

Huge numbers willing to go under knife to alter their appearance, study finds

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Most women, and large numbers of men, are interested in having cosmetic surgery, UCLA scientists report in the October issue of the *Journal of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*.

Forty-eight percent of women surveyed said they would be interested in cosmetic surgery, liposuction or both, and another 23 percent said they would possibly be interested.

Among men, 23 percent said they would be interested in surgery, with 17 percent expressing possible interest.

"Interest in cosmetic surgery is far more widespread than we had anticipated," said David Frederick, a UCLA psychology graduate student and lead author of the study. "The majority of women expressed some interest in cosmetic surgery, and more than one-third of men expressed some degree of interest, which I found really surprising. We know there is tremendous pressure for women to be thin and have a certain appearance and for men to be fit and muscular, but I would not have guessed that so many people would be interested in surgical body alteration."

In addition, 21 percent of women and 11 percent of men described themselves as unattractive, and 31 percent of women and 16 percent of men reported feeling so uncomfortable in a swimsuit that they avoid wearing one in public, Frederick and his colleagues reported.

"There is so much pressure, especially on women, to be thin and beautiful and to look younger," Frederick said. "Many people are willing to pay thousands of dollars to permanently alter their bodies surgically. The interest in cosmetic surgery is widespread across the full life span. Especially for women, there never seems to be a reprieve. Your appearance is judged to be an important part of who you are."

Frederick was surprised to find no relation between people's body image and their interest in cosmetic surgery — even those without a poor body image expressed interest in surgical alteration.

"This isn't about poor body image," Frederick said. "People interested in cosmetic surgery did not report less satisfaction with their body or face than people who are not interested. People interested in liposuction, however, did report lower body satisfaction, even when statistically controlling for body weight."

According to the American Association of Plastic Surgeons, nearly 11 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in 2006 — a 48 percent increase from 2000. Roughly 90 percent of cosmetic surgeries in 2004 were performed on women.

For the study, UCLA researchers analyzed the responses of more than 52,000 people — ranging in age from 18 to 65, with an average age in the mid-30s — to an online survey conducted by MSNBC.com and Elle.com in 2003.

Co-authors on the study were Janet Lever, professor of sociology at California State University, Los Angeles; and Letitia Anne Peplau, UCLA professor of psychology.

Source: UCLA

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