

Women prefer health and fitness, not perfection

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Credit: Yoann Boyer / unsplash.com

Images of fit, toned bodies on social media claim to provide fitness inspiration, but millions of photos tagged #fitspo could be having the opposite effect.

A new study by Flinders University has found that [women](#) who are exposed to campaigns encouraging functional fitness can have a positive impact on wellbeing and intent to [exercise](#), rather than viewing aspirational [body](#) images.

The paper, This Girl Can #Jointhemovement: Effectiveness of Physical Functionality-Focused Campaigns For Women's Body Satisfaction and Exercise Intent, has been published in the *Body Image* journal.

The research team, including Dr. Ivanka Prichard, Senior Lecturer, Health and Exercise Sciences at Flinders, tested the effectiveness of exposure to two functionality-focused media campaigns, This Girl Can and #jointhemovement, in improving satisfaction of their appearance and physical functionality, exercise intent, and protecting them against exposure to idealised imagery.

The study, which was also conducted with the

University of the Sunshine Coast and Melbourne's Burnet Institute, found that viewing either campaign produced higher appearance satisfaction and exercise intentions than the control video with idealised fitness imagery.

The researchers found that viewing idealised imagery of female bodies – the kind of perfectly toned bodies that are often tagged #fitspo on [social media](#) – did not maintain the same effect.

Additionally, the two campaigns with focused on functionality did not stop women comparing themselves to the more idealised or #fitspo style images.

"These results can inform agencies about [campaign](#) effectiveness and suggest that women benefit from campaigns that feature non-idealised depictions of women exercising," Dr. Prichard says.

The study supports previous research by Dr. Prichard, published in September 2017. The Impact of Different Forms of #fitspiration Imagery on Body Image, Mood, and Self-Objectification among Young Women, appeared in *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research*, and found that [body satisfaction](#) decreased and negative mood increased over time following exposure to fitspiration images, highlighting the potential negative consequences of engaging with fitspiration media.

More information: Ivanka Prichard et al. The Impact of Different Forms of #fitspiration Imagery on Body Image, Mood, and Self-Objectification among Young Women, *Sex Roles* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s11199-017-0830-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0830-3)

Kate E. Mulgrew et al. This girl can #jointhemovement : Effectiveness of physical functionality-focused campaigns for women's body satisfaction and exercise intent, *Body Image* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.11.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.11.007)

Provided by Flinders University

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