

itv

POP THEORY



THE BEAUTY ISSUE

British Bods, Botox and Bodybuilding women

According to creative strategy studio Morning.FYI's report [Meta Beauty](#) we've entered a new era of beauty known as Meta Beauty: *A new era of human identity & expression, defined by an internet-fuelled period of fantasy and dreaming.* While it might be true that the internet has long been a driving force behind beauty standards we cannot discard other influences like television (of course), celebrity culture and socio-economic factors.



A SURGICAL SHIFT

Cosmetic surgery worn with pride

We're in an era where our perceptions of ourselves are split between what we show online, what we see in the media and who we are in real life resulting in a skewed view of beauty. Which could be why it's becoming increasingly socially acceptable to have cosmetic surgeries done. Plastic surgery, often seen as a taboo, has seen a slow shift towards people being more open about cosmetic surgeries they've had done, now it's worn as something of a badge of honour. Celebrities like [Olivia Atwood](#) openly talks about the facial procedures she had done as well as breast augmentation but also highlights the dangers of not being expertly advised in her younger years. She tells Good Morning Britain that although she happily went ahead with the procedures the initial reason for them was societal pressure and trends at the time of when she was on Love Island. Veneers, fillers and face lifts have only continued to be the norm for reality TV stars who are by extension hyper-online.

TV Stars are more under the microscope than ever and so can't afford to be caught with a hair out of place let alone wrinkles or bags.

Similarly to celebrities we're all experiencing our own lives through some sort of lens whether it's our selfie camera's or someone else's. We're scrutinizing our appearances more than ever, as phone cameras become extensions of the mirror, amplifying our anxieties and deepening our concerns about how we look. In response, we're beginning to reject the shame once attached to cosmetic work, embracing it instead as a personal choice and form of treating ourselves. Our theory is that while we're socially and economically pressured how we appear to others is stronger currency than ever before. Protein in their [Competitive Wellness](#) piece touches on this idea of a new kind of rat race where we strive for our health and wellbeing as a new kind of status symbol. They state that wellness has gone from being about winding down and relaxing to something to be achieved, recorded and rewarded. Trendy run clubs and community saunas fill up with nano-influencers and amateurs living a polished version of what a "healthy" lifestyle looks like.

Brands can learn a thing or two from these celebrities that are openly sharing what they've changed about themselves and their own perceived imperfections. The viewer and consumer can now see through it all, so why not wear changes to your image or positioning with pride and embrace some of the same radical transparency.

THE ASPIRATIONAL BRITISH BOD

Face and Body Tea?

This begs the question, how do us Brits feel about all this. Corrie Star [Sally Carman](#) who plays Abi Webster doesn't shy away from how she maintains her youthful looks "Oh, it's no secret - I have fillers, I have Botox, facials.... I do all of it.". This unashamed attitude resembles behaviours identified in ITV's [Hun Culture](#) research. It's a protest against the restricted and controlled ways of British society that shame you for showing

off and being loud and proud of who you are. While cosmetic procedures seem like they're increasingly becoming normalised in 2023 69% of people felt the exact opposite and felt that it was sending the wrong message to young people (Attitudes towards Cosmetic Procedures, Mintel, 2024). Unsurprisingly the same research tells us that 25-34s are the age group most interested in cosmetic procedures as this is when signs of ageing begin to concern them. When combined with an increased disposable income and no dependents it feels like a no-brainer.

So how are Brits altering their bodies? According to the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons the top three cosmetic procedures in 2022 for both men and women were breast augmentation, abdominoplasty (the "tummy tuck") and Liposuction. Googling any one of these procedures you'll find they are defined by an "improvement" of the shape or look of a certain body part but this idea of betterment in beauty meaning something needs to be *perfect* is changing. However, as The Guardian reports following an interview with our very own Rylan—who recently swapped his perfect veneers for something 'more natural'—it seems the desire for an effortlessly natural, even 'imperfect,' aesthetic is growing.



This mirrors the rise of the 'no-makeup' makeup trend in the skincare world, where the goal was to appear untouched, even when considerable effort goes into achieving the look. What you could call “quiet beauty” is a marker of status that says you can afford to not try too hard.

Cadbury's recent “Guaranteed not too last” campaign captures this sentiment of perfect imperfection. We see an empty tub of Cadbury's Dairy Milk ice cream with just the residue of this dreamy chocolate treat, a relatable scene for any ice cream lover – and it's not even advertising the product itself. Authenticity and relatability aren't just buzzwords, they're something you can show. Particularly in our increasingly AI generated visual culture not being a bit rough around the edges and incomplete is how you show people your real authenticity.

WOMEN IN THE WEIGHTS ROOM

The Rise of Female strength training

The idea of what the perfect British body is continues to change particularly for women. It's no doubt that being a woman in the world of health and wellness comes with its own challenges on top of the added pressure society places on women's bodies. Often health and wellness for women is branded as demure, soft and stereotypically feminine – it's partly why pilates has seen so much success (beyond the status symbol it carries

akin to a luxury lifestyle) as it subtly tones and sculpts your core, glutes and arms, maintaining a 'feminine' shape – but femininity in health and wellness is changing. There's a rise in women in the weights room, no doubt for the benefits building muscle has for your mental health and protecting your body in your old age, but also to redefine fitness for women. These women weight-trainers are posing new ideas of a healthy femininity, whether it's a more visibly toned or muscular frame, it's a picture of an empowered woman. [A 25-year-old, amateur bodybuilder](#) Mia Collins found herself on a journey of self-discovery and discipline after pursuing bodybuilding. She sees weightlifting as a lifestyle choice that will benefit her later down the line.

According to research done by the [University of Leeds](#) the number of women participating in regular strength training has soared by 27% since 2024. This is thanks to relatable fitness influencers making women more visible in weight-training, giving women the confidence to adopt weight training as a part of their routines. Weightlifting as a sport once seen as a way for men to display their manhood and physical prowess has now become a much more inclusive and universal symbol of health and self-improvement.

If you're a brand trying to centre women in your work it's important not to reduce women's issues pertaining to health by comparing them to what men face. Instead take the time to unpack how women want to be seen and treat them like the nuanced audience that they are. A great example of this is Dove's [The Code](#), tackling beauty perceptions through the lens of AI generated images, it's not telling women how to look it's reclaiming the beauty that already exists.

