



# ParentsTogether

## REPORT

Date: September 29, 2021

Subject: New findings from teen survey shows beauty filters harm teens' self-esteem

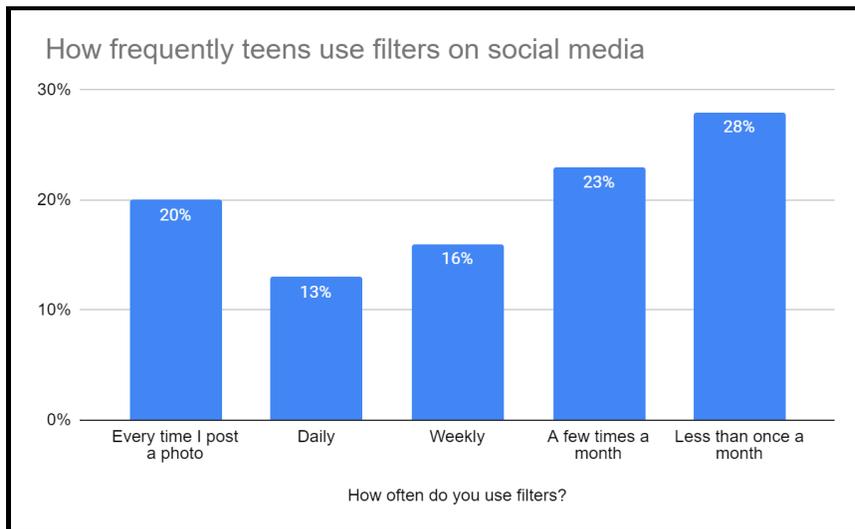
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A new survey conducted by ParentsTogether, a community of more than 2.5 million parents across the U.S., has found that most teens (61%) say using beauty filters makes them feel worse about how they look in real life and that beauty filter use is correlated with low-self esteem and poor body image.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

From September 15 - 21, 2021, ParentsTogether surveyed over 200 teens ages 13-21 from across the US via TikTok and Instagram about their use of beauty filters on social media. Here are the findings from that survey.

## RESULTS

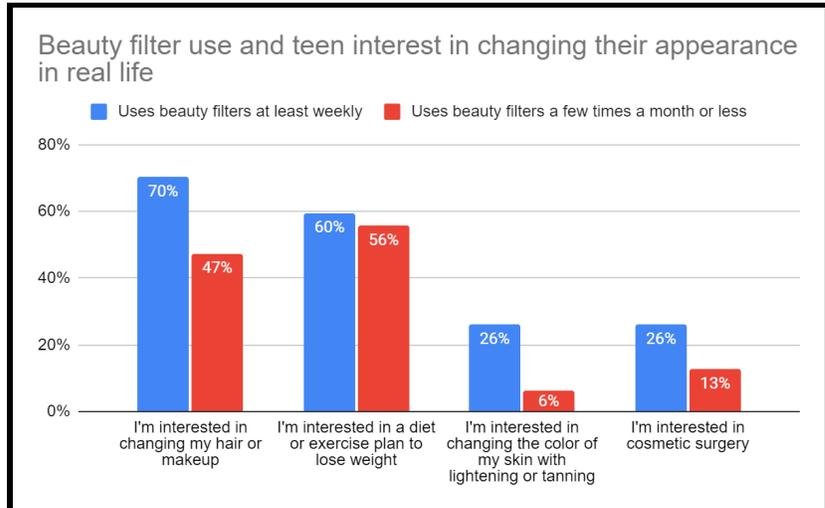


**Nearly half of teens (48%) use beauty filters at least once a week and 1 in 5 use them on every single post.**

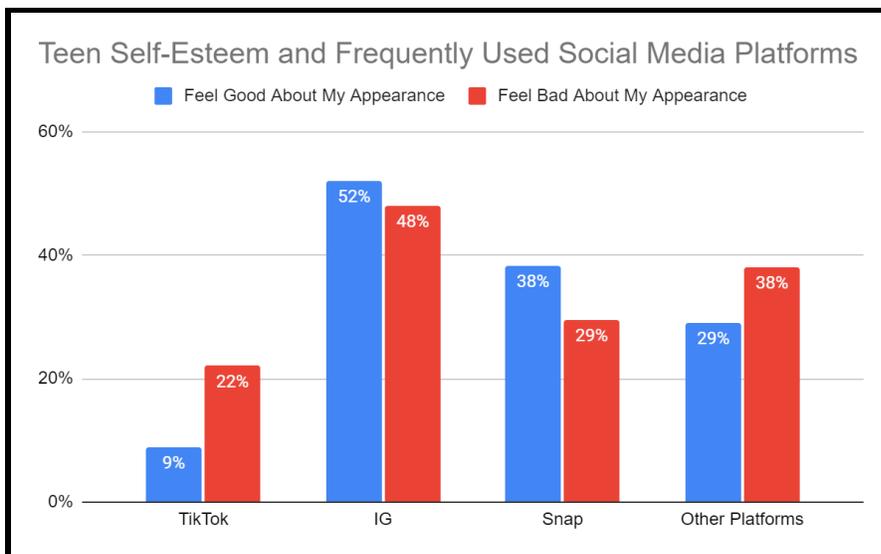
- 87% of teens have used a filter on social media.
- 72% of teens think their friends use beauty filters most of the time.

- More than 1 in 5 respondents report spending more than 18 hours a week on social media.
- Teens who spend the most time online (18+ hours per week) are nearly twice as likely to dislike their appearance as teens who spend the least time on social media per week (less than 8 hours per week).

**Teens who use beauty filters at least weekly are twice as interested in cosmetic surgery and four times as interested in changing their skin color as those who use filters less frequently.**



- 61% of teens say using beauty filters makes them feel worse about how they look in real life.
- The most common reasons teens use beauty filters is to “look more beautiful” (63%) or “hide a characteristic they don’t like” (58%).
- More than half (52%) of teens say they use beauty filters to change the way their face looks.



**Most respondents used filters on Instagram, but TikTok’s beauty filters were the most correlated with dissatisfaction with personal appearance.**

*(Y axis shows % of respondents who use beauty filters on a platform)*

(More respondents used

- We also showed teens [10 photos of celebrities](#) from social media, either filtered or unfiltered in a [“Real or Fake?”](#) quiz. 70% of teens got a failing score -- 60% or below, showing that teens struggle to identify beauty filters when used on social media.

### Comments from Survey Takers

“There's no feeling worse than when I open my camera to take a picture, and the skin smoothing feature is pre-enabled, and I think I look great, only to notice that a filter is on, remove the filter and suddenly feel that by contrast I am absolutely hideous.” - Female, 21

“My new friends think I'm gorgeous, but really my skin is discolored in patches from the sun and I have acne which makes me think more of myself IRL.” - Female, 13-15

“The ones that make you lighter skinned 🙄 I'm already lighter skinned than most POC and it disgusts me how pale they make you to consider you "beautiful" - Non-binary, 16-17

“When I was in middle school, I used to base my self worth on how closely I fit into societal beauty standards. I used filters everyday, and pressured myself into obtaining the "perfect body". This pressure that I put on myself, fueled by social media and beauty filters, caused me to develop an eating disorder, one I still struggle with to this day.” Male, 16-17

“I always have to catch myself when I'm using a filter that changes my jaw shape or my nose size, two things I'm decently insecure about. I don't want to feel good about how I look in a filter when I know next time I look in a mirror I'll have a more negative perception of myself ... It's hard though, as so many filters immediately jump to give you a shorter face and smaller nose and fuller lips.” Non-binary, 16-17

“Once .. I let someone use me as a model to build their modeling photography portfolio. They put a filter on my nose to make it smaller (I'm black and have a big-ish nose) and when I saw it, I felt terrible about myself. I felt so ugly in real life because they'd seen the need to alter my face.” Female, 18-21

“Some of the filters on Tiktok and Snapchat make me feel bad about myself.” - Female, 13-15

“Honestly I would prefer to not use them but since everyone uses them I feel like the standard is higher and so I have to use them or my pictures won't be as high quality” - Female, 21

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