



Mothers, Daughters & Body Image

Results from a National Survey of Mothers and Young Daughters

May 4, 2015

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Executive Summary

The Representation Project is launching the #BuildConfidence campaign to celebrate and empower mothers, caregivers, and mentors who model positive self-esteem and body image. In support of #BuildConfidence, The Representation Project partnered with twtw Companies to conduct research in order to understand the current thinking around body image from the perspective of mothers.

The research shows that most mothers have struggled with their own body image and think it is likely their daughters will struggle at some point as well. In spite of this, most moms feel their daughters currently have a healthy body image. Moms are aware that they have some impact on how their daughters will feel about their own bodies. With #BuildConfidence, The Representation Project is taking the opportunity to support mothers by providing tips, information and resources.

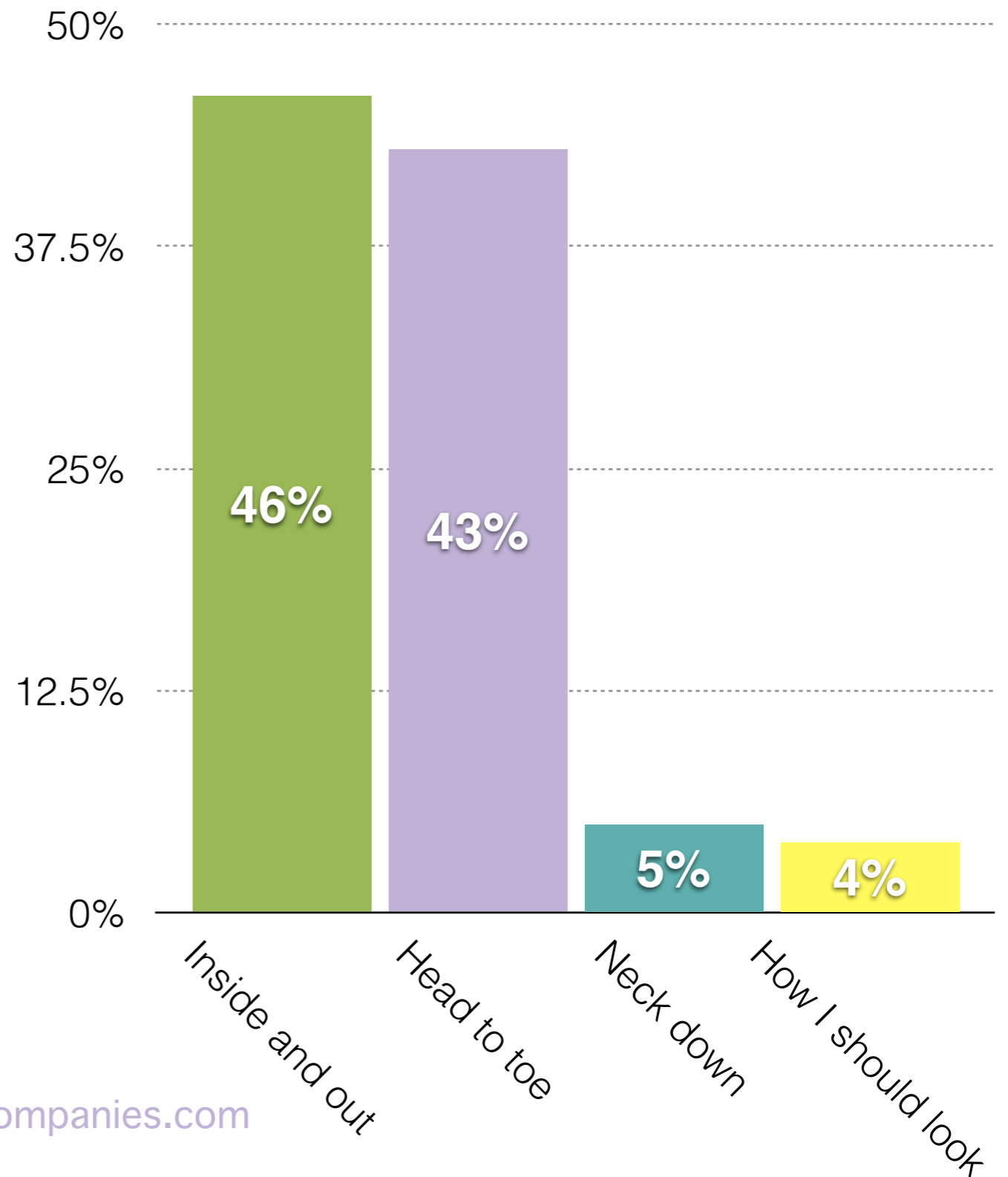
Moms and Their Bodies



What is Body Image?

- Mothers believe body image is more than simply the way they feel about how they look from the neck down.
- 46% feel that body image is how they feel about their whole body, inside and out.
- 43% believe it is how they feel about the way they look from head to toe.
- When thinking about body image, most women include: weight 92%, shape 90%, and facial appearance 69%.

What is Body Image?



The Struggle with Body Image

- Nine-in-ten mothers have struggled with body image at some point in their life (31% have always struggled and 59% have struggled from time to time).
- 51% of moms have negative thoughts about their body at least once a day.
- Just 32% agreed with the statement “I am comfortable with my body as it is.”
- 41% of mothers feel pressure to have a perfect body; older moms feel less pressure than younger moms.
- Overall, Caucasian and 18-29 year old mothers appear to struggle the most with body image.

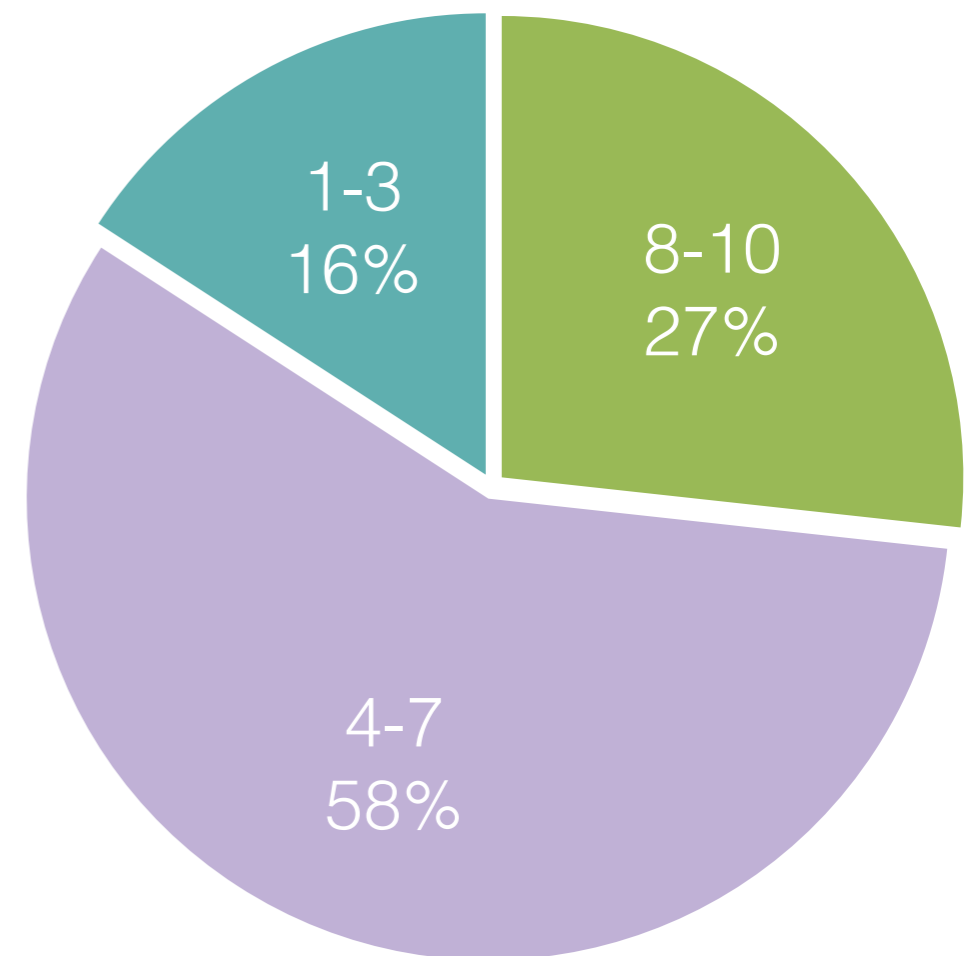
Satisfaction with body image

- Women were asked to rate how satisfied they are with their body on a scale from 1-10.
 - 40-44 year olds had the highest levels of satisfaction, while 18-29 year olds had the lowest.
 - Asian women were the most likely to be satisfied (37%) while Caucasian women were the least (19%).
 - Mothers who live in the south have the highest level of satisfaction (34%), while those in the west (21%) are the least satisfied with their bodies.
- 76% of moms said they would be happier if they weighed less than they do now.
- 40% say they have gone on a diet in the last 3 months.

5.82

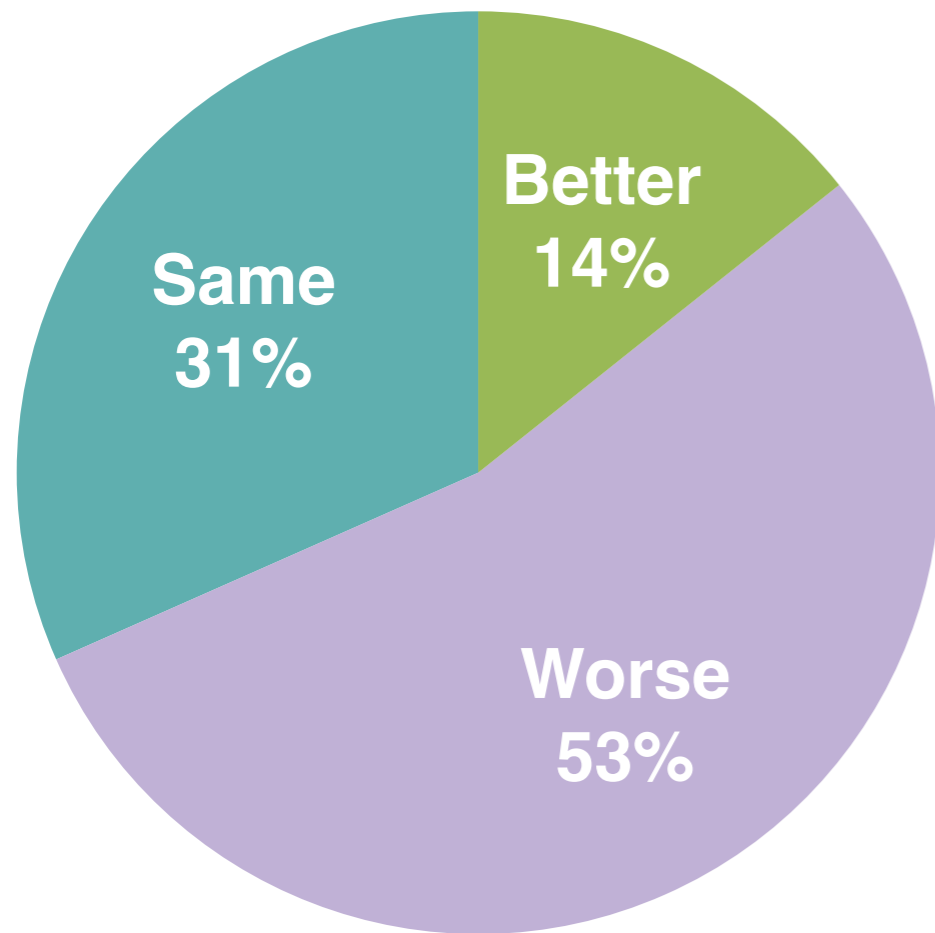
was the mean body satisfaction score

Satisfaction Score



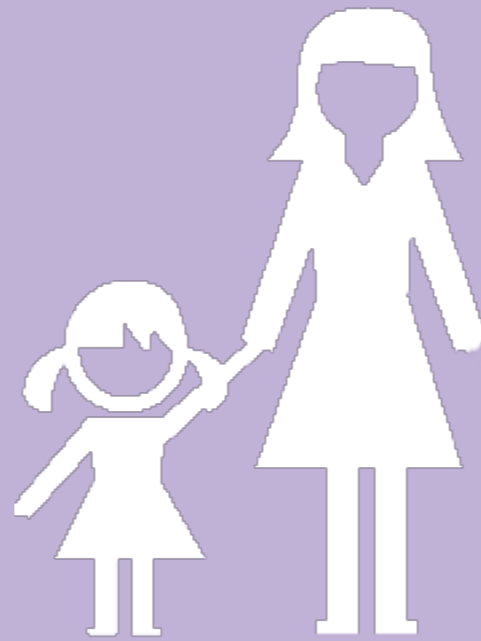
Post-baby Body

Do women feel better or worse post baby?



- 53% of women feel worse about their bodies than they did before they had a baby. 31% feel the same and 14% feel better.
- 43% are more impressed with their bodies than they were before having a child.
 - Hispanic women were the least likely to agree (36%) while Asian women were the most likely (56%).
- 36% are more accepting of their bodies now that they have had a baby.

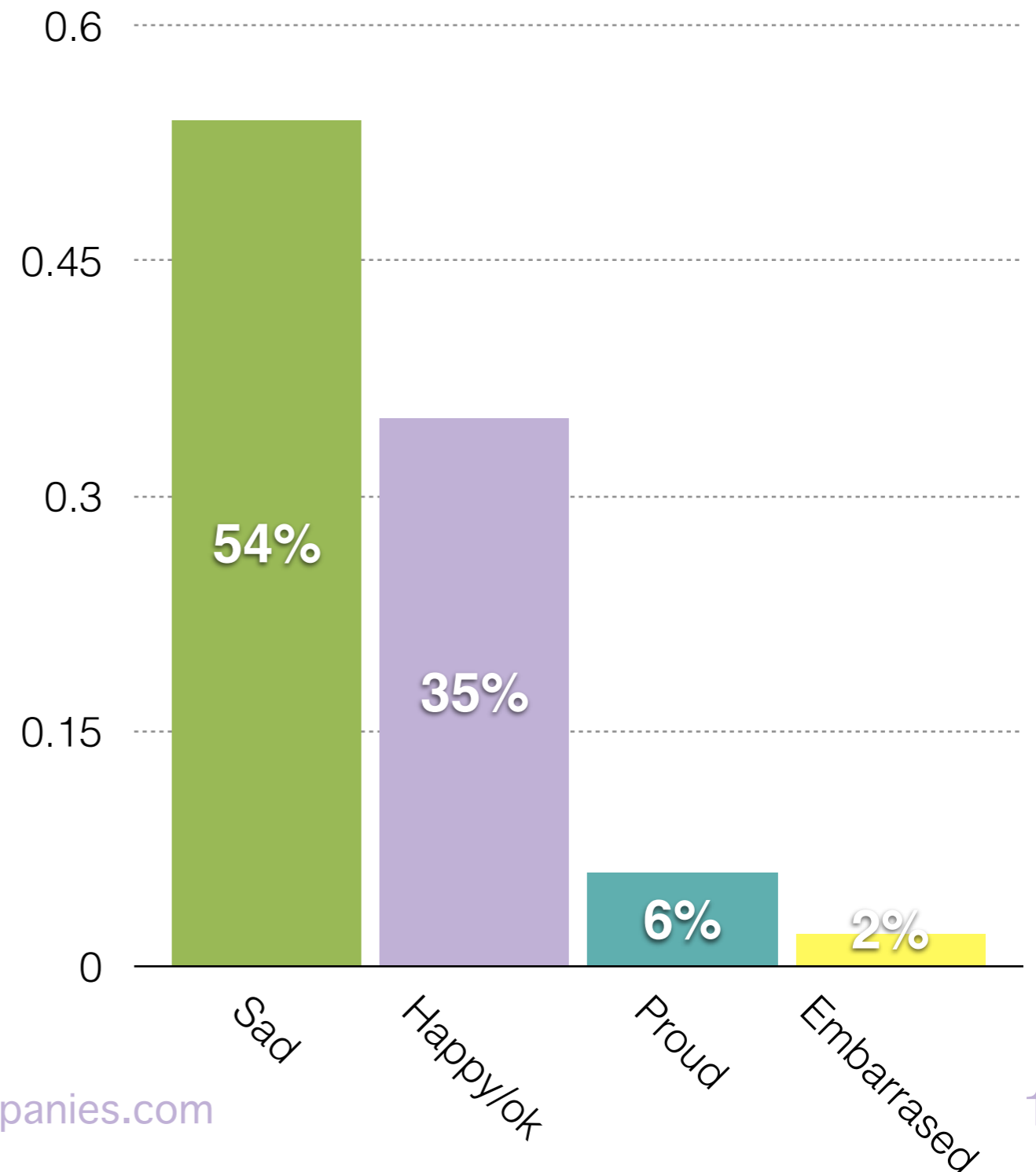
Mothers and Daughters



What if they felt the same way?

- Mothers were asked how they would feel if their daughters grew up to feel about their bodies the way they do now. This was an open ended question.
- 54% said something resembling sad or disappointed. 35% said they would be ok with it.

What if your daughter felt how you do now?

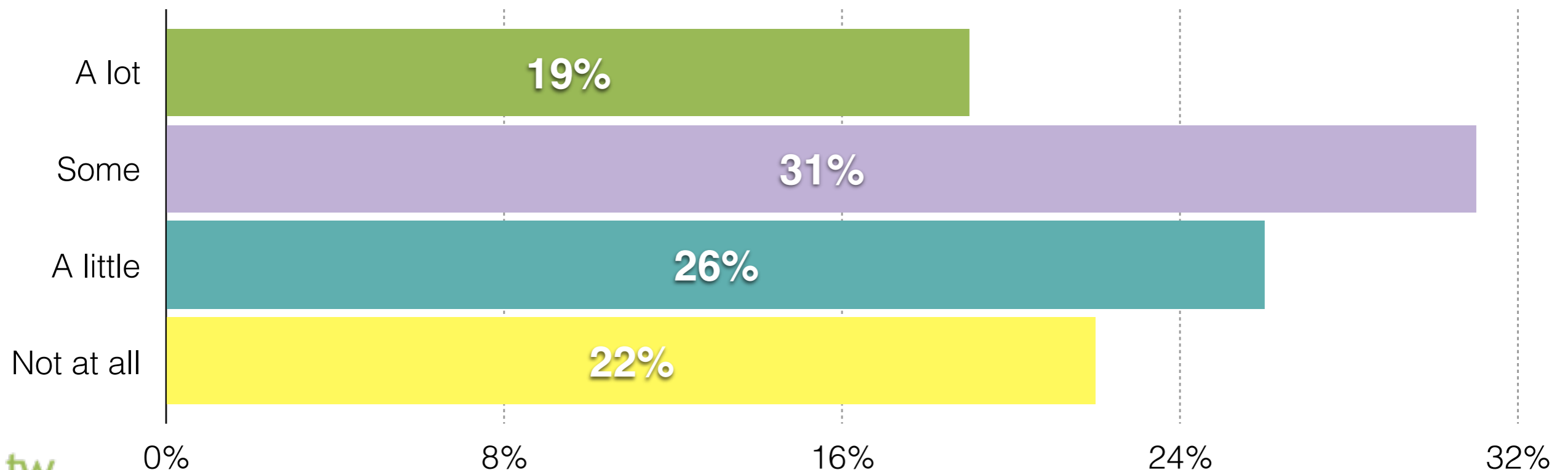


Thought given to body image

Half of moms of young daughters have thought at least some about body image as it relates to their daughters, but most have not addressed the issue specifically.

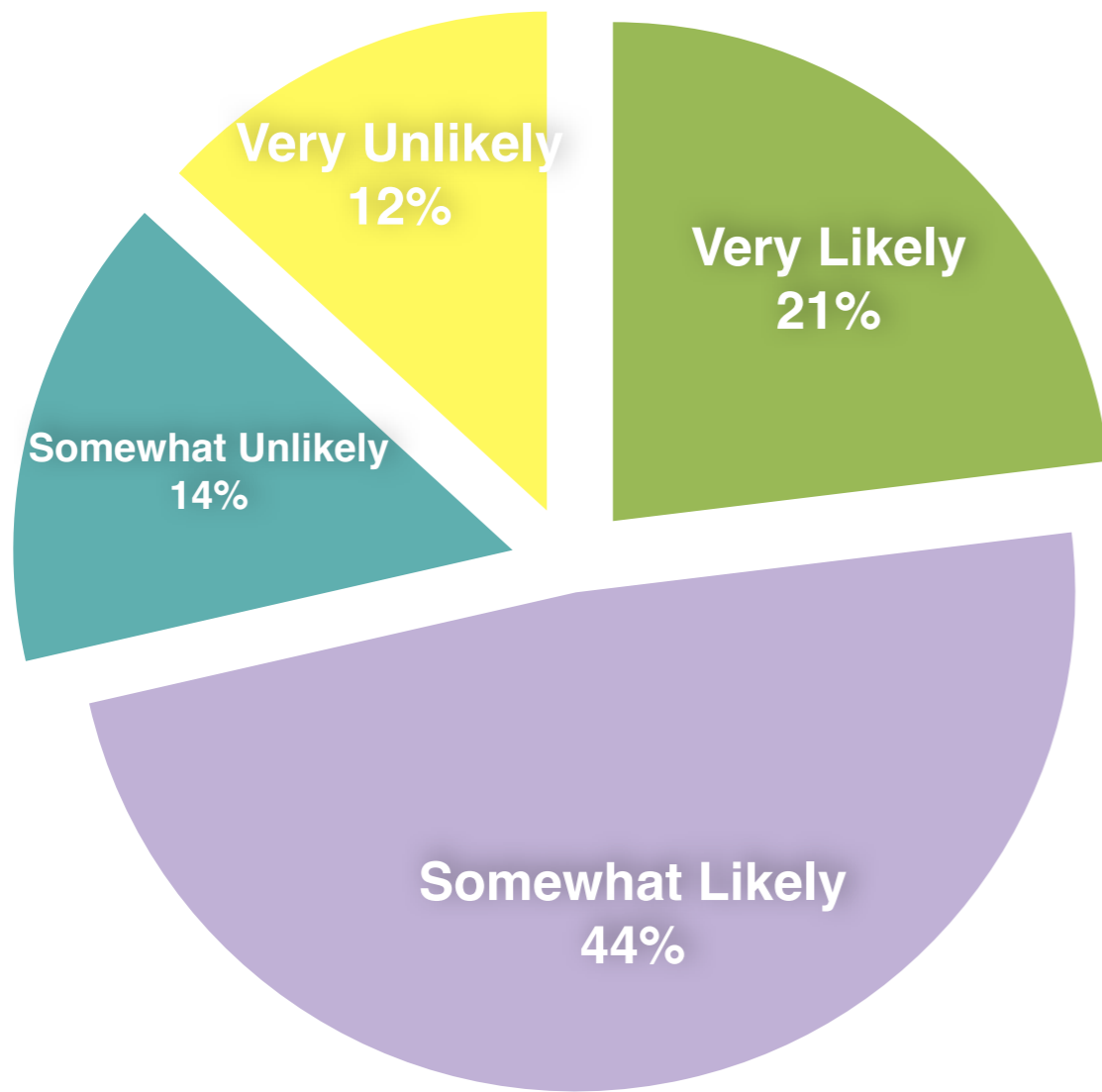
- Of those who have thought about body image as it relates to their daughters, 19% say they have given it a lot of thought and 31% say they have given it some thought.
 - 40-44 year olds were the most likely to have given it a lot of thought.
 - Caucasian women were the most likely to have given it a lot or some thought.

How much thought have you given to the body image issue?



Is it inevitable?

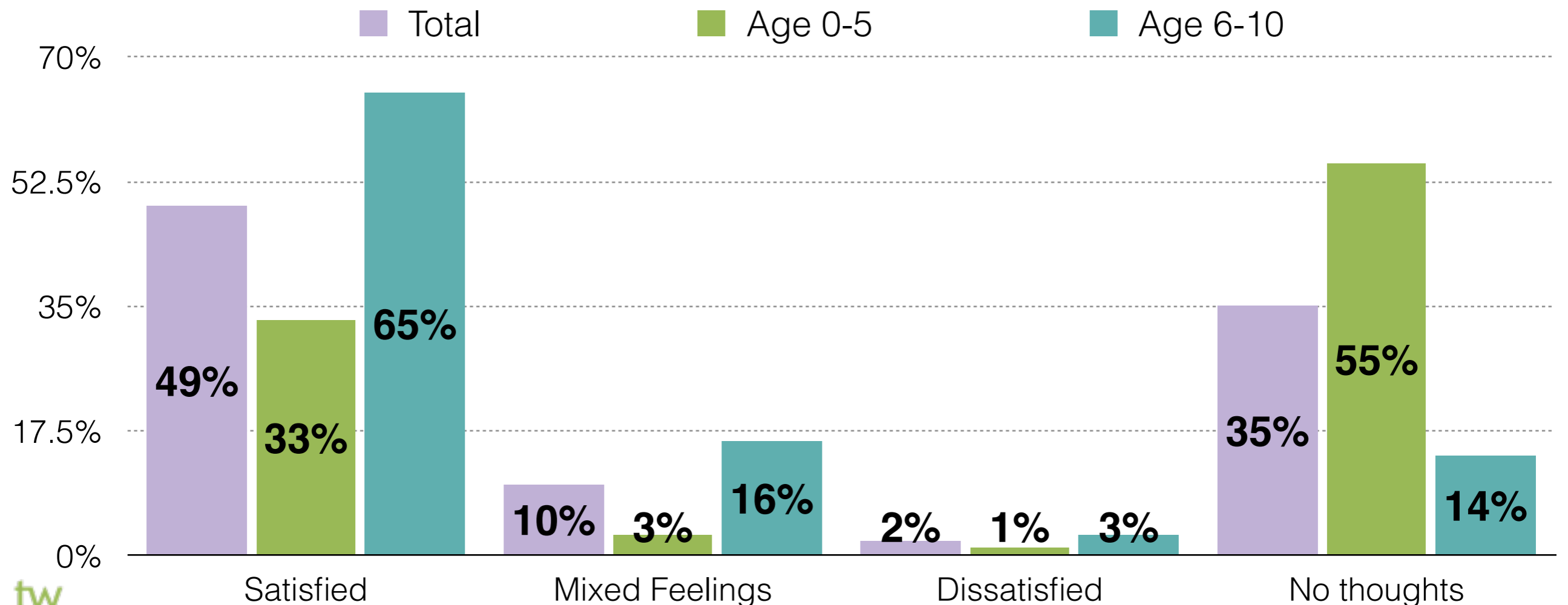
Likelihood daughters will struggle with body image



- Several mothers in the focus groups expressed that they felt no matter what they did, their daughters would struggle with body image at some point. They felt their responsibility was perhaps not trying to make sure they didn't struggle, but instead preparing them for when they did.
- The national survey echoed the idea that a body image struggle is inevitable for their daughters - 65% felt it was likely their daughter would struggle with her body image at some point.

What are girls saying?

- Most moms believe their 6-10 year old daughters are generally satisfied with their bodies (65%), moms with younger daughters (age 0-5) don't think their daughters have given much about her body image one way or the other (55%).
- 78% of moms said they have heard their daughter say positive comments about their bodies. (keep in mind that some moms have daughters who cannot speak yet.)
- 31% of moms said they have heard their daughters say negative things about their bodies.
 - Of those women, 13% said their daughters had called themselves fat.



Moms' Reactions

- 56% said hearing their daughters make negative comments made them sad, 46% said they were shocked and 22% said they were frustrated.
- 30% addressed it by telling their daughters they were beautiful, 16% talked about the importance of being healthy.

Moms' experience addressing body image with their daughters

I have had a specific conversation with her about body image	11%
I have addressed body image by reacting to things I see and hear with her in our daily lives	22%
I limit her exposure to certain media and/or toys and tell her why I limit them	3%
It has not come up yet	35%
I have not felt that it is appropriate to discuss body image at her age	20%
I don't know what to say to her or how to bring it up	2%
I don't think it is necessary to bring up body image	5%

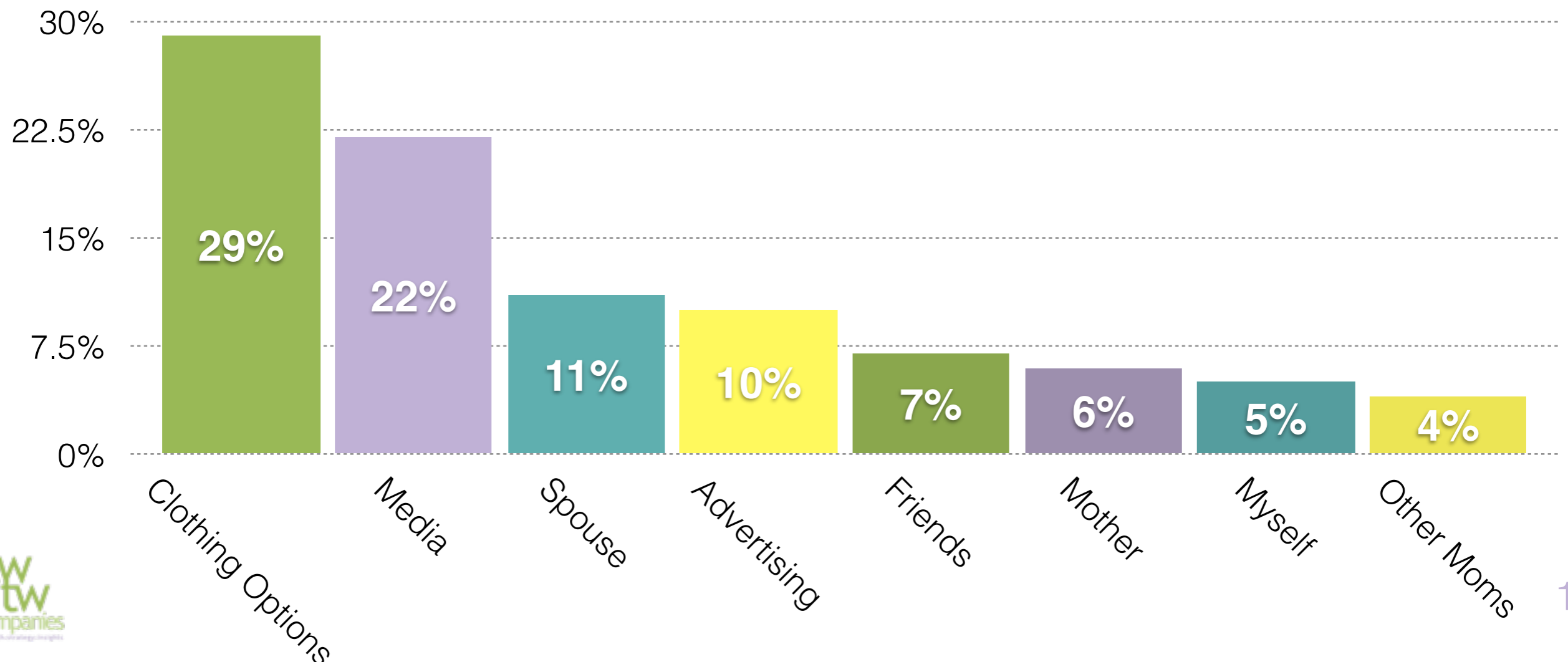
What Influences Body Image



Mom influencers

- When asked what had an impact on their own body image 71% of mothers said clothing options, 55% said the media, 48% said advertising, and 38% said friends.
- 45-49 year olds were most likely to say their mother. 18-29 year old said their spouse or clothing options. 30-24 year olds said their friends and 35-30 year olds said the media and advertising.

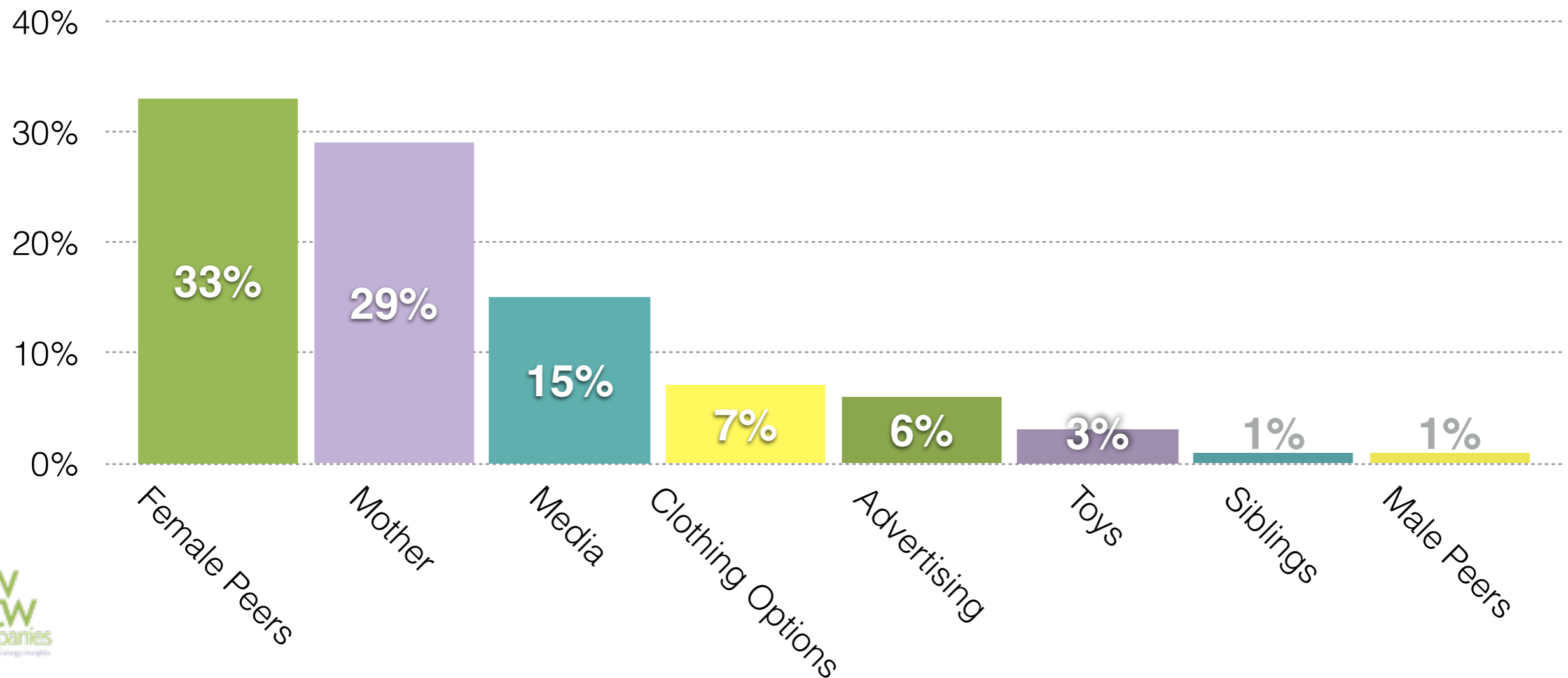
Largest impact on woman's body image



Daughters Influencers (moms's perspective)

- When moms were asked what they thought had an impact on their daughters' body image 64% said their female peers, 54% said their moms (themselves), 49% said the media.

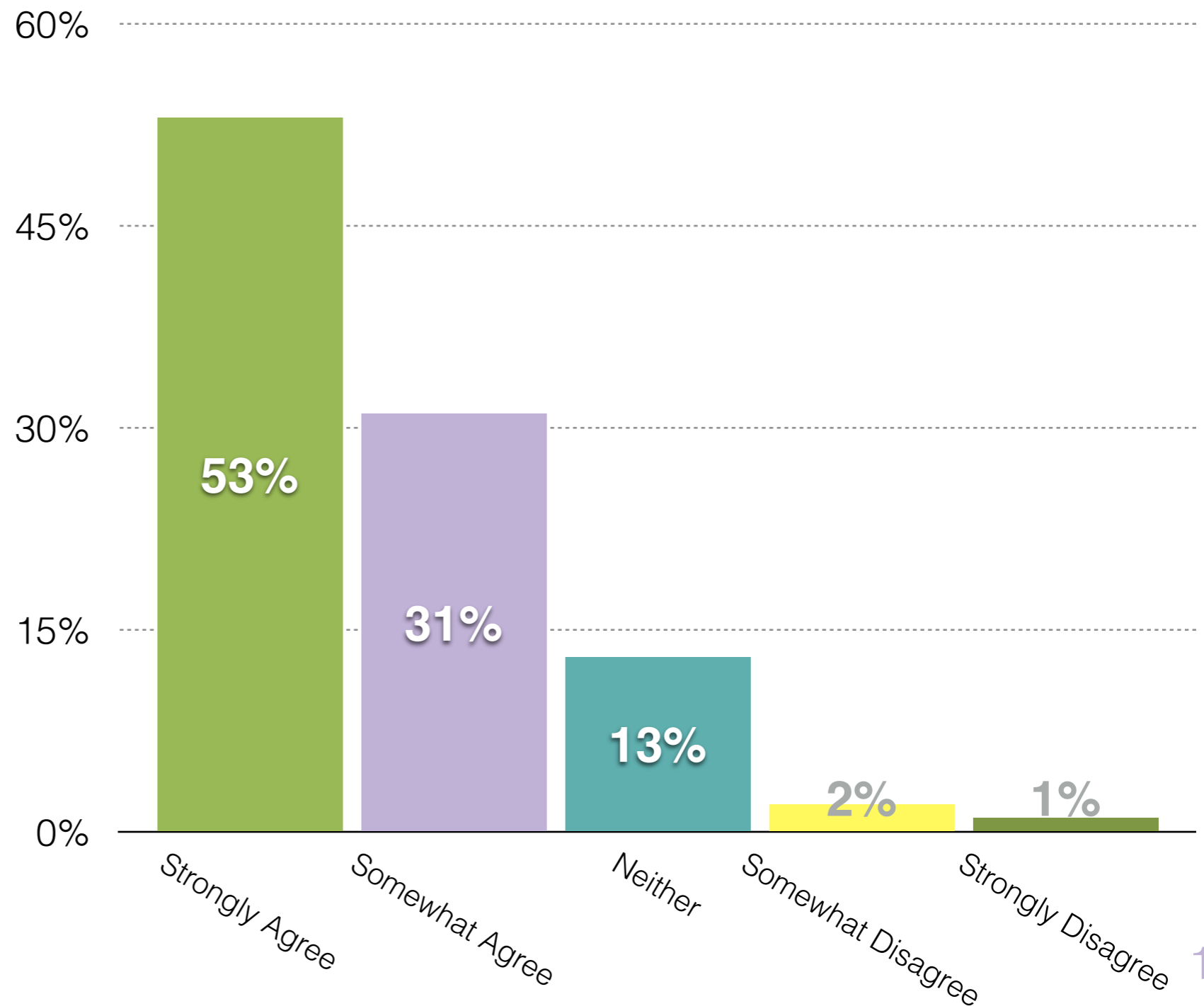
Largest impact on daughter's body image



The pressure on females

There is too much emphasis on physical beauty for women and girls

- 84% of women agree that there is too much emphasis on physical beauty for women and girls.
- This was consistent among age groups and races.

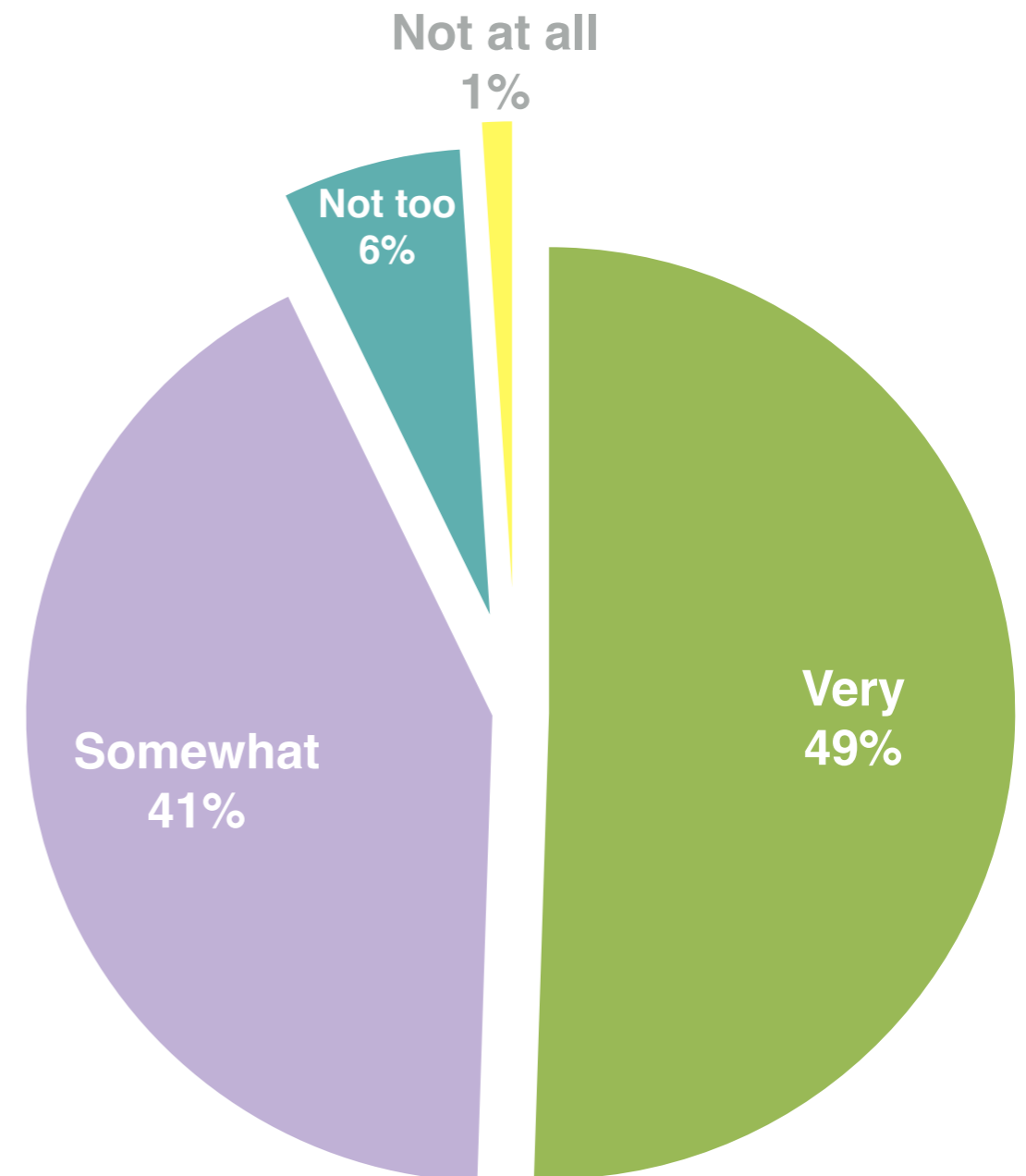


The Representation Project's #BuildConfidence

Confidence in dealing with body image issue

- 59% of women whose daughters had made negative comments about themselves felt they handled the issue successfully. 36% were not sure they had.
- 90% of all women said they felt confident in their ability to address body image with their daughters.
 - African American women were the most confident
- 87% of moms have not tried to find information about body image.

How confident do moms feel in dealing with body image



Tips for addressing Body Image

- Moms were asked if they had any of tips that they would like to share for how they address body image with their daughters
- 16% said that their daughters were too young to discuss this yet.
- 10% of responses had to do with religious or spiritual advice such as reading scripture.
- 7% said they try to be a good example and 8% said they try to be positive.
- 8% said they read books with their daughters.

Here are some tips on how moms address body image (directly quoted from survey participants)

I tell my daughter that she is beautiful because she smiles. Probably not the best approach but she is a very happy and smiley kid so it is very true. I also talk about people in terms of their personality or their behavior instead of their looks -- as in, "Jane is a good friend and always happy to help out," instead of, "Jane has a great dress on today."

Trying to instill in her that she is smart, beautiful and strong and that she is important and that she matters. And that not everyone will always think so, but that's ok. As long as she believes and knows that she is.

I stress to her that if we all looked the same, what a boring world it would be. Beauty comes from your heart, not your face. I think girls need to support and encourage one another, not tear one another down. Girls should feel good about themselves and the smallest compliment can mean the world to someone.

We try to avoid using visual references as an expression of worth. We might say "you put together a cute outfit" but not "you're so pretty" and we also prefer to praise her for being kind, graceful, strong, funny, smart - but try to limit the "pretty" or "cute." If you NEVER say pretty or cute, though, she might think that's because she isn't, not because it's not important. We try to focus on enjoying and being grateful for all we can do and experience, and eating right and being active because it feels good, not because of how we look. We do the same with our son.

I try very hard to respond positively to anything they point out on my own body. "Mommy you have a big fat belly!" Said as they kiss my belly. I smile and say, "Yes I do! I carried you in my belly!"

Here are some tips on how moms address body image (directly quoted from survey participants)

I bought her the American Girl doll books for girls. When we see things or people, I immediately talk to her about it. Keep an open dialogue always. And try not to flip on on topics that make me uncomfortable. I never let her see me sweat!

I've gotten age appropriate books on the subject and read them with her

When watching (certain kids TV shows) I get a chance to talk to them about some girls who strive to look really cute, but make very poor choices. I tell them, there is nothing bad with looking cute and dressing like a princes but what matters the most is how you think and what you do and especially when nobody is looking.

I haven't really addressed body issues directly. But I do tell my children to eat healthy and take care of themselves. They only get one body and their action and consumption directly affects their body. We approach most topics in our house scientifically. This is why we need exercise, or vitamins, sun, and even laughter.

I know she looks to me for reactions on everything. If I react in a way that I feel was wrong, I make sure to discuss it with her. Even though she's 3, her mind is being shaped now.

Here are some tips on how moms address body image (directly quoted from survey participants)

The American Girl guide books are helpful for us. She seems to need to hear things not just from me. These books offer girls a way to learn that they are not the only ones to wonder and/or worry about how they look or what others think of their looks. They also offer advice on how to think positively and what to say when others are not nice.

Listen to them and seek to actually hear what they are saying. Not what you are feeling or what you felt at their age. After you have listened well ask if they would like to hear what you think. First validate what they are saying because whether it's true or not, it's how they feel. Then speak from a time where you felt similarly and not just as a kid but more so as an adult. It makes you more real and approachable.

All of what we see in media is some form of exaggeration and fabrication. 99.9% of real people do not look like what you see. (I tell her to) believe half of what you see and none of what you hear.

Peer impressions are so important to any child. I have always taught my daughters that just because somebody says something out loud, that doesn't make it true. So what's the difference between "you're ugly" and "you're blue"? Obviously you know you're not blue, so why would you even consider that you're ugly? I also reinforce that God made each of us specifically for a purpose and our purpose may be different than the other person's so it is silly to compare ourselves to others. Would a lawnmower compare itself to a pogo stick? Certainly not, because they were designed for completely different purposes.

Demographics



Demographics

Children

	Age 0-5	Age 6-10	Age 11-13	Age 14-17
Boys	20%	18%	11%	6%
Girls	54%	53%	9%	8%

Marital Status

Married/Domestic partnership	79%
Single, never married	14%
Divorced	6%
Widowed	1%

Demographics

Race/Ethnicity

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Multiracial	No answer
60%	12%	15%	6%	1%	4%	2%

Region

Northeast	17%
South	34%
Midwest	29%
West	20%

Education

Less than high school	1%
High school graduate/GED	9%
Some college or technical school/ Associates Degree	34%
College graduate/Bachelor's Degree	34%
Post-graduate (Master's Degree, Ph.D., MD, JD)	22%

Demographics

Employment

I work full time	53%
I work part time	13%
I am a full time student	1%
I am a stay at home parent	29%
I am currently unemployed but looking for work	2%
I am unemployed and not looking for work	1%
No Answer	1%

Household Income

Less than \$35, 000	14%
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	16%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	22%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	19%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	12%
\$150,000 or more	6%
No answer	11%

Conclusion

Conclusion

The Representation Project's #BuildConfidence campaign is very timely. Clearly the issue of negative body image is something that all women contend with and most women struggle with at some point in their lives, but conversation around the issue seems to have reached a fever pitch recently. The way moms feel about themselves impacts their children - especially their daughters - in a big way. By providing mothers with tools and resources, The Representation Project can help increase the chances that the body image struggle does not continue to be perpetuated generation after generation.

Methodology



Focus Groups

twtw conducted 2 focus groups with a total of 15 mothers of young daughters. The groups were conducted in Palm Beach County, Florida and lasted approximately 90 minutes per session. The focus groups helped illuminate topics to be covered in the survey.



National Survey

Following the focus groups, twtw conducted a nationwide survey of 504 women who had at least one daughter between the ages of 0 and 10. The survey was fielded online between April 14, 2015 and April 18, 2015. The margin of error is +/- 4.5% at the 95 percent confidence level.



**Questions?
Please
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