

The Real State of Beauty: A Global Report

Nordic highlights and
comparisons

APRIL 2024



20 years **Changing** Beauty



About The Study

Listening To Women For 20 Years

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Campaign for Real Beauty, Dove has embarked on its most comprehensive study yet, speaking with more than 33,000 respondents across 20 markets. The research illuminates the state of beauty and its impact on women and girls around the world today. In Sweden, the research was conducted with 1,005 respondents aged between 18–64 years old (727 women, 231 men) and 758 respondents aged between 10–17 years old (501 girls, and 250 boys).*

Denmark and Finland were not part of the global study, but we commissioned a dedicated supplementary study in Denmark and Finland as well. This report compares the result from these two supplementary studies to the global findings that also include a Swedish subset. The survey in Finland

and Denmark was conducted by Syno between 2024-03-22 and 2024-03-26. 1023 interviews were conducted through an On-line survey using panels (510 in Finland, 513 in Denmark). The target group was 18–65 years old females, with a representative sampling on age and regions.

727	501	
WOMEN	GIRLS	SWEDEN
513	0	
WOMEN	GIRLS	DENMARK
510	0	
WOMEN	GIRLS	FINLAND

Brand North Star

20 Years Of The Campaign For Real Beauty

20 years ago, Dove redefined the beauty industry with the launch of the Campaign for Real Beauty.

The campaign was a bold demand to make beauty *real* – challenging toxic beauty ideals by transforming its advertising. We took action to change how media and society engage with beauty and invited the rest of the industry to do the same. This ignited Dove's

Real Beauty Pledge – a long-term commitment to always feature real women, never models, portray women as they are in real life, and help young people's body confidence and self-esteem.

What used to be a harmfully exclusive category has broadened definitions of beauty to welcome more into its fold.

Women do feel better represented by the industry, but there is still work to do to ensure all girls and women and their real beauty are represented and feels celebrated.

*Note: Other gender identities and non-binary respondents were surveyed but are not reported due to the limited sample sizes.

Please see end of the document for additional information on subgroups.

Note on historical comparisons: Sweden wasn't included in the 2004/2016 research, meaning that specific comparisons between 2004/2016 and 2024 are not available. However, we have kept in this document the comparisons for the global data averages (i.e., the average of all markets surveyed globally in 2004/2016) to offer insights into the overall trend.



The Issue / Why We Need To Keep Going

Beauty Is Too Powerful A Currency

Despite progress in **representation and diversity**, the work is far from over. Beauty is too powerful a currency today, and there is a pressure to embody perfection. **Objectification** is creating a world where women and girls feel appearance is related to their worth and valued over everything else in their life.

Compared to 20 years ago, women globally are more likely to say **"Women who are beautiful have greater opportunities in life"**. This is felt to a greater extent in Sweden.

Sweden **67%**

Denmark 61%

Finland 77%

2024 *global average: 59%¹*

2004 *global average: 44%¹*

Women are now three times as likely to be **willing to be less intelligent to be more beautiful**.

Sweden **16%**

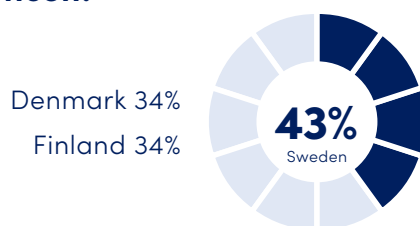
Denmark 11%

Finland 9%

2024 *global average: 19%²*

2004 *global average: 10%²*

Today, far too many women feel that beauty is highly valued in society and is **more important than life itself**.



Over 4 in 10 women (43%) *global average: 38%* would give up at least a year of their life to achieve their beauty ideals.



1 in 5 women (20%) *global average: 21%* would give up 5 years of their life to achieve their ideal appearance.

1 - Global data recalibrated using the 8 common countries from 2024 and 2004 studies: Women 2024: 61% / 2004: 46% (+15)

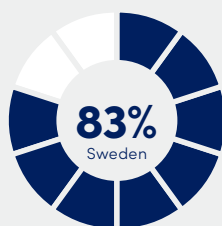
2 - Global data recalibrated using the 8 common countries from 2024 and 2004 studies: Women 2024: 17% / 2004: 8% (+9)



Expanding On The Issue

Beauty Pressures Are Relentless And Impossible To Meet

While beauty ideals have diversified, societal pressure on women has intensified, driven by the pursuit of perfection, **objectification** of women and persistent norms such as thin ideal. Pressure to be beautiful has notably increased for women over the last 8 years.

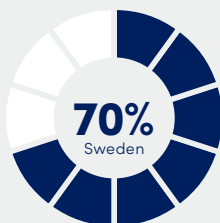


Denmark 83%
Finland 84%

8 in 10 women (83%) feel pressure to be beautiful.

global average: 70% +15 pts vs. 2016³

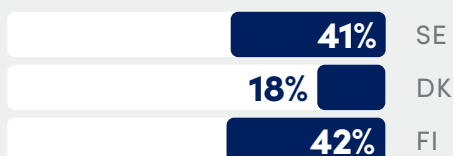
This pressure is felt more strongly by women with larger bodies 86% vs. 80%, and with mental health conditions 92% vs. 79%. It is also very strong among women of colour (86%, 83% of White women).



Denmark 76%
Finland 68%

7 in 10 women (70%) believe women today are expected to be more physically attractive than their mother's generation was. *global average: 62%*

Women in groups targeted by marginalization are most likely to feel this expectation (women with mental health conditions 78% vs. 66%, physical disabilities 74% vs. 70%, larger bodies 72% vs 68%).



4 in 10 women (41%) and 1 in 3 girls (37%) say that they feel pressure to alter their appearance because of what they see online.

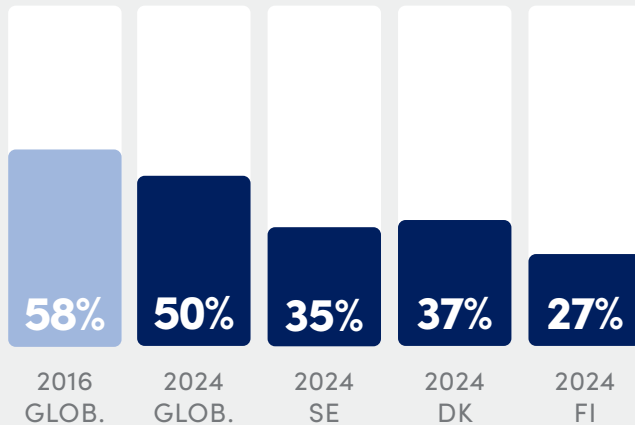
Groups targeted by marginalization feel pressure to alter their appearance the most because of what they see online; 1 in 2 women with mental health conditions (53% vs. 35%) and almost half of women living in larger bodies (45% vs. 36%).

2024 global average: 38%

3 - Global data recalibrated using the 14 common countries from 2024 and 2016 studies: Women 2024: 72% / 2016: 57% (+15)



Women who feel confident in their beauty?



As a result, women are feeling **less confident in their own beauty** than they were a decade ago (*global average: 50%, -8pts vs. 2016*).⁴

Only 1 in 3 women (35%) women in Sweden report feeling confident in their own beauty.



There is an **even higher pressure to be beautiful in the Nordics** than in any other country surveyed

In the nordic countries, levels of self-criticism are higher than in any other country surveyed. 7 in 10 women (73% in Finland, 72% in sweden and 66% in Denmark) say they are their own worst critic.

2024 *global average: 53%*

4 - Global data recalibrated using the 14 common countries from 2024 and 2016 studies: Women 2024: 54% / 2016: 62% (-8)



This significantly influences their behaviour
and opportunities.

Sweden **73%**

HAVE REFRAINED FROM PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

Low confidence in appearance can limit women's presence (**73%** have refrained from public activities).

Denmark 41%

Finland 48%

HAVE REFRAINED FROM GOING TO THE BEACH, POOL, SAUNA OR SPA

Denmark 28%

Finland 31%

HAVE REFRAINED FROM PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SPORT, LIKE EXERCISING OR BIKING

Sweden **15%**

Denmark **24%**

Finland **26%**

HAVE NOT ASSERTED THEIR OPINION

This opting out behaviour is even more common amongst women with mental health conditions (85%), LGBTQ+ women (81%), women with larger bodies (82%) and women with physical disabilities (76%).

This opting out behaviour is also more common among women with low body esteem (87%) vs. high body esteem (28%).