

Positive body image linked to better life satisfaction, research finds

September 5 2023



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Having more positive body image is strongly associated with better psychological well-being and life satisfaction, according to a new study led by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU).

Published in the journal *Body Image*, the research is one of the largest studies ever conducted on the topic of body image, involving 56,968 participants in 65 nations.

The research was focused on "body appreciation," defined as "accepting, holding favorable opinions toward, and respecting the body, while also rejecting media-promoted appearance ideals as the only form of human beauty."

Previous research has shown that high levels of body appreciation are linked to a range of positive well-being traits such as improved [self-esteem](#) and healthy eating habits, and negatively associated with issues such as depression and anxiety. However, few studies have assessed body appreciation across nations.

Led by researchers from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), a consortium of scientists asked participants in 65 nations to complete the Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2), which contains 10 items, including "I respect my body" and "I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body."

The study found that across nations, greater body appreciation was significantly associated with higher psychological well-being, as assessed using a measure of [life satisfaction](#). The researchers also found that body appreciation was higher in participants who were single (compared with being married or in a [committed relationship](#)) and those living in [rural areas](#).

The study also found large differences in body appreciation scores across the 65 survey nations. Only India and Australia scored lower for body appreciation than the U.K. Malta scored highest, followed by Taiwan and Bangladesh.

Viren Swami, Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and lead author of the study, said, "This is one of the largest studies on body image ever carried out, brought about by a collaborative research effort involving over 250 scientists across the world. Our finding that greater body appreciation is associated with better psychological well-being highlights the importance of developing ways to promote more positive body image globally.

"Also, people who live in [urban areas](#) may feel stronger pressure to conform to body ideals promoted by Western society, and it is also notable that people from countries considered culturally different to the United States appeared to have broadly greater body appreciation. People in rural areas may also benefit from being in nature, which past research has also shown to be linked with positive [body image](#).

"This research also highlights what can be achieved when scientists from across the world come together to achieve a common goal."

More information: Viren Swami et al, Body appreciation around the world: Measurement invariance of the Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2) across 65 nations, 40 languages, gender identities, and age, *Body Image* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2023.07.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2023.07.010)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

Citation: Positive body image linked to better life satisfaction, research finds (2023, September 5) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-positive-body-image-linked-life.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.