

Motherhood can deliver body image boost—new study

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/Public Domain

New research indicates that perfectionism is related to breast size dissatisfaction, but only in non-mothers—suggesting that mothers are

more comfortable with their bodies.

The study, carried out by Professor Viren Swami of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and academics from Sapienza University of Rome, has been published in the journal *Body Image*.

Of the 484 Italian [women](#) surveyed, 69% reported breast size dissatisfaction with 44% wanting larger breasts. These findings are similar to a previous study carried out by Professor Swami focusing on women in the UK.

Perfectionistic self-presentation—the desire to create an image of flawlessness in the eyes of other people—is known to contribute towards negative [body](#) image.

The study found that breast size dissatisfaction was associated with higher levels of two of the three factors behind perfectionistic self-presentation (non-display of imperfection and perfectionistic self-promotion).

However, this association was not found among the 54% of women surveyed who were mothers. This was particularly the case among women who had more than one child.

Viren Swami, Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University, said: "Our findings suggest that motherhood may help to decouple the link between perfectionistic self-presentation and breast size dissatisfaction.

"There are a number of potential reasons why the association between perfectionistic [self-presentation](#) and breast size [dissatisfaction](#) was significant only amongst non-mothers. There is the fact that becoming a mother naturally results in changes to the appearance of the breasts,

particularly in terms of their size.

"But perhaps the most relevant is that becoming a mother—and particularly the experience of breastfeeding—may focus women's attention on [breast](#) functionality as opposed to focusing on the aesthetics of breasts and the body."

More information: Caterina Lombardo et al, Motherhood status moderates the relationship between perfectionistic self-presentation and breast size dissatisfaction, *Body Image* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.05.005](#)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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