

The Scottish Women's Convention

Unfiltered: Women, Body Image and the Illusion of Perfection 2026

A woman's perception of her body can strongly influence her self-worth, mental health, confidence, and overall wellbeing. In recent years, body image has become a more prominent topic due to factors such as social media, celebrity influence, peer pressure, and evolving beauty standards. Understanding how women view their bodies is important for identifying issues related to self-esteem, health behaviours, and social pressures.

The following infographic analyses the results of a survey conducted following our recent conference Unfiltered: Women, Body Image and the Illusion of Perfection, to help capture views from a wider demographic. The survey explored how women feel about their appearance, what influences these views, and how their relationship with their bodies affects their confidence and daily lives. By examining the responses, our findings identify several key trends, concerns, and influences, highlighting areas where greater awareness, education, or support may be needed.

THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION (SWC)

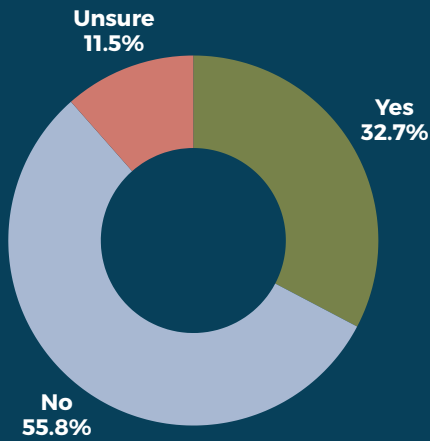
The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

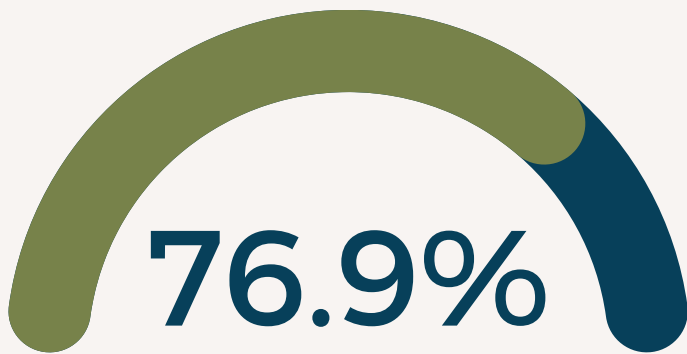


Survey Results

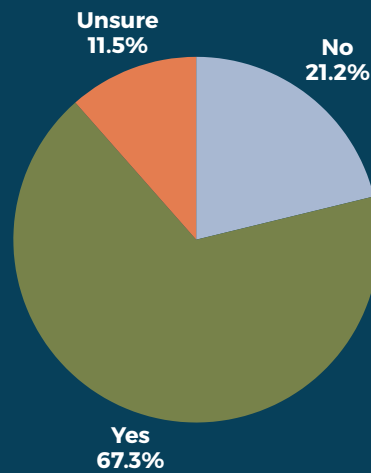
Do you feel comfortable with your body as it is right now?



Over 98% of respondents reported that they feel pressure from the media, advertising or other sources to change how their body looks

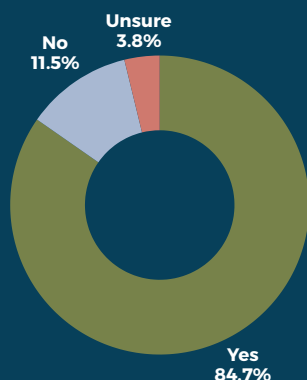


of respondents often compare their body to that of other women.



Does your body image affect your mental and emotional wellbeing?

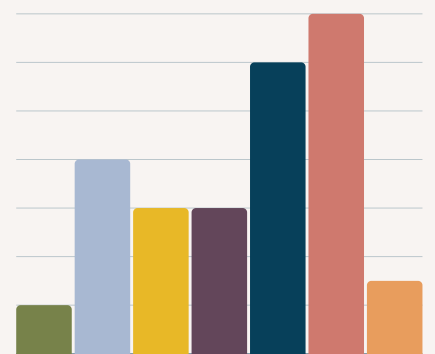
Women need to build each other up rather than strip each other down to make ourselves feel better.



Do you think that poverty, access to healthy food, or women's safe spaces for exercise can affect body image?

AGE

- 18-24
- 25-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 76+



Women's Experiences

Too heavy.

Too fat.

I have never felt comfortable with my body.

What women told us when asked about how they feel about their bodies...

After childbirth my tummy has refused to go down.

I'm ageing and conflicted - I want to embrace it but feel pressure to 'beat' it.

On social media and education...

Given social media is one of the primary perpetuates of poor body image, it should take a role and responsibility in what is being shared. The same goes for schools as this is the age at which adolescents are most impressionable regarding their body image.

They should focus less on body image and more on health, nutrition and movement. When your body works well and does what you need it to do, I think healthier attitudes will follow.

You can't go on social media without being targeted.

It is everyone's responsibility to promote healthy attitudes.

Women's Experiences

On body image and younger women...

Stop the expectation and acceptance about commenting on women's bodies staring at a young age.

Body dismorphia starts in early years.

From a young age we are bombarded with women with perfect bodies and lives.

I feel for young women today who feel they have to live up to stereotypes.

On unrealistic beauty standards...

People have been programmed to think everyone should be a Barbie.

Most advertising shows women with ideal figures rather than the reality of how we all look.

If we normalised conversations around food, body image, and balance from a young age, it could help create a much healthier mindset and relationship with food over time.

Media continually focus on women's looks, body size & have made an unachievable standard for everyday women.

I feel my body doesn't fit with what's wanted & what's perceived as accept[able].

We are constantly told that you are only pretty, beautiful and valued if you're a size 8!

Women's Experiences

On body image and women's health...

I have diabetes and I've gained weight which I can't get rid of. I also have mobility issues and I'm worried that I use my disability to get my own approval for being overweight.

I recently put on weight and don't feel as confident in my body. I also have psoriasis and when it flares up I am self conscious about what I wear.

I was slim all my life and now I hate my post menopausal weight.

I believe that if I lost excess weight and look more like them I would be happier.

Living in poverty puts barriers in the way of women looking after themselves physically and emotionally.

I was an anorexic bulimic when I was young.

I have put on lots of weight on my tummy, hips and legs which is all connected to a heart issue and lymphoedema.

Having previously suffered from bulimia, body image has definitely affected my mental wellbeing, however since going through therapy this is much less the case today.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing...

Every day I look at myself in the mirror & see a tired, middle aged woman looking back at me & feel like a failure.

If I don't feel good on the outside then I don't feel good on the inside.

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THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of the women who provided their invaluable insight into their experiences. We are forever grateful for the sustained engagement women give to our organisation, and we will continue to utilise the information given to inform Scottish policy-making practice.

SWC Contact Details

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