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FIFTY SHADES OF BEIGE

For many people buying makeup can be a curse. From too fair to too dark, many modern-day makeup brands have been known to still not be inclusive for darker shades of skin.

To understand the lack of representation of makeup in the media, we need to travel back in time about 6,000 years to Ancient Egypt. Women and men have worn cosmetics for centuries – the earliest historical record of makeup comes from the first Dynasty of Egypt. Tombs were discovered revealing products such as unguent to hydrate skin and avoid wrinkles to makeup products such as Kohl. Kohl was made from antimony (a metallic element) or soot. The Egyptian women used Kohl to decorate their eyes by applying dark green colour to their under lid and blackening their lashes.

Although makeup was worn to identify the wearer's status to others, it also had "magical benefits" supposedly ward off the evil eye. The cheeks and lips were blushed with red ochre (clay) and many powders were used to cover up unwanted blemishes on the skin such as goose fat.

Roman Philosopher Plautus (254-184 BC) wrote, "A woman without paint is like food without salt". It then transpired to Romans using cosmetics by the middle of the first century AD, they adapted the trend of using Kohl however used chalk for whitening the complexion.

Although makeup has evolved throughout the centuries, it still needs to change drastically to fit every type of skin colour. In current years, makeup brands have expanded their makeup skin tone range to cater for darker skin colours. One brand in particular, 'Fenty Beauty' had launched over 40 shades in 2017 and has increased its shade range since. For 2017,

that was a big milestone, many brands had a sparse shade range.

This sparked many other brands to make more shades as it highlighted their lack of inclusion to different ethnicities. This makes me wonder why the makeup industry had only started to produce a more inclusive shade range in the past century when makeup has been around since the Ancient Egyptians?

It's all caused by colourism. Colourism is discrimination/prejudice to individuals with a darker skin tone, especially within a racial or ethnic group. The makeup companies can provide lighter skin tones with foundation shades however, they can't use more pigment to include darker skin tones. It's subliminally discriminating people with or without even knowing they're doing it.



Leeds makeup artist and social media influence, Adiaratou Diarra or known on Instagram as [dinastyg_glam](#) says, "There's no representation. You will see different ethnicities only in a specific argument or paragraph dedicated to it. Such as fashion in Africa or beauty in colours etc. It has never bothered me too much because I knew this in a Caucasian country so I can't expect more melanin presence in the media. I have felt excluded four or five years ago, but not anymore. 90% of brands now have different shades and this is thanks to Fenty Beauty. Now even if you go to Primark you will find dark shades."



Instagram - [dinastyg_glam](#)

After asking if she felt there's been a change within social media for promoting more inclusive makeup brands? Diarra replied, "This depends on who you follow. The thing is, with social media, if you are looking for a makeup artist, only Caucasian makeup artists will come out. It's rare you will see at first glance a melanin MUA. Even if there's loads."

Diarra mentioned Fenty Beauty and if you search for anything to do with inclusive makeup Rihanna's makeup line 'Fenty Beauty' is first to be shown. On the official Fenty Beauty website it explains that Rihanna was inspired to create Fenty Beauty after years of experimenting with the best-of-the-best in beauty – and still seeing a void in the industry for products that performed across all skin types and tones. She

launched a makeup line "so that people everywhere would be included." Focusing on a wide range of traditionally hard-to-match skin tones, creating formulas that work for all skin types and pinpointing universal shades.

The makeup brand was a real shove for other brands to change their ways. When big companies ignore big groups of people purely because of skin tones, it tends to stem from the CEOs and people in charge of the makeup brands and their ideologies. With the toxic ideologies passively aggressively being shown through exclusion, it might make people feel unhappy in their own skin or have to put up with it. Especially with Adiaratou Diarra she had grown accustomed to the lack of diversity in the makeup industry in the UK and didn't think any less because she has been made to feel like that's the "norm."

I spoke to Farjana Begum, Coventry makeup artist or known as [makeupbyfarjana](#) on Instagram about how she felt about the lack of representation she may feel. "I think there has been a significant improvement than ever before on the representation of ethnicities in magazines. Now it is no surprise that you'll find the front page of a magazine being a proud and beautiful black woman. Yet, I believe there is still some room of improvement in this area. From my own experience I have noticed that some ethnicities are more represented than others. For example, black and Asian communities particularly of East Asia are commonly used for 'representation' whereas you'll find an odd few magazines on South Asian beauty. So, although the representation of ethnic backgrounds has increased, there's room for improvement."

Similar to Adiaratou Diarra, Farjana Begum expressed "A westernised Media was something we minorities were used to growing up. Many of us didn't think twice about it. We just felt that it was the norm really and we obviously were not part of that 'norm'. And we just accepted it as it was."

Begum continues: "Makeup has been a huge part of my life for as long as I can remember. I used to sneak into my mum's makeup bag, and I remember thinking why this shade does not

match her complexion... I found the answer to that question myself when I started buying a few products for myself a few years later. Majority of the shades catered towards light to fair skin tones with less than a handful for people of colour. It was difficult to find something to match us. To some it may have seen as though many POC were ashamed of their colour hence why they used shades which were much noticeably lighter. I believe that may have been the case for some yet, many did genuinely just struggle and had no shades to choose from... and so were unable to appreciate and show love towards their natural complexion colour.



Instagram - [makeupbyfarjana](#)

I started my makeup artist business recently. Near to 4 years. The change in the makeup industry on inclusion from 9 years ago, to 6 years ago to just 3 has been major. More shades and undertones have been created over time. With the achievement of a person of colour being the CEO behind a brand which made sure to be inclusive! For example, coming out with 42 shades of foundation - Juvia's place and Fenty beauty with 40 shades. Now the struggle to find a match for a client is non-existent. Although this was not always the case with all brands for example Tarte did have some controversy in 2018, with 15 shades and only 3 to cater to darker skin tones."

After asking if Begum believes there's been a

different approach for inclusion on social media, Farjana Begum says, "I do think that there has been a change in the makeup industry. Brands now have acknowledged that society loves representation and to showcase that they are also inclusive, a substantial number of models, who are of colour, are selected in campaigns to wear and promote these inclusive shades and demonstrate the representation that the brand believe in. This in turn attracts POC and ethnic minorities, making the makeup industry a better place."

I think it's great more makeup brands are providing us with inclusive beauty. Juvias place, an affordable makeup brand that can be found in Superdrug quote, "We believe in inclusive beauty. Our customers are women. Our customers are men. Our customers have skin tones in the fairest fairs to the deepest darks. The Juvia's tribe is where we celebrate our customers that come to us from all walks of life.

"Founder Chichi Eburu struggled to find make-up suited for her deep skin tone. What was available were muted colours, and products that didn't enhance the true richness of her skin tone. She searched for years to find cosmetics that would enhance the dark hues of her skin tone without making her look lighter or greyer, makeup that offered colours that weren't muted against her rich skin colour."

Makeup should be designed for everyone and Juvia's place not only provide a large range of foundation shades but have enhanced all products. Products like blush and bronzers might not always be designed for darker shades too. Which makes so much sense because if makeup users can't even find their own shade of foundation why would pigments be bright enough or complimenting for darker skin tones.

This coincides with skin whitening, also known as skin lightening/bleaching is the practice of using chemicals in attempt to lighten the skin or provide an even skin colour by reducing the melanin concentration in the skin.

Allied market research states the global skin lightening products market was valued at around \$7.05 billion in 2021 and is projected to reach \$14.60 billion by 2031. According to

Future Market Insight, China comprises 40% of sales in Asia, Japan 21%, and South Korea 18%. The world Health Organisation in 2011 showed that 40% of African women bleach their skin.

Many women are willing to go any length to attain lighter complexions despite knowing the consequences. For example, skin bleaching creams made outside the United states have been linked to mercury toxicity. Mercury poisoning can include numbness, high blood pressure, fatigue, sensitivity to light, neurologic symptoms such as memory loss and more and kidney failure.

Historically, skin bleaching started in the Victorian era with the use of powder and paint (what we now call foundation) it was a way of communicating "purity". At that time race was being solidified as a concept as the Victorian era overlapped through slavery and Britain abolished slavery in 1833/1834. Whiteness was defined as pure and black unfortunately wasn't.

The practice carried on throughout history. As it's a worldwide practice it carried down from generation to generation to try to fit into westernised standards. However, this can be very damaging to people located in African or Asian countries because of the heat and harmful UV rays. Melanin provides pigmentation to your skin, eyes and hair. The substances absorb



harmful Ultraviolet rays and protects your cells from sun damage. It is believed when people migrated from Africa over 40,000 years ago to Northern latitudes drove genetic mutations to reduce the pigment of melanin because there wasn't as much UV to synthesize vitamin D. Therefore, evolving pale skin to absorb UV.

There is a deeply rooted cultural norm in Asia that dark skin has long been associated with working in the fields and therefore meaning rural poverty. Whereas pale skin is associated with living a more comfortable, cosmopolitan lifestyle indoors. Skin colour therefore still tied with social class.

A vogue article written by Audrey Noble states she was only nine when she received her first (and last) skin lightening product from her aunt from the Philippines. "On the label, it promised to exfoliate dead skin, fade away dark spots, and lighten my skin... After my aunt's visit, I found the soap in my shower, which I took as a not-so-subtle hint that I should start using it."

This shows that the harmful bleaching of skin can not only cause serious consequences both physically but mentally, it is the norm in Asian and African countries to bleach your skin. Several African countries including Rwanda, Ghana and South Africa have banned the use of skin bleaching to stop the vicious cycle.

With products such as skin whitening and makeup it's hard for people to feel content with their skin colour. Colourism is a global issue and the main cause is the beauty industry and the media. If makeup and the media was more inclusive, people would feel more represented. They wouldn't revert to toxic products like skin whitening.

Farjana Begum said, "The change in the makeup industry on inclusion from 9 years ago, to 6 years ago to just 3 has been major. More shades and undertones have been created over time. With the achievement of a person of colour being the CEO behind a brand which made sure to be inclusive!"

Although their mixed emotions on whether there has been more representation in the makeup industry, some brands have tried to become more inclusive. However, makeup brand Essence which launch their new foundation 'Keep me covered' and matching concealer set in 2023 have only 15 shades.

who is fair skinned whereas Chichi Eburu CEO of Juvia's Place is dark skinned. Companies should promote inclusivity and the beauty of every shade.

However, makeup companies are still in 2023 excluding certain skin types. If makeup companies like Fenty Beauty and Juvia's place

can make a vast shade range to cater to different complexions – so should every other company. Foundation colours are developed using mineral oxides such as titanium dioxide for white, iron oxides for yellow, red and black. Various combinations of the four basic colours created an infinite number of shades. Therefore, this indicates companies are discriminating certain skin tones and consequently not representing certain ethnicities.

Makeup lovers such as Adiaratou Diarra, Farjana Begum and Golloria finally have platforms like social media to speak out on this injustice. Nevertheless, beauty products such as skin whitening, and non-inclusive makeup brands have to listen to customers. I



Makeup Muddle - Essence Keep me covered long lasting foundation

Fashion and lifestyle influencer Golloria posted a TikTok video in January after receiving a PR package with the new makeup line. She was appalled after trying the darkest shades and being extremely light on her complexion. Golloria says, "This being the darkest shade of the essence brand new foundation is ridiculous... for new complexion product launches, tone inclusivity should be your priority." After trying on the shades, she then says, "It is 2023 dark skin women have been excluded from the beauty industry for literally far too long. It's very telling of the type of company you are and it's really disheartening as a person with a darker complexion to see stuff like this."

The contrast between Essence's 15 shade range to Juvia's Place foundation range of 42 shades that launched in 2019, it is very telling. Both available in the drugstores however Essence's CEO and Co-Founder is Christina Oster-Daum

think there's a lot more work to be done to change the makeup industry. It just shows representation of different ethnicities hasn't yet successfully been achieved.



Cocoa Swatches - Juvia's Place foundation



SHAPE OF YOU

The movement body positivity has gotten a lot of extra attention in the past few years. Especially with social media, it's easier to spread the acceptances of every type of body, regardless size, shaped, skin tone and gender.

When I was younger, I'd look at my fellow dance friends and envy their petite figures, at a young age I thought I was fat. How can I nine-year-old think such a thing? As I've grown older, I've been "skinny", I've been "curvy". The thing I hate the most is walking into Zara. Zara is targeted for petite women, I'd say I'm average sized, I could exercise more and eat a few less Jaffa cakes... but all in all, I'm fairly average. But as soon as I step into those changing room, I start to sweat with dread.

I couldn't think of anything worse than going clothes shopping with my friends, the ooh's and ah's as they say, "Omg that would look totally cute on you!" and then I step out the dressing room with defeat smothered on my face because I couldn't even get it on. Even with a size large.

This is due to not feeling represented in the media. Growing up Disney channel were cast with only a few "plus sized" characters. For example, Wizards of Waverly Place had a character called Harper and subconsciously she was still the plus side character you see in every movie or tv show. Even though she was a healthy size subconsciously she was made the "fat friend".

Actress Nicola Coughlan most known for her roles in Bridgerton and Derry girls received immense backlash and unwanted opinions about her weight. She told The Irish Times in 2020 about the role in Derry Girls, "It was wild, because I was a size 10 filming series one and I got called "the big one"! I was like, Are you serious? I'm not this gigantic sumo wrestler,

and even if I were, would it matter? Would it be relevant?"

Reflecting on her role on Bridgerton she said, "It's referenced, but it's not the defining characteristic of Penelope. I think that's what bother me: we try and reduce women to the size of their body, and there's so much more than that."



Cosmopolitan - Derry Girls

According to Break binge eating, more than 50% of adults from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, France and Germany reported experiencing weight stigma. Weight stigma is receiving negative comments or "health concerns" about your weight from anyone, including health care professionals.

It's extremely hard to deal with negative thoughts about your own weight when social media gives you endless access to idealistic and fake ideals about women and men's bodies. However, apps designed for face tuning and photoshop are available at the touch of a button. This means models and influencers will airbrush and photoshop photos to make them look more attractive but don't disclose that they have.

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These scenarios create unrealistic beauty standards because even models don't look like that – this makes normal people feel inadequate because they don't look like this.

Instagram is extremely full of toxic weight loss gags, such as weight loss teas and “vitamins” that help you lose weight. It's essentially a scam because natural tea's such as Oolong tea and green tea do have scientific evidence that they promote healthy blood pressure and regulate appetite. Nevertheless, weight loss teas can be dangerous due to a lot of diet teas having laxatives in them and laxatives shouldn't be used on a daily basis.



Instagram influencers can make thousands off promoting weight loss teas however not required to even understand or use the product they're promoting. Instagram told Insider magazine that they recently began blocking weight loss product advertisements to users under the age of 18.

Male body positivity isn't recognised as widely as women and trans. Societies expectancy of men obtaining an extremely muscular physique impacts men of all ages. Breaking binge eating reported nearly 22% of young men engage in muscle-enhancing behaviours, for example eating more or differently to build muscle, supplement use and even androgenic-anabolic steroid use.

20-year-old Harry said, “The body positivity movement positively affected me because I don't have abs, but it showed you don't need them to be attractive. I feel like the dad bod is coming back, I think it shows a lot for so-

cial media. It makes me feel good that there's people that have my body type and that they're being shown - it makes me feel included.

I've suffered due to male stigma. I think as well when you compare yourself to other people like before on Instagram it was men with massive shoulders, massive chests, six packs, ripped to shreds. Seeing that and not seeing people that look like you on social media, it's nice that it has changed.”

Harry is one of many men that suffer in silence due to unrealistic body standards for men and women. After holding an online survey 44% of young adults between 19-25 agreed the body positivity movement had a positive effect on them. With 39% saying they disagreed and 17% haven't even heard of the body positivity movement.

After asking “how does social media make you feel about your own body?” some anonymous answers were:

“The ‘model figure’ now is being quite toned and petite, so I never feel good enough.”

“That it's completely healthy to want to work out and improve yourself, and that this should be encouraged.”

“It makes you feel bad sometimes comparing yourself to others.”



“No matter how woke the internet becomes people will always compare themselves”

“Makes me feel constant pressure to constantly be getting in better shape.”

“A bit insecure but I know social media isn't an accurate representation of reality”

“Social media has a big impact on how you look at yourself. It's such a toxic environment to compare yourself to others when everyone's bodies different, I'm not overly fussed, I love myself to an extent but the reality of it sounds deeper from someone else's perspective”

Even though this survey was open to both women and men, only one of the answers was written by a female. It really shows that men are willing to talk about it if they had the platform and encouragement that other people receive but due to male stigma they hold back.

20-year-old Navy Engineer Technician Luke Stevenson said, “Being in the navy I don't feel I'm pressure to eat clean and exercise. There is a fitness test yearly to maintain fitness but the rest of the year it's your choice to exercise and what you eat. Most of the food/meals they sell on base aren't very nutritional. You can obviously make better choices than going to Greggs or buying burger and chips, but the food standards are pretty poor, so people don't really make the clean choices.”



After asking if he felt his body type was represented on social media he said, “I wouldn't say so no, I feel like my body shape is sometimes shown as more of a negative which does make me thing bad of the way I look sometimes but I try not let it.”

“Definitely in the last few years it seems to be coming up on social media like TikTok quite a lot more on ways to look. I would say I was overweight a few years back and it did get to me that I didn't look the way I ‘should have’ looked. But after working out and getting into a better healthier shape I'd say I'm happier now even without being at these standards set on the internet”

It's a positive that the navy don't try to push healthy and athletic standards onto recruits, I personally have always thought you would have a strict diet and exercise regime whilst serving in the navy or any type of army.

I think the body positivity movement has a long way to go, I think it should also provide more help for men as I discovered a lot of the men on the survey were happy to discuss it anonymously but found it hard to speak publicly about it. It's all due to societies pressures on men to be “more masculine” or to “not have feelings”.

A campaign well recognised is the Dove self-esteem project, Dove have been building self-esteem in young people since 2004. In recent years, dove launches it's first-of-its kind Roblox game – specifically created to challenge unrealistic beauty standards and build self-esteem. Dove says “Today, 1.3 billion women and girls play video games globally.” “60% of girls have started playing video games before the age of 10.”

However, Dove believe the gaming industry is falling short in representation of girls and women in gaming. I know first-hand that a lot of Xbox and PlayStation games have women characters that are big busted and tiny physics which is an unrealistic beauty standard for many. The entirely free game ‘Super U



Dove - Super U Story on Roblox



Story’ is a game to explore connections, build communities and express your true self without negatively impacting their self-esteem like other games can.

With more companies throughout the world trying to change with campaigns to promote all different body types, it could hopefully change representation of societies norms. Many people aren’t represented, and it has series implications on mental health. Actors that are normal sized are considered plus sized because the audience isn’t used to normal-larger body types playing roles on the screen. Hopefully in the future, more influencers on social media will find happiness in their true form and stop photoshopping and face tuning their photos. Then we can all feel more happier and positive in our own skin due to not scrolling through Instagram and seeing people who look more “skinnier” and “prettier” than us, when in reality it’s fake.



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“YOU DON’T LOOK DISABLED”

As I was scrolling through TikTok, a young seemingly able-bodied Australian woman was talking about a situation that had happened. The woman shows her disabled parking permit and says she parks in a disabled parking space and leaves the car minding her own business when an older man came up to her and says, “You don’t look disabled.” As she rightfully vents to her TikTok, she says “I’m sorry, do you want me to cut off my legs so that I look disabled enough for you? Like let me get out the car and be bent over limping just so that I fit your idea of disabled.”

The phrase “so that I fit your idea of disabled” was so powerful. You don’t realise how much stigma has correlated around disabilities. Disabilities come in all shaped and sizes, some visible some not. Many disabilities are over-looked because they’re seemingly more able-bodied. However, this is not the first, many people shared their stories about how they were publicly scrutinised because they weren’t “disabled enough.”

A young British woman explained on her TikTok that she had got onto a bus and placed herself on a priority seat at the front of the bus. There were four priority seats all empty except the one she was sitting on.

She clarifies that she is paralysed in the bottom of her leg due to having a brain disease. An older woman gets on and public announces to the whole bus “When will people realise that disabled seats are for disabled people” The Tiktoker was the only person sat on a disabled seat.

The older woman then continues with “can you not read the sign, it clearly says priority seats for disabled people.” The young woman stuck her zebra print carbon fibre leg and put down her walking stick and says, “I am disabled and when will people realise that disability has no

look and disability has no age.”



The stories the women shared extend the question: where did the stigma generate from? People with disabilities have been stigmatised throughout history. In many cultures’ disabilities have been associated with curses, disease and helplessness. People with disabilities may be left out of social activities, presumed helpless due to not being able to care for themselves or make decisions by themselves. They may find they’re denied jobs, housing and opportunities in life purely due to false assumptions and stereotypes. People with disabilities may also be targeted in hate crimes or sexual violence due to the helplessness stigma.

Recently I stumbled on a Facebook post that has been circling social media. A midlands local who describes himself as a vulnerable wheelchair user had a support worker for around a year. She worked with him a lot and even went on holiday together. During the last three months of working with him, the support worker stole around £2,000 from his bank accounts without his knowledge. The support worker was aware of his circumstances of having little family in the local area and needing a support worker to depend on. The money she stole was

left to him in his mum’s will which the support worker was aware of. He says the support worker “lied to me and abused my trust and her power... this experience has really effected my trust and mental health.”

This shows that people take advantage due to disabilities even support workers who choose their career to purely help others. Social media is the biggest instigator of stigma in disabilities. Social media is a platform to help educate people and show awareness but representation in the media for disabled people is slim.

I interviewed Diyanah Khan or known on Instagram as Dee. She’s a lifestyle and beauty blogger from East Midlands. Her platform is targeted to advocate for disabilities. She says, “You don’t really see many disabled people unless you search for them. I myself have used certain hashtags regarding my disability and it



Diyanah Khan

hasn’t reached to many people at all. I understand every disability is different but even on my search page on Instagram nothing comes up at all regarding disabled people.

“The inspirational lifestyle and beauty blogger explained, “I lost my memory through a seizure so I had to restart my life again, I can’t say much about growing up but you don’t really see much at all in the media regarding a disabled person unless it’s about an issue or a death. I would love to see more inclusivity as with regards to being disabled and showing different ethnicities. My social media is growing slowly but surely as I myself have been quite ill so

have not been able to show much about my life. I have had a few disabled followers which is good to know I’m not alone.”

For Diyanah Khan Instagram is a way for her to feel more included she makes content so that she can find others in similar situations so she can feel more included. Diyanah Khan would love to see more disabled people in the media because the only thing she really sees is negative posts such as deaths.

The United department of Economic and social affairs disability have been trying to change perceptions and try to show a more accurate and balanced portrayal of disabilities without the negative connotations attached. Public events which are excellent opportunities to raise-awareness and conduct outreach supported by the UN are:

- Worlds Down syndrome day – 21st March
- World Autism Awareness day – 2nd April
- World Mental Health day -10th October
- World sight day – second Thursday in October
- World AIDS day – 1st December
- International day of Persons with disabilities – 3rd December
- Human Rights Day – 10th December
- Inclusion saves lives – DiDRR campaign

The main denominator of negative connotations mainly stems from fashion – if you’re not a size 0 and tall then you’re not model material. In recent years the fashion industry is starting to change.

I recently saw a TikTok come up on my for you page from British Vogue, with the caption “PSA: This is how you do inclusivity in fashion” with a mix of ladies from pregnant to plus to disabled. A striking bright pink garment was fitted onto the young model, she strutted the catwalk in a motorised wheelchair.

The comments had mixed reactions, and a few posted onto the TikTok on the lines of “bring 90s models back.” Which defeats the object of the whole idea of this inclusive fashion show. I delve deeper into Sinead O’Dwyer she graduated from the MA fashion program at London’s



Instagram - Sinead O'Dwyer

Royal College of Art.

On the London Fashion Week, it says, "Sinead O'Dwyer's eponymous label has adamantly reframed common misconceptions around garments and the bodies they're intended for. Rallying against a sample-size-oriented design logic, her work explores silicone moulding, stretch and innovative pattern-making as technologies to comfortably accommodate femme-identifying bodies that have historically been precluded access to luxury ready-to-wear... Sinead O'Dwyer's designs reflect the kaleidoscopic spectrum of feminine expression for all body shapes and size."

However, it's a long time coming, disabilities have been around for centuries and only now making appearance on high-end fashion shows. New York and London Fashion Week 2022 positioned themselves at the front of inclusivity by featuring models with visible disabilities. But the real reality is that the venues themselves are inaccessible to attendees or staff, with some venues only reachable via stairs or tiny hallways and seating on benches that allow no room for wheelchair users.

One collab which strayed away from the norm of New York Fashion Week was provided by Artizia and Open Style Lab whom came together with the spinal muscular atrophy community to create 'Double Take, a first-of-its-kind' fashion show. The show featured members of the spinal muscular atrophy community modelling

adaptive clothing designs created for them. It was placed at ground floor space on Fifth Avenue.

The clothes were not only designed but thought out to accommodate the needs of the community. For example, Shane Burcaw a social media influencer wore a purple velvet suit with stretch panels at the elbows to facilitate bending and invisible zippers for separating the sleeves and back for easier dressing. Which I thought was a great idea - it's great putting disabled models on the catwalk but the designers also need to think about the target audience a normal suit would be quite restrictive and harder to put on and off.



Stat News - Shane and Hannah Burcaw

Vogue interviewed Michael Dunn, Genetech's Senior Director of Marketing and he said, "As an organization, we wanted to partner closely with and listen to the community to really understand their perspective and what opportunities exist. One common theme that rang really true across our listening tour was around the need for adaptive clothing and how with items off-the-rack there's often a need for individuals with disabilities to make adaptive adjustments themselves".

This is creating the idea that not everyone can even wear the clothes designers make so it's great they collaborated so they could understand because as an abled body you wouldn't think about the struggles you may face with

wearing clothes because they're catered towards abled bodies and not everybody.

London Fashion Week hosted a panel in collaboration with the British Fashion Council and Valuable 500 to explore disability inclusion, addressing the challenges and triumphs within the fashion industry.

The Valuable 500 have built a global collective of 500 CEOs and their companies who have committed to change for people with disabilities. The basis of collaborating is "to not leave disabled people behind" and in fact help disabled people get into work and are supported and have access to products and services.

The latest estimates from the Family Resources Survey indicate that 14.6 million people in the UK had a disability in the 2020/21 financial year. Which represents 22% of the total population. With over a large percentage of people disabled, have platforms like social media begun to break through the barriers of representation towards disabled?

I spoke to Beth Cooper a lifestyle blogger from the UK who promotes skin and body positivity on Instagram and who also suffers from chronic health issues.



Instagram - realbeautywithbeth

Cooper says, "Growing up I wasn't disabled, it wasn't until I was 17/18, I really experienced a lot of chronic health issues and began to need my wheelchair and walking stick etc. However, I don't remember anyone really prominent in the media who were disabled. I now have a 4-year-old niece who I'm close with, and I notice a lot more representation. Whether this is within story books, on tv or within toys. I got her a wheelchair Barbie for Christmas!

I'd love to see brands asking what they can do to make things accessible for all. I think most large-scale brands should have disability advisors on their teams - how can we make sure the events are accessible, their websites, products etc."

After asking whether she felt disabilities were represented in the media she says, "Representation is definitely increasing, but barely! I'm grateful to see more amazing disabled creators out there, but I feel you have to actively seek them out!

Brands tend not to repost us or give disabled creators the same opportunities. Not necessarily active discrimination, but more so not realising the barriers which disabled people face and keep us away from opportunities. Social

media, for me personally in this aspect has been fantastic. I've met so many incredible disabled people, who share some of my struggles. Even if we have completely different conditions, I find most disabled people feel a little isolated and left behind. It's great to be able to create a community online, to support each other."

Both Beth Cooper and Diyanah Khan shared that they struggle to find people online that share similar disabilities. It may feel isolating like Beth Cooper expressed; this is because when you're going through something it's always comforting to have support from others going through the same thing.

The media are inclusive with disabilities for example, tv shows like Glee that premiered in 2009 stars Lauren Potter who has down syndrome who played Becky Jackson. However, there's movies and tv programmes still being made who highlight disabilities in the story line however aren't played by disabled people.

For example, the movie Music which premiered in 2021 is about a girl called Xu finding her way in the world when she receives news that she is sole guardian of her half-sister Music, a young girl on the autism spectrum. Yet Maddie Ziegler was cast as the autistic young girl but doesn't have autism.



The Independent - Music

Another situation similar is the Netflix tv show Atypical which premiered in 2017 and has had multiple seasons since is about a teen called Sam who's on the autism spectrum finding his way through the world. The actor who plays Sam also known as Keir Gilchrist is not autistic.

After exploring these shows it says the actors did a great deal of research to get to the point where they could play an autistic person. But why didn't they just cast an autistic person? Among the disabled community this practice is known as "cripping up" which refers to able-bodied actors "dressing up" as disabled characters. This practice is excluding many disabled actors who would bring more insight into the characterisation.

In September 2020 the academy of Motion Arts and Picture Sciences announced that It would be introducing new standards for rep-

resentation which films will need to meet to qualify for an Oscar. This is because in the past actors portraying disabled characters would win awards such as Marlee Matlin who played a disabled character won best actress for her role in Children of a lesser God. Approximately there were 61 nominees for Academy Awards of actors portraying disabled characters and only two out of the 27 winning Oscars were disabled.

This shines a light on ableism when there are millions of disabled actors out there with a range of disabilities that could fit into the roles perfectly, they choose an able-bodied actor. It doesn't show the correct representation because even though the storyline is based on a disabled person if they don't cast the role to a disabled person why even make it?

Consequently, people such as Diyanah Khan and Beth Cooper won't feel represented because they turn the tv on to watch a programme to find disabled actors more likely fitting into the storyline with non-disabled narratives.

I think some able-bodied people have two extremely different perspectives on disabled people- that being they're too disabled, or not disabled enough. Therefore, not being cast as it would be "easier" to get a non-disabled actor to research the role on how to act disabled or simply parking in a disabled parking space when they don't seem "disabled" will lead to harassment like the Australian TikTokker. Stigma around disabilities is still high however, if it was correctly represented in social media or tv it wouldn't be the case. It would make people like Beth Cooper not feel as isolated because she would feel more represented.



PERCEPTION



PERCEPTION

WHAT A DRAG!

Drag queens have been filling up the screens on social media and tv but where did it all come from?

Although not necessarily called drag queens, they first played their starring role in society in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Shakespearean theatre brought a whole new twist on entertainment when the Church only allowed men to play the roles in plays. This meant female roles were actually played by men. The word “drag” was believed to have theatrical connotations due to the dress’s men wore to play females would drag along the floor.

Even though this type of drag isn’t exactly the same as the term used today, it was a way for men to start expressing a different side of themselves, over-exaggerating feminine looks, style and body language to create their female persona’s.

Since then drag has evolved to drag queens and drag kings which are women who dress up as males. Though drag has been around for centuries, it’s still widely unaccepted in certain places. Governor of Tennessee, Bill Lee has set out to ban drag. 32 bills have been filed in: Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

Tennessee was the first to pass its bill into permanent law the start of March 2023. The law bars “adult cabaret performances” on public property or in places where children may view the performances. With charges of misdemeanor or even felony charges if broken.

The bill prevents people from self-expression. Many performers feel it gives them a voice or a



way to explore sexual and gender identity and expression. It also helps them to feel acceptance within themselves.

RuPaul a queer icon known for RuPaul’s drag race posted an Instagram reel discussing his feelings towards the new bill said, “It’s a classic distraction technique, distracting us away from the real issues they were voted into office to focus on jobs, healthcare, keeping our children safe from harm at their own schools”.

RuPaul’s Drag Race included many firsts for season 14 which premiered in 2022, it was the first for a heterosexual man ‘Maddy Morphosis’ to compete and contestant ‘Willow Pill’ won the title of ‘America’s Next Drag Superstar’ and became the first transgender contestant to win. Drag Race UK season 3 featured the first ever cis-women contestant, called ‘Victoria Scone’. The show has challenged stereotypes of only gay men being drag queens because this is not the case. It really challenges how we think about gender identity and expression.

To investigate further I created a survey to ask the general public what they thought of Drag Queens.

"I think they're very confident people who don't care what other people think of them."
"Great at makeup"
"A little weird but they don't affect me"
"Not for under 16 but fine otherwise"
"They're a bit weird but I'm sure they're entertaining if you're into them"
"Scary and disgusting"
"Love them!"
"If it makes them happy crack on"

Overall, there was quite mixed reviews from weird and disgusting to adoring them or not really fussed. 96% of young people said they had heard of drag queens and only 4% said they didn't know what drag queens were.

It's unfortunate Drag Queens aren't well-liked within the straight community, it really helps young people experiment and figure out how they identify or a great way to express themselves.

The Yard is the number one's LGBTQ venue



in Coventry, with events throughout the week and special events like Mother's Day bingo and brunch to weekly karaoke sessions, it's a great way for people to feel included. Drag performances are quite popular but bars have collaborated with Drag Queens to get even more exposure for Drag queens. 'Tonight Josephine' a cocktail bar is a well-known bar to have drag performances. With venues in major cities it's a great way to have bottomless brunch with fun entertainment! From Beyonce

tributes to drag bingo it's a fun way to incorporate drag shows and alcohol.

A few years ago, I was fortunate to watch a drag performance at the Alara Bistro in Nuneaton, in a small town it was quite exciting because there hadn't been much drag performances before.

Miss Tish Ewe started her show off by singing 'One night only' by Jennifer Hudson and surprisingly she hit every note. The night progressed and funny stories and dirty jokes were told – it was a real crowd pleaser. The performance ended with Miss Tish Ewe taking off her wig, dress and makeup left wearing a bodysuit



and padding which drag queens were to get a womanly figure. It was a great way to end the show, she was showing her true self and was vulnerable to the audience.

Miss Tish Ewe (also known as Andrew Livingstone) admitted her daytime career was a head teacher at "Horatio House" in Great Yarmouth which unfortunately closed late 2019. Great Yarmouth Community Trust and parents of the school thought the two jobs were "incompatible" after videos of his drag performances were viewed. On the brighter side, Miss Tish Ewe still does drag performances and in November 2022 starred on BBC Radio Norfolk.

The media often demonise drag queens and although drag performances are more age appropriate for young adults, Shirley Delta Blow a drag queen from Denver, USA uses drag story time to defend the negative connotations towards drag queens. Moving away from her

normal drag performances, Shirley Delta Blow reads to children in drag. In 2017 she volunteered to participate in drag queen story time.



Advocate - Stuart Stanks/Shirley Delta Blow

In fact, Blow is a long-time educator who teaches third- grade, she believes the argument that drag queens are trying to indoctrinate kids or that the over-the-top outfits will somehow affect kids' sexual orientation is silly and absurd. She combines her love for drag with her love for education. In the story times she reads picture books to young children that are about acceptance, confidence, kindness, self-esteem and compassion.

In Advocate magazine's interview with Shirley Delta Blow, she said, "I love reading, reading inspired me and opened my eyes to the world. So why would you not want to share the joy of reading with kids who see a character from a book reading to them in real life?" Blow adds, "We are actors. We are dancers. We are performers. So, when I'm hired to go and do a drag queen story time, I understand my audience."

I think this is a great collaboration for drag and children. For educators like Miss Tish Ewe and Shirley Delta Blow they receive immense backlash for being part-time educators and drag queens. The negative connotations towards drag queens means working with children can be difficult. Events like drag story time is a great way to break those negative connotations

whilst advocating to younger audiences that drag and being gay is acceptable. It's a great way to educate children properly and bring them up with more than one way of life.

Whilst drag's main purpose is to perform it's also used as self-expression and celebration of LGBTQ+ community. RuPaul's Drag Race is well-known however it is the only mainstream tv show. There are spin offs of the show from RuPaul or a few other tv shows such as: Super Drags are cartoon on Netflix or Drag SOS which travel around the UK on a mission to help transform random participants from students to single mums into a more confident version of themselves. However, not many un drag related tv shows will cameo drag queens.

Insider magazine interviewed Brandon Austin from Kent, England who said, "I wasn't myself at all. Nobody was gay, and I was an easy target for bullies. I felt abnormal. Then at 16, my best friend introduced me to 'RuPaul's Drag Race. Without RuPaul's Drag Race I wouldn't have had the confidence to come out as gay, I think I'd still be a few years away from coming out."

This is the very reason there needs to be more representation of Drag Queens and LGBTQ+ community in the spotlight. It can be very hard to come out and be proud of who you are, but with openly gay people on the tv it helps others become more accepting and also more comfortable to be gay. With the negativity surround drag queens and the LGBTQ+ community it's hard for people to feel accepted and want to be open.

Therefore, there needs to be more representation in the media such as more tv shows or cameos. With more actors in the spotlight from the LGBTQ+ community it will bring more social acceptance because it will become more of the "norm". We also need more positive events such as drag queen story times; I think it's an excellent way to teach children that this is acceptable and what better way than reading stories about confidence, kindness, self-esteem, compassion and acceptance to children. It will bring positive connotations on social media towards the LGBTQ+ community.

PERCEPTION

Problematic love...

Is love island merely a reflection of real-life toxicity?

Love Island it's like marmite, we either love it or we hate it. A drama filled show where groups of men and women participate to find the love of their life. But we all know that some of the participants are just in love with that £50,000 winning at the end...

The thought behind Love Island is sweet but being under the camera 24/7 and having little break from the rest of the Islanders, tension rises instantly. Ofcom revealed Love Island was hit with 54 complaints for the episode broadcasted on the 9th February 2023. Half the complaints were about Shaq Muhammad's behaviour towards Ron Hall. Tension had risen due to Ron not putting equal effort into making a meal for the girls.

A lot of people complain to watchdog due to the alleged bullying of Ron by other contestants. Although Love Island will show more of the drama to gain more views, it does spark the idea of how Love Island affects the mental wellbeing of the contestants.

Niall Aslam who starred in Love Island 2018 accused Love Island of failing to help him avoid stress-induced psychotic episodes because they weren't making reasonable adjustments for his autism. In an interview with The Mirror, he claimed the food he requested didn't appear until four days in, he struggled with stress and wasn't allowed to take time off alone to nap. He felt himself detaching from the co-stars. He explained one of his coping mechanisms is to talk to himself which the producers started to worry about. The producers took him in a car without telling him where he was going and then was assessed by a doctor in Palma and medicated. Aslam's UK doctor told them he needed to come home for specialist psychiatric help.

Caroline Flack the former host of the show died by suicide and unfortunately two contestants died from suicide, Sophie Gradon and Mike Thalassitis. Although the cause is unclear and cannot be linked to Love Island, endless media coverage and online harassment were things the contestant and host was suffering from after leaving the villa.

After the recent Love Island 2023 series, it displayed toxic femininity from the islanders to



Nine for brands - Love Island UK

the point the male contestants burst into tears. Tom and Shaq that upset they leave the villa completely and cry. It showed series issues that even when they needed time to feel their emotions alone, camera crew shoved cameras down their faces to get the drama. At what lengths do they need to have a private moment?

Not only does Love Island cause mental distress on the contestants but also the audience. The Mental Health Foundation stated almost one in four people (24%) ages 18 – 24 say reality tv makes them worry about their body image. The survey suggests that Love Island could leave thousands of young adults feeling worried about their own bodies. Dr Antonis Kousoulis from the Mental Health Foundation said: “This lack of diversity is further feeding unhealthy advertising and media coverage. Love Island has issued mental health aftercare guidelines for contestants, but they must also take into consideration the potential damage being done to viewers.”

The shows aftercare guidelines came about after the suicides of two former Love Islanders Sophie Gradon and Mike Thalassitis. A statement released by ITV in 2021 states the key welfare plans are:

- Comprehensive psychological support
- Training for all Islanders on the impacts of social media and handling potential negativity
- Training for all on financial management
- Detailed conversations with Islanders regarding the impact of participation on the show
- A proactive aftercare package which extends support to all Islanders following their participation
- Guidance and advice on taking on management after the show

The updated 2023 aftercare guidelines meant that islanders paused social media activity for duration of the series and have enhanced training around behaviour in relationships.

However, with all the aftercare guidelines the show still chose to “turn a blind eye” on certain things for drama. For example, Jacques O’Neill in Love Island 2022 was left sobbing after

producers brought in bombshell Adam Collard (who was a contestant in 2018) to the villa out to steal Paige Thorne off of Jacques. O’Neill struggled with his mental health and actually left the Island on his own accord because the situation left him no longer feeling like himself.

Not to mention Adam Collard caused controversy in his first appearance in Love Island in 2018. Women’s Aid a domestic abuse charity warned Adam displayed “clear warning signs” towards love interest Rosie Williams and how he gaslit Rosie into “questioning her memory of events, trivialising her thoughts/feelings, and turning things around to blame her.” Yet Love Island producers brought him back into the villa for the second time.



Metro UK - Adam Collard

I asked the target audience, which are young adults, how they felt about Love Island and if it affects mental health?

“I don’t like it due to the heteronormativity of it, how they emphasise looks as individual value, and the general cattiness between contestants. It reinforces unrealistic beauty standards and stereotypes for both genders.”

“It’s bad for impressionable people of what looking good looks like with loads of surgery.”

“False sense of reality, people use scripted moments of a tv show in their own lives.”

From the general public it shows they feel quite negative towards the show and the beauty standards upheld. 58% of voters say they disliked Love Island with only 35% saying they liked it. 6% of voters said they had never seen it before. Love Island still lacks most representation.

Although in recent years they have included people with disabilities, they still only cast a few minorities every season and always are somehow paired together. With it’s ninth season of Love Island just ending it’s beyond shocking that only one or two of the contestants has ever been “plus sized.” Anna Vakili was the promoting “plus sized girl” but she’s only dress size 10-12, well below the UK average size 16. Although curvy, she has a flat tummy and is only a few dress sizes above the usual contestants picked. This shows the internalised beauty standards Love Island holds because they can’t pick from millions of plus sized women in the UK. It really does “reinforce unrealistic beauty standards.”

They have in recent years cast disabled people for example Tasha Ghouri the first ever deaf contestant who wore a cochlear implant which can help those with deafness to hear better. Ghouri was born deaf and received a cochlear implant when she was five. She wanted to raise awareness for the deaf community. It’s a great thing for her to raise awareness for her community but you can tell Love Island wouldn’t have cast her if she only used sign language. (born with a foot or feet that turn in and under)



Radio times - Tasha Ghouri

In 2023’s Love Island Ron Hall opened up about going blind in one eye as a child after an unfortunate sporting injury. Ron is the first visually impaired Islander and has two different eye colours one blue one green.

Niall Aslam was the first contestant to have a disability in Love Island however some of the media completely disregard him and say Hugo Hammond who was born with a club foot

he was treated as a child to correct the turning. You can tell Love Island only cast disabled people that look visibly able-bodied. I have yet to see a bombshell strut through with one arm or in a wheelchair.

Love Island can create internal beliefs that because you’re disabled, or plus sized or a minority that you don’t fit societies beauty standards. Love Island praises that they bring “normal” people onto the show; however, the majority of the contestants have stated they were scouted to join Love Island. Hence, they fit Love Islands beauty standards.



The Mental Health Foundation is concerned about the impact some television programmes, including Love Island, has on viewers – particularly those targeted at younger audiences who are most likely to be distressed about their bodies.

According to YouGov almost a quarter of 18-24-year olds said they had experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings because of concerns in relation to their body image. More than one in seven said they had self-harmed or deliberately hurt themselves because of concerns about their body image.

This is quite shocking; people of all ages can suffer with body images and with tv programmes only casting a certain type of body which is usually petite and skinny for the ladies and big and muscley for the men. It creates a knock-on effect.

Personally, Love Island does sometimes make me feel quite upset about how I look. I will never fit the Love Island beauty standard. Especially when I see girls my age or close to my age that look incredible.



It does make me feel quite self-conscious. One thing I personally have to think about is that many of the Love Island women have had filler or plastic surgery. Most Islanders are actually quite open about the work done to their bodies. I think this is great because we shouldn't shame people for wanting to have filler or plastic surgery but lying about not having work done can in itself be more toxic because you're trying to create a reality that you look like that naturally when they don't.

I think Love Island is quite a controversial tv programme. They promote an idealistic beauty standard which can be upsetting for viewers. It

normalises toxicity within females and males. This isn't good because it's subliminally saying this is normal in relationships when it isn't. There have been many cases of unhealthy relationship behaviour from gaslighting to emotional manipulation between contestants. Not to mention bullying contestants to their face. It's also normalised to make unkind remarks behind each other's backs.

21-year-old HR worker, Talia Burrell said "I don't know whether it's intentional or not but given the track record of the casting team and the inability to get someone that is beyond a size 12, or more of a curvy/plus size individual says something... And the way their lifestyle is glorified with love, sex, holiday and fun. I think it perpetuates negativity towards the watchers self esteem. Even on the male side, how they're depicted as strong and the classic heterosexual strong male, you don't see any chubby guys, just muscle. That gives the insecurity of how they're supposed to look which isn't necessarily attainable for most people regardless of how much they go to the gym.

Mental health wise I'd be concerned about the body dysmorphia that it could lead to. But also insecurity of am I good enough? Do I look right? Am I into the right things? I just feel it can degrade an individuals self worth."

Overall, a lot of things need to be changed in Love Island from not only the producers to the contestants. With the tense situations they're forced into, it can cause bullying and emotional abuse. Contestants need to be checked more in-depth with domestic abuse charges and analysed by professionals to check they're the best fit to enter the Island. There's also an urgent need for healthier ways for producers to get drama because Love Island 2023,

I would say was the most toxic so far. I would love to see more people represented, whether that be more disabilities, minorities and plus sized women and men. Love Island target audience is normal young adults and if they want to continue to hit their target, they need to be more inclusive. Otherwise Love Island will continue to cause mental health issues for all viewers and contestants.

PERCEPTION



PERCEPTION ВЕРСЕКЦІОН

