

# Cosmetic Surgery & Body Image Among Women: What Utahns Need to Know

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

## UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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Body image and cosmetic surgery are increasingly visible topics in Utah's public discourse. Popular media, social media, and cultural messages have contributed to perceptions that Utah women face unique appearance-related pressures. Although it is difficult to determine whether cosmetic surgery rates in Utah differ significantly from those in other states, research suggests that body image is shaped by a complex mix of social, cultural, religious, economic, and psychological influences. Understanding these factors provides important context for exploring the growing popularity of cosmetic procedures and promoting healthy body image among women and girls.

### EARLY INFLUENCES

Body image influences emotional well-being, self-esteem, and mental health throughout a woman's life. Family, peers, media, and societal beauty standards shape how women view themselves and their bodies. These pressures often begin early and can intensify during adolescence, creating lifelong patterns of comparison and appearance evaluation. Among girls ages 14-19, 96% reported experiencing appearance-related cyberbullying, and 92% considered changing their appearance as a result, highlighting how early appearance pressures can affect self-perception and behavior.

### DIGITAL PRESSURES

Social media has increased exposure to appearance-focused content and created new opportunities for comparison. Women who viewed images of peers with cosmetic enhancements reported greater interest in cosmetic procedures, particularly if they already experienced body dissatisfaction or spent substantial time on social media. Influencer culture, photo editing, and highly curated online images can reinforce unrealistic beauty ideals and contribute to the belief that cosmetic enhancement is a solution to appearance concerns.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

"There definitely is a physical appearance culture here in Utah to look the best that we can. We just have to be thoughtful about the social media that we use and how we portray people, and focus again on head, heart, and hands more than looks."

*Dr. Susan R. Madsen,  
UWLP Founding Director*

### RIISING ACCEPTANCE

Cosmetic procedures have become increasingly common. Between 2019 and 2022, cosmetic surgery procedures increased by 19%, while minimally invasive treatments such as Botox and fillers grew by more than 70%. Americans spent more than \$26 billion on cosmetic procedures in 2022, and demand continued to rise in both 2023 and 2024. The global cosmetic surgery market is projected to grow from nearly \$57 billion in 2024 to almost \$77 billion by 2032, reflecting growing acceptance of cosmetic enhancement, advances in technology, and sustained demand for procedures intended to improve or maintain appearance. As a result, cosmetic enhancement is often viewed as a routine form of self-care rather than a significant personal decision.

### BODY IMAGE IS:

- influenced by cultural expectations.
- fueling demand for cosmetic procedures.
- shaped by comparison and conformity.
- improved through education and support.

### COMPLEX CULTURE

Utah has developed a reputation as a cosmetic surgery hotspot, although definitive statewide data are limited. Indicators of interest are notable: Utah ranks first nationally for internet searches related to both "breast augmentation" and "boob job," fourth for searches involving "breast implants," and among the top states for overall cosmetic surgery related search activity. The state also ranks tenth nationally in plastic surgeons per capita, suggesting strong consumer demand.

Cultural, social, and religious factors may help explain these patterns. In a survey of 1,333 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 14% reported having major cosmetic surgery and 20% reported cosmetic enhancements, rates that exceed national averages. Participants frequently described experiences involving comparison, conformity, competition, and appearance related expectations, though many also reported that faith promoted self worth and acceptance. Together, these findings suggest that even where self worth and body respect are emphasized, appearance-related expectations may still contribute to body dissatisfaction and interest in cosmetic enhancement.



## FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

Strong cultural expectations surrounding may reinforce pressures to conform to appearance ideals. Utah has the highest percent-age of married residents in the nation, women marry younger than in any other state, and families remain among the largest in the country. As a result, appearance may become closely linked to attractiveness, social acceptance, and success in marriage and family life. Cosmetic procedures marketed as “mommy makeovers” and beauty ideals like the “clean-girl aesthetic” or the “Utah look” reinforce the pursuit of a polished, natural appearance that often requires significant investment in cosmetic enhancements.

## LASTING IMPACTS

While cosmetic surgery may improve satisfaction with specific physical concerns, its long-term effects on self-esteem, confidence, and mental health remain unclear. Rising procedure rates have also raised concerns about complications and corrective surgeries. Ultimately, cosmetic enhancement does not always resolve deeper challenges related to body image and self-worth.

## STRENGTHENING PREVENTION & CARE

**Body image resilience starts with awareness.** Body image concerns often begin early and are shaped by family influences, peer relationships, media messages, and social comparison. Expanding media literacy education, promoting positive body image programs, and helping girls and women recognize their value beyond appearance can strengthen resilience before body dissatisfaction becomes more severe.

**Healthy self-worth requires broader definitions of beauty.** Social media, cultural expectations, and beauty standards can contribute to body dissatisfaction and interest in cosmetic procedures. Encouraging critical thinking about appearance-focused messaging and increasing access to mental health and body image resources can help individuals make informed decisions and develop healthier relationships with their bodies.

**Culture change starts within communities.** Families, educators, healthcare providers, faith leaders, policymakers, and community organizations all influence how women and girls view themselves and their worth. By fostering environments that emphasize acceptance, celebrate diverse representations of beauty, and value health, ability, character, and contribution over appearance, Utah communities can help reduce appearance-based pressures and support healthier body image for future generations

## HELP ADDRESS EATING DISORDERS IN UTAH

You can help foster positive body image by creating environments where girls and women feel valued for who they are rather than how they look. See below for calls to action and resources to help build confidence, strengthen self-worth, and cultivate a more accepting body image culture in Utah.

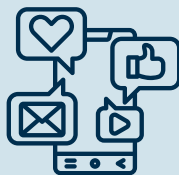
*Data Source: [UWLP Snapshot No. 63 \(2025\)](#)*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Learn More:** Explore resources in the UWLP Body Image & Cosmetic Surgery [Resource Kit](#).
- **Review:** Related information and research, including the [Eating Disorders Research Snapshot](#).
- **Get Involved:** Connect to grassroots movement happening within [A Bolder Way Forward](#).
- **Take Action:** Help move the needle and discover additional [Calls to Action](#) for groups, organizations and communities.



Model positive conversations about appearance. Compliment others on character, effort, and achievements more often than looks.



Be mindful of media messages. Follow and share content that promotes realistic and diverse standards of beauty.



Invest in confidence-building experiences. Support activities that develop leadership, creativity, athletics, service, or other talents that reinforce self-worth.

Learn more at [www.utwomen.org](http://www.utwomen.org)

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