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RESULTS REPORT

BETWEEN HEALTHINESS AND THE CULT OF PHYSIQUE

The Impact of Fitfluencers' Content
on Adolescents' Body Care, from
TEEN_ONFIT, 2024

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Project Overview

This report presents the findings of the research project **“Between Healthiness and the Cult of Physique: The Impact of Fitfluencers’ Content on Adolescents’ Body Care”**, known as TEEN_ONFIT. The project is funded by the Institute of Research, Transfer, and Innovation (ITel) of the Vice-rectorate of Transfer at the International University of La Rioja (UNIR), under reference number BE23-008. Additionally, it has received support from the PantallasAmigas association.

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Foreword

In today's digital society, platforms have profoundly transformed the way we communicate, interact, and perceive ourselves. For adolescents and young people, these environments for socialization and consumption of informative and audiovisual content occupy an increasingly significant space in their lives. However, the effect of social networks on the self-esteem and emotional well-being of young people aged 12 to 17 is a topic of growing concern and debate. With the emergence of influencers nearly a decade ago, who have a significant impact on their followers, it is essential to analyze the consequences of these figures on youth.

The "Digital FIT" report, conducted by the International University of La Rioja (UNIR) in collaboration with the MAPFRE Foundation in 2023, highlighted the influence of social networks on the diet and physical appearance of minors. Nearly 45% of respondents reported receiving advertisements for unhealthy foods. The report also revealed that 50% of minors believed that having a good physique contributes to greater social acceptance. Furthermore, 63% stated that they felt quite or very satisfied with their body and physical appearance, while 12% expressed frustration or anxiety about not being able to achieve the image projected by influencers.

In response to these concerns, Spain has taken significant steps. In July 2022, the new General Law of Audiovisual Communication came into force, which includes regulations on the practice and role of influencers who exert notable social influence through digital platforms. Subsequently, in May 2024, a Royal Decree established the requirements for being considered a user of special relevance in video-sharing services on digital platforms, specifically targeting communities with millions of followers. These regulations aim to mitigate the risks associated with the content consumed by adolescents and promote a safer, more responsible, and healthier digital environment. The law also establishes clear criteria for advertising and sponsored content to prevent the exploitation and indirect manipulation of this vulnerable group, which is particularly sensitive to persuasive messages in the digital environment.

On the other hand, under the recent European Digital Services Regulation (Digital Services Act), all online platforms will be required to comply with a series of measures to combat disinformation and provide transparency reports. Additionally, 19 technology conglomerates, including Meta, Google, X, and Amazon, must implement complementary measures by legal mandate. For example, they will be responsible for societal risks, particularly those related to mental, physical, and public health.

These companies must undergo external audits and appoint a person responsible for ensuring compliance in managing these risks. Failure to comply could result in fines of up to 6% of their global income and a temporary block within the European Union. Furthermore, companies must reveal their algorithms and explain in detail how their recommendation systems work.

In this context, the present report, **“Between Healthiness and the Cult of Physique: Incidence of Content Published by Fitfluencers on the Body Care of Adolescents (TEEN_ONFIT),”** focuses on exploring youth perceptions of body image. It addresses the dichotomy between a healthy body and an aesthetically attractive one, as well as the self-assessment of their own bodies and the influences on these perceptions. Additionally, it examines how young people use social networks and digital platforms, and how these media affect their self-perception of physical appearance and social success. The influence of close environments, including family and peers, and digital platforms on youth body image is highlighted, emphasizing the pressure from these sources. Finally, the impact of influencers on the perception of youthful physical appearance is investigated, considering aspects such as perceived confidence, expertise (knowledge), attraction, and the influence of fitness influencers on this population.

At PantallasAmigas, we applaud and support these types of initiatives that help us understand a reality on which we can design strategies to promote healthier and more positive engagement with content related to physical health. These strategies also inevitably affect the balance and emotional well-being of future generations.

Jorge Flores Fernández
Director of PantallasAmigas

Introduction

Currently, the influence exerted by social networks and the so-called **“fitinfluencers”**—influencers specialized in fitness and health—on adolescents and young people has sparked growing interest and concern. The omnipresence of these platforms in daily life can reconfigure perceptions of body image, health, and habits linked to well-being (Sádaba, 2024). In this context, it is essential to explore the impact that consuming content generated by these profiles, with their large followings, has on the perceptions, motivations, and behaviors of adolescents, particularly regarding body care and nutrition (Feijoo et al., 2023).

The widespread use of the Internet among the youth population is notable both globally and in specific contexts such as Spain. With penetration rates of 94.5% among young people aged 16 and older (INE, 2023), mobile phones have become the primary gateway to the Internet and social networks (IAB Spain, 2023). The daily consumption of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitch has allowed fitinfluencers to exert significant influence on the self-image and physical well-being of the youth population, one of the segments most susceptible to persuasive messages.

This situation is further evidenced by the market value of influencer marketing, which has experienced exponential growth in recent years, reaching a global figure of over 19.8 billion US dollars in 2024, with a forecast of 22.2 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2024). In Spain, despite a decrease in overall advertising spending in 2021, influencer marketing and native advertising have been the fastest-growing advertising categories, with an investment of 63.9 million euros in the latest Infoadex report (2023). This trend highlights the continuous and growing relevance of influencers in the daily lives of adolescents.

While the content generated by fitinfluencers can provide certain benefits, such as motivation to adopt a more active and healthy lifestyle, existing research suggests that it can also have detrimental effects on the self-image and well-being of young people (Cataldo et al., 2021). For example, it has been shown that “fitspiration” content can increase body dissatisfaction and foster unrealistic ideals about beauty and physical perfection (Bell et al., 2024; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018).

Additionally, adolescents are especially susceptible to the influence of peers and authority figures regarding their body image and health-related habits (Lindvall-Dahlgren et al., 2024). In this context, it is crucial to investigate the repercussions that content created by fitinfluencers can have on adolescents.

While previous research has analyzed the negative effects of such messages, there is also evidence to suggest that it can inspire positive movements and behaviors (Cohen et al., 2021), such as motivating adolescents to adopt healthier and less stereotyped habits (Bandura, 2001). Consequently, beyond merely assessing the impact, it is important to delve deeper into the nature of these effects and their correlation with the motivations and perceptions of the youth population.

This report presents the initial findings regarding the **incidence and motivations of adolescents** in their consumption of content published by fitinfluencers. It highlights aspects of self-perception of what constitutes a healthy and aesthetic body, the impact of media and social networks on the perception of physical appearance and its consequent social success, and the pressure from peers, family, and friends. It also examines the gratifications adolescents seek by following these personalities, based on attributes such as trust, honesty, reliability, sincerity, and knowledge, as well as the attractiveness, elegance, and charm projected in their content. This approach aims to understand the imaginary that young people develop in relation to body care, physical exercise, nutrition, and health, influenced by the often-sponsored discourse of fitinfluencers.

Goals

The **TEEN_ONFIT** project aims to investigate the complex relationships between health, body aesthetics, and the use of content platforms and social networks among young people. The objective is to understand how these interactions influence young people's perceptions and behaviors regarding their physical appearance and general well-being, and how digital platforms, particularly the actions of fitinfluencers, shape their concept of self-image, beauty, and social success.

In this context, we examine how social pressure, both from the immediate environment and social networks, impacts the way young Spaniards perceive and worry about their body image. A key aspect of this report focuses on evaluating the role and presence of fitinfluencers in their daily lives and their ability to influence the attitudes and health habits of the youth population.

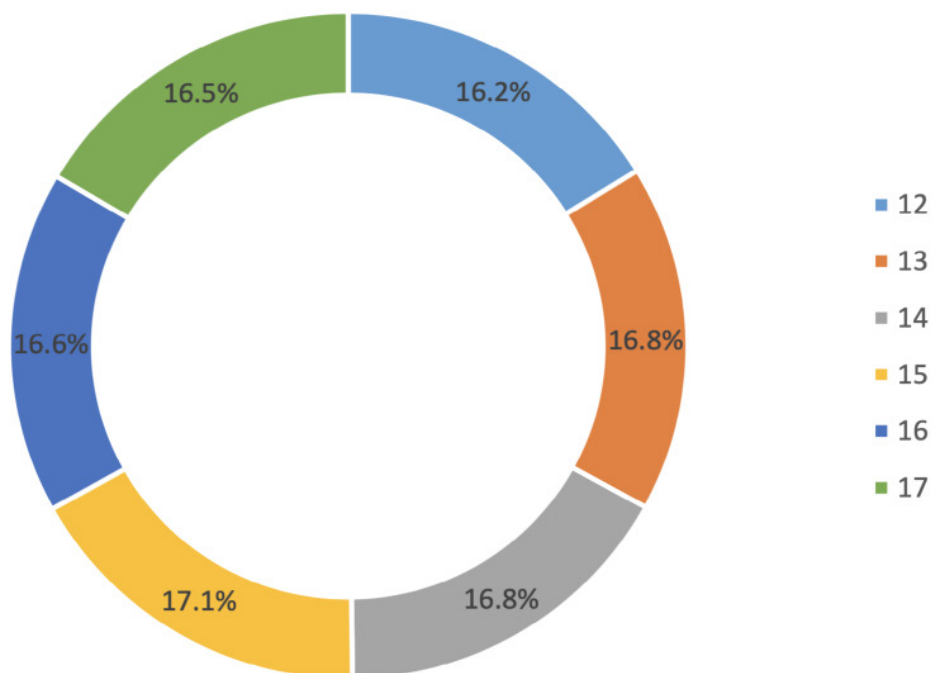
This preliminary report provides insights into **how young people process the information and images projected** by these digital fitness influencers and how they respond to their messages and content. It introduces data that helps outline future directions for creating a healthier digital environment during adolescence.

Methodology

An empirical study with a quantitative approach was conducted through the administration of a questionnaire to adolescents across Spain. This report presents the main descriptive results collected between February and May 2024.

The research involved 1,082 **minors aged 12 to 17** residing in Spain. The sampling procedure was multistage and stratified with proportional allocation. The first stratum comprised four geographic zones added ad hoc (following the classification of NUTS zones used by the EU), while the second level of stratification was based on the socioeconomic status of the families (low, medium, and high).

The final selection of individuals was conducted using cross-gender and age quotas, resulting in 49.6% boys and 50.4% girls¹. A balanced representation of ages was also achieved, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.



¹ The "other" category in the gender variable was also considered, but it did not receive any responses.

1 Youth Perceptions About a Healthy and Aesthetic Body

1.1 Healthy Body vs. Aesthetic Body

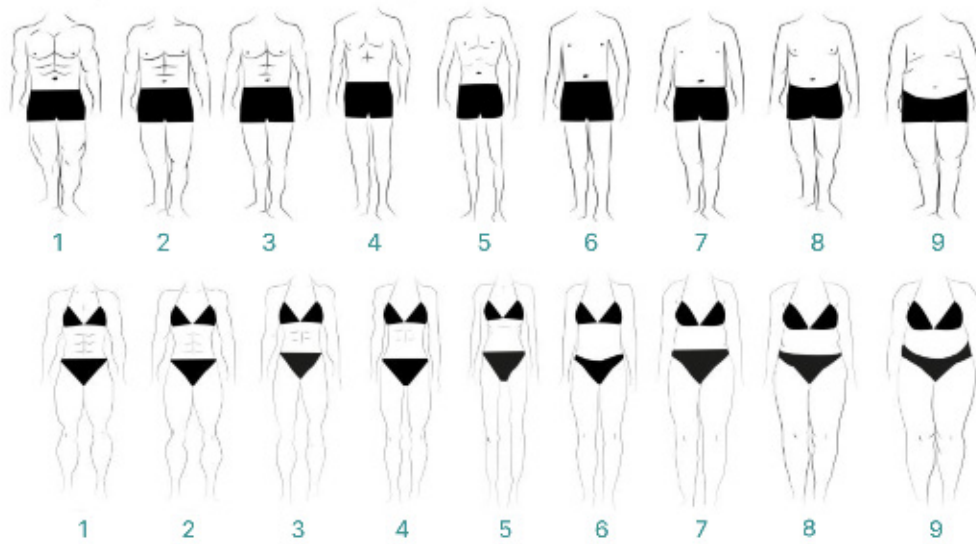
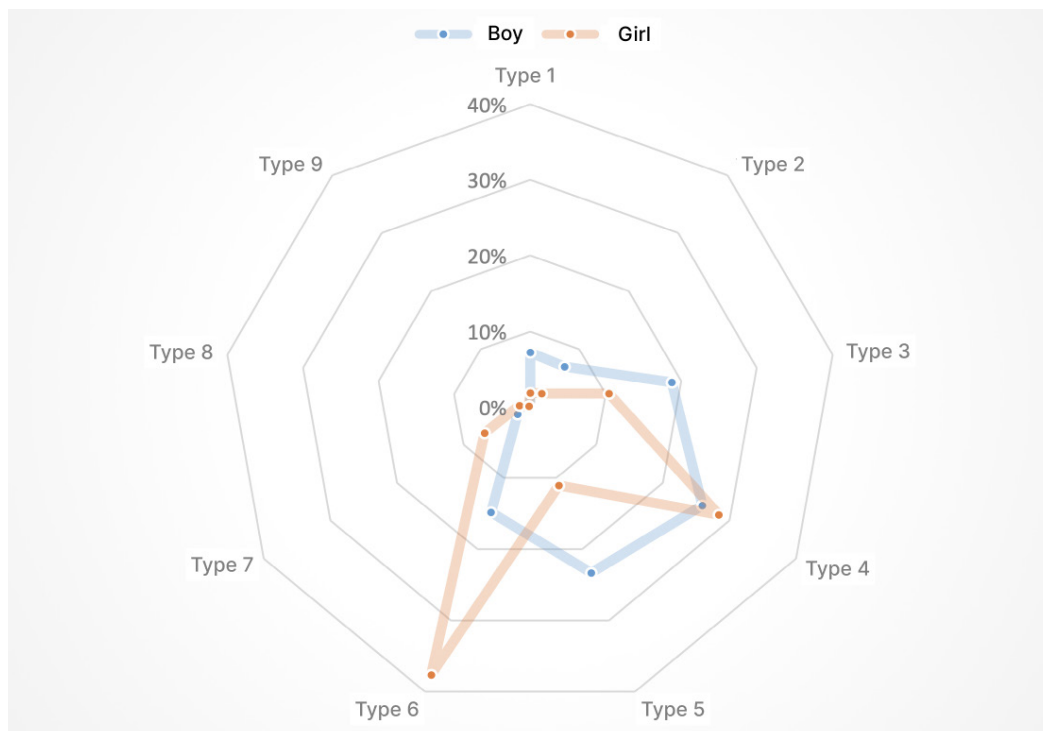


Figure 1. Which image do you think best represents a healthy body?



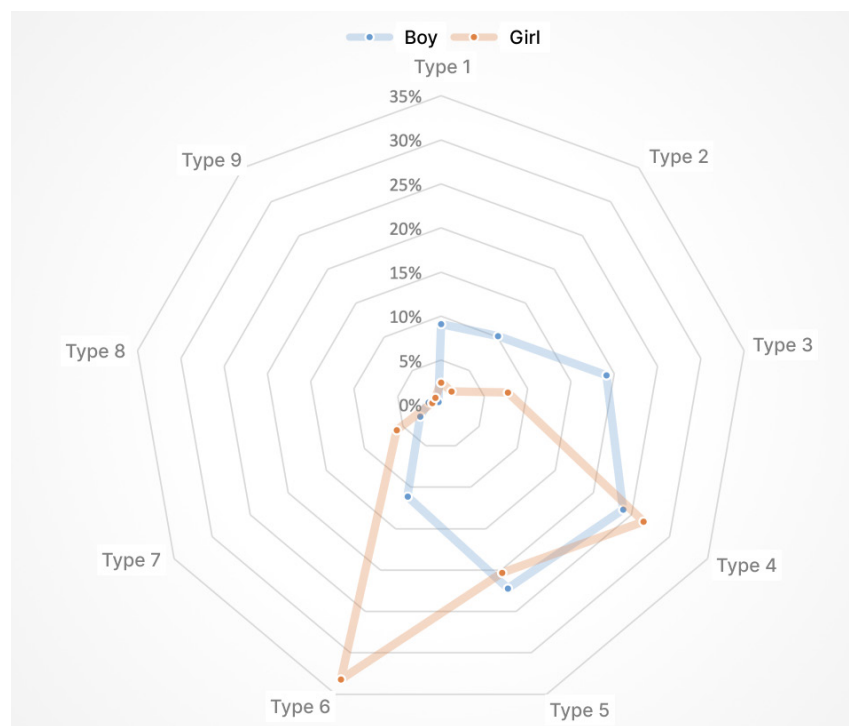
Healthy Body vs. Aesthetic Body

The idea of what constitutes a **healthy or aesthetic body** can vary considerably among adolescents, reflecting their understanding of different silhouettes. This section analyzes their perceptions of these two criteria using a classification of nine different silhouettes, ranging from silhouette 1 (extremely toned figure) to silhouette 6 (standard figure) to silhouette 9 (obese figure).

Starting with the analysis of the healthy body, the data reveals notable differences between genders and typologies. In particular, silhouette 4 (toned/muscle body) and silhouette 6 (standard body) stand out. Silhouette 4 is the most selected model overall (27.1%) and is especially preferred by boys (25.9%). Silhouette 6, while more significant for girls (37.6%) than for boys (14.8%), also shows a generalized preference. This suggests that silhouettes ranging from toned and thin to standardized bodies (without notable body mass and fat) are primarily recognized by adolescents as indicative of health.

Additionally, the silhouette 3 figure (slightly more toned body) is also popular, with 18.7% of boys and 10.4% of girls selecting it. silhouettes 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 receive lower frequencies.

Figure 2. Which image do you think best represents an aesthetic body?



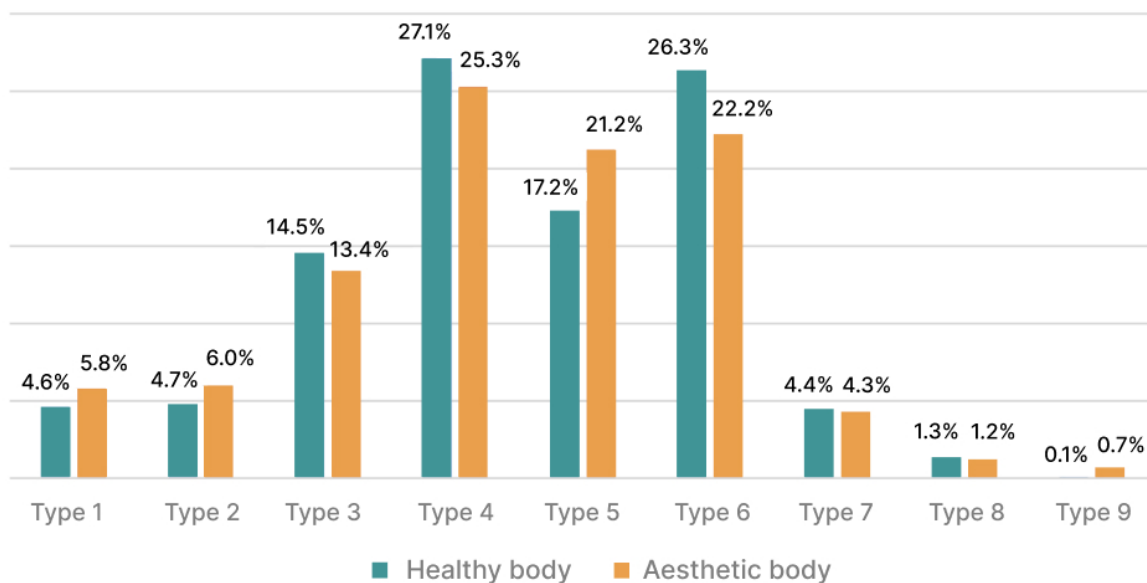
Healthy Body vs. Aesthetic Body

Regarding the perception of the aesthetic (“beautiful”) body, variations are observed compared to the healthy body. The data show that silhouette 4 (toned body) continues to be preferred among adolescents (25.3%). This expresses a common and significant conception of an ideal body that is slim and moderately toned.

Silhouette 6 (standard body) has a marked preference among girls (33.2%) in contrast to boys (11.1%). That is, girls understand the ideal of body beauty as a figure with muscle mass and slight body fat. On the other hand, boys indicate silhouette 3 (19.1%) as the preferred aesthetic body, which is much more muscular and toned.

Another relevant aesthetic figure is silhouette 5 (absolute thinness), with balanced percentages for both genders (22.2% in boys and 20.3% in girls). In contrast, silhouettes 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 are the least recognized. Characterized by extreme muscle toning, silhouettes 1 and 2 achieve a count of 6% in boys and 5.8% in girls. However, it is silhouettes 7, 8, and 9 that are perceived as least aesthetic (ranging from moderate overweight to obesity), with totals of 4.3%, 1.2%, and 0.7% respectively.

Figure 3. Comparison of healthy body vs. aesthetic body



1.2 Body Self-Assessment

Figure 4. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is your ideal healthy/aesthetic body, where would you place yours?

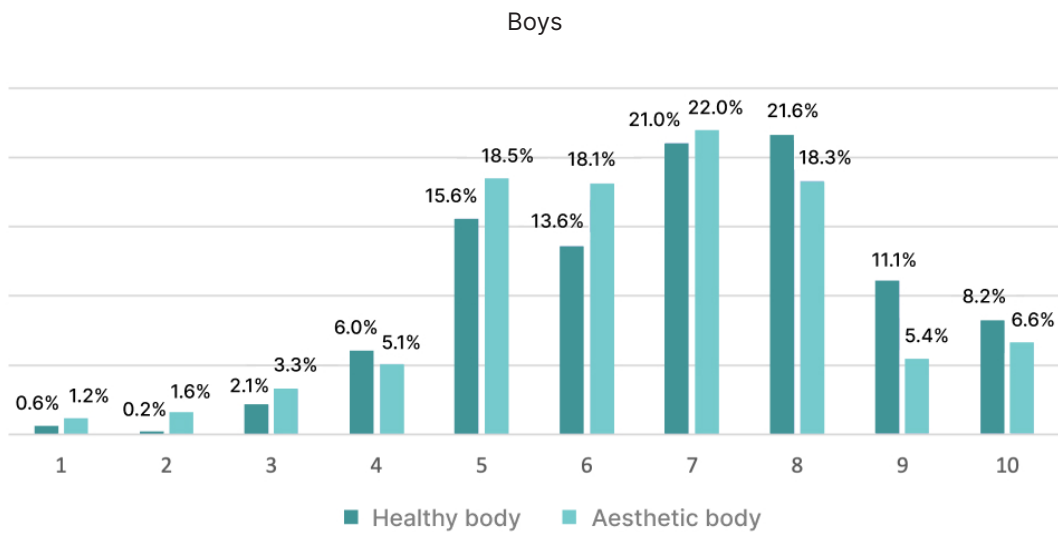
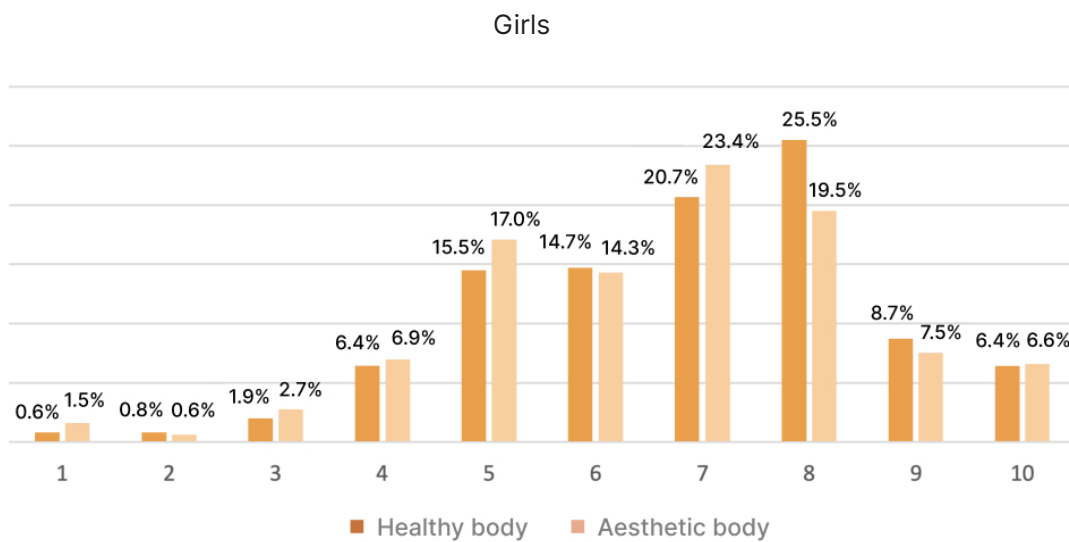


Figure 5. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is your ideal healthy/aesthetic body, where would you place yours?



Self-Perception

The **self-perception of adolescents** regarding a healthy and aesthetic body was also evaluated. Participants were asked to rate their bodies on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 represents the ideal of a healthy and aesthetically perfect body.

Looking first at the distribution of responses regarding a healthy body, there is a tendency towards medium and high scores, suggesting that, in general, adolescents have a positive perception of their body in terms of health. The most frequent ratings are in the range of 5 to 8, indicating moderate satisfaction and body well-being. Specifically, 23.5% of respondents rate their body an 8, followed by 20.8% who choose a 7, and 15% who choose a 5. The extreme ratings (1 and 10) are the least representative, indicating almost no positioning at the extremes.

Based on gender data, variations are observed between girls and boys. For example, a higher percentage of girls (25.5%) rate their body an 8 compared to boys (21.6%). This suggests a slightly more positive trend toward healthy body self-perception among girls. However, in the highest scores (9 and 10), boys reflect higher frequencies (11.1% compared to 8.7% for a score of 9; and 8.2% compared to 6.4% for a score of 10), indicating that boys, proportionally, are more satisfied with their bodily health.

In a similar vein, adolescents were asked to rate their bodies based on what they consider to be an ideal physical shape on an aesthetic level. Again, the distribution of responses was concentrated on the medium scale, with a notable peak at score 7 for both boys (22%) and girls (23.4%), indicating a moderately positive aesthetic self-perception. A much smaller proportion of respondents (6.5%), regardless of gender, gave themselves the highest ratings (values 9 and 10 on the scale).

On the other hand, 11.4% rated their body with the lowest scores (1 to 4). Although the answers are balanced, there is a slight tendency towards greater dissatisfaction among girls (11.8% compared to 11.1%).

The results of the evaluation show that the majority of adolescents have a positive perception of their body in both healthy and aesthetic terms, with a tendency towards medium and high scores in both dimensions. Although there is moderate general satisfaction, it is important to highlight that a significant proportion of adolescents do not give themselves the maximum score in their self-evaluation.

1.3. References for a Healthy and Aesthetic Body

Figure 6. Who do you look at most to understand what a healthy body looks like? Gender comparison.

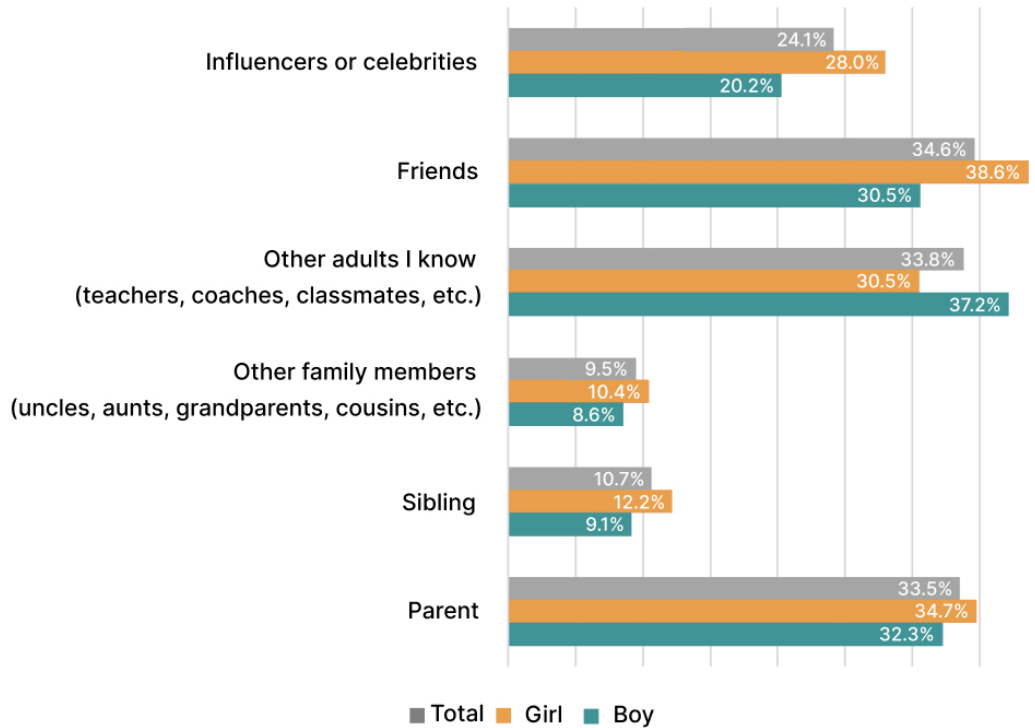
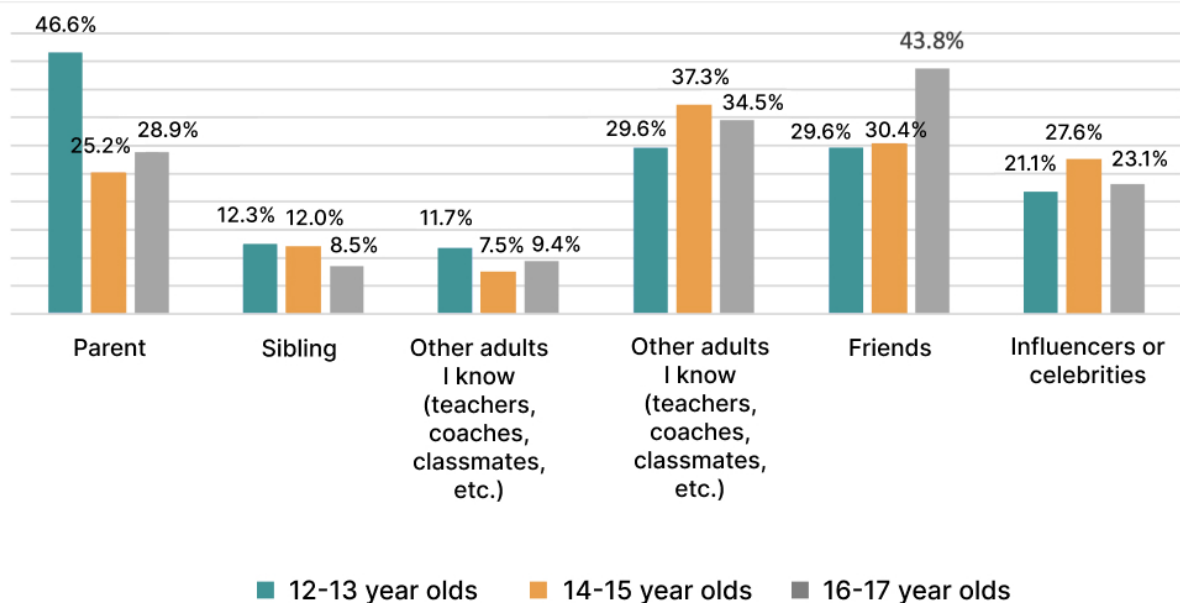


Figure 7. Who do you look at most to understand what a healthy body looks like? Age comparison.



Healthy Body References

Based on adolescents' self-perceptions of healthy body image, we analyzed the **influence** exerted by family members, friends, and public figures such as influencers or other celebrities.

Fathers and/or mothers are the most significant influence in the early years of adolescence, with a peak of 46.6% at age 12, decreasing to 28.9% at age 17. This suggests that parental influence decreases as young people seek role models outside the family unit.

In the same environment, although less influential than parents or guardians, brothers and/or sisters maintain a discrete impact that decreases with age, from 12.3% at ages 12-13 to 8.5% at ages 16-17. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, have a relatively low and constant influence, with an average of 9.5%. Additionally, other well-known adults, such as teachers or coaches, show an increase in their influence as young people grow, starting at 29.6% at ages 12-13 and reaching 37.3% at ages 14-15.

It is also relevant to pay attention to the influence of peers and public figures. Friends show a significant increase in their influence on healthy body perception, especially during late adolescence. This influence starts at 29.6% at ages 12-13 and rises to 43.8% at ages 16-17. Influencers and other celebrities maintain a relatively stable influence over the years, peaking at 27.6% at ages 14-15.

Regarding gender, a greater influence of these profiles on girls compared to boys is noted across all segments (fathers/mothers, siblings, other family members, friends, and influencers and celebrities), except for other adults, where there is a greater influence on boys (37.2%) than on girls (30.5%).

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Figure 8. Who do you look at most to understand what an aesthetic body is like? Gender comparison.

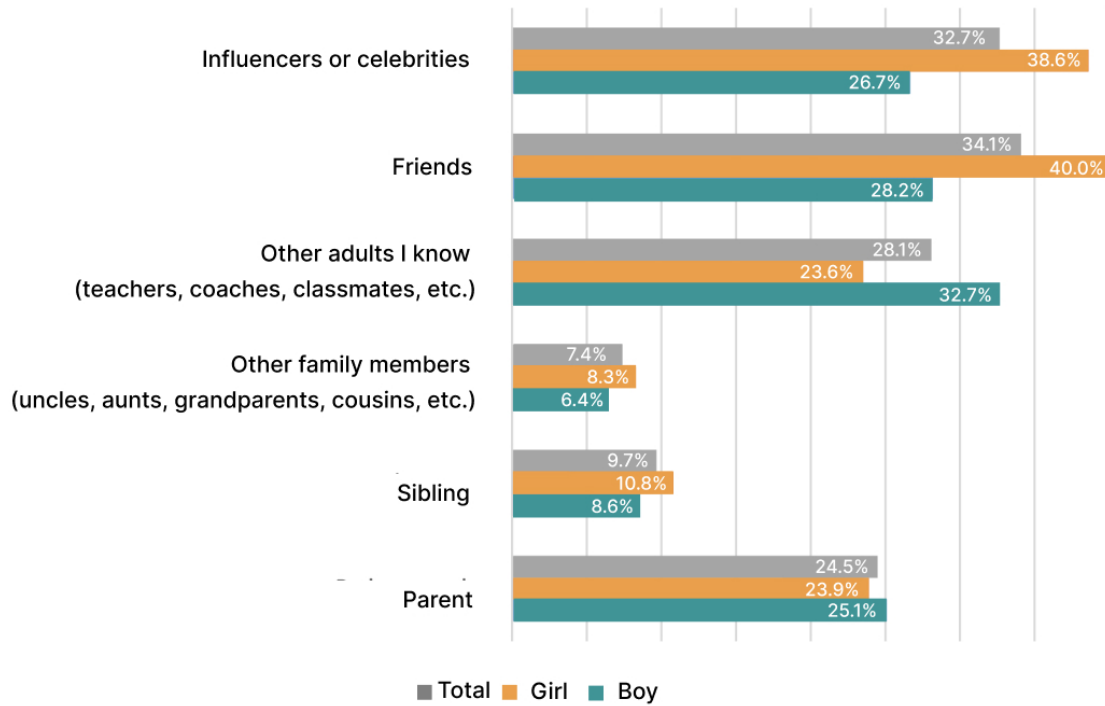
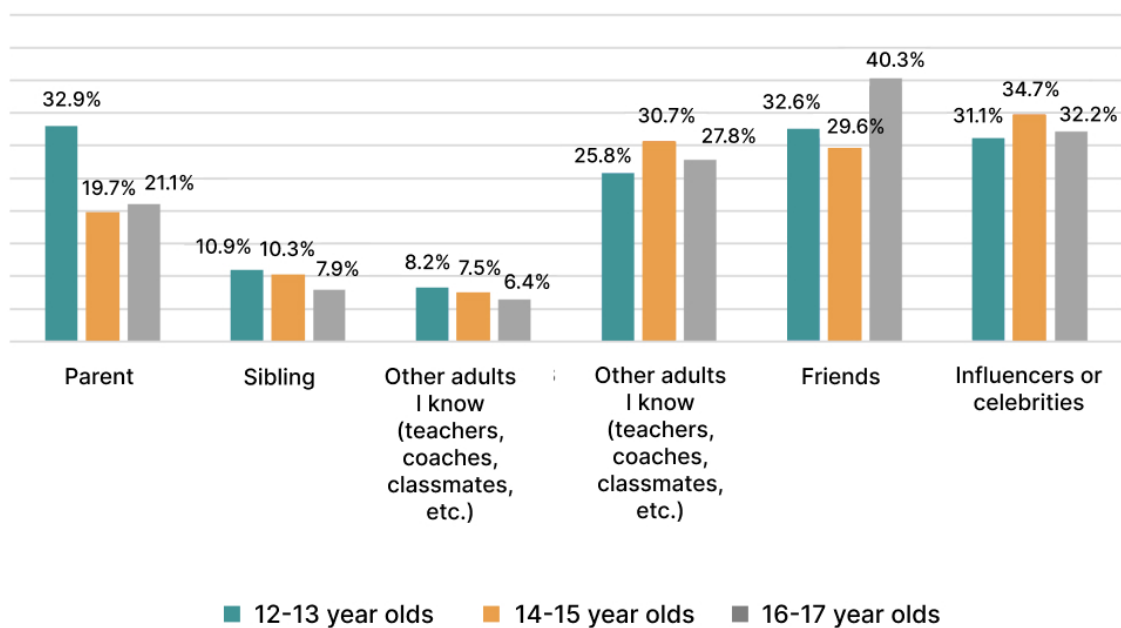


Figure 9. Who do you look at most to understand what an aesthetic body is like? Age comparison.



Aesthetic Body References

Regarding the **ideal aesthetic body**, the influences of various groups are observed according to age and gender variables. In this context, where the perfect physical appearance takes precedence over health, fathers and/or mothers represent a considerable influence, accounting for 24.5% of the total sample. This influence is more notable at early ages (32.9% at 12-13 years old) and gradually decreases as adolescents grow older. Siblings have less influence, with an average of 9.7% and little variation between ages. Other family members have even less influence, comprising 7.4% of the total.

Other known adults show an increase in influence with age, starting at 25.8% at ages 12-13 and reaching 30.7% at ages 14-15, though it decreases to 27.8% at ages 16-17. Friends seem to be the most significant aesthetic bodily influence for adolescents as they grow, increasing from 32.6% at ages 12-13 to 43.4% at age 16. Influencers and other celebrities have a constant and significant influence across all ages, with an average of 32.7%.

In terms of gender, for boys, friends (28.2%) and other well-known adults (32.7%) are the main influences. For girls, friends (40%) and influencers and celebrities (38.6%) are the most prominent influences.

The analysis of social influences reveals a complex panorama surrounding the shaping of adolescent perceptions of healthy and aesthetic body image. Fathers and/or mothers exert a significant initial impact that decreases with age, while friends and public figures such as influencers maintain and increase their presence in the field of aesthetics, especially during late adolescence.

2 Youth Use of Social Networks and Digital Platforms

Figure 10. Which social network or platform do you use the most?

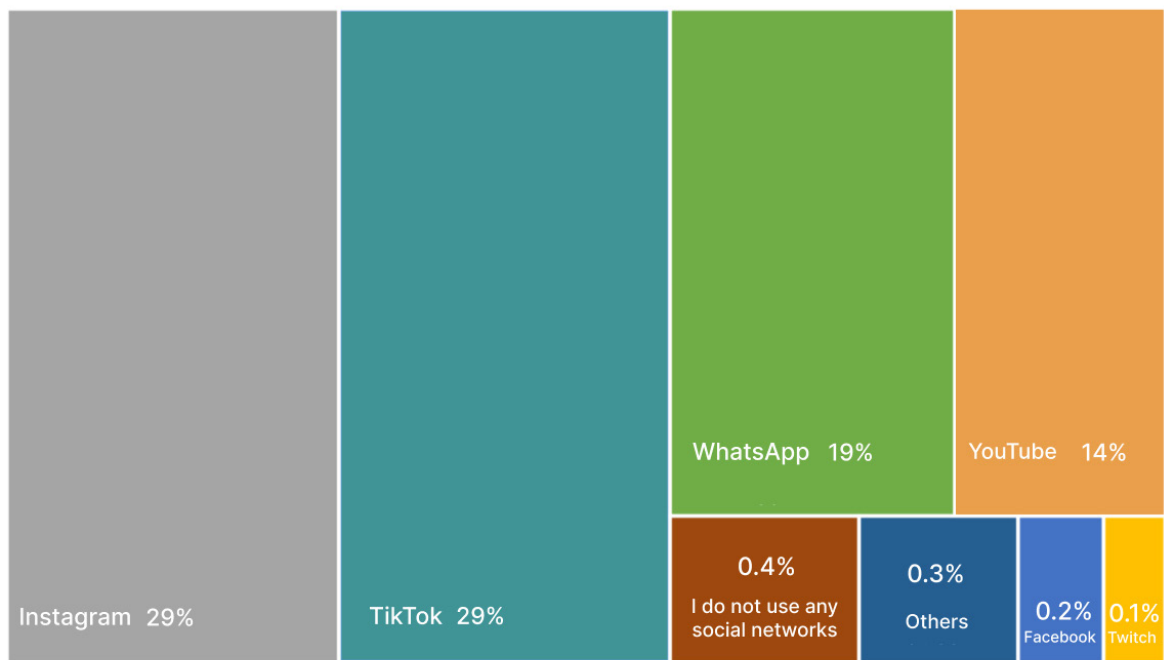
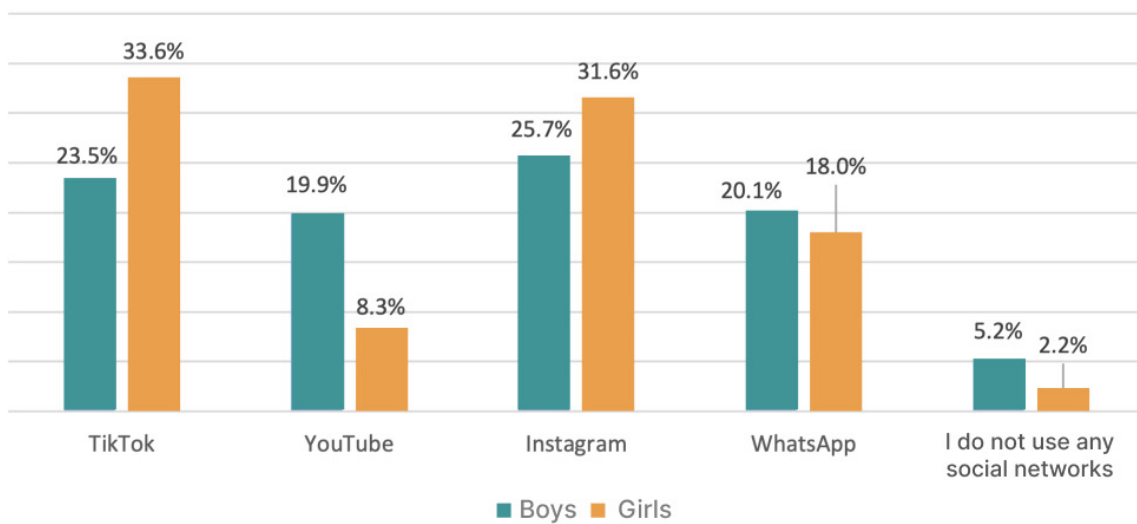


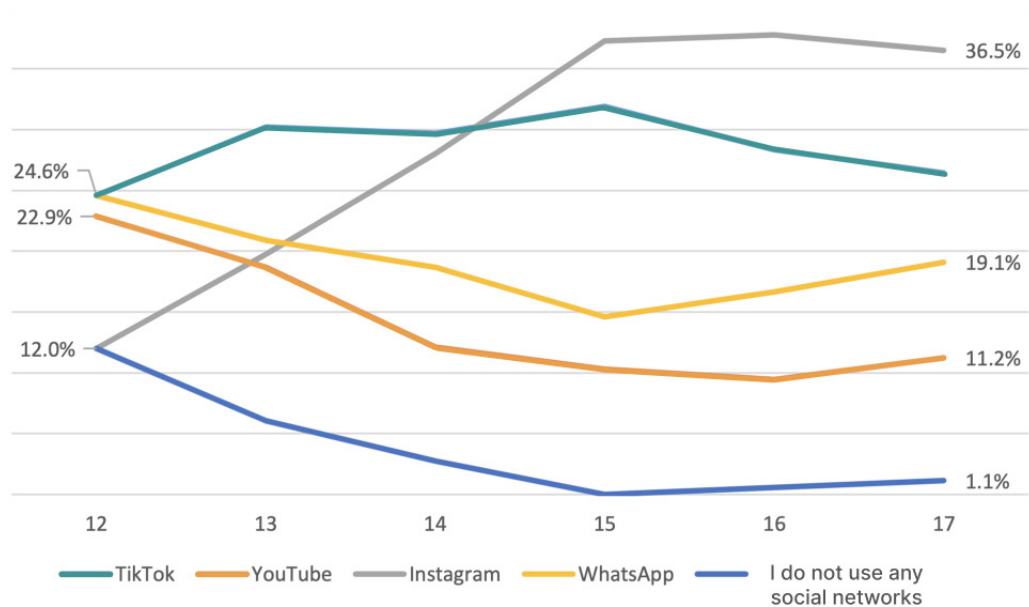
Figure 11. Which social network or platform do you use the most? Gender comparison.



Social Networks

The following analysis explores **preferences in the use of social networks** among adolescents. According to the data, the most used platforms are Instagram and TikTok, with 28.7% and 28.6%, respectively. WhatsApp follows with 19%, and YouTube accumulates 14%. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitch, BeReal, Pinterest, Telegram, Snapchat, and X (Twitter) show a preference below 2%. Only 3.7% of adolescents indicated not using any social network.

Figure 12. Which social network or platform do you use the most? Age comparison.

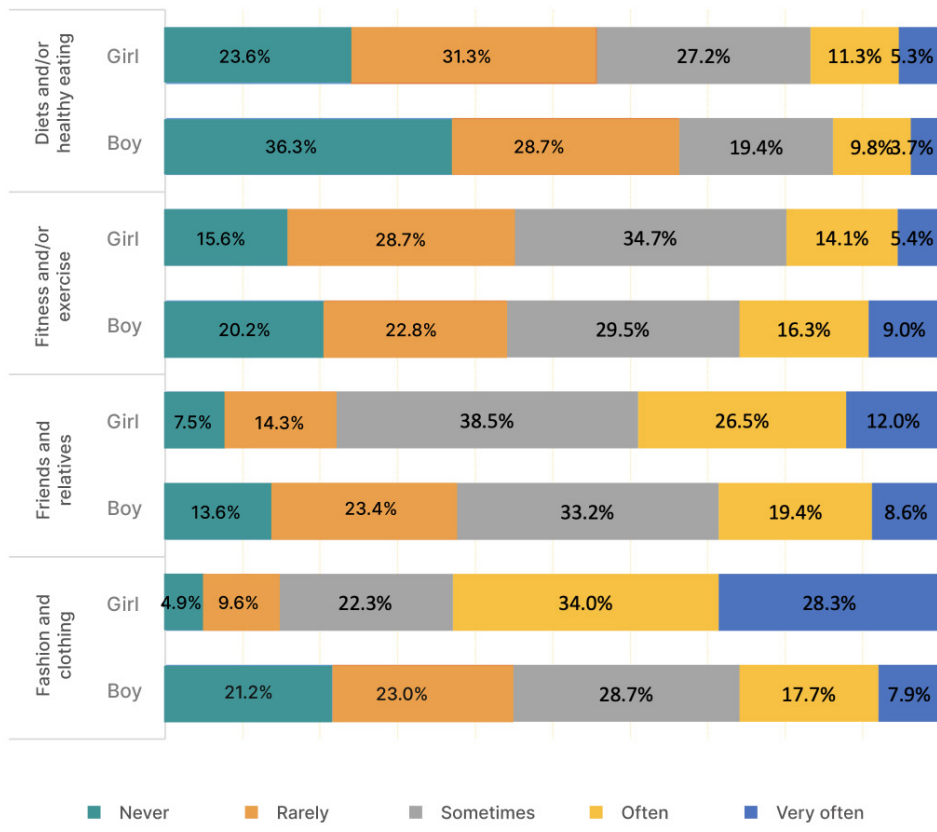


Looking at the most relevant platforms, slight differences are observed in terms of age and gender. TikTok is more popular among girls (33.6%) than among boys (23.5%), and especially among 15-year-olds (31.9%). Instagram is equally notable among girls (31.6%) and boys (25.7%), especially at 16 years old (37.8%).

YouTube shows a more pronounced difference between boys (19.9%) and girls (8.3%). The use of this audiovisual platform decreases significantly with age, from 22.9% at age 12 to 9.4% at age 16, with a slight rebound at age 17 (11.2%). WhatsApp is also used slightly more by boys (20.1%) than by girls (18%), and it is the most used platform at age 12 (24.6%).

Platforms such as Twitch and BeReal show low popularity with minimal variations between genders. Twitch is more popular among boys (1.7%) than girls (0.7%), and BeReal is used more by girls (0.7%) than boys (0.4%).

Figure 13. How often do you see this type of photographs on social networks?



Given the preferential use of social networks among adolescents, progress is being made in the analysis of the frequency with which these minors **view different types of content**. The data reveal significant differences in consumption patterns between both genders.

Notably, girls tend to view content related to fashion and clothing more frequently than boys (62.3% over 25.6% respectively). Now, if we look at content from friends and family, both genders show a high frequency, although they are also more common among girls (38.5%) than among boys (27.8%).

Regarding content related to fitness, food, diets and physical exercise, minimal variations are observed between genders, but with equally relevant frequencies. In the fitness and/or exercise category, viewing is moderately high, with 22.2% of girls and 25.3% of boys consuming it "Often" and "Very often." However, content related to diets and/or healthy eating shows less than 15% in both genders, where girls (16.6%) preferentially view this content compared to boys (13.5%).

Figure 14. Frequency of use of filters or applications to modify facial features. Gender comparison.

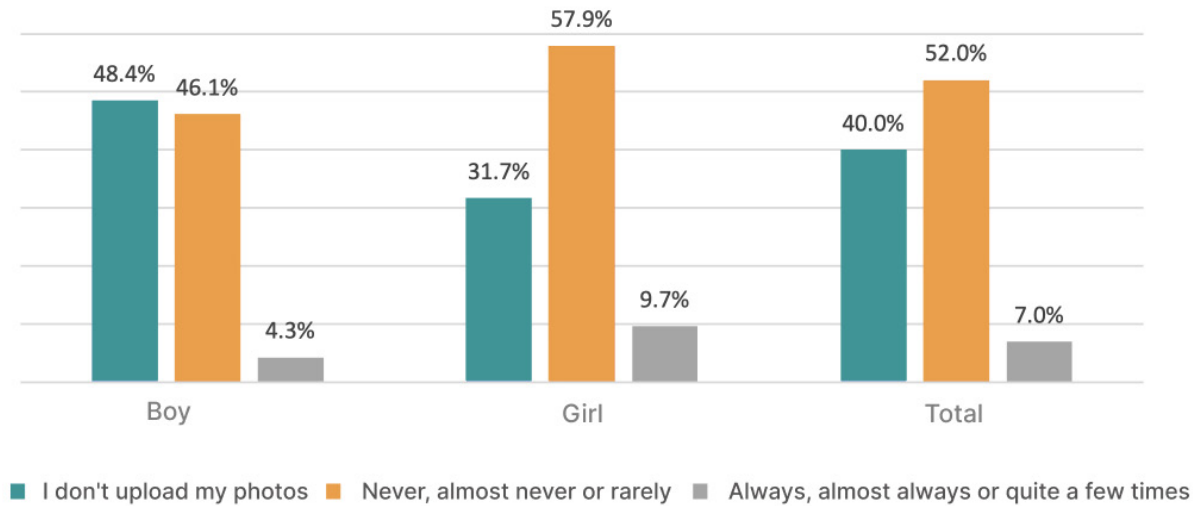
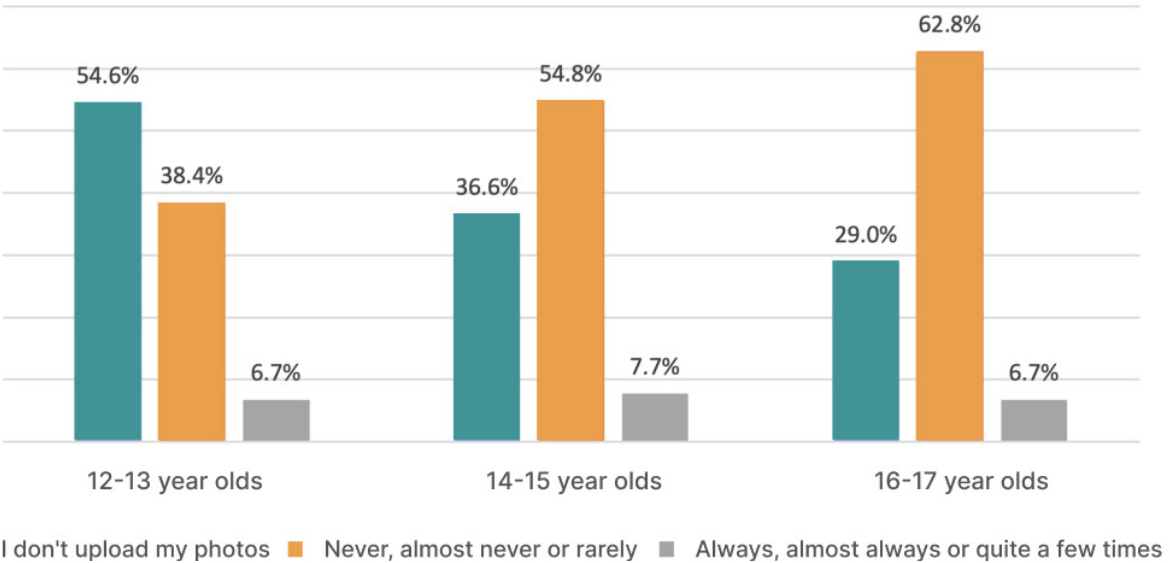


Figure 15. Frequency of use of filters or applications to modify facial features. Age comparison.



Use of Filters

The use of **filters and multiplatform applications** to modify facial features before publishing photographs on social networks has garnered significant attention across academic, social, media, and institutional spheres due to its prevalence and potential impact on self-esteem and beauty perception.

There is a notable gender difference revealed in the data. A higher percentage of boys (48.4%) compared to girls (31.7%) indicate that they do not upload photographs where their face is displayed on social networks. However, boys also show a greater inclination to use filters and applications, with 9.7% stating that they use them frequently, always, or almost always, compared to 4.3% of girls.

Regarding age, it is observed that as adolescents grow older, the proportion who refrain from uploading their own photographs decreases, from 54.6% at ages 12-13 to 29% at ages 16-17. This trend may indicate an increase in trust or a growing desire to share aspects of their lives as they mature.

Figure 16. Frequency of use of filters or applications to modify body shape. Gender comparison.

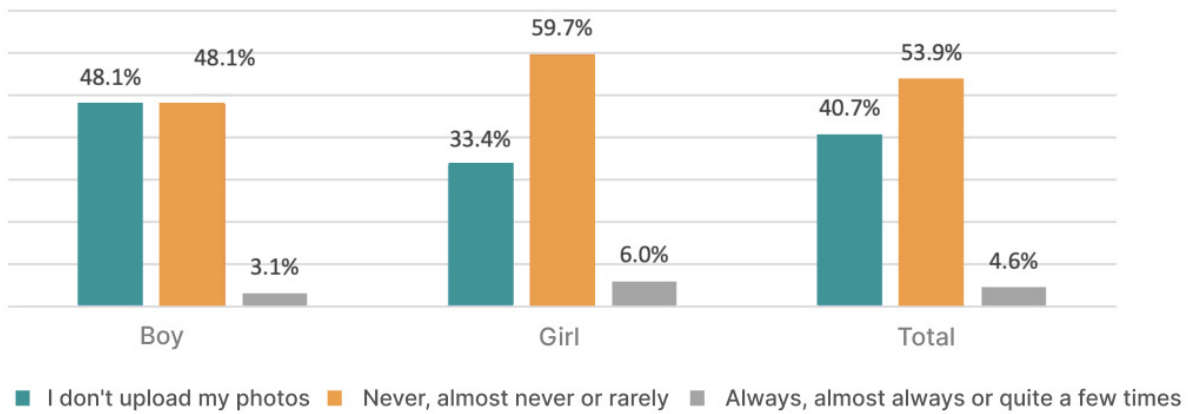
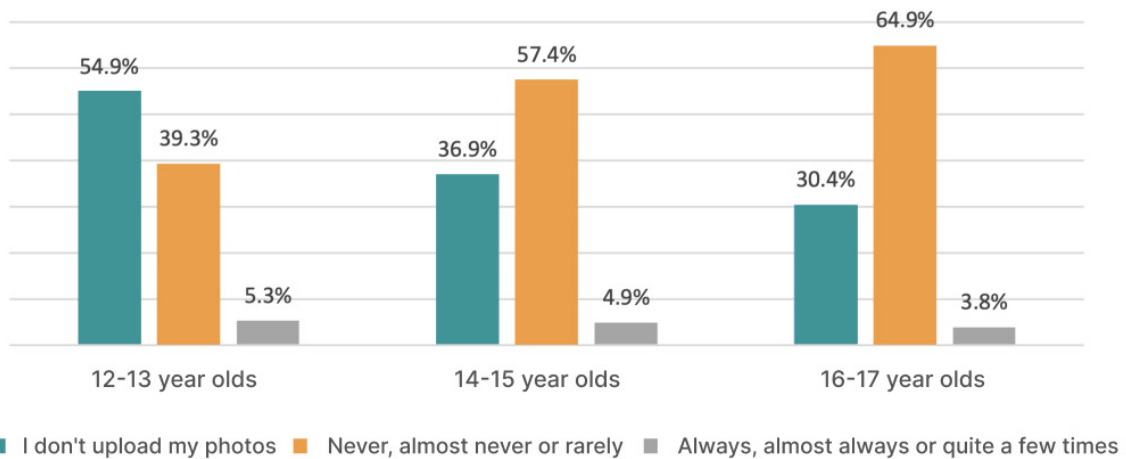


Figure 17. Frequency of use of filters or applications to modify body shape. Age comparison.



When examining the use of these tools to **modify appearance**, 48.1% of boys compared to 33.4% of girls state that they do not upload photographs of their body. Additionally, 3.1% of boys and 6% of girls not only upload photos but also alter them using filters with some frequency. It's noteworthy that frequent use of filters is a minority, starting at 5.3% among 12-13-year-olds and decreasing to 3.8% among 16-17-year-olds.

Figure 18. Frequency of use of filters to improve colors and effects. Gender comparison.

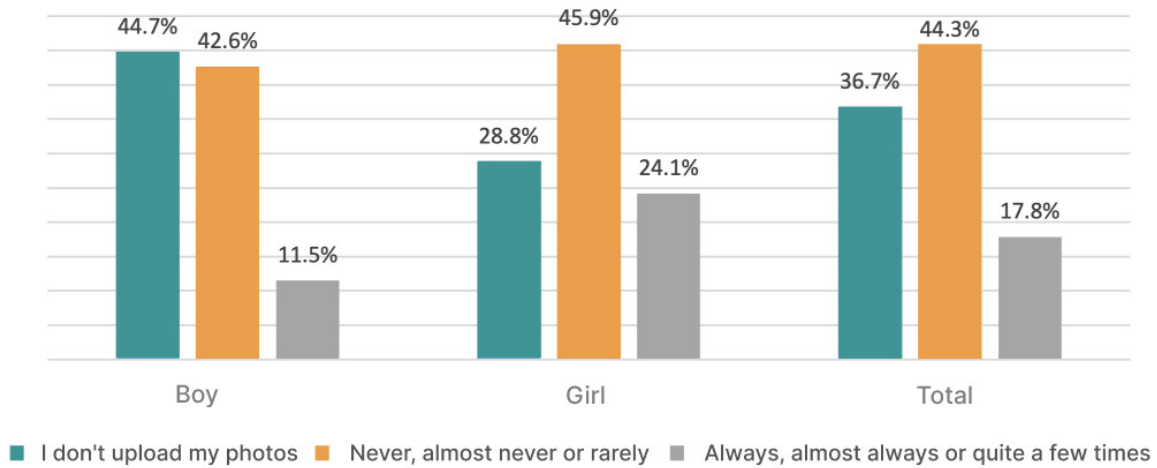
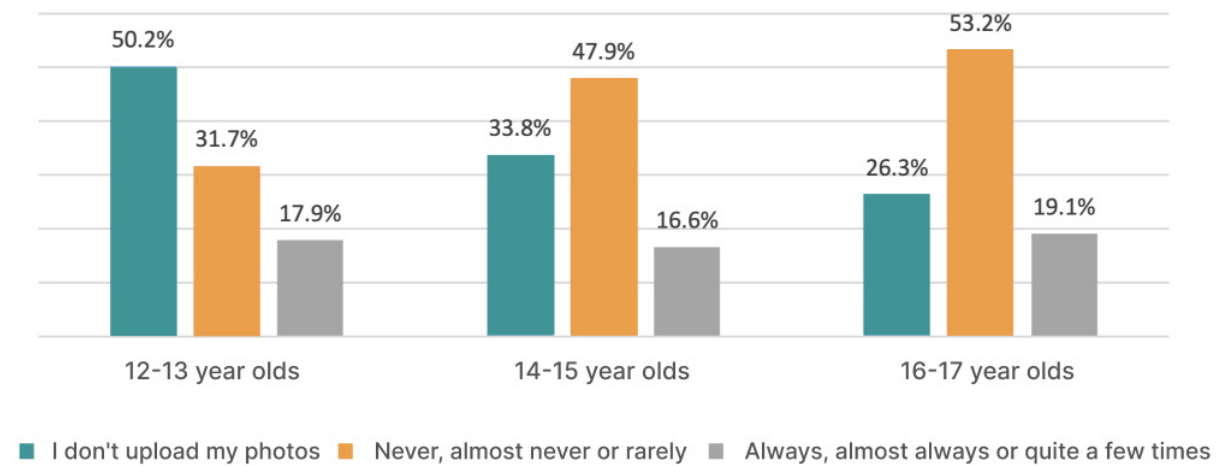


Figure 19. Frequency of use of filters to improve colors and effects. Age comparison.



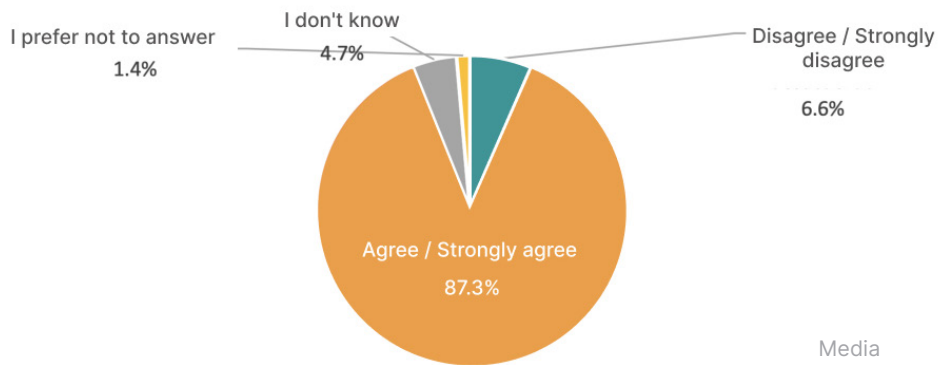
Finally, concerning the use of these tools to **enhance colors and effects** in images, a higher incidence is observed among girls, with 24.1% indicating frequent use compared to 11.5% of boys.

In terms of age, the use of filters to alter color or generate effects shows relative stability, ranging between 16.6% and 19.1%. However, there is a notable increase in the “quite a few times” category among 17-year-olds (18.3%), potentially indicating greater experimentation or societal pressure to maintain high-quality images as they approach adulthood.

3 Youth Perceptions of Media, Physical Appearance, and Social Success

3.1. Impact of Physical Appearance on Digital Media and Platforms

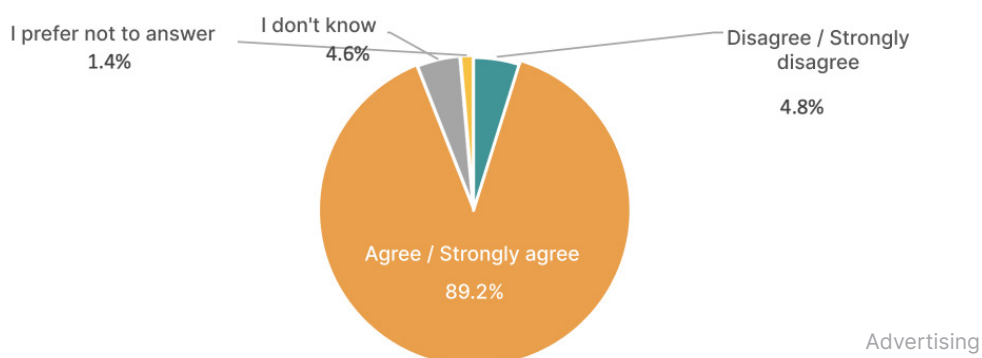
Figure 20. Degree of agreement with the statement “The media often focus on physical appearance rather than overall qualities.”



The media, encompassing television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms, plays a pivotal role in shaping **societal norms and expectations regarding body image and beauty standards**. This analysis aims to assess public perceptions of the media’s emphasis on physical appearance.

An overwhelming majority of adolescents (87.3%) agree that the media portrays physical appearance as a significant factor. A smaller percentage (6.6%) either disagrees or strongly disagrees with this assertion, while 6.1% refrain from taking a definitive stance, indicating variability in how media influences perceptions of body image.

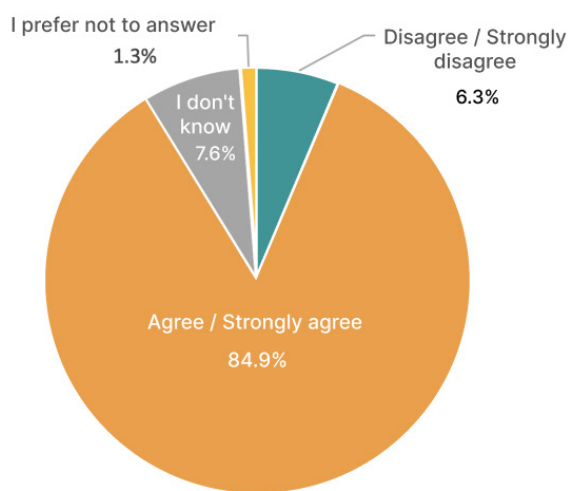
Figure 21. Degree of agreement with the statement “Advertising usually focuses on physical appearance rather than its general qualities.”



Advertising, within the media landscape, also holds considerable sway. Social discourse frequently questions the emphasis placed on physical appearance in the persuasive messages adolescents encounter.

Similarly to perceptions of the media, a substantial majority (89.2%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that advertising prioritizes physical appearance. A minority (4.8%) holds a contrary view, while 6% abstain from expressing an opinion on the matter. This underscores significant youth awareness regarding the media and advertising industries as influential platforms in shaping, projecting, and perpetuating standards of body image.

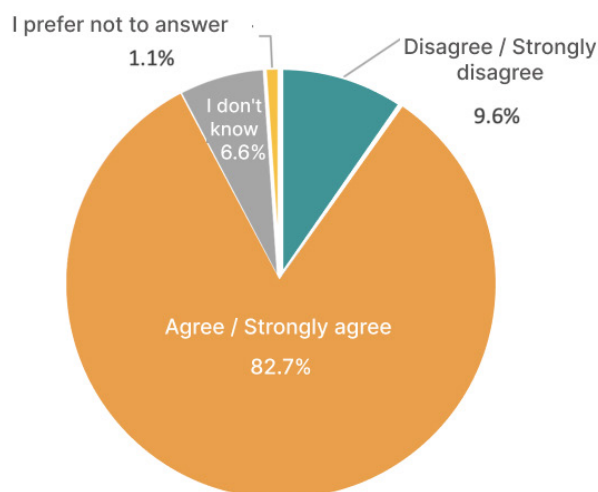
Figure 22. Degree of agreement with the statement “The importance of physical appearance in media images, networks, and advertising negatively affects people’s self-esteem.”



Self-esteem

In analyzing perceptions of the negative impact of physical appearance in media, social networks, and advertising on people’s self-esteem, a consistent trend emerges: nearly 85% of adolescents agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Figure 23. Degree of agreement with the statement “Bodies that are shown as beautiful in the media, advertising, or social networks are unrealistic.”



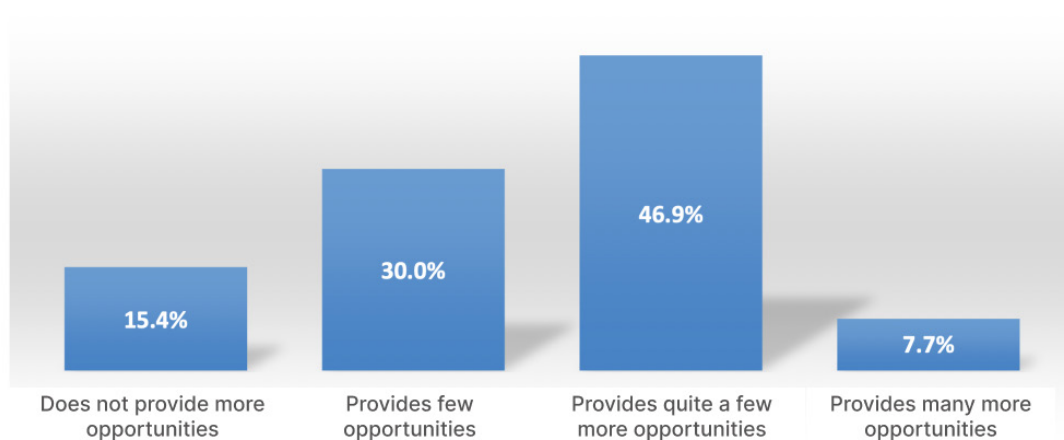
Realism

When evaluating young people's perceptions of the **realism of bodies portrayed as "beautiful"** in the media, advertising, and social networks, a prevalent trend is observed. The majority, comprising 82.7% of respondents, agree that the bodies depicted as ideal are unrealistic. These findings reflect a critical awareness among minors regarding how the media and persuasive messaging promote beauty standards that do not encompass body diversity.

However, a minority (9.6%) of participants disagree with this notion, suggesting an alternative perception or possibly an acceptance of the standards propagated by the media as attainable or desirable. Additionally, 6.6% of adolescents responded "I don't know," indicating uncertainty or insufficient reflection on the topic.

3.2. Social Success and Physical Appearance

Figure 24. To what extent do you think having a toned/muscle body provides more opportunities or advantages in life?



In terms of adolescent perceptions regarding the **advantages of having a toned or muscular body**, a diverse range of opinions is evident. 15.4% of respondents believe that a toned body does not offer additional advantages in life.

Conversely, 30% of participants perceive that having a toned body provides few opportunities in life. However, the majority of minors, totaling 46.9%, hold the belief that a muscular body provides many more opportunities. This significant percentage suggests a strong conviction in the social and professional benefits associated with physical fitness, possibly influenced by the cultural link between physical attractiveness and competitive success.

Additionally, a small but notable 7.7% of respondents believe that having a well-toned body provides many more opportunities, indicating an extreme belief in the positive impact of physical fitness on one's life. This group may view physical fitness not only as beneficial in itself but also as a crucial factor for success across various domains.

4 Influence of the Immediate Social Circle and Social Networks on the Physical Appearance of Youth

4.1. Family and Peer Pressure on Physical Appearance

Figure 25. Family influence on physical appearance

My family members...

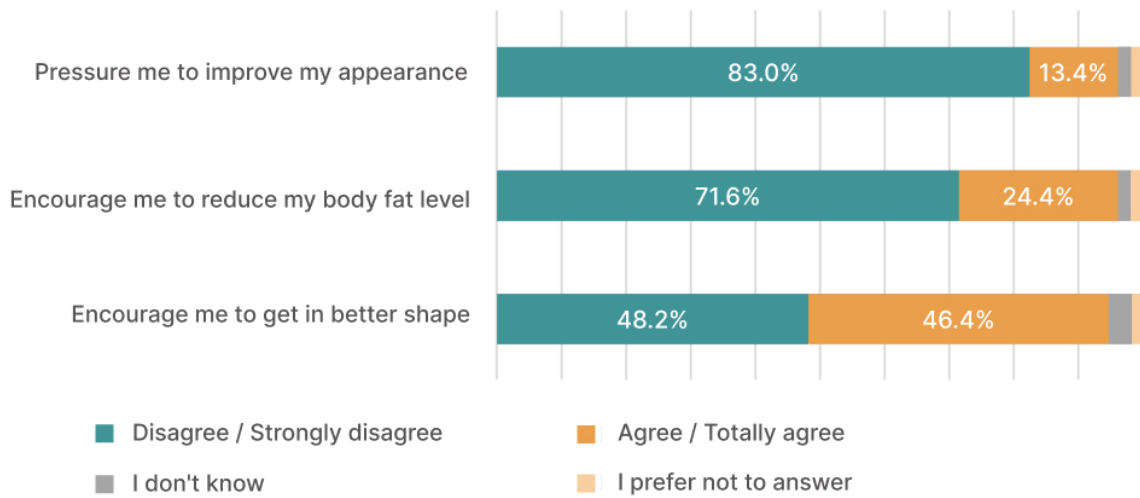
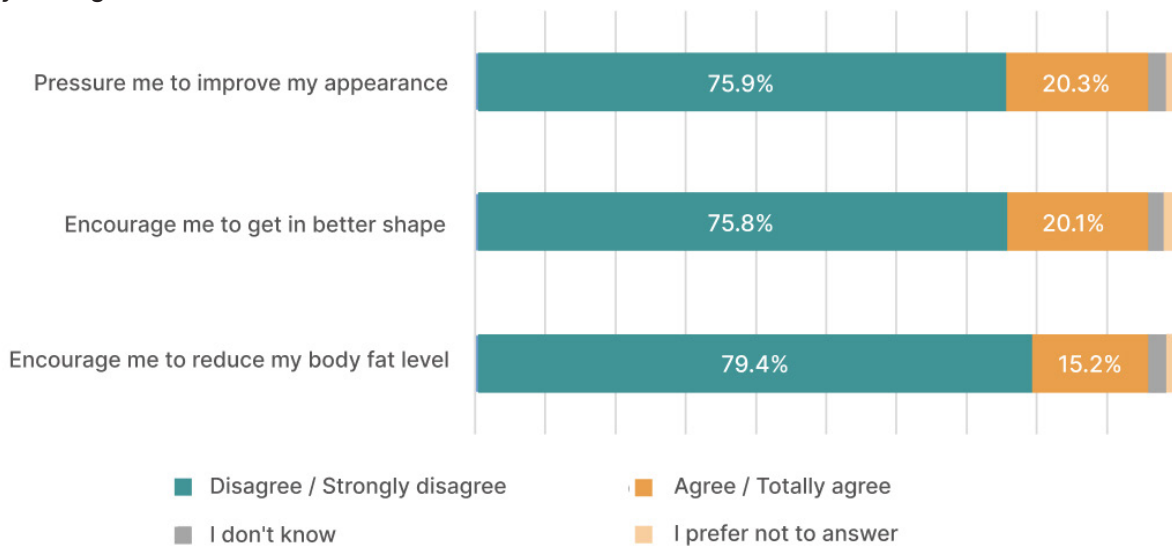


Figure 26. Influence of peers on physical appearance

My colleagues...



Family and Peer Pressure

The impact of family and peer **pressure on adolescents' perceptions of physical appearance** is crucial to understanding their emotional and psychological development. From early stages, many minors may face pressure from both family members and peers to conform to specific beauty and fitness standards. Analyzing responses from their immediate environment reveals a general trend of resistance against pressure to alter body appearance, though a notable proportion still acknowledges feeling pressured to varying extents.

In the family context, pressure to **enhance physical appearance** is evident, albeit not overwhelmingly so. A significant 48.2% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that their family pressures them in this regard. However, nearly half of adolescents (46.4%) concede to feeling some degree of pressure, underscoring the considerable influence families wield over body image perceptions.

Concerning pressure to **reduce body fat**, resistance is more pronounced, with 71.6% of respondents denying feeling pressured by their family in this regard. Nonetheless, 24.4% report some level of pressure, highlighting ongoing concerns within family dynamics about body fat.

In contrast, peer pressure exhibits a less pronounced impact. A substantial 79.4% of adolescents do not perceive pressure from peers to reduce body fat, while 75.8% do not feel pressured to enhance physical fitness. These figures indicate that, relative to family influence, peers exert a lesser role in shaping perceptions of body image alteration needs.

4.2. Pressure from Social Networks on Physical Appearance

Figure 27. Degree of agreement with the statement “I feel pressure from social networks to appear fitter.” Gender comparison.

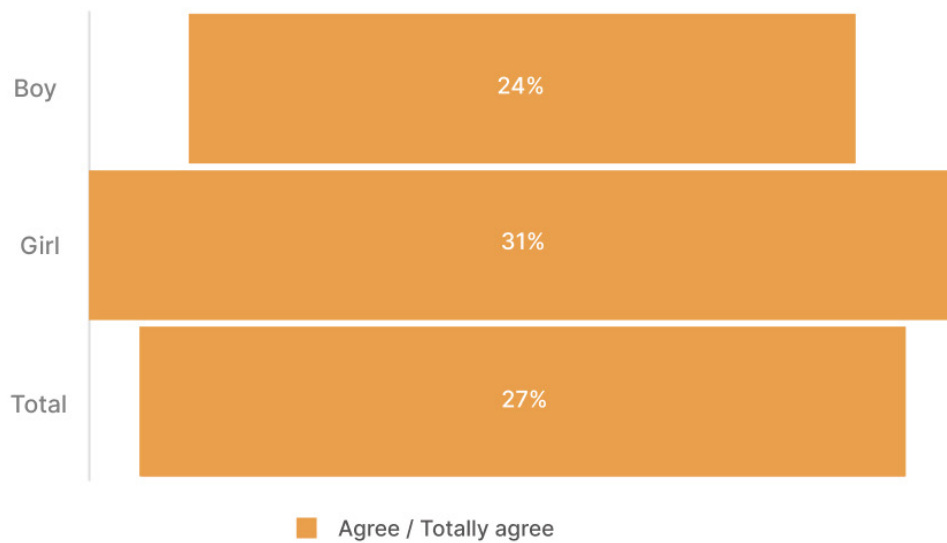
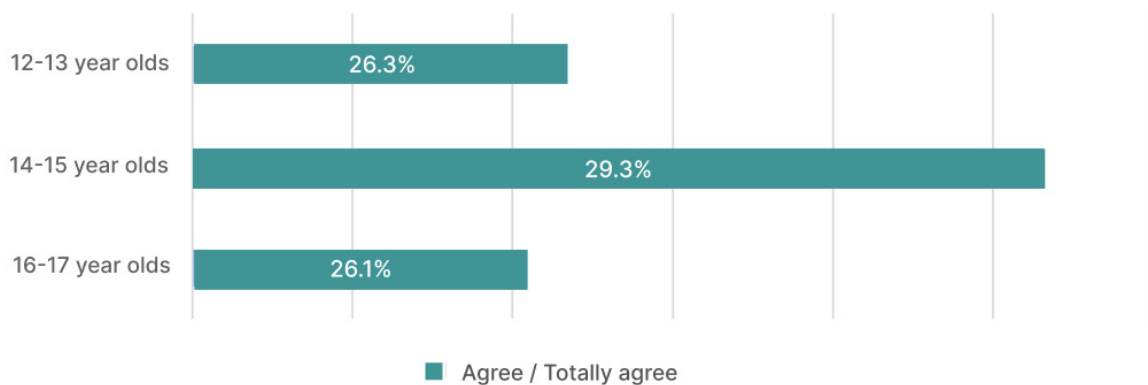


Figure 28. Degree of agreement with the statement “I feel pressure from social networks to appear fitter.” Age comparison.



Social Media Pressure

The influence of social networks on the physical appearance of adolescents reveals significant gender differences. A notable 33.2% of boys disagree or strongly disagree with feeling pressured digitally, while 23.5% agree or strongly agree. Conversely, girls exhibit a stronger inclination towards feeling pressured, with 31.1% disagreeing and 31.9% agreeing. This pattern suggests that girls are more susceptible to the body ideals prevalent on online platforms.

Breaking down the data by age, **perceptions of this pressure vary significantly throughout adolescence.** Participants aged 12-13 show the lowest agreement with feeling pressured (26.3%), potentially reflecting reduced exposure or sensitivity to social media dynamics at this stage. However, perceptions increase notably at ages 14-15, where 29.3% of adolescents agree or strongly agree with feeling influenced to maintain physical shape. This rise may correlate with increased social media use and its growing importance during this developmental stage, alongside changes in self-esteem and identity development.

Figure 29. Degree of agreement with the statement “Social networks pressure me to look thinner.” Gender comparison.

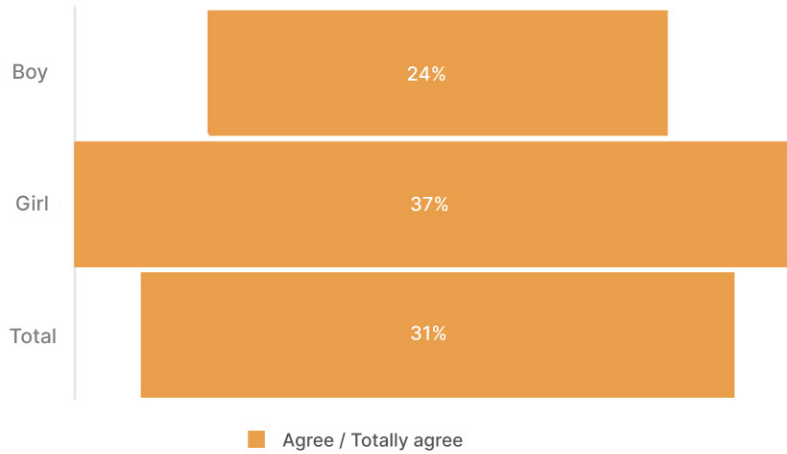
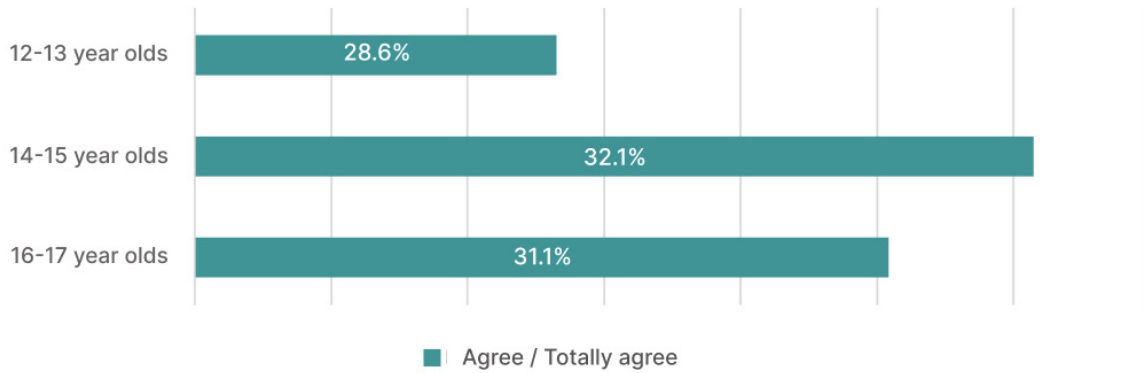


Figure 30. Degree of agreement with the statement “Social networks pressure me to look thinner.” Age comparison.



Regarding pressure from social networks **to appear thinner**, a similar trend is observed, particularly among girls, where 37.5% report feeling pressured in this regard. In contrast, 23.7% of boys perceive such influences.

Analyzing age groups reveals a progressive increase in pressure towards thinness. Younger adolescents (12-13 years) experience less pressure compared to those aged 14-17, indicating that as adolescents mature, they become more active and aware of their online presence, potentially leading to efforts to conform to societal body ideals, and thus lose weight.

Figure 31. Degree of agreement with the statement “I feel pressured by social networks to increase the size or definition of my muscles.” Gender comparison.

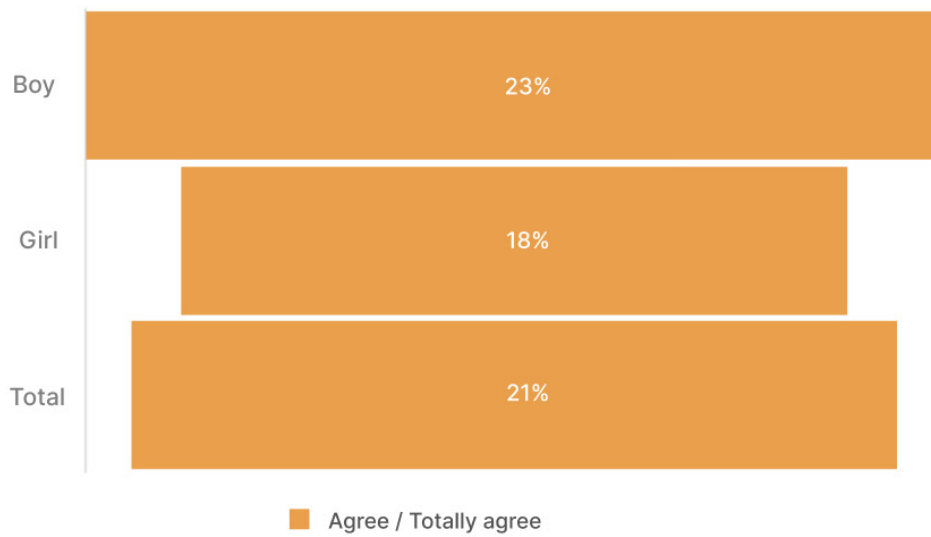
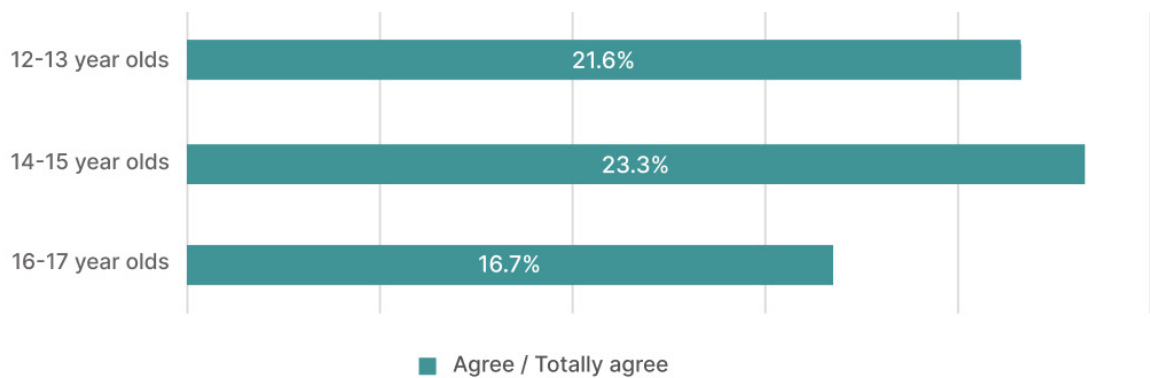


Figure 32. Degree of agreement with the statement “I feel pressured by social networks to increase the size or definition of my muscles.” Age comparison.

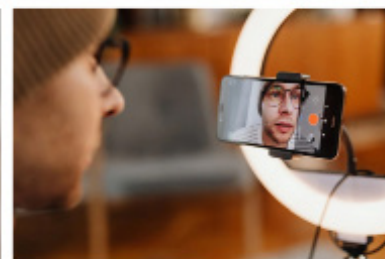


Regarding the pressure exerted by social networks **to increase and define muscle size**, it’s evident that boys (23.2%) feel more influenced than girls (18.0%). Across different age groups, a similar trend emerges: older adolescents experience greater pressure, with a peak observed at ages 14-15 (23.3%)

5 Impact of Influencers on Youthful Physical Appearance

Figure 33. Do you have a favorite influencer or can you remember one?
Top 5 favorite influencers among young people.

46.1% of respondents confirm having a favorite influencer.



Influencers

Influencers have attained prominence as significant media figures engaged in professional activities within the communication field, particularly in marketing and advertising. These individuals, who amass substantial followings on social networks, have garnered interest from media, institutions, and society at large due to their nature, impact, and influence among adolescents.

The initial step in understanding the relationship between these profiles and the surveyed minors was **to ascertain their current preferences for specific influencers**. 46.1% of the participants claim to have a favorite influencer, underscoring their significant presence in the lives of young people. Specifically, respondents identified Ibai Llanos, El Rubius, Dulceida, YoSoyPlex, and Lolalolita in descending order of preference.

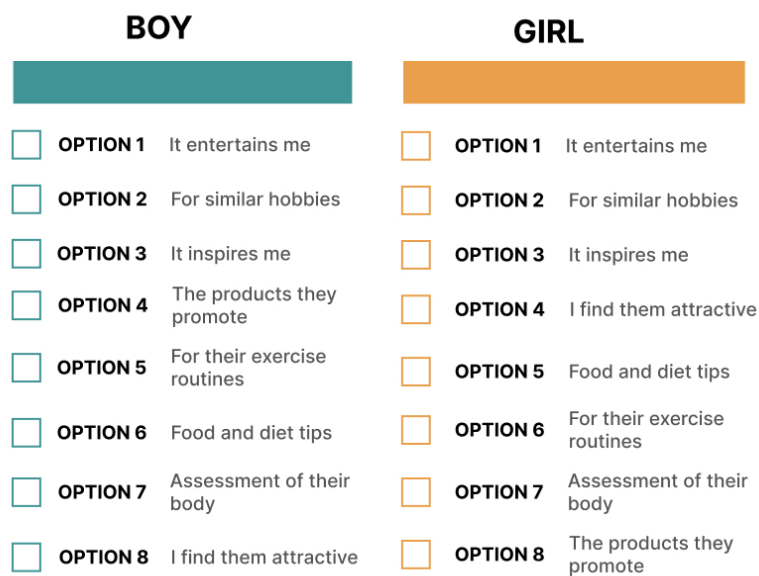
Analyzing the **popularity** of these influencers, **Ibai Llanos** stands out prominently. His leadership reflects considerable influence within the youth community, particularly on platforms like Twitch and YouTube, where his content spans video games, interviews, and live events (streamings). Following closely is **El Rubius** (Rubén Doblas Gundersen), recognized as a pioneer in Spanish-language streaming of video games, maintaining a robust presence on YouTube and Twitch since 2006 amid a competitive digital landscape.

Dulceida (Aida Domènech), in third position, is the most popular Spanish influencer in the fashion and lifestyle category among the profiles mentioned by participants. Her success on Instagram and YouTube underscores the significant interest among adolescents in topics related to appearance and physical care.

At the Spanish level, **YoSoyPlex** (Daniel Alonso) and **Lolalolita** (Lola Moreno Marco) have also positioned themselves as favorites among teenagers. YoSoyPlex engages audiences with content focused on challenges, adventures, and travel, while Lolalolita focuses more on entertainment and lifestyle on TikTok and Instagram, effectively catering to the platforms most frequented by this demographic.

5.1. Influencers and Gratifications for Youth from Interacting with Social Networks

Figure 34. Ranked list of mentioned gratifications. Gender comparison.



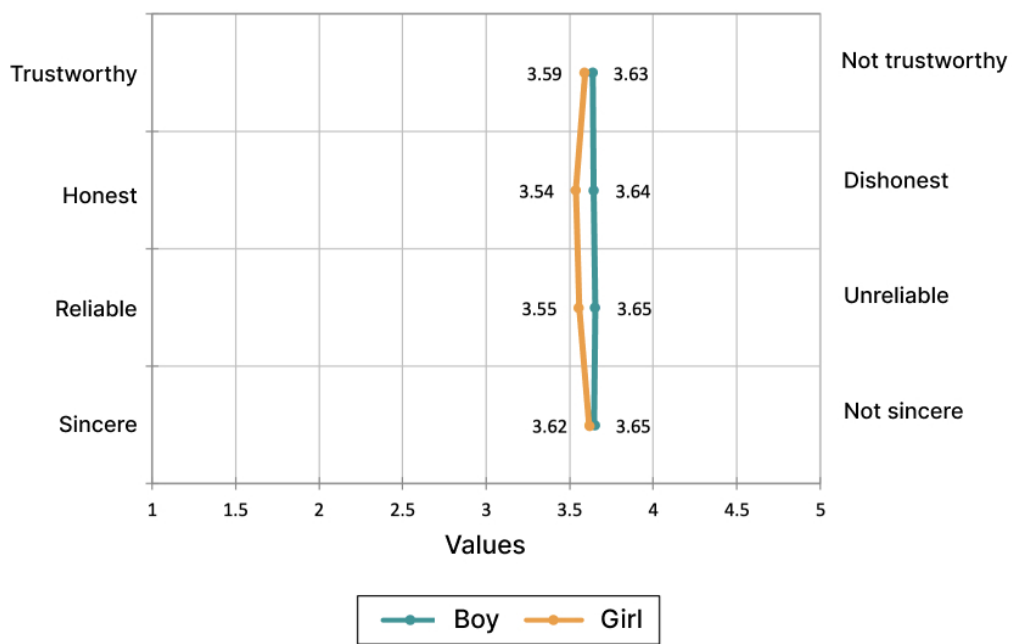
Building upon the significant role influencers play in the lives of adolescents, we examine the various **motivations behind their following of these profiles** on social networks. The primary reason both girls and boys follow influencers is for **entertainment** (option 1). Shared **hobbies** also play a crucial role, ranking second as a motivation to follow influencers, suggesting that these figures, irrespective of gender, resonate with their followers beyond leisure content.

Inspiration emerges as another key motivation, particularly among girls (option 3). While the **physical attractiveness** of influencers also influences followers, its impact is relatively less pronounced. This underscores that, especially for girls, influencers serve as role models or sources of inspiration. Additionally, advice on food and diet is more pertinent to girls than boys, whereas exercise routines hold greater interest for the latter.

The **products endorsed** by influencers wield significant influence, especially among boys who cite this as a compelling reason for following. This indicates that influencers not only shape adolescents’ perceptions of their bodies but also influence their consumer behaviors.

5.2. Perceived Trust, Honesty, Reliability, and Sincerity of Influencers

Figure 35. Assessment of the attributes ‘trust,’ honesty,’ ‘reliability,’ and ‘sincerity’ perceived from influencers.

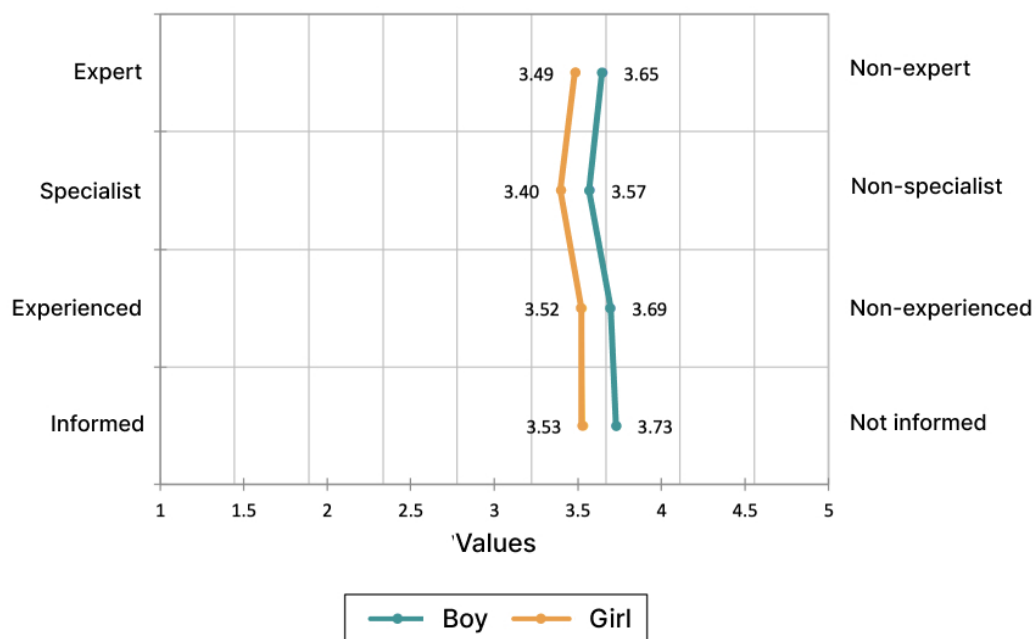


The relationship between influencers and adolescents was analyzed based on perceptions of trust, honesty, reliability, and sincerity—essential qualities in interpersonal relationships and human behavior. The data indicate a tendency towards neutrality in opinions, albeit with significant levels of distrust across several attributes.

This suggests **cautious attitudes towards the authenticity and integrity** of influencers.

5.3. Perceived “Expertise” of Influencers

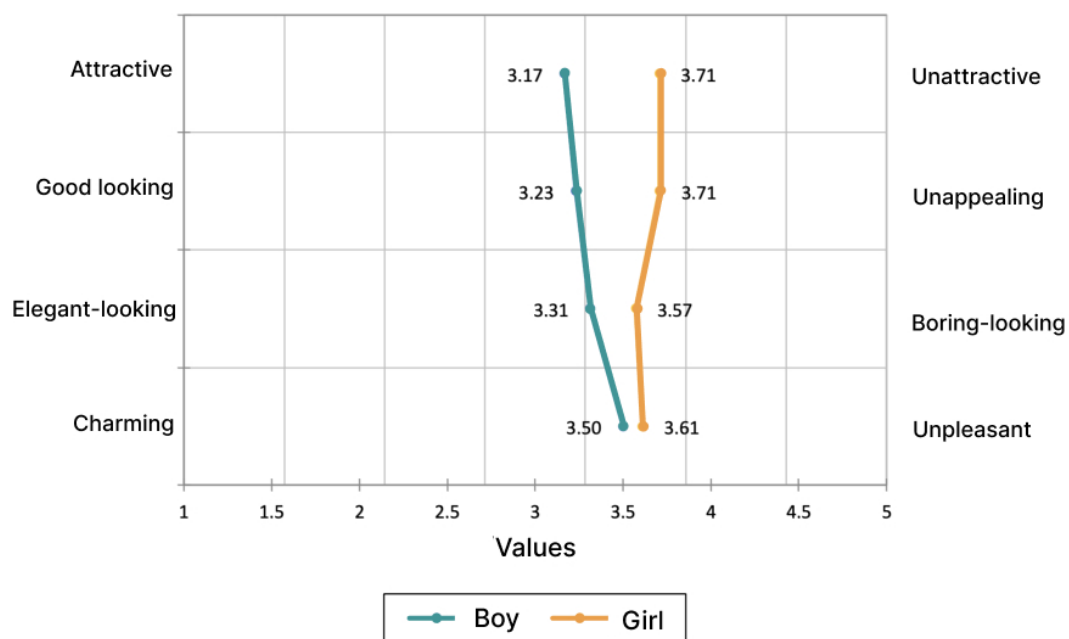
Figure 36. Assessment of the attributes ‘expert’, ‘specialist’, ‘experienced’, and ‘informed’ perceived from influencers.



In terms of perceived knowledge, experience, specialty, and information projected by influencers, **they are generally not viewed as experts** in their respective fields. Gender-based analysis reveals notable differences, with boys perceiving influencers as less qualified compared to girls.

5.4. Attractiveness, Elegance, and Charm Perceived Around Influencers

Figure 37. Assessment of the attributes 'attractive', 'good looking', 'elegant', 'charming' perceived from influencers.

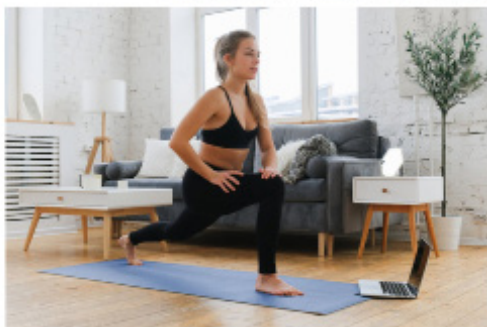


The study examines perceptions of influencers based on personal and physical characteristics, revealing a moderate overall assessment of various qualities, albeit with notable gender differences. The following results highlight four main categories: attractiveness, physical appearance (good looking vs. unappealing), elegance, and charm. Notably, girls tend to be more critical of the physical qualities attributed to these public figures.

5.5. Impact of Fitness Influencers on Young People

Figure 38. Do you have a favorite fitness influencer?
Top 5 favorite fitinfluencers among young people

20.2% of those surveyed confirm having a favorite fitness influencer.



Fitness Influencers

The rise of fitness influencers, known as **fitinfluencers**, has significantly impacted social media and influenced the decisions and lifestyles of young people. This analysis focuses on their popularity among the youth demographic.

20.2% of surveyed minors report having a favorite fitinfluencer. Among these preferences, five profiles stand out prominently. One of the favorites, **Dr. Tony Ortega**, a psychologist with extensive clinical and coaching experience, maintains a following across Facebook, Instagram, and X, where he engages in cognitive and behavioral therapy. However, he does not exceed 6000 followers on these platforms.

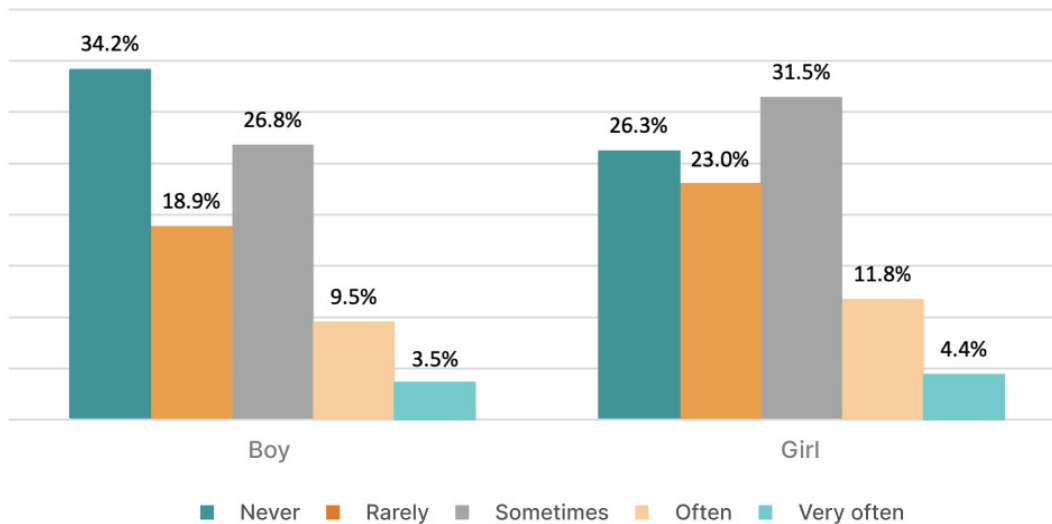
Tomás Mazza, an Argentine streamer on Twitch with a substantial presence on TikTok, where he reaches nearly 2 million followers, focuses on physical transformations and offers personalized training and diet plans under his brand Trainingwhead.

For her part, **Teresa Sanz**, a Spanish influencer, has gained fame for her focus on fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and fitness. She launched her career on YouTube, amassing a significant community (more than 250,000 followers) through daily content showcasing her passion for cooking and CrossFit, aimed at promoting a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Her presence extends across Instagram, TikTok, and X.

Tano Villar specializes in nutrition and personalized training. Following a transformative experience in the United States, he dedicated himself to sharing his lifestyle and expertise on social media. His content offers a holistic approach to health, featuring nutritious recipes and training tips. While active on Instagram and Facebook, he is renowned for his YouTube channel where, as a dietitian and personal trainer, he reviews food and discusses fitness and nutrition.

Sascha Barboza, known as **Sascha Fitness**, is a Venezuelan influencer who has built a strong brand focused on fitness and nutrition. She began sharing nutritional advice through X in 2010. Her popularity soared after documenting her personal journey to regain her figure post-pregnancy, inspiring women globally. Sascha is a bestselling author, a bodybuilding champion, and has achieved significant success in Ibero-American e-commerce through her online store. Her content includes exercise routines, healthy recipes, and nutrition tips, primarily shared on Instagram and YouTube.

Figure 39. How often do you think about your appearance when you see content from influencers dedicated to fitness? Gender comparison.

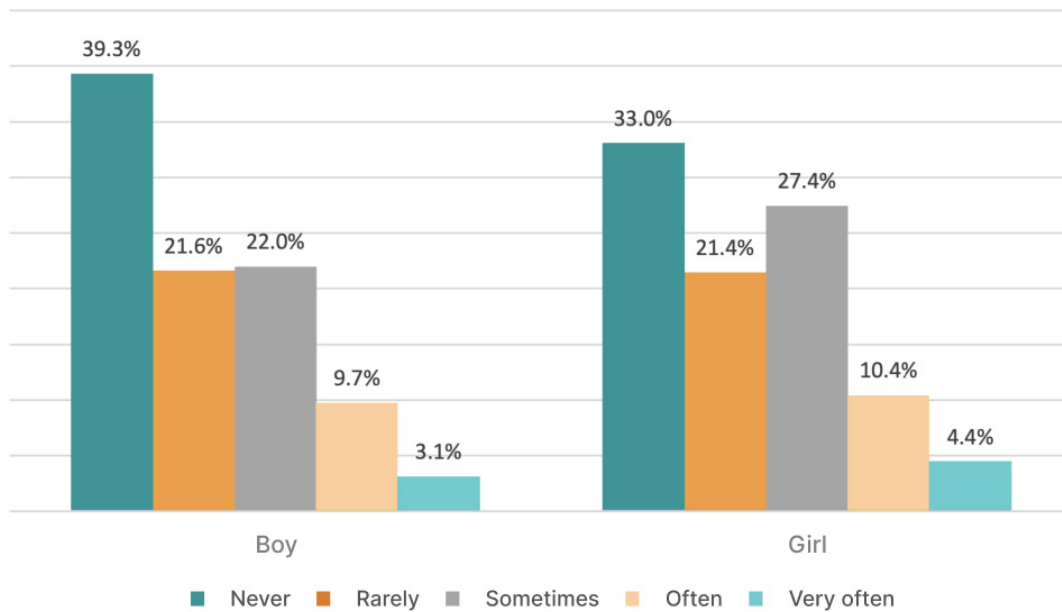


The presence of fitinfluencers on social networks is significant, necessitating an understanding of **how their content impacts adolescents' self-perception**. The following results offer a detailed view of how adolescents perceive their body image when exposed to these influencers.

Findings reveal that **30.2%** of participants never think about their appearance when viewing content from fitness influencers, suggesting many consume this content without negative self-image effects. However, 20.9% rarely, 29.2% sometimes, 10.7% often, and 4% very often think about their appearance. This indicates that over half of young people surveyed question their body image to some degree when exposed to these messages.

Gender differences are notable: girls tend to reflect more on their appearance than boys across all categories except "Never." Specifically, 31.5% of girls sometimes think about their appearance compared to 26.8% of boys. This trend continues in categories like "Often" and "Very often," with 11.8% and 4.4% for girls respectively, compared to 9.5% and 3.5% for boys. These findings suggest that content from fitinfluencers may have a more pronounced impact on girls' perception of physical appearance, possibly influenced by broader societal pressures and beauty stereotypes.

Figure 40. How often do you compare your general appearance and/or specific parts of your body with those of influencers dedicated to fitness? Gender comparison

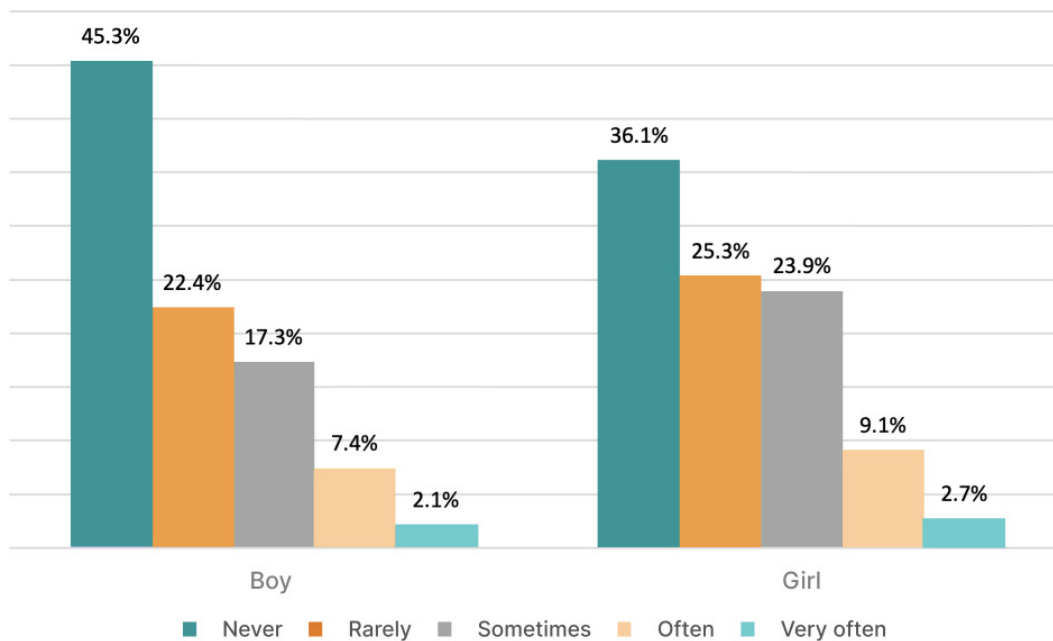


Continuing with fitinfluencers, it is essential to analyze how adolescents compare their general appearance and/or specific body parts with these figures.

Overall, **36.1%** of minors never compare their physique with fitinfluencers. However, 21.5% rarely and 24.7% sometimes do, totaling 46.2% who compare themselves to fitinfluencers to some extent. Moreover, 10.1% do it often and 3.8% very often, indicating a significant minority that frequently measures themselves against these standards.

Gender differences are evident here too: **39.3% of boys** never compare themselves to fitinfluencers, compared to **33% of girls**. This suggests that girls may be more exposed or susceptible to the influence of these models. In terms of frequency (rarely, sometimes, often, very often), girls tend to compare themselves more frequently than boys, especially in the categories of “sometimes” (27.4% vs. 22%) and “very often” (4.4% vs. 3.1%). This underscores greater pressure or social expectations on girls related to beauty standards.

Figure 41. How often do you compare your facial features with those of fitness influencers? Gender comparison.



Finally, regarding the comparison of facial features with fitness influencers, there is a clear tendency towards non-comparison, albeit with notable gender variations. **40.7%** of surveyed adolescents indicate they **“never” compare** themselves with these profiles, with a higher proportion among boys (45.3%) compared to girls (36.1%).

Conversely, 23.8% mention they “rarely” make such comparisons, with girls slightly more prone (25.3%) compared to boys (22.4%). Additionally, 20.6% admit to sometimes making these comparisons, with a higher percentage again among girls (23.9%) than boys (17.3%).

The categories “often” and “very often” represent a minority but significant proportion, with 10.6% in total. Specifically, 8.2% of participants report doing it “often” and 2.4% “very often,” with girls reporting slightly higher frequencies in both cases.

Conclusions

The **perception of body and physical appearance** among minors is a topic of growing interest and social concern, as beauty and health standards are being shaped by a variety of influences. These range from media-driven standards and persuasive messages to influencer content. This report reveals significant disparities in youth perspectives on what constitutes a supposedly healthy and aesthetically pleasing (“beautiful”) body, where attributes such as muscularity, toning, and thinness hold prominence. Both fitinfluencers and family members emerge as influential models shaping adolescents’ self-perception.

Key conclusions drawn from this study include:

- Toned body**
 - **50.9%** of adolescents view a toned body (silhouettes 1, 2, 3, and 4) as representative of health, with boys expressing a higher preference at 58.8%. Girls tend to favor intermediate silhouettes (silhouette 6) for both aesthetic (33.2%) and health (37.6%) reasons.
- Aesthetic body**
 - **21.2%** of respondents identify the thinnest figure (silhouette 5) as the ideal aesthetic body.
- Healthy body**
 - There appears to be ambiguity among adolescents in distinguishing between a healthy and aesthetically pleasing body.
- Aesthetic vs. healthy**
 - **42.6%** of boys and 46.1% of girls rate their bodies highly (7 and 8) in terms of health, with slightly lower ratings for aesthetics. Conversely, around 11% rate their bodies poorly in terms of aesthetics compared to 9.3% for health.
- Influencers**
 - Influencers (**24.1%**), parents (**33.5%**), other adults (**33.8%**), and friends (**34.6%**) significantly influence adolescents’ perceptions of a healthy body. In terms of aesthetic body perception, influencers’ influence increases (32.7%), while that of parents (24.5%) and other adults (28.1%) diminishes. Notably, family influence decreases with age, while peer influence rises. Gender differences show that boys look more towards adults, whereas girls are influenced more by peers and celebrities.
- Filters**
 - The use of filters is prevalent among adolescents primarily for enhancing photo colors and effects on social networks (**17.8%**). In contrast, fewer use them to modify body shape (**4.6%**) or facial features (**7%**). Girls tend to utilize these tools more extensively, with **24.1%** editing images and 6% focusing on body shape, and **9.7%** adjusting facial features.

Conclusions

- Media and Advertising**

 - A significant majority of adolescents (**85%-90%**) perceive that media and advertising prioritize physical appearance, impacting their self-esteem negatively.
- Realism**

 - About **82.7%** of respondents believe that the “beautiful” bodies portrayed in media, advertising, or social networks are unrealistic, potentially influencing future expectations and body satisfaction.
- Advantages of a Toned Body**

 - Over half of adolescents (**54.6%**) perceive toned and muscular bodies as offering significant social and professional advantages, highlighting the pressure to attain unrealistic physical ideals.
- Social Media Pressure**

 - Girls report higher pressure from social networks to appear **fitter** (30.9%) and **thinner** (37.5%) compared to **boys** (23.5% and 23.7%, respectively). Conversely, boys feel more pressure to **increase muscle size** or **definition** (23.2% vs. 18% for girls), particularly evident after age 14.
- Favorite Influencer**

 - **46.1%** of adolescents have a favorite **influencer**, often chosen for entertainment or shared hobbies, with **20.2%** specifically favoring **fitinfluencers**.
- Motivation**

 - Fitinfluencers motivate teens towards healthy lifestyle habits, albeit potentially **reinforcing unrealistic physical standards and pressures**.
- Authenticity**

 - Adolescents express cautious views on the **trustworthiness and sincerity** of influencers, indicating mixed perceptions of their authenticity.
- Credibility**

 - Influencers are generally **not viewed as qualified experts by teenagers**, which may impact the credibility of the information they disseminate.
- Perception**

 - Influencers are perceived as **moderately attractive and charming**, although there is significant critique of their appearance and behavior, particularly among girls.
- Comparison**

 - Between **7% and 14% of adolescents** frequently compare their appearance to that of fitinfluencers, potentially impacting their body image and self-esteem. Girls tend to experience more pressure and compare themselves more often to fitinfluencers than boys, particularly regarding facial features.

Recommendations

- These findings underscore the **importance of promoting body self-acceptance and valuing physical diversity**. It is crucial to foster a social environment that prioritizes emotional well-being over external appearances.
- The significant influence of **media, persuasive messages, and social networks** on body image perception highlights the need to educate young people on critically analyzing the messages and images they encounter.
- It is also essential to **clarify the distinction between what constitutes a healthy body and what is considered aesthetically pleasing**. While health has an objective component, aesthetics are influenced by cultural and social norms. Addressing adolescents' difficulty in discerning between these concepts is imperative.
- Given the popularity of fitinfluencers in motivating healthy lifestyles, promoting a balanced and realistic approach to health and fitness is essential. Emphasizing **professional guidance** in nutrition, exercise, and rest can help **mitigate the perpetuation of unrealistic beauty standards**.
- Parents and other influential adults play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' body perceptions. Providing them with resources and guidance on addressing body image issues and promoting healthy social media use is vital.
- Furthermore, there is a need to implement policies that ensure transparency and honesty in **the representation of body images** across media, advertising, and social networks, especially when involving influencers and celebrities.

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