

More than skin deep: cosmetic surgery industry booming

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In the never-ending quest for youthful, magazine-cover looks, 8.6 billion euros (\$10.7 billion) were spent last year on materials and chemicals used in cosmetic procedures worldwide, the IMCAS industry body said Thursday.

This meant plastic surgeons and beauty practitioners spent about the equivalent of Costa Rica's total annual exports on the tools of their trade.

The data revealed "a strong dynamism for this sector in a difficult economic environment for several geographical areas," said a report released at the IMCAS beauty industry conference in Paris.

Spending on equipment and products used to nip, tuck, lift, and tighten grew more than eight percent from 2016, it showed.

The market should reach 9.3 billion euros in 2018, and is likely to more than double in the seven-year period from 2014 to 2021.

The report tracked sales of equipment such as lasers for "body contouring" or hair removal, pharmaceutical compounds, "active" cosmetics, fat-sucking devices, muscle-freezing toxins such as botox, wrinkle "fillers", and breast implants.

Impressive as they may seem, the amounts surgeons spend on these items is but a drop in the ocean of what clients fork out for beauty procedures.

According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), Americans alone spent more than \$15 billion on beauty procedures in 2016, an 11-percent rise from the previous year.

In a statement, ASAPS president Daniel Mills credited a healthier economy, technological innovations, and "a desire on the part of baby-boomers and their offspring to remain competitive in a youth-centric workforce."

Procedures to shift undesirable fat from areas such as the buttocks or belly to perk up breasts or plump up checks were among the most popular in America, the data showed.

Demand 'stronger than ever'

A form of cosmetic vaginal surgery called labiaplasty was one of the most sought-after procedures, growing 23 percent in the United States and 45 percent globally from 2015.

It involves trimming back the "inner lips" or labia minora flanking the vaginal opening, in the quest for a smooth, designer vagina.

"Vaginal rejuvenation is the new trend and the fastest growing [procedure](#) (labiaplasty)," International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) president Renato Saltz told AFP.

According to an ISAPS report on the year 2016, the latest period for which data is available, 23.6 million face- or body-boosting procedures were performed globally, nine percent more than in 2015.

Of these, 10.4 million required clients going under the knife, the rest were injections or non-invasive treatments.

"The demand for [cosmetic procedures](#) is stronger than ever," said Saltz.

The top five countries—the United States, Brazil, Japan, Italy, and Mexico—accounted for 41.4 percent of the world's cosmetic procedures, the ISAPS report said.

Breast augmentation remained the most popular surgical procedure in 2016, accounting for 15.8 percent of all beauty operations, followed by liposuction with 14 percent, eyelid surgery with 12.9 percent, and nose jobs with 7.6 percent.

Penis enlargement was the least popular cosmetic procedure in 2016, and the category with the biggest drop—28 percent.

"The most popular non-surgical procedures continue to be injectables, with Botulinum toxin (botox) ranking at number one at 4,627,752 procedures," said the ISAPS.

Led by China and India, Asia was the fastest-growing market, added IMCAS, and should overtake Europe for the first time in 2018 in terms of cosmetic industry spending.

The data showed that men made up almost 14 percent of clients overall, mainly seeking eyelid surgery, breast reductions, nose enhancements, liposuction, and hair transplants.

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