



This response was submitted to the call for evidence issued by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics' Working Party on Cosmetic procedures. Responses were gathered from 11 January to 18 March 2017. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

## Nuffield Council on Bioethics Cosmetic procedures: ethical issues - Girlguiding Response

### About Girlguiding

1. Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, with over 500,000 members. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good. We give them a space to have fun. We run Rainbows (5-7 years), Brownies (7-10 years), Guides (10-14 years) and The Senior Section (14-25 years). Registered Charity No 306016. [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)

### About Girlguiding's evidence

2. Girlguiding's submission focuses on evidence from our Girls' Attitudes Surveys - our annual research into the opinions of girls and young women throughout the UK aged 7-21- and the personal testimony of young members.
3. The Girls' Attitudes Survey canvasses the opinions of over 1,500 girls and young women aged 7 to 21, inside and outside guiding across the UK each year. We commission expert child research agency Childwise to conduct this survey. For more information and data see [www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes)

### Body Image Ideals

4. Over the six years of the Girls' Attitudes Survey, we have consistently found body confidence to be an important issue for girls and young women, and increasingly so as they get older - 17- to 21-year-olds are most affected by appearance pressures. In 2015 we explored their views on how the pressures they feel affect their behaviour, and found that low body confidence can lead to lower participation in education and leisure activities. Girls and young women face strong pressures to conform to body image ideals;
5. 53% of those aged 11 to 21 say that they feel pressure to do more exercise to get a thin body.
6. 48% of those aged 11 to 21 say that they feel pressure to go on a diet. Those aged 17 to 21 feel most pressure about dieting, with 56% saying this.
7. The 2014 Girls' Attitudes Survey found the same percentage of this age group had actually been on a diet, which may indicate a strong link between feeling pressure to diet and behaviour change. The figure for those aged 7 to 10 feeling pressure to diet is 15%.
8. What girls see in the media has a big influence on body image. 37% feel they should try to look more like the pictures of girls and women they see in the media, and



33% think they are more likely to be successful if they look like celebrities, rising to 43% among those aged 17 to 21.

9. 45% of girls sometimes feel ashamed of the way they look because they are not like girls and women in the media. The numbers who feel this way increase from 36% among those aged 11 to 16 to 52% of 17- to 21-year-olds.
10. 56% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 feel that they should spend a lot of time getting ready before they go out (on make-up, hair, clothes); this increases from 50% in the 11 to 16 age group to 62% for those aged 17 to 21. Just 27% disagrees.
11. 39% of those aged 11 to 21 often stop themselves taking part in fun activities because they are self-conscious about their appearance, and 30% take part less in the classroom/at work because they feel concerned about their appearance.
12. Among 7- to 10-year-olds, 16% agree that they think they are more likely to be successful if they look like celebrities, and 14% agree that they sometimes feel embarrassed about the way they look because they're not like the girls on TV.
13. Just 4% don't often do fun activities because they are worried about messing up their appearance or take part less in the classroom because they worry about how they look.

### Cosmetic Surgery

Research from the 2012 Girls' Attitudes Survey on cosmetic surgery found that:

14. The majority of girls were against the idea of having surgery to change the way they look - 61% of girls aged 11 to 21 said they would never consider this.
15. 32% of girls said they would be willing to consider some form of surgery to change their appearance.
16. Breast enhancement and cosmetic surgery were the procedures that girls were most willing to consider - one in six 11- to 21-year-olds were receptive towards either of these (16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively), with numbers rising to 19% among those aged 16 or over.
17. 8% of girls said they would think about trying Botox or having a gastric band or weight-loss surgery (7%) - unlike other procedures which become more popular with age, these are more likely to be favoured by girls aged 11 to 16.