

Overview

Now in its third year, Butterfly Foundation's BodyKind Youth Survey provides a nationwide glimpse into the levels of body satisfaction and body image experiences of a large sample of young people living in Australia aged 12 to 18 years.

Overall, the findings of the BodyKind Youth Survey 2024 suggest that body dissatisfaction continues to be a relevant experience for young people in Australia. 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, trans and gender diverse and LGB+ young people are still reporting the highest levels.

On average, respondents reported feeling *rarely* or *sometimes* positive about their bodies. Poorer body appreciation was related to greater body dissatisfaction, life disengagement, social media making them feel dissatisfied with their body, desire for thinness/leanness, and not surprisingly also a greater concern about their body image. Nearly half reported *never* or *rarely* feeling comfortable with their body.

The impact on young people's lives is also evident. Consistent with previous years, body dissatisfaction limited young people's involvement in sport, social activities and giving an opinion or standing up for themselves. For over a quarter of young people body image frequently impacted their ability to focus on schoolwork and willingness to raise their hand in the classroom, and for a fifth of respondents their school attendance.

When exploring some of the known risk factors for body dissatisfaction, it was found that the majority (78.5 %) of young people have experienced appearance-related teasing. Teasing most frequently occurred at school and so it is not surprising that 87.0% of young people want schools to do more to stop it. It was also evident that whilst young people were engaging in BodyKind practices, particularly towards others, more than half *rarely* or *never* spoke positively about their own bodies.

Young people were also asked about their social media use and its impact

on their body image. More than half reported that social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body, which was related to greater body dissatisfaction, concern about their body image and life disengagement. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear from young people that they want to see changes in the way media/social media present body ideals and beauty standards, as well as stricter guidelines around harmful content as a means of improving young people's body image.

Across the three 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 support those struggling with their body image, including content delivered by people who have overcome their own body image concerns and having body image content as part of the curriculum. An overwhelming majority felt that those working with young people in schools should be trained in how to support positive body image.

Who participated?

1648 respondents (12-18 years)

79.2% Female

13.5% Male

6.3% Trans and gender diverse

3.8% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

21.3% LGB+*

Average age 15.48 years



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

All Australian states and territories represented.

How satisfied are young people with how their body looks?

More than half (53.8%) of young people reported being dissatisfied with how their body looks.

More than 1 in 3 (37.5%) reported being *mostly or completely* dissatisfied with how their body looks.

Over two thirds of males (67.3%) reported some level of body satisfaction compared with 32.8% of females and 24.8% of trans and gender diverse young people.

Some level of body dissatisfaction was reported by approximately two thirds of respondents from the LGB+ community, while around half reported a high level of body dissatisfaction.

Body dissatisfaction was highest for 17- and 18-year-olds (65.7% and 60.1%, respectively). Similar rates of body dissatisfaction were found across the other ages with between 42.6-53.9% reporting some level of body dissatisfaction.

To what extent do young people appreciate their bodies?

2 in 5 young people never or rarely feel good in their body.

1 in 5 reported *never or rarely* respecting their body.

Nearly half of young people *never or rarely* feel comfortable with their body.

Are young people being kind to their bodies?

Over half report never or rarely speaking positively about their body, 47% never or rarely encourage friends to talk less about appearance, and 2 in 5 never or rarely spend less time focusing on their appearance.

On the other hand:

Most reported *often or always* valuing other people for their personality over appearance (76.1%).

Around 8 in 10 said they avoided saying unkind things about other people's bodies or appearance.

73.5% surround themselves with people who like them for who they are, rather than how they look.

How concerned are young people about their body image?

90% of young people had some level of concern.

Two in five (41.6%) young people reported a high level of concern about their body image, which is slightly lower than 2023 survey findings (46.4%).

Young people who preferred not to say (46.6%), females (46.3%) and trans and gender diverse young people (40.2%) reported a high level of concern about their body image.

A similar proportion of young people who identified as gay/lesbian and bisexual reported a high level of concern about their body image (>45.0% very or extremely concerned).

12-year-olds were the least concerned about their body image, while 17- and 18-year-olds were the most concerned (with 51.9% and 49.3%, respectively, reporting a high level of concern).

What are the body ideals of young people?

75.5% of young people wished they were thinner /leaner.

Females (82.2%), trans and gender diverse (82.8%) and those who preferred not to report their gender (76.9%) reported a greater desire for thinness compared with males (32.4%).

Over 83% of young people in the LGB+ community reported a desire to be thinner, compared with 71.0% of heterosexual young people.

Desire for thinness peaked at age 17 with 86.1% of all 17-year-olds wanting to be thinner.

66.6% of young people wished they were more muscular.

Across the age groups, 18-year-olds reported the greatest desire for muscularity.

Desire for muscularity was high amongst all gender groups, but males (83.6%) and trans and gender diverse young people (70.2%) reported the greatest desire to be more muscular.

Over 63% of females desired to be more muscular.

How does body image impact young people?

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

Feelings about their body had also stopped young people *quite a bit* or *all the time* from:

- Going to the beach (47.5%)
- Going shopping for clothes (39.7%)
- Doing a physical activity/sport (34.5%)
- Giving an opinion or standing up for themselves (38.6%)

The impact of social media on young people's body image.

More than half (57.2%) of respondents said social media made them feel dissatisfied with their body.

There was a significant association between young people reporting that social media made them feel more dissatisfied about their bodies and greater body dissatisfaction, greater

concern about their body image and greater life disengagement.

The reported impact of social media on body dissatisfaction was **less** for males (22.8%) compared with over 45% of other genders.

A third of young people reported *never* or *rarely* seeing their bodies represented on social media.

What age should people be allowed to access social media?

More than half of young people thought that age 13-14 should be when young people are allowed to access social media. Younger respondents tended to report access should be given at an earlier age than older respondents.

Almost half of all respondents said social media made them feel dissatisfied about their body.

There was a relationship between young people reporting that social media made them feel dissatisfied about their bodies and desire to be thinner/leaner, poorer body appreciation and greater 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.

Are young people being BodyKind online? *

74.2% reported *never* or *rarely* taking a break from social media because it was affecting how they felt about their bodies.

44.0% reported they *never* or *rarely* posted unfiltered or unedited photos of themselves.

On the other hand:

- Nearly three quarters (74.8%) reported *often* or *always* commenting kindly and honestly on friends' posts.
- 33.8% reported *often* or *always* taking action against appearance bullying and teasing online.

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



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

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

Nearly 8 in 10 (78.5%) young people have received negative comments or been teased about their appearance.



Appearance-teasing was:

- Frequent across all ages, with 75.0-88.1% of young people reporting ever having been teased.
- Frequent across all genders but was more frequently reported by trans and gender diverse young people (92.9%) and less so by males (65.0%).
- Frequent across all sexualities with 74.5-95.8% of young people reporting ever having been teased.

78.2% reported that they experienced appearance-teasing at school.

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

- At home (37.4%)
- On social media (31.7%)
- Via text/group chats (26.8%)

What do young people think about schools and body image?

8 in 10 agreed primary schools should do more to support positive body image and 9 in 10 agreed 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 (88.1%).
- More resources should be provided at schools for anyone struggling with body image (87.1%).
- Schools need to do more to stop bullying and teasing around appearance (87.0%).

Young people's top 4 preferences for delivery of school based body image education were:

- Delivery by a person who has overcome their own body image concerns (38.2%).
- Included in normal lessons as part of the curriculum (32.2%).
- Delivered by other young people who have been trained (31.3%).
- An online, self-paced program (28.2%).

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

39.6% thought social media was the best way for young people to get information about body image.

The other most frequently indicated responses were:

- Programs or talks in schools (35.9%).
- School counsellor/student wellbeing team (34.0%).

What can schools and other youth settings do?



Help prevent body image issues from developing in adolescence by implementing body image education early and safely, in primary school. Continue education and support throughout the adolescent years.



Offer opportunities to learn about body image at secondary school by implementing evidence-informed body image programs within the curriculum.



Consider the needs of LGBTQIA+ young people when implementing body image education and linking to support. Find out more [here](#)



Foster a positive body image school culture that is kind, respectful and inclusive of students in bodies of all shapes, sizes and abilities.



Allow young people to role model and support each other through supported peer-led delivery of body image education.



Empower young people with social media literacy skills to source helpful not harmful body image, nutrition, fitness and health information, online. Find out more [here](#)



Provide opportunities to learn about body image from trained people who have overcome challenges. Contact education is powerful.



Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to appearance-related teasing and bullying and include this within anti-bullying policies and student codes of conduct.



Support school staff and families to identify warning signs and act early if a young person is struggling.

Butterfly Resources supporting body image in young people



Butterfly Body Bright

Whole of school body image program for Australian primary schools.



Butterfly BodyKind Initiatives

BodyKind Schools
BodyKind Families
BodyKind Sports
BodyKind August

Butterfly Foundation's Prevention and Education Services have been supporting schools, communities, and sporting organisations since 2007. Our work has reached an estimated 2.3 million young people. Help us as we work to support all young Australians to be BodyKind. E: education@butterfly.org.au



For more information or to access the full 2024 BodyKind Youth Survey Findings, please visit: www.butterfly.org.au/YouthSurveyFindings

Butterfly National Helpline
www.butterfly.org.au/helpline

www.butterfly.org.au/youthsurveyfindings



Concerned about someone?
Butterfly National Helpline
8am-Midnight (AEST/AEDT)
7 days a week