

Body shaming – a young persons perspective



Background and methodology

Body shaming was chosen as one of the priority areas by our Youthwatch volunteers. Volunteers wished to gain a better understanding of young people of Sunderland's knowledge and understanding of body shaming and the impact it was having on their overall health and wellbeing.

To capture this information, volunteers designed a survey to be used. The questions in the survey focused on:

- Young people's understanding of body shaming
- The impact of social media on body shaming
- Knowledge of where to go for support.

(Please see appendix 1).

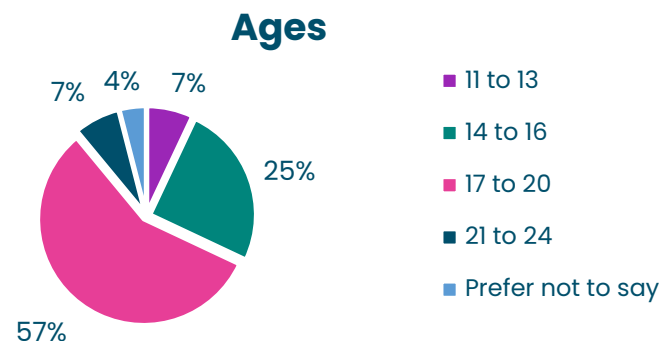
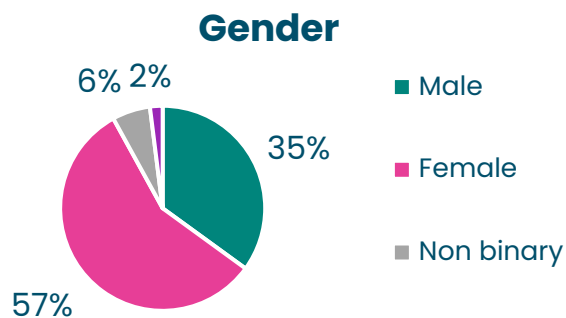
Using the survey Youthwatch volunteers targeted it at young people living or studying in Sunderland, between the ages of 11-25. The survey was promoted on the Healthwatch website, across Healthwatch social media channels, in person at City of Sunderland College and across the voluntary and community sector. Youthwatch volunteers also shared it with their family and friends and the Healthwatch engagement team also promoted it alongside Youthwatch volunteers, during their engagement sessions across the city.

Our findings – We received 103 responses from young people across the city

What we found out

- 44% (45) young people have been impacted by body shaming
- 87% (90) of young people think social media is a contributing factor to body shaming
- 44% (45) of young people didn't know or were unsure who to contact if they needed support.

Demographics – The charts below show the demographic breakdown of those who responded. The results show that most respondents were female, aged 17–20 and White British.



Ethnicity	Percent
White: British / English	57%
Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani	5%
Black / Black British: African, Caribbean	25%
Middle eastern origin	5%
Prefer not to say	8%




Our findings


Question 1. What is your understanding of body shaming?

When asked what their understanding of body shaming was, almost all young people who completed the survey gave a response and commonly stated that body shaming is the act of discriminating, criticizing, insulting and/or humiliating others based on their appearance, body shape, height, weight or size. Some also commented that it can affect everybody regardless of an individual's body shape or size.


In addition, most stated that the act of body shaming has negative consequences on recipients and often causes the individual to feel shame and insecure.



“I know that anyone can be affected by it no matter what your body type is, and it’s making people feel uncomfortable about their body and see themselves in a different way.”



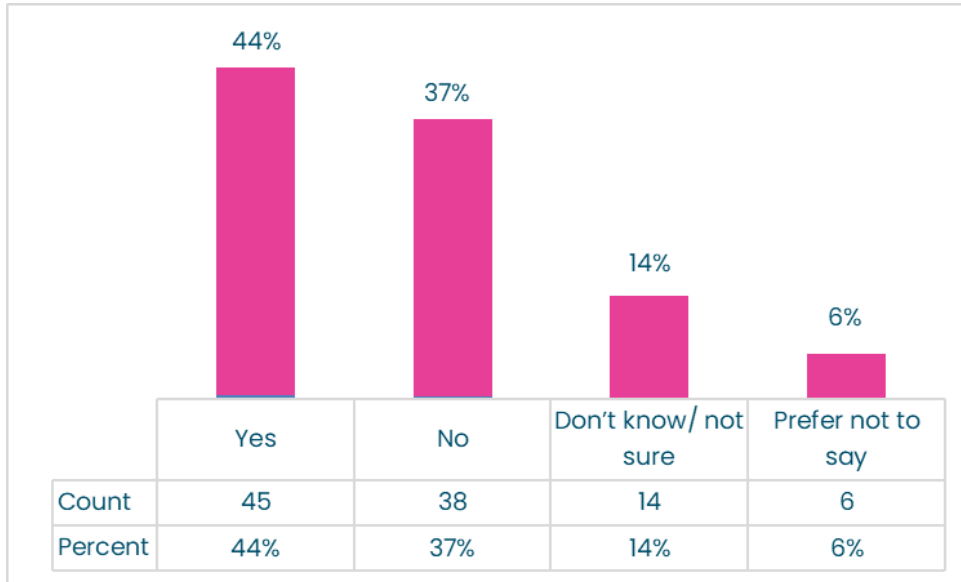
“Anyone can be body shamed, whether they're overweight, underweight or a healthy weight.”



“Reflecting your negative views and opinions to someone else based on your own insecurities.”

Question 2. Have you been impacted by body shaming?

The table below shows the responses we received:



The results show that most of those young people (44%) who responded have been impacted by body shaming.

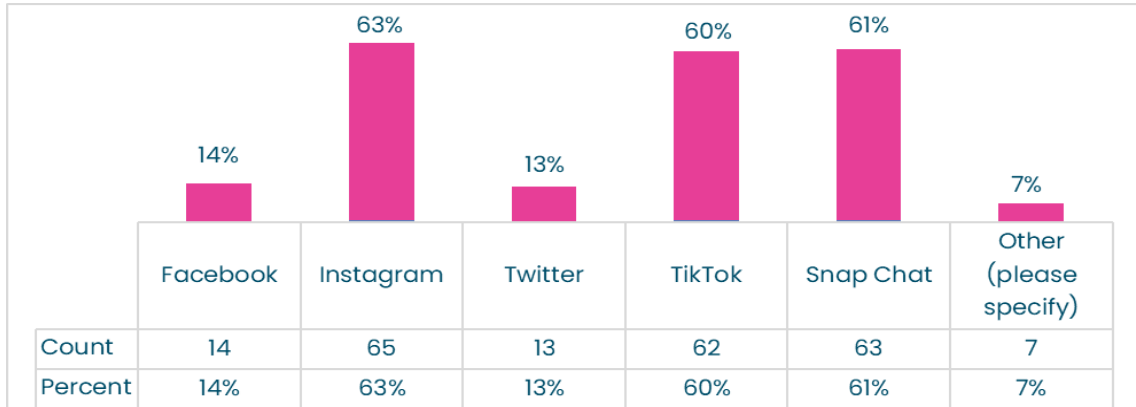
Those 45 who responded yes to the question were mostly female (62%) and of white ethnicity (71%)



"The fact that I've never been comfortable as being myself and although no one directly points it out it's in the small little things that they don't do make you realize that it's because of the way you look or the way you are."

Question 3. Which social media platforms do you use the most?

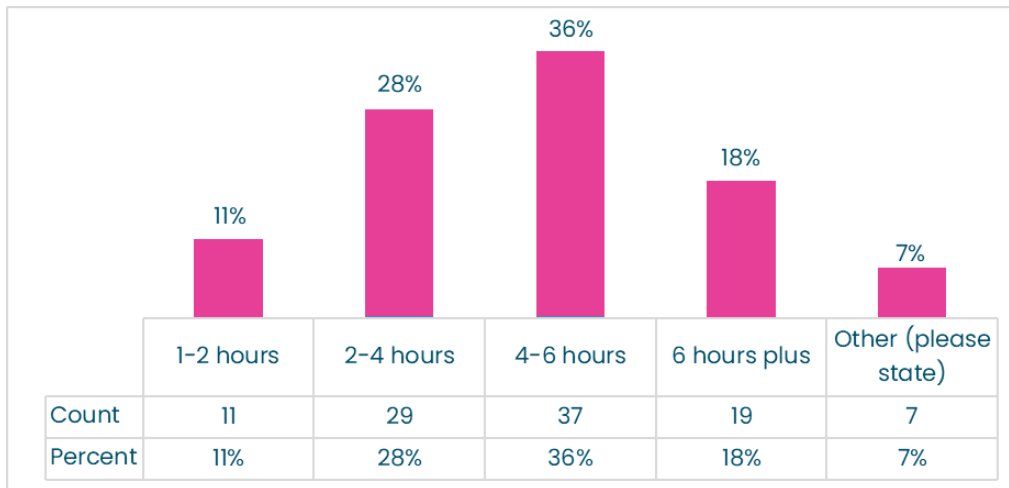
The table below shows the responses we received:



The results show the most used social media platforms are Instagram (63%), Snap Chat (61%) and TikTok (60%).

Question 4. How long do you spend on social media? (per day)

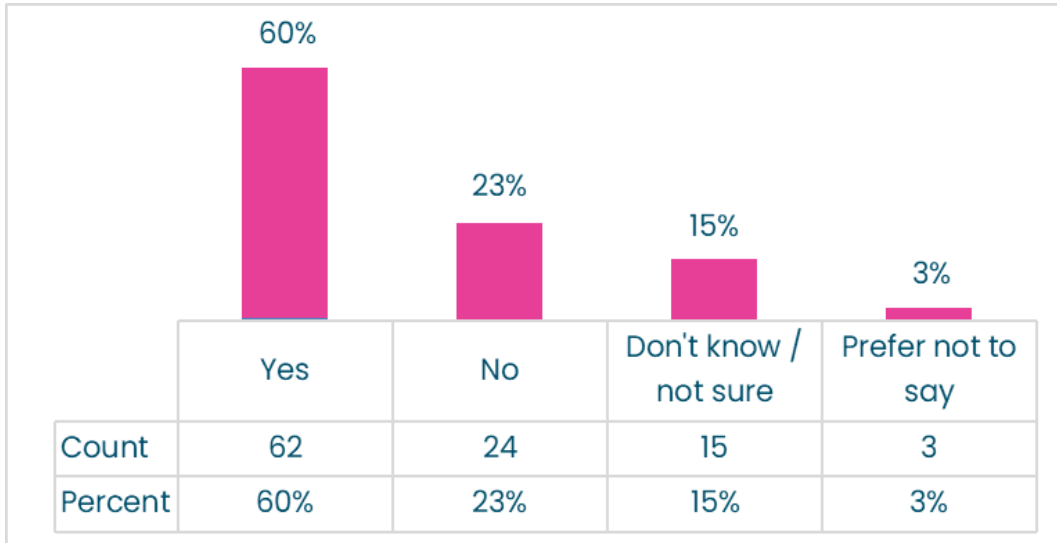
The table below shows the responses we received:



The results show that most of the respondents (36%) spend 4-6 hours or 2-4 hours per day (28%) on social media. Of those who responded other (7%) all stated they spend less than 1 hour per day on social media.

Question 5. Have you ever felt self-conscious about your body because of what you have seen on social media?

The table below shows the responses we received:

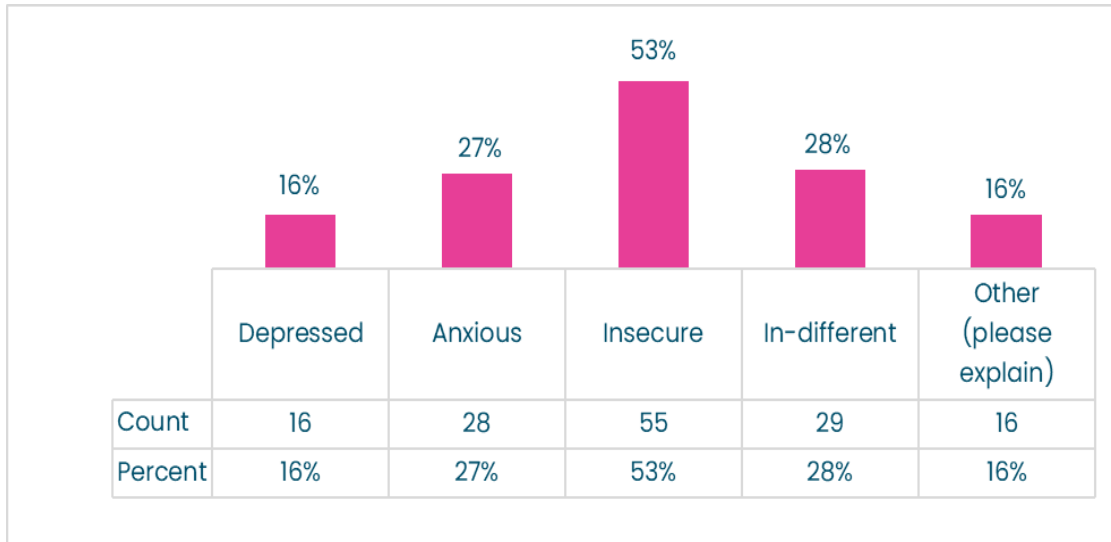


The results show that most respondents (60%) stated they were made to feel self-conscious about their body because of content they had seen on social media. Most of these respondents were female and of white ethnicity.

“Making individuals feel lesser or conscious of their body in a way that damages their self-esteem. It can be something like you're so skinny or you're so fat or anything to the effect of making people think their body is strange, different or wrong.”

Question 6. How does this make you feel?

The table below shows the responses we received:



Most respondents were negatively affected because of the content they have seen on social media.

Most young people stated that they felt insecure (53%) or anxious (27%).

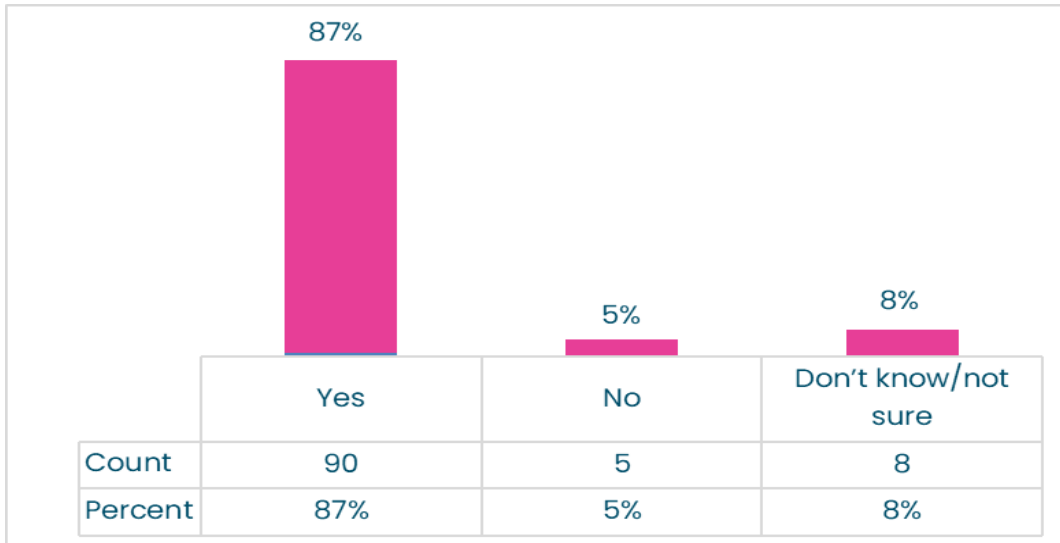
“It is not nice and can cause people to feel insecure.”

“It is not good and can make people feel sad.”

“Making comments that can make others feel insecure about how they look.”

Question 7. Do you think social media is a contributing factor to body shaming?

The graph below shows the responses we received:



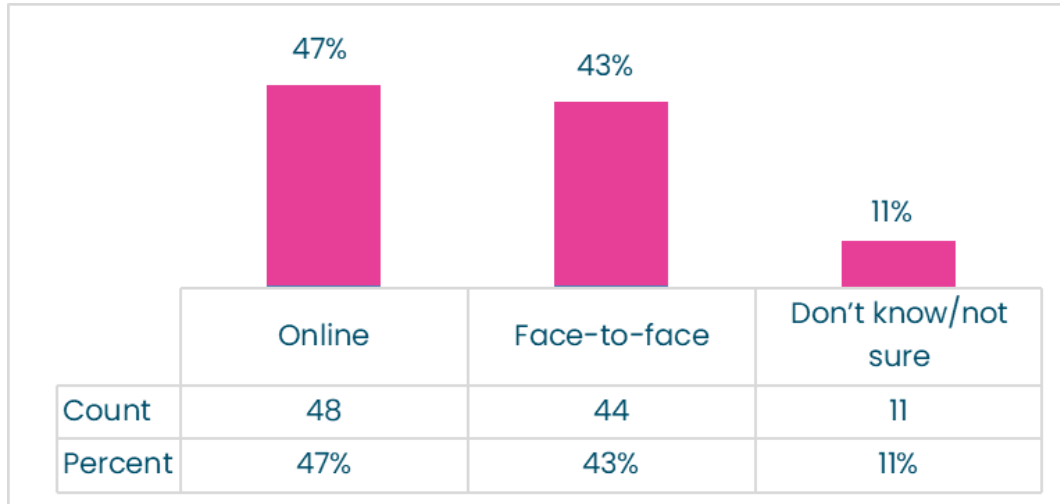
Most respondents (87%) when asked agreed that social media is a contributing factor to body shaming. Only 5% believed this was not so.



"It is comments/judgements based on someone's body which is disrespectful or unwanted. It can come from anyone including family or over social media."

Question 8. In your opinion, is body shaming worse online than face-to-face?

The table below shows the responses we received:



47% of respondents when asked believed that body shaming is worse online compared with 43% who believe it is worse face-to-face.

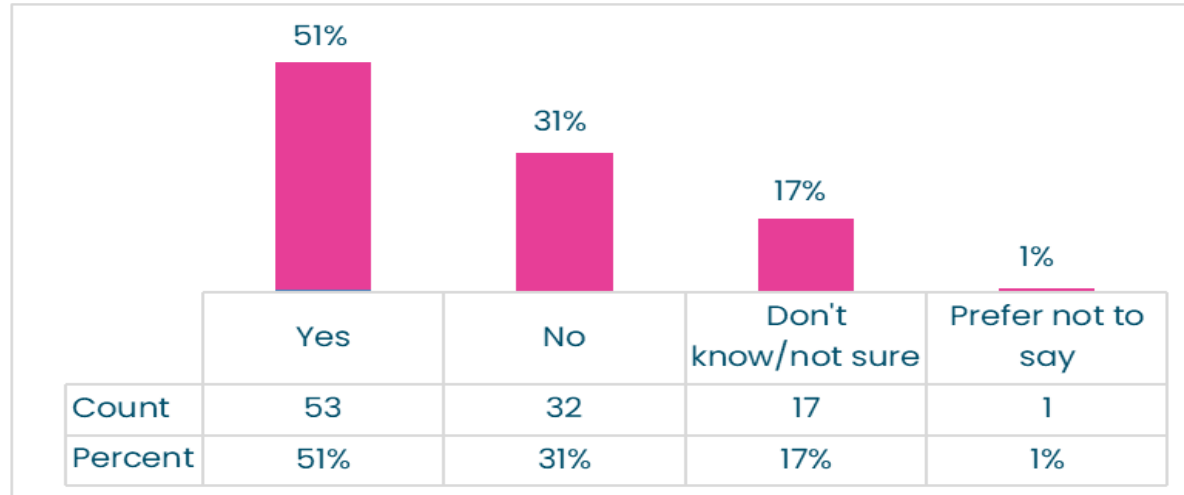


“Body shaming can happen both online and in person. It can involve using negative language towards a person based on their appearance and specifically their body.”



Question 9. If you needed support with issues linked to body shaming, would you know where to go?

The table below shows the responses we received:



Just over half of the respondents (51%) when asked stated that they would know where to go if they needed support as a result of issues related to being body shamed. A further 31% replied they wouldn't know where to go and a further 17% didn't know or were unsure where to seek support.

Of those who replied no or don't know/not sure, most were aged 17-18 (65%), were female (70%) and were either white (58%) or black, African or other black background (26%).

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