also given the opportunity to say 'not sure'.

**75.2% reported never or rarely taking a break from social media because it was affecting how they felt about their bodies.**

**40.7% said they never or rarely posted unfiltered or unedited photos of themselves.**

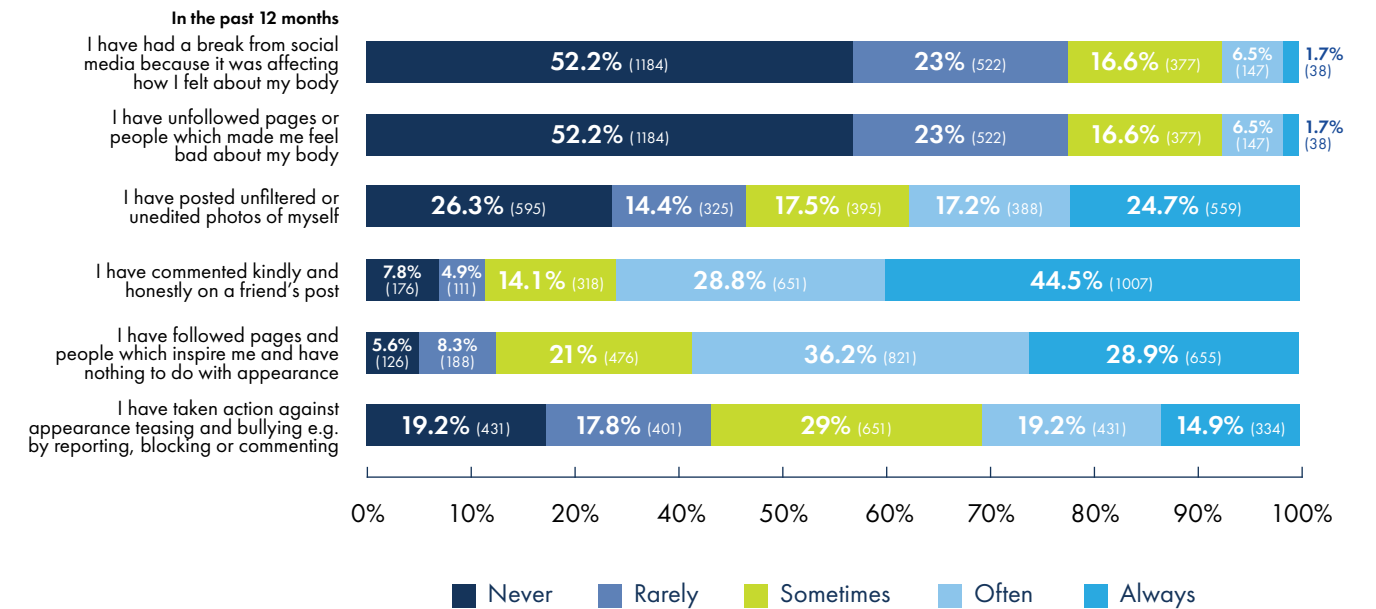
**On the other hand,**

**73.3% reported often or always commenting kindly and honestly on friends' posts.**

**65% young people reported often or always following pages and people that inspire them (and have nothing to do with appearance).**

**Whist nearly 1 in 5 never or rarely take action against appearance bullying and teasing online, over a third (34.1%) said they did often or always.**

**Figure 31. Use of social media literacy strategies – all respondents (n = 2268)**



### Who is engaging in social media literacy strategies?

Older participants tended to more frequently post unedited or unfiltered photos of themselves (43.0% of 18-year-olds compared with 30.5% of 12-year-olds).

Young people who identified as female (23.7%) and non-binary (22.7%) more frequently unfollowed pages or people that made them feel bad about their body, compared with other genders (<14%). One quarter of males (25.2%) and one third of non-binary young people (33.3%) reported often or always posting unedited or unfiltered photos of themselves, compared with close to half of females (44.5%) and young people who preferred a different term (40.5%). 42.9% of males often or always followed pages and people that inspired them and had nothing to do with appearance, whilst around two thirds of young people of other genders frequently engaged in this action on social media. Young people who identified as non-binary (53.0%) and preferred a different gender term (40.5%) more frequently took action against appearance teasing and bullying than other genders (<34.4%).

Young people who identified as gay/lesbian (80.2%) more frequently followed pages and people that inspire them and have nothing to do with appearance, compared to straight/heterosexual respondents (61.1%). Young people who identified as gay/lesbian (44.4%) and preferred a different sexuality term (44.0%) more frequently, than other sexuality groups (<37.0%), took action against appearance teasing and bullying online.

Compared to non-Indigenous respondents, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people more frequently took action against appearance teasing and bullying online.



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

**77.7% of young people have received negative comments, or been teased, about their appearance\***

Of those who have experienced teasing:

**39.3% in the last month.**  
**35.8% in the last 6 months.**  
**36.0% in the last 12 months.**  
**39.8% more than a year ago.**

*\*Of the 2,256 young people who responded to this question*

### Comparison to 2022

Notably, in 2023 a statistically greater proportion of young people reported experiencing negative comments or appearance teasing than the 2022 sample (67.80%) ( $p < .001$ ,  $\phi = .2$ ), with a small to medium effect size; but results from both years indicate a high prevalence.

### Where is it happening?

Those who have experienced teasing report the top four locations where this most frequently occurred as being at school (77.0%), at home (37.8%) on social media (33.4%), and at family events (30.1%).

### Who is it happening most to?

Appearance-related teasing was:

- frequent across all ages, with 73-83% of young people reporting ever having been teased.
- frequent across all genders, but was more frequently reported by non-binary young people (90.9%), and less so by males (59.4%).
- frequent across all sexualities, with 74-87% of young people reporting ever having been teased.
- similar between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people.

### What about teasing of others?

A quarter of young people admit to commenting negatively or teasing someone about their appearance, most commonly whilst at school\*

*\*Of the 2,240 young people who responded to this question.*

## What do young people think about schools and body image?

### Should schools do more to support positive body image?

Young people were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with a series of statements about school support for body image, as shown in Figure 32. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

**8 in 10 agreed that primary schools should do more.**

**9 in 10 agreed that high/secondary schools should do more.**

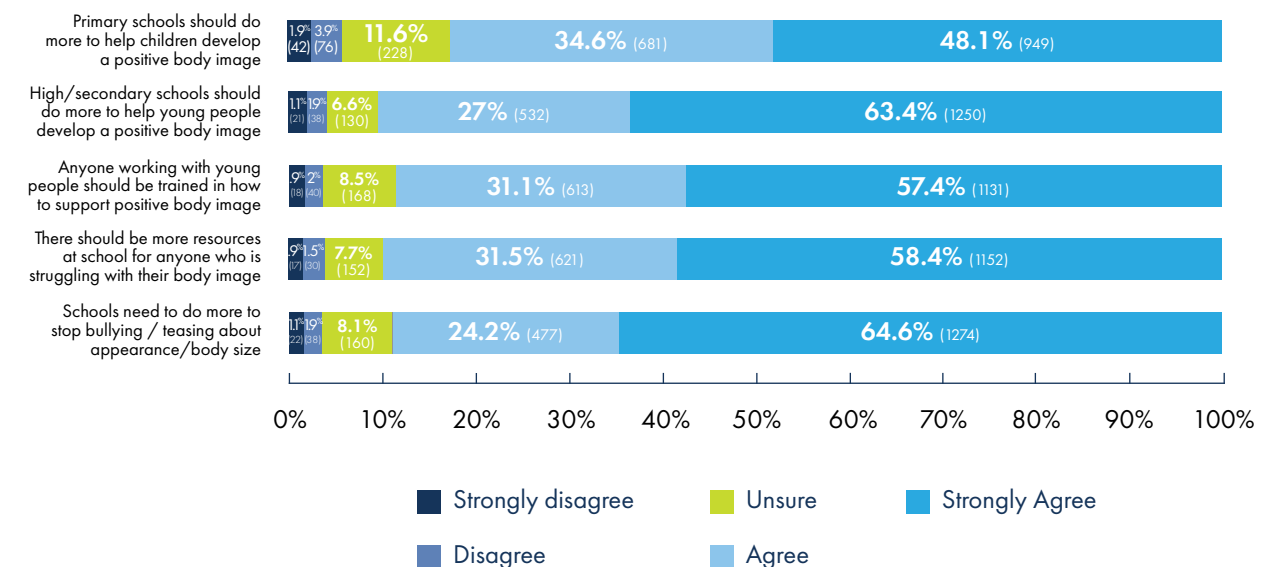
Nearly 9 out of 10 agreed that:

**Those working in schools should be trained in how to support body image (88.5%).**

**More resources should be provided at schools for anyone struggling with body image (89%).**

**Schools need to do more to stop bullying and teasing around appearance (88.8%).**

**Figure 32. Young people's views on body image education and support in schools – all respondents (n = 1971)**





Have young people ever been given strategies for positive body image?

Around 1 in 10 said they had received body image strategies at primary school.

Around 2 in 5 said they had received body image strategies at high/secondary school.

40.9% said they had received body image strategies from their parents.

How would young people like to learn ways to improve their body image from school?

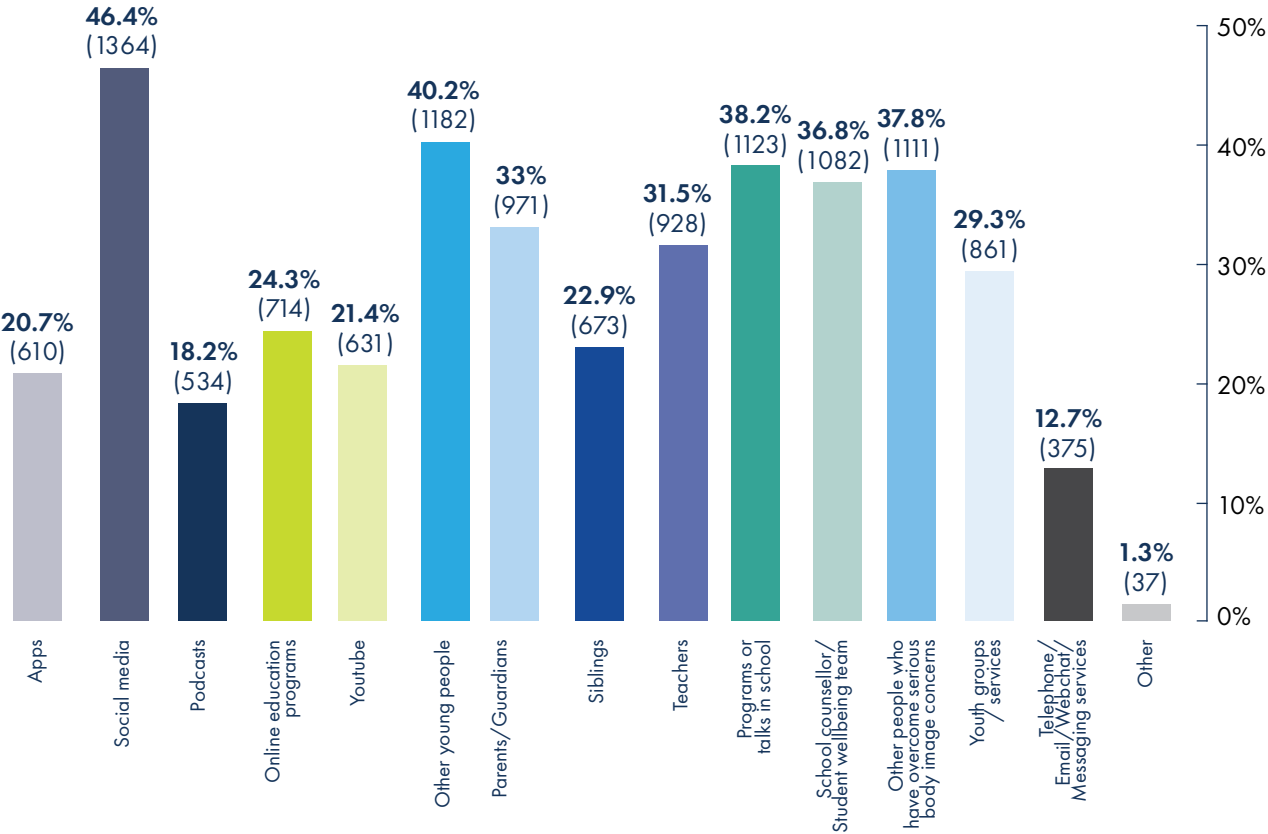
- Young people’s top four preferences for delivery of school-based body image education were:
- delivered by a person who had overcome their own body dissatisfaction (44.7%).
  - included in normal school lessons as part of the curriculum (39.1%).
  - delivered by young people who are trained to deliver the skills (35.6%).
  - an online, self-paced program (32.8%).

What ways do young people want to receive information about body image?

Young people were asked to indicate, from a list, the best ways for young people to get information about body image. They were able to tick more than one response.

Social media was most frequently indicated (46.4%), followed by other young people more generally (40.2%). The least preferred methods were through telephone/email/webchat services (12.7%), podcasts (18.2%) and Apps (20.7%).

Figure 33. Preferred sources of information about body image – all respondents




## If young people had a magic wand, what would they do to help young people feel good in their bodies?

Anonymous quotes provided by young people generally tackled the issues of diversity in the media, and addressing beauty standards and diet culture.

"Wish away all value in appearance, everyone should forget that being pretty or ugly automatically made them cool and popular or a loser and nerd."

"To not create body standards in the first place because that's where the issue started why does a size 4 body look better than a size 10 body why do you have to change your appearance to look good why can't everyone just accept everyone for who they are."




"Tell them that your body is beautiful but has nothing to do with you as a person. Your personality and the person that you are is the reason you are beautiful, not what you look like."

"Change the stigma around your body determining someone's worth, just from the start getting rid of all beauty standards."

"As someone born with a cleft palate and an underbite, I would make it so other people are more understanding of people who go through facial surgeries and who are born with facial deformities and birth defects. I also wish that people's first reaction would be to seek understanding or to learn about my body rather than to make fun of it."

"Actually eradicate any negative media around bodies. Media can be so hurtful, and I would never allow for anything negative about bodies to be spoken about again."



"Celebrate all body types and not have labels such as 'fat, skinny etc.' or have labels of 'plus size' models."

"Educate parents and caregivers about the importance of positive body image and how to support their children."

"Encourage inclusion in sports and fitness activities by providing a diverse range of sports programs and venues to accommodate young people with different interests and abilities."

"Erase the idea of this 'perfect body' that everybody seeks but doesn't actually exist."

"I would make everyone embrace their own bodies and not worry about fitting into a certain mould that society seems to be acceptable."



## How did completing the survey make young people feel?

Before leaving the survey, respondents were asked to indicate how participating in the survey made them feel. Only 13.0% felt sad and 4.1% felt embarrassed, otherwise 44.3% were OK, 19.0% felt empowered, 10.8% happy, and 8.8% bored.



## Conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to better understand the body image experiences and related issues among young people living in Australia in 2023.

The findings of this survey suggest that body dissatisfaction is affecting a significant proportion of young people in Australia, with a slightly greater proportion reporting dissatisfaction in 2023 compared to 2022 and over 95% reporting some level of concern about their body image. More than half of young people were dissatisfied with how their body looks, and their body dissatisfaction continues to impact the way they engage in everyday life and activities, including attendance and engagement at school. Body dissatisfaction was experienced across all demographic groups but females and young people in the LGBT+ community continue to appear most at risk.

Poorer body appreciation was related to a greater desire for thinness, life disengagement and social media making young people feel more dissatisfied about their body.

In relation to their social media experience, it was reported by more than 60% of young people that social media made them feel dissatisfied about their bodies. Thus, it was not surprising to hear from young people that they want social media companies to do more to support young people's body image, including representing more diversity online, stricter guidelines and more realistic/unedited images. Young people also expressed desire for social media companies to have better inbuilt controls and ways to manage content that young people are exposed to.

Young people also indicated that more should be done to help them develop a positive body image through

programs at primary and secondary schools. An overwhelming proportion of young people have experienced appearance-related teasing, and they want schools to do more to stop it from happening, given the high frequency in which it is occurring at school.

It was also evident that young people may be more *Body Kind* towards others, but rarely spoke positively about their own bodies or sought help if they were not feeling good about their bodies.

The *Body Kind* Youth Survey has now been conducted over two years, with plans to run it for a third year. It is intended that this survey may highlight changes in prevalence and impact of body image issues among Australian young people over time, inform actions for Butterfly's prevention programs and resources, and provide new insights for researchers, policy makers, and education, youth, and mental health service providers. For example, the *Body Kind* Youth Survey 2022 findings informed the development of new content for secondary school prevention programs, a collaboration with Yellow Ladybugs, and continued advocacy with parliamentarians and social media platforms.

The findings continue to support Butterfly's ongoing advocacy for stronger public investment in body image, including a national focus on research, investigation of the economic and social costs of body dissatisfaction, greater support for prevention and early intervention initiatives, and an investigation of options for regulatory and policy change to reduce the social determinants of body dissatisfaction among young people.

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