

Most Australians think they're fat

By Lisa Bjorksten

March 07, 2007 06:00am

Article from:



AN overwhelming majority of Australians see themselves as overweight and say the way body image is portrayed in the media has a significant impact on the way they see themselves.

Almost all Australians would change at least something about their body if given a chance, and more than one in five said they would have surgery to improve their body, a survey has found.

The body image survey conducted by CoreData for *NEWS.com.au* in association with three2seven.com is the first of its kind to discover how Australians feel about their bodies.

The findings are based on answers from more than 5500 people who responded to a survey on *NEWS.com.au* in February.

Almost 70 per cent of respondents said they considered themselves overweight, yet the vast majority of people believe size 10 to be the ideal size for a woman of average height. Almost one in four men (24 per cent) said size 8 was the ideal size.

"This reflects the common thought that a lot of women wish they could drop a couple of dress sizes," said Kelly Smeeton, editor-in-chief of three2seven.com. "It concerns me that men voted for size 8 though - guys, it's about health and fitness, not the tape measure."

Three quarters of Australian women regard themselves as being at least a few kilos overweight, as opposed to 61 per cent of men.

The strongest impact of body images in the media is on females aged 19-30 years. Older respondents are less affected by media images.

Scarlett Johansson - a curvaceous size 10-12 - was voted by most respondents (37 per cent) as having the ideal body, while Victoria Beckham was regarded as far from ideal. "This isn't surprising considering Scarlett isn't skinny or overweight. She's accessible - a Hollywood superstar that we could actually be like," Smeeton said.

Almost 83 per cent of people not at their target weight weren't happy and 85 per cent of women believe they would be happier if they were a few kilos thinner.

Women are also more likely to compare their body with those of their peers, with a quarter of Australian women doing so "most of the time" and another 18 per cent doing so "all of the time".

A staggering 95 per cent of women want to change something about their body, with changing overall body weight (54 per cent) and reducing cellulite (44 per cent) the most common concerns. And 27 per cent of women would undergo surgery, such as liposuction, to reduce weight - and one in 10 men indicated they would do the same.

"That's an awful lot of people who want the quick fix and have given up on exercise and a healthy diet. I do understand that surgery may be the only option for some but there would be a lot of people in this 27 per cent who I believe are simply too lazy to make healthy lifestyle changes," Smeeton said.

But having a great body doesn't necessarily equate with sexiness, with 83 per cent of respondents saying attitude and confidence makes a person sexy.

Offer a cash incentive, however, and Australians change their tune: more than half of the male respondents said they would put on 15kg for \$50,000. 67 per cent of women said they would turn down the cash.



Image conscious ... Paris Hilton checks her appearance in the mirror of a Ferrari / AFP

Copyright 2007 News Limited. All times AEDT (GMT +11).