

# Boys' internalized appearance-related norms from different socializers uniquely, negatively relate to wellbeing and gender beliefs.

**THE GIST:** Body image has layers of social context and ideas. We surveyed elementary school boys between the ages of 10 and 13, along with fathers and peers (both male and female) to compare their beliefs about appearance and investigate male beliefs on body image and gender. In comparing boys' expectations with those of the other groups, we found that most boys appeared to internalize beliefs about their appearances. Different opinions had different impacts on their self-esteem, ideas of gender (private and public), and self-presentation. Overall, boys compared their looks to masculine ideals and felt that these aesthetic expectations came from themselves more than from their fathers or peers.

**THE TAKEAWAY:** Feeling comfortable in your skin is important for your well-being. Men, especially young men, may be subject to the influences and ideas of other people. More than that, youth tend to be pretty hard on themselves. The high standards they hold themselves to can be hard to break from when they believe it is what society wants from them. Boys may feel pressure where masculinity and appearance meet. Understanding where these expectations about appearance come from can help parents and peers better support boys and improve men's mental health.