



Project Embrace

I.AM. ENOUGH.

2023



The Project Embrace Curvy Hair Study

Project Embrace Curvy Hair Study. Conducted with the support of



Raced-based Beauty Bias

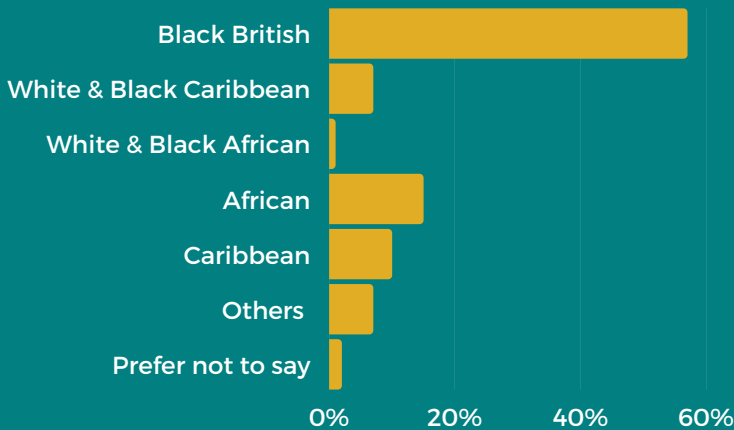


Societal expectations of how women are expected to look has created a beauty bias against the natural hair texture of Black women. The beauty lexicon has introduced the idea of good hair and bad hair, with good hair being closer to Caucasian textured hair and bad hair being closer to African textured hair.

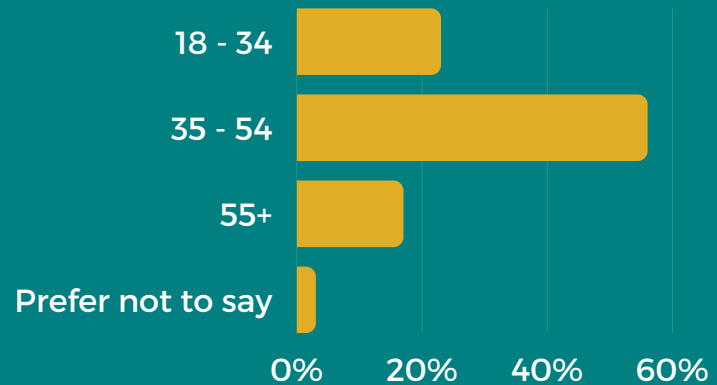
This bias often manifest in various forms such as workplace dress policies, school children being punished, lack of availability of proper Afro-textured hair training, invisibility in the media, bullying, lack of products and professional hair services.

Needless to say, it has affected the hairstyling choices of Black women in order to avoid being discriminated against. Unfortunately many of these choices can result in hairloss and other health issues and impacts both physical and psychological health negatively.

RESPONDENT'S ETHNICITY

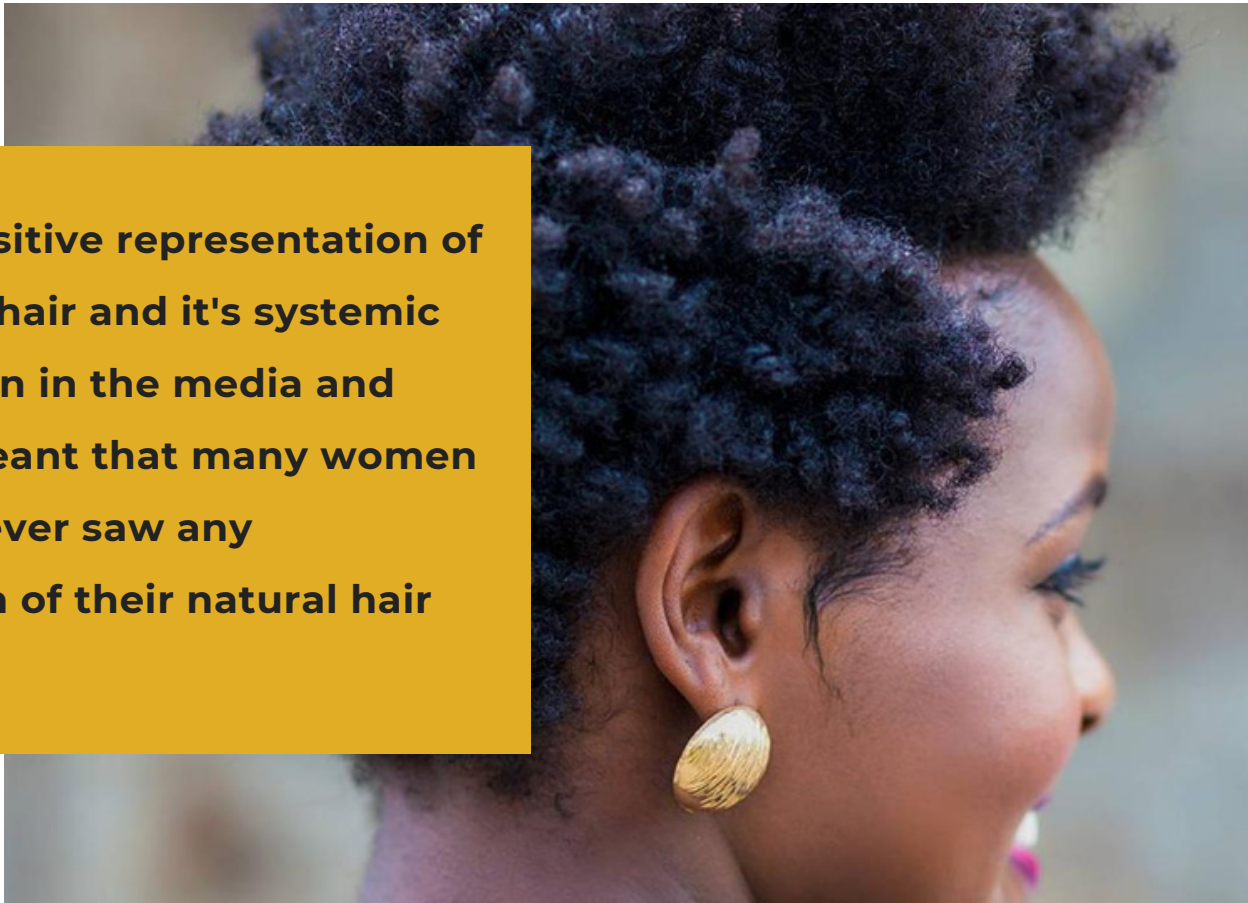


RESPONDENT'S AGES



We surveyed a total of 318 black women

The lack of positive representation of Afro-textured hair and its systemic marginalisation in the media and society has meant that many women growing up never saw any representation of their natural hair type.



When asked how much afro hair representation they saw as a child...

43% Never

35% Sometimes

22% Always

Lack of representation meant that black women growing up had very few role models with their hair type.

When asked if they ever had any role models with Afro-textured hair while growing up...

58% No 42% Yes

While a majority of black women played with dolls growing up, lack of diverse hair representation was also reflected in the dolls available for them to play with.

88% Played with dolls as a child

12% Did not Play with dolls as a child

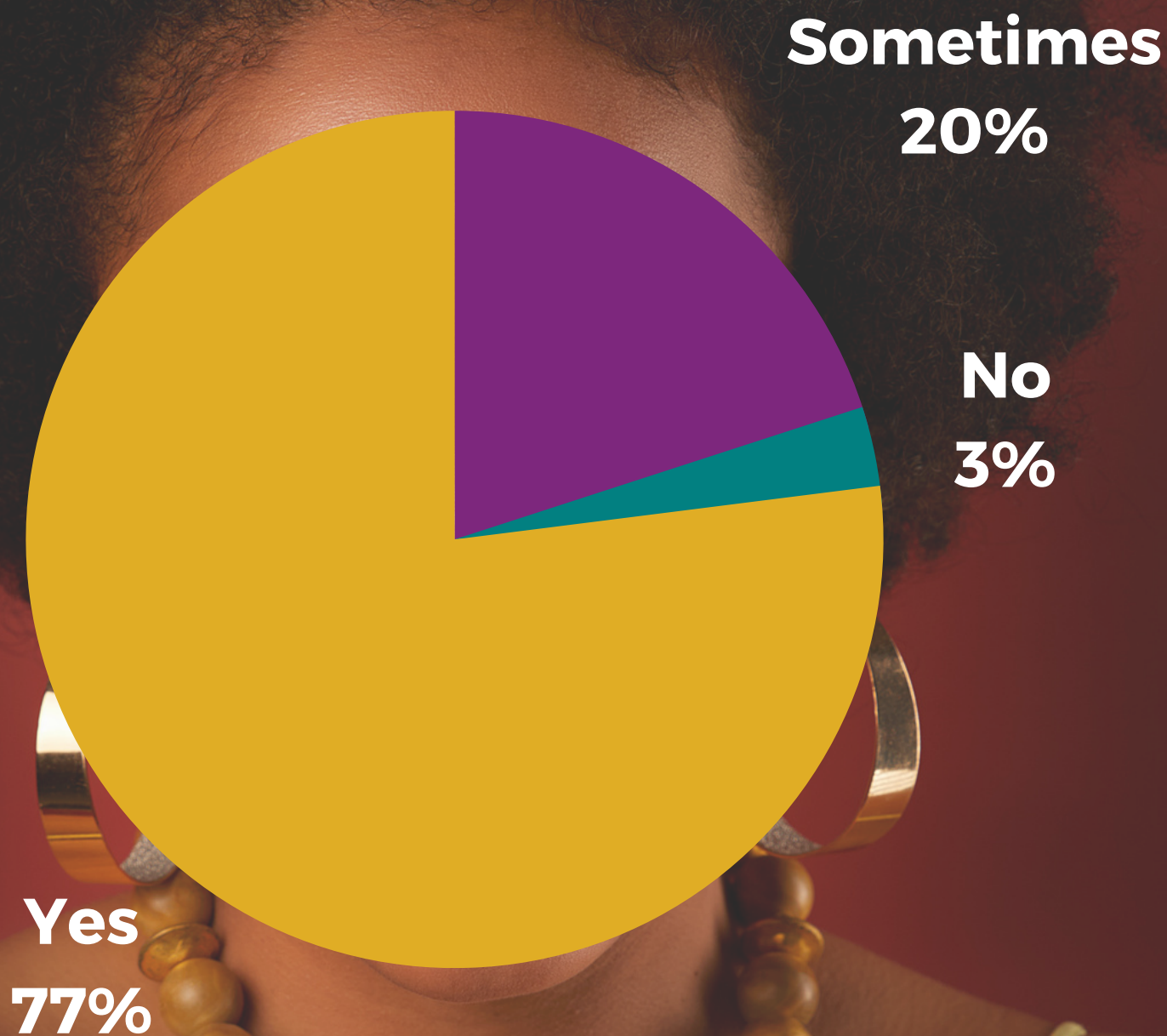
86%

Played with dolls that did not have Afro-textured hair

14%

Played with dolls that had Afro-textured hair

Have you ever felt uncomfortable with your natural hair?



Feeling uncomfortable with natural hair can start as early as 3 years old.

When did you start feeling uncomfortable with your natural hair?

54%

3 - 12 years old

15%

13 - 21 years old

31%

22+ years old

Just as with feeling uncomfortable with their natural hair, hair altering practices can start in early childhood.

When did you get your first relaxer?

11%

3 - 6 years old

34%

7 - 17 years old

44%

18+

82% 18%

Yes

Never

Have you ever used a relaxer?

A vast majority of Black women have at least one time in their lifetime used a relaxer to straighten their hair.

78% Said they were affected by Western beauty standards.

Black women acknowledge that racism impacts accepted beauty standards, and while that has influenced how they present their hair, they would prefer wearing their natural hair.

78% Believe racism impacts the representation of natural hair

67% Would go back to their natural hair

67% Have worn a straight weave or wig at some point in their adult life

88% More media representation is needed

Feel there is not enough positive representation of natural black hair.

Black Hair Bias, Discrimination And Microaggression Experiences



“ My boss told me my hair looks better straight and flowing. ”

“ I was asked, if I was going to start a protest! ”

“ Whilst wearing bantu knots to school as a child, I was compared to the toy “bop-it” - which is maybe innocuously silly, but given that this was immediately followed by my classmates grabbing, pulling and twisting my hair, I felt totally harassed and alienated. it’s safe to say I never wore that style to school again. ”

“ A white colleague once told me that that my hair looks unprofessional and like a Christmas tree. ”

“ I am mixed-race with wavy hair, but my daughters have thick Afro-textured hair. My 14 year old had just decided to stop straightening her hair. The first day she took her natural hair to school a teacher said her hair looked terrible and told her to go home and get it sorted. She came home crying. ”

“ I have been told that my hair is messy, smelly and looks like a birds nest. ”

92%

Experience some form
of emotional distress
surrounding their hair.

Traumatised

**Angry
and
upset**

**Vexed.
Insulted**

Bad

**How Black Hair Bias,
Discrimination And
Microaggression
Makes You Feel**

Humiliated

Annoyed

**Disheartened
and
Depressed**

In conclusion ...

The survey was conducted to provide insights into individual experiences and perceptions related to hair care, personal image, societal influences, and preferences.

“

I'm shocked and sickened that children continue to be segregated in schools due to their hair styles. Our hair is not a distraction nor is it disruptive or offensive. It is a piece of our beauty that continues to be seen as inferior by those who don't understand and or see black people for who we are.

”

“

"I'm worried when I have children especially a girl, she may feel that she has to alter the texture of her hair to fit in.

”

“

I was asked to change my natural hairstyle at work. I felt angry because I was being asked to essentially change a part of myself in order to make people around me more comfortable.

”

This survey shows that the systemic lack of equal and fair representation of beauty has created a beauty bias resulting in a society that punishes those with afro textured hair.



Racialized beauty standards have had a profound impact on the representation of hair, reflecting broader societal biases and inequalities.

With Afro-textured hair seen as deviant and unacceptable, and Western beauty ideals prioritizing straight hair, it is often a site for bullying, microaggression and discrimination, which can affect both physical and mental well-being of individuals. From schools to workplaces, the survey shows that hair discrimination is still very much a part of this society, disproportionately affecting individuals with Afro textured hair.

Hair is used as a tool for expressing cultural identity, but these standards have coerced many to conform to damaging hairstyling practices.

The lack of diverse hair representation in media and fashion further perpetuates the idea that only certain hair types are desirable or professional.

This calls for a re-evaluation of societal standards, a more inclusive portrayal of hair in order to foster positive self-image and dismantle systemic biases, and a change in legislation to reflect a more inclusive, equitable, and accepting society.



Call To Action

* ACCEPTANCE & NORMALISATION

Respondents want their natural hair to be accepted and considered mainstream. They want to see natural hair accepted in society, workplaces, and schools. They also want to see more acceptance of their hair type within the black community itself.

* EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Respondents want more knowledge about their hair readily available. They want information on finding the right products for their specific hair issues, like alopecia and having more information on hair maintenance.

* REPRESENTATION

Respondents felt that seeing more representation of natural hair in media, advertising, and professional spaces is extremely important and would help boost their confidence. They called for more black models with natural hair, more representation of a variety of curls and hair types, and more people of their own race wearing their hair naturally, especially in influential positions.

* HAIRCARE PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Respondents desired affordable and effective hair products that were readily available in stores. They also want hairdressers that understand how to work with their hair type and don't charge extra or treat them differently because of their hair.

* SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY

Respondents expressed a desire for support from others. This included having more people wearing their hair naturally, more black men supporting women with natural hair, and having a hair community for sharing advice and recommendations.

Appendices

What Gender do you identify as?	F	%
Male	1	1%
Female	144	97%
Non-binary	0	0%
Gender fluid	1	1%
Third gender	0	1%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	3	2%

What sexuality do you identify as?	F	%
Heterosexual	119	83%
Homosexual	3	2%
Bisexual	8	6%
Pansexual	0	0%
Other	3	2%
Prefer not to say	11	8%

What is your household income?	F	%
£0 - £12,500	7	5%
£12,501 - £50,000	40	28%
£50,001 - £100,000	36	25%
£100,001 - £150,000	11	8%
£150,001+	5	3%
Prefer not to say	45	31%

What's your accommodation type?	F	%
Semi-detached house	37	26%
Detached house	19	13%
Terraced house	27	19%
Flat	37	26%
other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	23	14%

What is your current state of employment?	F	%
Employed	72	50%
Self-Employed/Freelance	43	30%
Unemployed - looking for work	4	3%
Unemployed - Unable to work	6	4%
Homemaker	1	1%
Studying	8	6%
Retired	0	0%
Other	1	1%
Prefer not to say	9	6%

Where do you consume information about hair	
YouTube	76 mentions
Instagram	54 mentions
Family/Friends	47 mentions
Online	32 mentions
Hairdressers	23 mentions
TikTok	14 mentions
Magazines	10 mentions
Google	9 mentions