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An International Examination of Skin Concerns Impacting Self-Confidence Among 5,138 Males

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Dear Editor,

The idea that men care less about their skin than women is a stereotype that has persisted for some time. Historically, societal norms and gender roles have often dictated that men should prioritize traits like toughness, stoicism, and practicality over self-care and grooming. Skincare has been traditionally associated with femininity, leading to the perception that it is not as important for men (1, 2).

However, this perception is changing, with evolving societal attitudes towards gender roles and expressions, increased awareness and education, and a growing emphasis on self-care and wellness in contemporary culture (3, 4). Self-reported dermatological concerns encompass a wide range of issues that individuals perceive and report regarding their skin health and appearance. Data on dermatological concerns and impact on self-confidence in men are lacking, and most studies have been conducted in one centre or country. Our objective was to conduct the first international study to assess the relation between skin type/sensitivity and self-reported dermatological concerns in men and their impact on self-confidence.

The survey, conducted between February 2022 and June 2023, involved males ≥18 years from the USA (n = 761), France (n = 346), Brazil (n = 515), India (n = 856), China (n = 648), Mexico (n = 672), Japan (n = 118), South Africa (n = 668), and Indonesia (n = 554). In each country, proportional quota sampling was used based on the distribution of the population according to age, sex, environment (large cities, towns, and rural areas), and income, in order to guarantee national representativeness of the sample. Participants were contacted by mail to complete a structured digital questionnaire. Questions included sociodemographic data, skin type, presence/absence of skin sensitivity, presence/absence of 9 dermatological concerns (**Table I**), and lack or not of self-confidence. The questionnaire for data collection was designed in English by a scientific committee that includes expert dermatologists and public health specialists. Once created, the questionnaire was administered to a small sample to ensure that the questions were properly understood. It was then translated into each language by native speakers living in the country concerned. To ensure linguistic similarity and cultural coherence between different language versions, the translations produced by native speakers were then back-translated in English.

Table I. Proportion of individuals with the 10 studied dermatological concerns and those with lack of self-confidence with respect to the skin type, presence/absence of skin sensitivity, and age

Factor	Global population		Skin lack of firmness		Skin feeling tight		Skin wrinkles		Skin tired looking		Skin pimple breakouts		Skin redness		Skin loss of elasticity		Skin getting thinner		Skin dark spots	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sensitive skin																				
Yes	2,215	43.1%	230	10.4%	217	9.8%	328	14.8%	497	22.4%	544	24.6%	254	11.5%	134	6.0%	80	3.6%	323	14.6%
No	2,923	56.9%	313	10.7%	215	7.4%	572	19.6%	647	22.1%	498	17.0%	150	5.1%	177	6.1%	79	2.7%	401	13.7%
Type of skin																				
Very dry/dry	1,055	20.5%	113	10.7%	104	9.9%	217	20.6%	238	22.6%	122	11.6%	77	7.3%	51	4.8%	32	3.0%	143	13.6%
Mixed	1,779	34.6%	185	10.4%	176	9.9%	310	17.4%	418	23.5%	407	22.9%	153	8.6%	133	7.5%	63	3.5%	276	15.5%
Oily/very oily	1,308	25.5%	127	9.7%	77	5.9%	192	14.7%	297	22.7%	382	29.2%	112	8.6%	70	5.4%	30	2.3%	204	15.6%
<40 years																				
Sensitive skin																				
Yes	1,370	46.6%	110	8.0%	126	9.2%	113	8.2%	294	21.5%	430	31.4%	155	11.3%	54	3.9%	41	3.0%	201	14.7%
No	1,570	53.4%	112	7.1%	101	6.4%	128	8.2%	294	18.7%	361	23.0%	81	5.2%	57	3.6%	19	1.2%	204	13.0%
Type of skin																				
Very dry/dry	589	20.0%	49	8.3%	49	8.3%	52	8.8%	107	18.2%	96	16.3%	32	5.4%	17	2.9%	13	2.2%	71	12.1%
Mixed	1,063	36.2%	77	7.2%	94	8.8%	98	9.2%	229	21.5%	308	29.0%	93	8.7%	49	4.6%	24	2.3%	160	15.1%
Oily/very oily	778	26.5%	48	6.2%	45	5.8%	56	7.2%	161	20.7%	287	36.9%	76	9.8%	32	4.1%	14	1.8%	125	16.1%
40 years and above																				
Sensitive skin																				
Yes	845	38.4%	120	14.2%	91	10.8%	215	25.4%	203	24.0%	114	13.5%	99	11.7%	80	9.5%	39	4.6%	122	14.4%
No	1,353	61.6%	201	14.9%	114	8.4%	444	32.8%	353	26.1%	137	10.1%	69	5.1%	120	8.9%	60	4.4%	197	14.6%
Type of skin																				
Very dry/dry	466	21.2%	64	13.7%	55	11.8%	165	35.4%	131	28.1%	26	5.6%	45	9.7%	34	7.3%	19	4.1%	72	15.5%
Mixed	716	32.6%	108	15.1%	82	11.5%	212	29.6%	189	26.4%	99	13.8%	60	8.4%	84	11.7%	39	5.4%	116	16.2%
Oily/very oily	530	24.1%	79	14.9%	32	6.0%	136	25.7%	136	25.7%	95	17.9%	36	6.8%	38	7.2%	16	3.0%	79	14.9%

In total, 5,138 men were involved (mean age 39.67 ± 12.76 years). Table I indicates the proportion of individuals with the 9 studied dermatological concerns and those with lack of self-confidence with respect to the skin type, presence/absence of skin sensitivity, and age. **Table II** presents the logistic regression with univariate and multivariate analysis to determine risk factors for lack of self-confidence.

Understanding dermatological issues prevalent across diverse skin types is essential for devising successful skincare approaches and tackling skin-related problems effectively.

In general, men with skin sensitivity express more dermatological concerns than those without. Furthermore, they are significantly more likely to express lack of self-confidence. Surprisingly, those ≥40 years with skin sensitivity tend to express lack of confidence more than those <40 years. Moreover, almost half of men with very dry/dry skin and more than a third of those with oily/very oily skin also express a lack of self-confidence. Multivariate analysis shows that the risk factors for lack of self-confidence are: dry skin, loss of elasticity, skin sensitivity, skin looking tired, and dark spots. Conversely, dry skin, lack of firmness, skin tightness, wrinkles, pimple breakouts/blemishes, redness, and weakened skin do not seem to be significantly associated with lack of self-confidence.

Men commonly experience cosmetic issues such as acne resulting in post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, pigmentary disorders like freckles, melasma, and solar lentigo, as well as wrinkles and skin laxity (5, 6). However, wrinkles do not seem to be associated with lack of self-confidence.

Presently, men are subjected to heightened beauty standards and expectations for youthful looks, which can significantly impact their self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, and professional achievements (5, 6). This trend is evident in the growing interest in men's skincare items and minimally invasive cosmetic procedures. Recognizing the pivotal role of skin in aesthetics, men are increasingly conscious of the advantages offered in the facilitation of healthy, youthful skin, targeting issues such as hyperpigmentation, rough texture, and dryness – by both preventing and reversing them.

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Table II. Logistic regression with univariate and multivariate analysis to determine risk factors for lack of self-confidence

Factor	Univariate	Multivariate
Skin sensitivity	1.34(1.20;1.50), *p*-value 0.000000472	1.275(1.133;1.435), *p*-value 0.000096
Dry skin	1.60(1.39;1.83), *p*-value 0.0000000000197	1.820(1.514;2.188), *p*-value 0.000096
Skin lack of firmness	1.01(0.84;1.22), *p*-value 0.895	1.018(0.838;1.236), *p*-value 0.86
Skin feeling tight	0.92(0.75;1.14), *p*-value 0.456	0.903(0.732;1.114), *p*-value 0.34
Skin wrinkles	0.87(0.74;1.01), *p*-value 0.06	0.887(0.752;1.047), *p*-value 0.155
Skin looking tired	1.21(1.06;1.38), *p*-value 0.00538	1.261(1.093;1.455), *p*-value 0.0015
Pimple breakouts/blemishes	1.08(0.94;1.24), *p*-value 0.307	1.018(0.878;1.181), *p*-value 0.809
Skin redness	1.03(0.83;1.27), *p*-value 0.808	1.016(0.816;1.265), *p*-value 0.886
Skin loss of elasticity	1.31(1.04;1.65), *p*-value 0.022	1.435(1.120;1.838), *p*-value 0.0042
Skin getting thinner/weakened	1.17(0.85;1.61), *p*-value 0.345	1.182(0.845;1.653), *p*-value 0.328
Dark spots	1.20(1.02;1.41), *p*-value 0.026	1.232(1.044;1.455), *p*-value 0.013