

# Body Image Issues

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## 1. Introduction

Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception<sup>1</sup>. In this report I discuss a few perceptions and stereotypes we come across body images across gender and different age groups. In today's society, Body image issues still tend to influence our self esteem.. The feeling of "not being enough" is prevalent when it comes to standards in maintaining the so called "ideal body".

It was alarming to find that 86% of women respondents have been subject to body shaming compared to only 38% of men. Moreover it is a higher proportion of younger individuals who experience Body shaming as compared to individuals in older age groups. 64% of men and women respondents agreed that it is women who are more pressurised to maintain ideal body standards as compared to men. A surprising finding in this study is that 50% of male respondents tried or have taken steps to alter their body image whereas a significantly higher proportion of women respondents (86%) have tried to alter their body image.

## 2. Data Collection process

For this study, I created a survey using Google forms with questions related to body image and related issues. The survey included both close-ended questions and rating scales. An informed consent was obtained before administering the questions assuring the respondents that their identities would be anonymous and confidential. The survey was administered to random Respondents so as to gather unbiased and honest opinions on the topic. The survey also collected information on the age and gender of the respondents.

In this study, I created three age categories -15 to 24, 25 to 30 and 31 to 40. The age ranges have been created for ease of analysis and to bring out differences and similarities in opinions among college going individuals, working population and teenagers. Similarly for gender, I have included three categories- male, female and other to analyse if perceptions on body image differ. I have excel software to analyse data and generate graphs.

## 3. Analysis

In this section the results of the analysis are presented and discussed question-wise as follows:

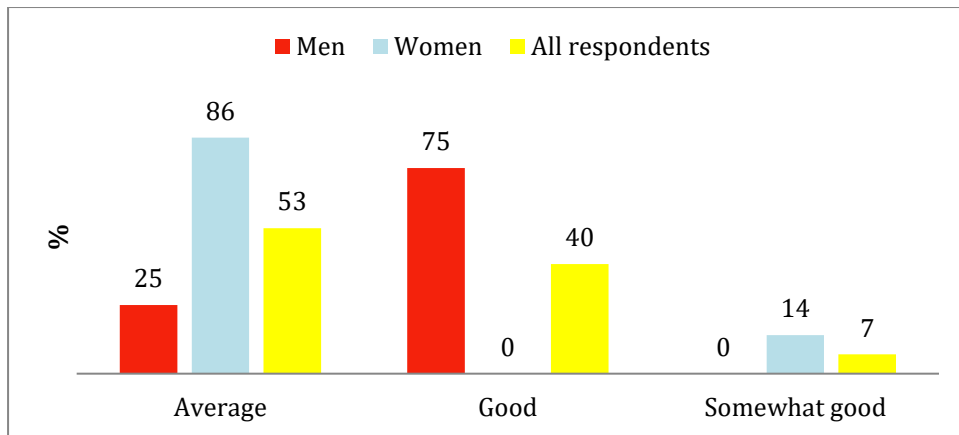
1. How good do you feel about your body?

In this study 86% of women felt that their self body image was perceived to be average and only 14%of women felt that their body image was somewhat good.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.psychalive.org/what-is-body-image/>

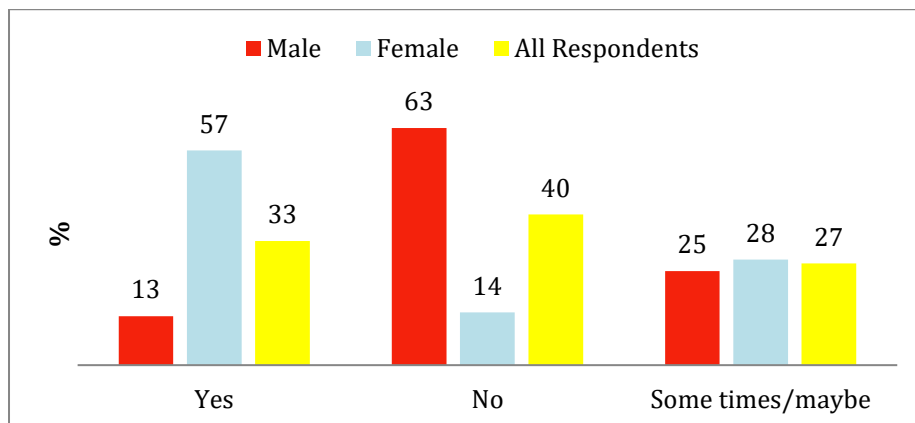
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/body-image>



This is in stark contrast to men where 75% felt good about their body. **None** of the women respondents felt good about their body. Overall on an average only 40% of the respondents felt good about their body.

2. Do you feel pressurised to maintain a certain "ideal body image"?

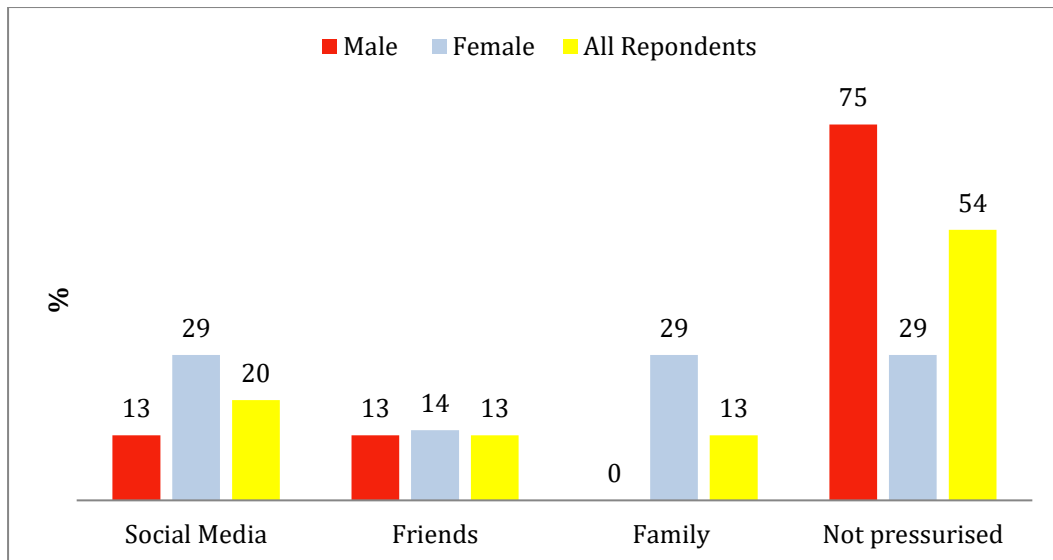
A vast majority of women (57%) felt pressurised to maintain a certain "ideal body image" where as only 13% of the male respondents were pressurised.



On an average, 33% of the respondents reported that they felt pressurised to maintain a certain body image. This indicates that on an average, women are generally pressured more than men.

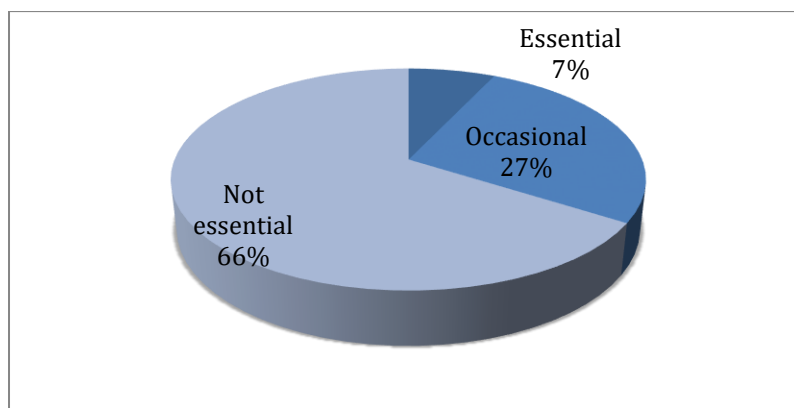
3. If yes, which of the following influences you the most to maintain or aspire to have an ideal body image?

A large proportion number of men did not experience pressure to have or maintain an ideal body image standard (75%). Social media was the major cause that pressurised women to aspire to have a certain body type. Surprisingly, family was also a cause for women (29%) to have an ideal body type. None of the men felt pressurised by their family. A small percentage of were pressurised by their friends and social media both being 13%.



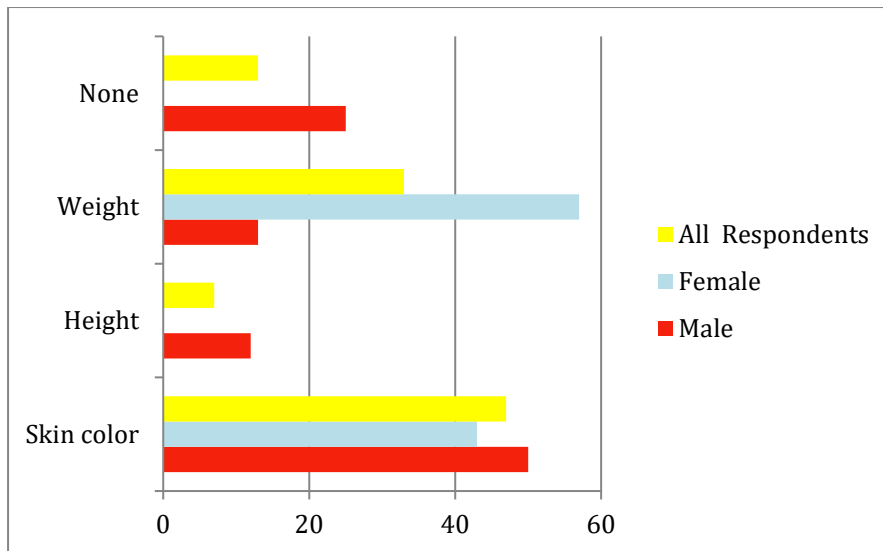
4. How essential is it for you to maintain a certain body image to fit in among your friends?

With reference to this question, a majority of respondents had an accepting social circle (66%). 27% of the respondents occasionally felt the need to maintain a certain body image to fit in among their friends. 7 % felt that it was absolutely essential to have a certain body image to fit in.



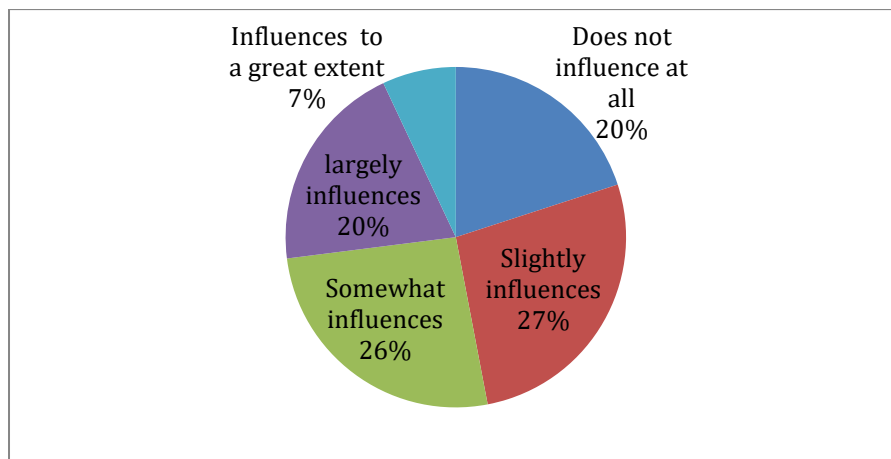
5. In your opinion, what is emphasised most in our Indian society with respect to maintaining an ideal body image?

Interestingly, 57% of women respondents emphasised on weight being the absolute standard in terms of maintaining an ideal body image whereas on the other hand, 50% of the male respondents felt skin colour (fairness) played a vital role in body image in our Indian society. This indicates women being more conscious about their weight whereas men being more conscious about the colour of their skin.



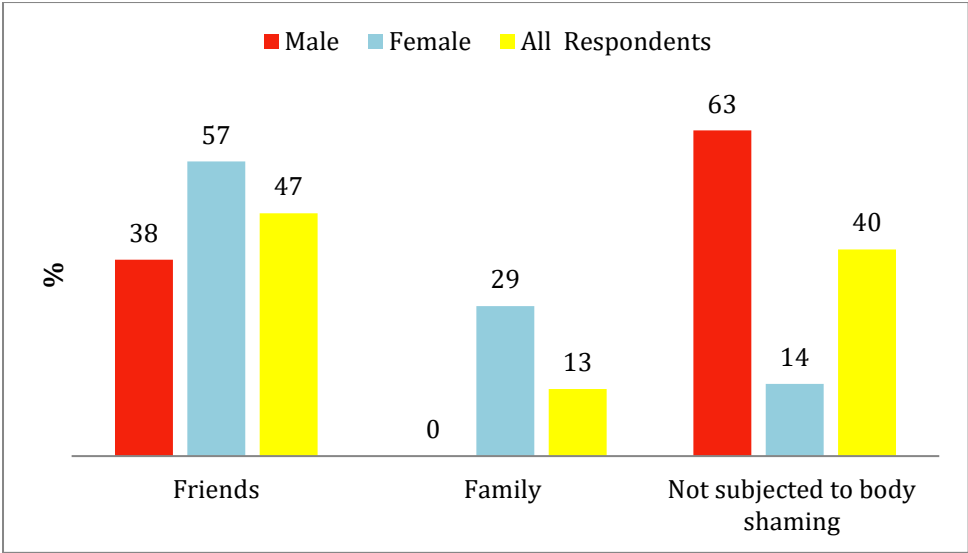
6. Rate the extent to which one's 'body image' influences professional success.

The pie chart below has mixed opinions regarding professional success and body image. About 26% of the respondents felt body image somewhat influences professional success whereas 20% of the respondents were certain body image influences professional success. The same also felt body image and professional success have no link. 27% felt that it has a slight influence whereas 7% felt it influences to a great extent.

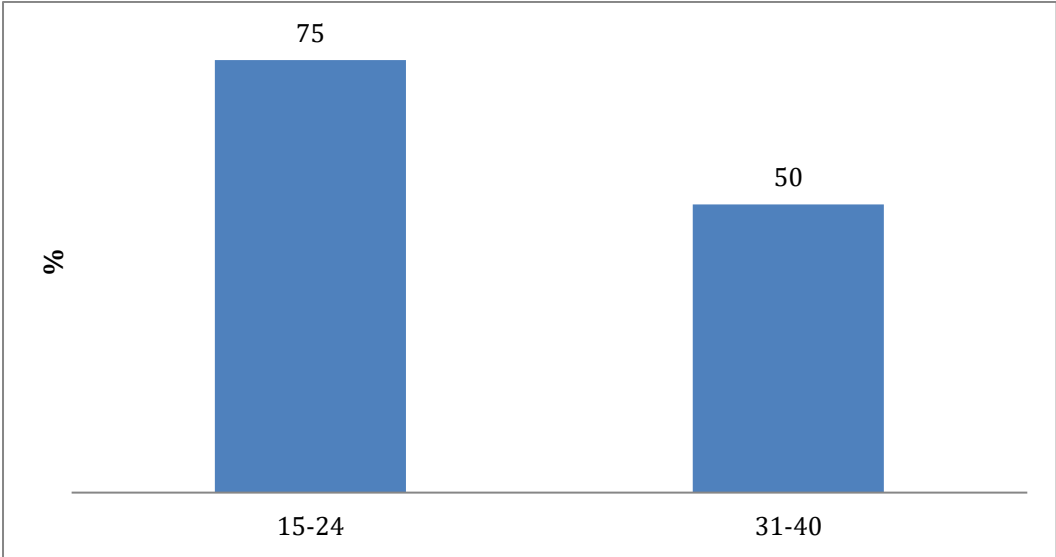


7. Have you ever been a subject to body shaming? If yes, which one of the following have done so the most?

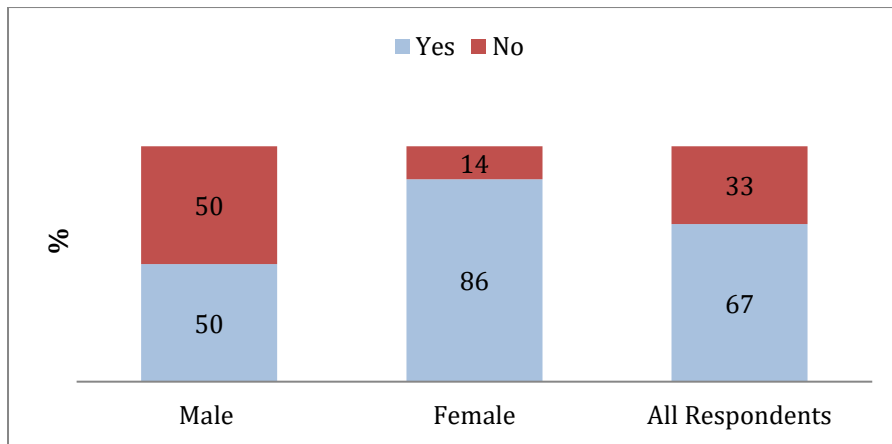
Among men, 63% have not been subjected to body shaming whereas 57% of women have been body shamed by their own friends. The percentage of men that have been body shamed by their friends is 38%. The percentage of women body shamed by their family is 29%. None of the male respondents have been body shamed by their family.



Younger individuals (15-24 years of age) face body shaming more than individuals in older age groups.



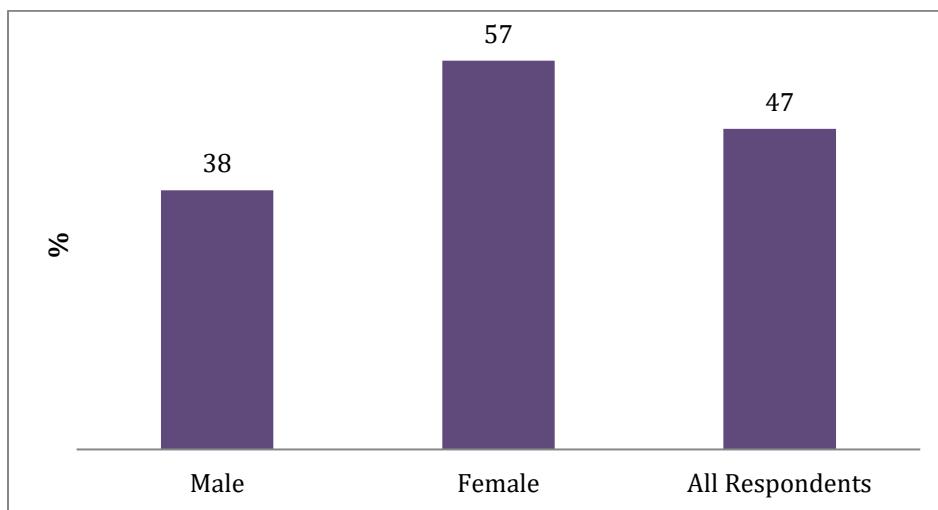
8. Have you ever taken steps to change or alter your body image (apart from medical reasons)?



Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported taking some steps to alter their body image. A higher percentage of women (86%) have reported taking steps to alter body image compared to 50% of male respondents.

9. To what extent do you think your appearance is important in how you evaluate your self-worth?

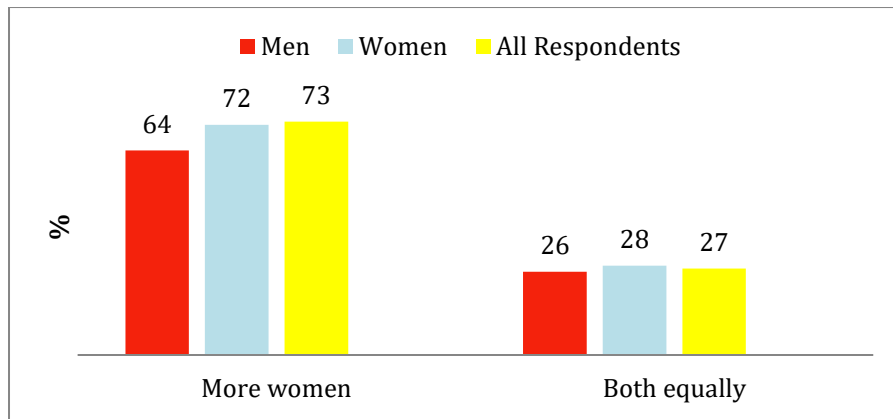
More women feel that their appearance impacts their self worth. Only 38% of men feel that appearance has an impact on selfworth. This could indicate that



women are more insecure about their body image compared to men.

10. In your opinion, who do you think is pressurised more to maintain an ideal body image?

Undoubtedly, a majority (73%) of all respondents feel that women are pressurised more to maintain an ideal body image. None of the respondents felt that only men are pressurised.



#### 4. Results and Suggestions

From this study, it is understood Body image issues tend to be present among both men and women. According to an article by psychology today, having a poor body image can affect a person in many ways, including performance in academics or in one's professional career, relationship satisfaction, and overall quality of life. Women in particular are pressurised to maintain an ideal body image and are also subjected to body shaming. It is appalling to learn through this study that 50% of men emphasized that skin colour is a significant factor in maintaining an ideal body image in our culture. It is no surprise we come across hundreds of beauty products that claim to enhance or lighten the colour of our skin. This itself is a beauty standard which is considered superior. Interestingly for women it is their weight which seems to be a beauty standard set to achieve in our society. So how can we alter these unattainable standards of body image?

- Through a systematic and consistent promotion of body positivity, particularly in Social media.
- Acceptance of ones own body – irrespective of shape, colour height needs to be inculcated through sessions in school organised by student's respective teachers.
- Body shaming in schools should be frowned upon and should have strict consequences along with disciplinary actions.
- Media including print and advertisements should not promote or endorse unattainable body standards.
- Products that endorse fairness should be criticized and condemned.
- Campaigns such as 'dark is beautiful' is a good start in questioning notions of beauty associated with fair skin and similar such campaigns should be designed and promoted with a wider reach

## 5. Bibliography

1. Mc Shirley, Collin. What is Body Image? EATING DISORDERS, SELF-ESTEEM. Available at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/body-image>, accessed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## 6. Annexure

Questionnaire<sup>2</sup>:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rlz2uY8CVPRFFy0TahjYaLCHKyawImU15nNDMfzM6pE/edit>

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<sup>2</sup> I have taken data from the first 15 responses