

# BodyKind

## YOUTH SURVEY

Your Body Image, Your Voice.



### 2022 SNAPSHOT | FOR EDUCATORS

## Overview

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Who participated?

**1635 responses**  
(12-18 years)

**48.1% Female**

**22% Male**

**3.5% Non-Binary**

**3.8% Other gender term**

**3.7% Aboriginal and/  
or Torres Strait Islander**

**28.5% LGBTQIA+\***

**All Australian states and  
territories represented**

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

## Snapshot of findings from key questions

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

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

Close to 1 in 3 reported being mostly or completely dissatisfied with how their body looks.

Body dissatisfaction was highest amongst those reporting their gender as anything other than male.

LGBTQIA+ youth reported high rates of body dissatisfaction (>40% mostly or completely dissatisfied), compared with 18.4% of heterosexual young people.

Body dissatisfaction experienced was highest for 14-year-olds (58%), and lowest for 12-year-olds (26%), followed by 18-year-olds (35.4%).

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

**90% of young people had some level of concern.**

Over 1 in 3 (38.3%) young people were very or extremely concerned about their body image.

Those reporting their gender as anything other than male reported a high level of concern about their body image (>40% very or extremely concerned).

LGBTQIA+ youth reported high level of body image concern (>40% mostly or completely dissatisfied), compared with 16.7% of heterosexual young people.

12-year-olds were the least concerned about their body image, while 13-year-olds and 16-year-olds were most concerned (with 45.4% and 42.4%, respectively, reporting a high level of concern).

### Are young people being kind to their bodies?

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

**BUT:**

Most reported often or always valuing other people for who they are rather than how they look.

Nearly two thirds surround themselves with people who like them for who they are, rather than how they look.

71.8% said they avoided saying unkind things about other people's bodies or appearance.

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

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

A quarter reported never or rarely respecting their body.

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

### What are the body ideals of young people?

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

**63.7% of young people wished they were more muscular.**

Those who identified as female (69.4%), non-binary (73.1%) and those using a different gender term (76.7%) reported a significantly greater desire for thinness compared with males (36.4%).

72% of young people in the LGBTQIA+ community reported a desire to be thinner, compared with 52.9% of heterosexual youth.

Desire for thinness peaked at age 13, with 73% of 13-year-olds wanting to be thinner.

No significant differences for desire for muscularity were apparent across age and sexuality groups.

Desire for muscularity was high amongst all gender groups, but those identifying as non-binary (70.2%) and those who preferred a different gender term (72.6%) reported a greater desire to be more muscular.

### How do body image feelings impact young people?

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

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

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

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

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

There was a relationship between reporting body dissatisfaction as a result of social media use and also the desire to be thinner/leaner, to have

lower body appreciation and higher life disengagement.

The impact of social media on body dissatisfaction was less for 12-year-olds, males and heterosexual respondents.

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

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

### Are young people Being BodyKind Online?

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

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

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

**BUT:**

6 in 10 often or always commented kindly and honestly on friends' post, and followed pages and people that inspire them (that have nothing to do with appearance).

35.7% reported often or always taking action against appearance bullying and teasing, online.

**\* Being BodyKind online means practicing media literacy and self care strategies to support their own and other people's body image.**

Overall, 12-year-olds were least likely to be engaging in media literacy strategies to support their body image.\*

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

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

**72.5% reported that they experienced appearance-teasing at school.**

**Appearance-teasing was:**

Frequent across all ages, with 13-year-olds most frequently reporting ever have being teased (79%) and 18-year-olds the least frequently (57.7%)

Frequent across all genders, but was more frequently reported by young people using a different gender term (87.1%), those who identified as non-binary (79.3%) and females (70.3%), compared with males (54.6%)

Frequent across all sexualities but was more frequently reported by young people reporting their sexual identity as bisexual (84.5%), using a different term (82.1%), and gay/lesbian (74.1%), compared with heterosexual respondents (59.5%).

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

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

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

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

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

**Nearly 8 out of 10 agreed that:**

Those working in schools should be trained in how to support body image

More resources should be available for students struggling with body image

Schools need to do more to stop bullying and teasing around appearance.

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

Delivery by a person who has overcome their own body image concerns (44.4%)

Included in normal lessons as part of the curriculum (40.8%)

Delivered by other young people who have been trained (38.9%).




### How do young people want information about body image?


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

The other most frequently indicated responses were:


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

### What can 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.


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


 Consider the needs of gender diverse and LGBTQIA+ young people when implementing body image education and linking to support.


 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.

 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 based 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:

Butterfly Body Bright  
(Foundation - year 6)



Body Kind Schools  
(Year 5- Year 12)



Body Kind Families  
(Parents of teens 13+)



Butterfly Education  
Services



For more information or to access the full 2022 Body Kind Youth Survey Report

[www.butterfly.org.au/YouthSurveyFindings](http://www.butterfly.org.au/YouthSurveyFindings)

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Butterfly National Helpline  
[www.butterfly.org.au/helpline](http://www.butterfly.org.au/helpline)