

IS THE INFLUENCE OF LOOKSMAXXING A GOOD THING?

Louis Theroux’s “Inside the Manosphere” has sparked conversations around the kind of online content influencing our young people, especially boys and young men. Views and subcultures previously found in fringe spaces are being brought into the mainstream and the world of looksmaxxing is a prime example. Emerging from message boards dedicated to pick-up artistry and so-called “incel” culture, looksmaxxing focuses on improving physical appearance to increase social status, particularly when it comes to dating success. Ranging from seemingly harmless advice around skincare and fitness (“softmaxxing”) to a darker world of DIY “bonesmashing” programmes to alter facial structure (“hardmaxxing”), looksmaxxing’s influence is becoming harder to ignore. For some, it is just part of self-improvement but for others, it’s part of a dangerous online community. With many adults unaware of this new culture, we wanted to ask young people what they think of the growing influence of looksmaxxing.

Alex 
Data Coordinator

48,064
TOTAL VOTES

9,379
VOTES AGE 5-11

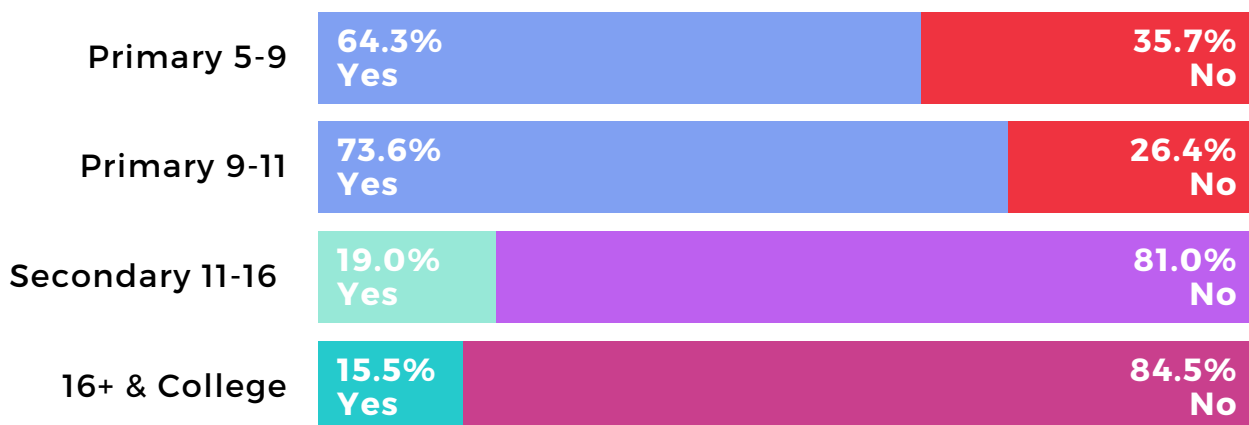
38,685
VOTES AGE 11-16+

The VoteTopic questions discussed amongst the different age groups were:

Primary 5-9: “Do you know how to listen to your body?”

Primary 9-11: “Is there too much focus on appearance?”

Secondary 11-16, 16+ & College: “Is the influence of looksmaxxing a good thing?”



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The theme of this week's lessons was self-awareness and attitudes relating to our bodies, prompted by the influence of looksmaxxing. 5-9 year olds discussed how able they feel to listen to their body's cues, and most reported feeling confident.

However, some revealed that they can feel "overwhelmed" navigating multiple signals and emotions. 9-11-year olds were specifically focusing on appearance and how bodies are perceived by themselves and others; many stressed that looks shouldn't play such a prominent role in how people are judged but showed an awareness that regardless, people do often feel influenced to change themselves to avoid criticism. Some reported feeling that pressure personally.

Meanwhile, older students were considering the trend of looksmaxxing and its effects. Secondary voters made a clear distinction between "softmaxxing" and "hardmaxxing". Many saw "softmaxxing" in a positive light, as it encourages people to look after themselves in a healthy way, provided it is self-motivated and not due to external pressures. "Hardmaxxing" was seen as dangerous and extreme, with some voters shocked that it exists at all. College voters commented on the benefits of looking after yourself but many shared similar concerns about external pressures leading to people losing a sense of their individuality.

Voting data revealed a gender split amongst older students. At Secondary, 26% of boys voted Yes, compared to just 12% of girls. Interestingly, some saw this as a trend affecting boys only. Amongst 16+ & College students, 22% of boys saw looksmaxxing as having a positive influence, compared to just 9% of female peers.

We think there is too much focus on our appearance the way we look and [...] people change their appearance because of people that they see on TV or on Social Media.

Primary 'Yes' Voter

I think it can be hard to listen to your body all of the time, as sometimes your body could be trying to tell you more than one thing at once.

Primary 'No' Voter

Looksmaxxing can be very dangerous, so it is best to avoid these extremes. Softmaxxing is a better approach to health and fitness.

Secondary 'Yes' Voter

Looksmaxxing can be beneficial to some if they take better care of themselves [...] their confidence and self-esteem can be boosted.

Secondary 'No' Voter