



# MAKING AN APPEARANCE

EXPLORING PERFORMERS' EXPERIENCES OF AESTHETIC LABOUR



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### 3. Executive Summary

- The “Making an Appearance” research project is a nine-month collaboration between the Centre for Contemporary British Theatre at Royal Holloway and the Equity Women’s Committee, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as a Creative Economy Engagement Fellowship.
- It explores the kinds of appearance-related activities that performers undertake as part of their performance work, considering changes performers make to their appearance of their own volition and those that are requested or required by employers, as well as the money, time and energy that performers invest in appearance.
- This report offers an analysis of the findings of a survey of 387 professional UK performers and follow-up focus group and interview discussions with 31 of those participants.
- The survey asked performers about the way in which they prepare their appearance for auditions, the costs involved in this work, requests received from employers to change their appearance, the relationship between appearance and identity, experience of criticism of appearance in the industry, and typecasting.
- Interview and focus group discussions explored these issues in more depth, considering how appearance work varies depending on the point in the performance process, the relationship between the body and performance, the relationship between appearance and casting, appearance pressures in different performance contexts, the resources required to make an appearance, and desired changes to industry practice.
- The vast majority of respondents reported undertaking aesthetic labour as part of their performance work, with 94% of survey respondents having made a change to their appearance ahead of an audition or interview. The most common activities were buying new clothes (81%) and changing hairstyle (65%), but also included more substantial appearance alterations such as trying to lose weight (53%) or having Botox (3%).
- Appearance-related activities can be costly. The median category of monthly spend on appearance was £25-£49 per month, excluding gym membership.
- Appearance-related activities also involve a time investment. The median category of time spent on appearance before an audition was 30 minutes to one hour.
- Respondents also reported experiencing an emotional cost in relation to their appearance-work, with some experiencing pressures on their mental health.
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents reported that they had been asked to make a change to their appearance for work in the industry. Of those respondents who had been asked to make an alteration, making a change to hairstyle was by far the most common request (67%), followed by dying hair (45%). 33% of those who had been asked to make a change to their appearance had been asked to lose weight.
- Responses suggest that these requests are often made informally, as the majority of such requests were made verbally in person and nearly a third of appearance-change requests were made during the job itself.
- Over three-quarters (77%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: I feel pressure to look a particular way in order to get work.

- Gender was felt to increase pressure on appearance by 72% of respondents identifying as female, 28% male, 71% of non-binary respondents, and 100% of those identifying as other gender identities.
- Race was felt to increase pressure on appearance by the majority of minority ethnic respondents, with 68% of those identifying as from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, 83% of respondents identifying as Asian/Asian British, 64% of respondents identifying as black/African/Caribbean/black British, 50% of respondents identifying as other ethnic groups suggesting their race intensified pressure on their appearance.
- The majority of respondents in every age category suggested that their age increased pressure on appearance: 56% of respondents aged 18-24, 55% of respondents aged 25-34, 65% of respondents aged 35-44, 64% of respondents aged 45-54, 69% of respondents aged 55-64, 63% of respondents aged 65-74, and 67% of respondents aged 75+ felt that their age increased pressure on their appearance. In interviews and focus groups older performers reported that they often felt stereotyped because of their age, while younger performers felt they often had to conform to a “desirable” appearance due to their age.
- 31% of respondents identifying as disabled felt that their disability intensified pressures on appearance.
- 53% of respondents’ appearance had been subject to criticism by someone in the industry, of whom 76% reported that the experience had made them feel differently about their body.
- 73% of respondents felt they had a casting type. Of those respondents, 78% felt that their casting type has a particular appearance. In interview and focus group discussions type-casting was often seen as limiting performers’ employment opportunities, with appearance-related stereotypes often seen as playing a major role in casting choices.
- Respondents reported instances where receiving criticism about their appearance had triggered or exacerbated mental health issues, particularly eating disorders.
- Interview and focus group participants identified greater diversity and more meaningful representation as ways in which the industry might develop a healthier attitude towards appearance and aesthetic labour.
- Four key areas for future activity or action were identified: employer responsibility, mental health, access and inclusion, and representation.

## 4. About

This research was undertaken as part of a Creative Economy Engagement Fellowship, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It was hosted by the Centre for Contemporary British Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London and partnered with the Equity Women’s Committee. Research Fellow Dr Sara Reimers designed the research activities and led their implementation under the mentorship of Dr Chris Megson from Royal Holloway and working closely with Kelly Burke of the Equity Women’s Committee.

## 5. Introduction

The “Making an Appearance” research project responds to growing concerns about the pressures performers face in relation to their appearance and the ways in which performers’ bodies are policed by a range of industry gatekeepers including, but not limited to, agents, casting directors, directors, producers, and reviewers.

Building on the work of Deborah Dean (2005, 2007, 2008) and Roanna Mitchell (2014), this project focuses on specific instances of aesthetic labour undertaken by performers as part of their professional life – this might include anything from growing or removing body-hair to gaining or losing weight – and examines performers’ attitudes towards this labour.

### 5.1 Aesthetic Labour

The term aesthetic labour was first applied to interactive service work, such as might be undertaken by flight attendants and theme park hosts. In the context of this kind of work Warhurst et al. defined aesthetic labour as:

a supply of “embodied capacities and attributes” possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into “competencies” or “skills” which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a “style” of service encounter. (4)

Deborah Dean developed this definition to apply it to the work of performers, suggesting that “The aesthetic labour process in performing is about the need of the employer to convey meanings and conjure particular associations through the use of the worker’s body” (“Recruiting” 762). Dean observes that “Performers will draw on the cultural currency of shared typifications and visual stereotypes to increase their chance of access to work” (“Recruiting” 768). This work at maintaining a “castable” appearance is ongoing and, as Entwistle and Wissinger have argued, the pressures on freelancers can be particularly acute as they “have to adapt to fluctuating aesthetic trends and different clients and commodify themselves in the absence of a corporate aesthetic” (774).

There are a variety of forces that shape the demands on an actor’s appearance. As Roanna Mitchell observes:

Type-casting, beauty ideals, fashions of the body, and the perception of what kind of body is appropriate to perform a specific role – all of these contribute to the importance of the actor’s appearance in gaining work, particularly in the commercial performance industry. Here a physical capital marketplace has developed, in which the dynamics of supply and demand are shaped by the numbers of actors with a certain physicality seeking work at one time, and by assumptions of what type of body is deemed appropriate to perform a certain role or character. (61)

This study aims to explore these demands, and where specific pressures come from, by considering the changes performers make to their appearance of their own volition and the changes they are asked to make by industry gatekeepers. Another key point of consideration is the ways in which questions of gender, race, age, and disability impact on the expectations and experiences of aesthetic labour.

## 6. Research Methods

We adopted a mixed-methods approach to data gathering, circulating an online survey, hosted on Qualtrics, and conducting follow-up focus groups at Royal Holloway's Bedford Square Building and telephone interviews. The survey ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Participants were self-selecting and were recruited via a range of methods including industry mailing-lists, social media, and Equity meetings. Inclusion criteria for analysis in this report required respondents to report being professional performers over the age of eighteen who undertake at least part of their work in the UK.

The survey was distributed electronically via a range of methods. The Equity Women's Committee promoted the survey via their social media channels including Twitter (c.2,000 followers) and Facebook (c.800 members). A link to the survey was included in Equity's April electronic newsletter (received by c.45,000 people) and was shared on social media and via mailing lists by a range of industry organisations including ERA 50:50, the Women in Film and Television, and the Act for Change Project. Leaflets about the research were distributed at five different branch meetings and Research Fellow, Sara Reimers, attended three London branch meetings in June to promote the survey to attendees (with between fifteen and thirty attendees at each meeting). Leaflets were also displayed at Equity's headquarters and at the Actor's Centre in London.

We received 387 useable responses to the survey, with a dropout rate of 18%. This represents a small subset of the population eligible to complete the survey, but is nonetheless a sizeable number for a survey of this nature.

The survey began with an information sheet and respondents were asked to confirm their consent to participate before beginning the survey. It took roughly 5-10 minutes to complete.

A substantial majority of responses came from people identifying as white and female, which will impact on the generalisability of these findings. However, analysis of the responses indicates that appearance pressures are felt by people right across the industry and that the nature of these pressures changes and intensifies in relation to gender, ethnicity, age, and disability, as well as a wider range of identity aspects.

Follow-up conversations were had with thirty-one survey respondents in the form of three focus groups and twenty four telephone interviews, which represents roughly 8% of survey respondents. Participants for the focus groups and interviews were self-selecting: at the end of the survey participants were invited to register their interest in participating in further research via a separate form. The demographics of those who participated in these follow-up conversations broadly map onto those of respondents completing the survey.

As with the survey, participants were given a participant information sheet and asked to complete a consent form before participating in the interviews and focus groups.

Survey data has been analysed using SPSS and NVivo software. Interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed by the research fellow and the transcripts were coded using NVivo.

The research was approved by Royal Holloway's Research Ethics Committee.

## 7. Survey

The research was designed to explore the following research questions:

- To what extent is aesthetic labour an inherent part of being a performer?
- How common is the policing of performers' physical appearance by industry gatekeepers? How do performers respond to this policing?
- How do issues of gender, race, age, and disability influence expectations and experiences of performers' aesthetic labour?

In the first instance, these themes were explored through questions in the survey that were grouped under the following headings: baseline data, auditions, cost, aesthetic labour in employment contexts, appearance and identity, negative comments about appearance, and typecasting. The focus group and interview questions were formulated in response to the early survey findings and designed to shed more light on the themes illuminated by the survey. In the reporting of the findings, interview and focus group responses are presented in conversation with survey findings, to facilitate a more in-depth engagement with the issues raised.

### 7.1 Baseline Data

In order to analyse responses in relation to the issues identified above, respondents were asked whether they work in the UK, whether they are a member of Equity, to state their gender identity, ethnicity and age, and to list whether they consider themselves to have a disability. They were also asked what types of performance work they undertake.

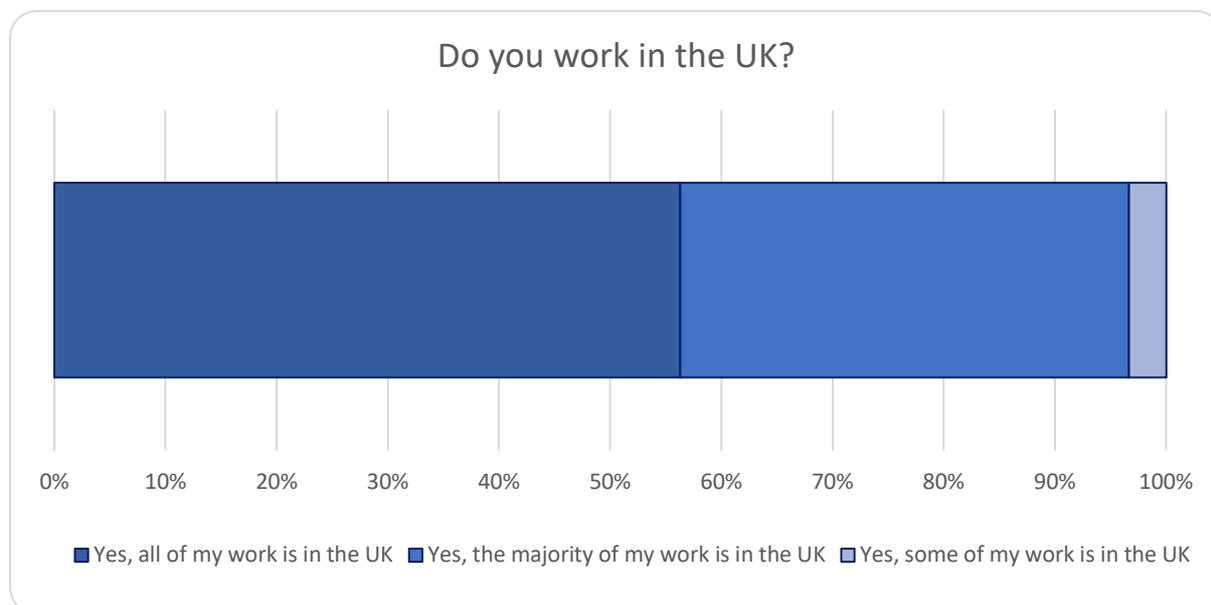


Figure 1 Do you work in the UK?

Respondents were asked if they worked in the UK. We received two responses from performers who undertake no work in the UK and as this is such a small percentage of the total responses these two responses have been removed from the final data set for the sake of consistency.

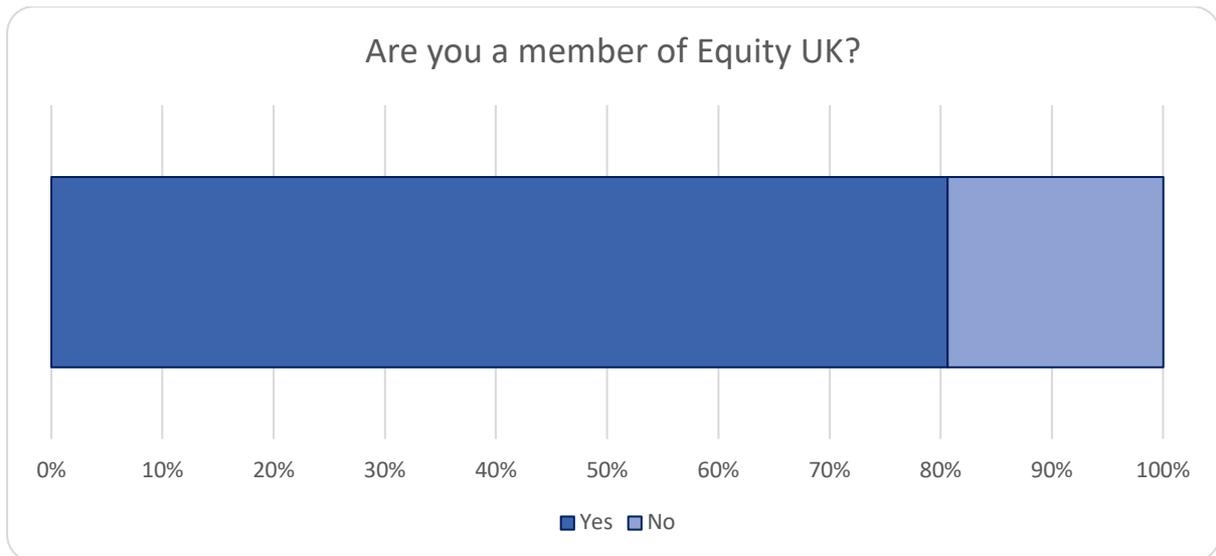


Figure 2 Are you a member of Equity UK?

A substantial majority of respondents (81%) were members of Equity, which reflects the primary methods used to recruit participants.

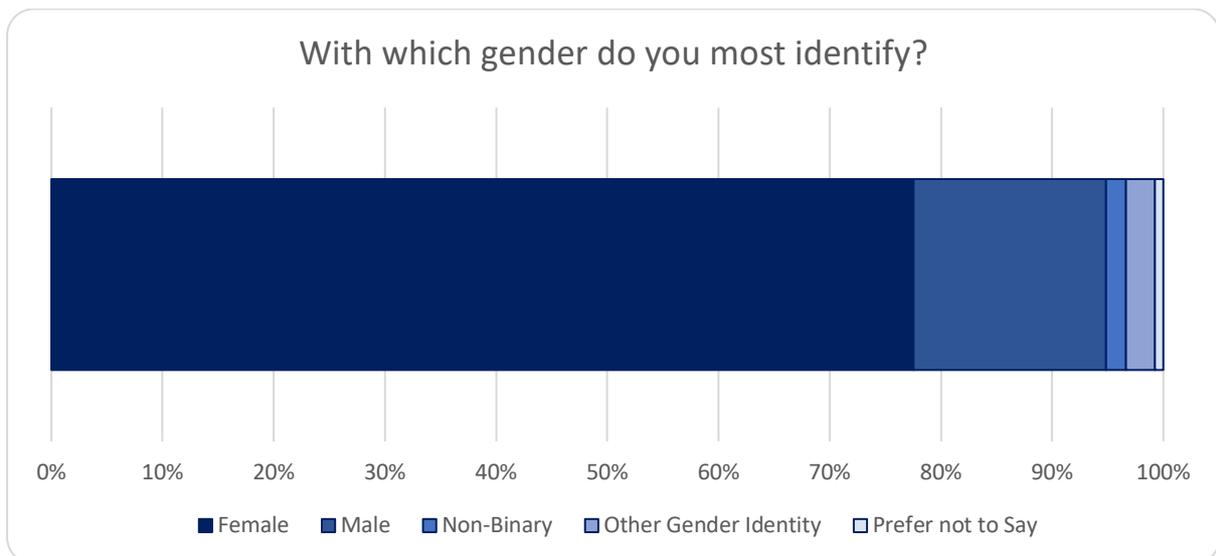


Figure 3 With which gender do you most identify?

A substantial majority of responses received were from participants who identify as female (78%), with 17% from respondents who identify as male, 2% from respondents who identify as non-binary, 3% who identify under other gender categories including gender fluid, genderqueer, and trans, 1% elected not to say.<sup>i</sup>

Shortly before the "Making an Appearance" survey closed we were alerted to issues with the gender categories that we had originally used in the survey (see Appendix One), with regard to the way they positioned cis and trans identity. The gender categories used in the survey were those employed by Equity's LGBT+ Members Committee in a survey in 2018. We are very grateful to the respondent who raised this issue with us and have fed it back to Equity. In the analysis that follows we use the categories of female, male, and non-binary, and have grouped responses from respondents who identified under the other categories as "other gender categories".

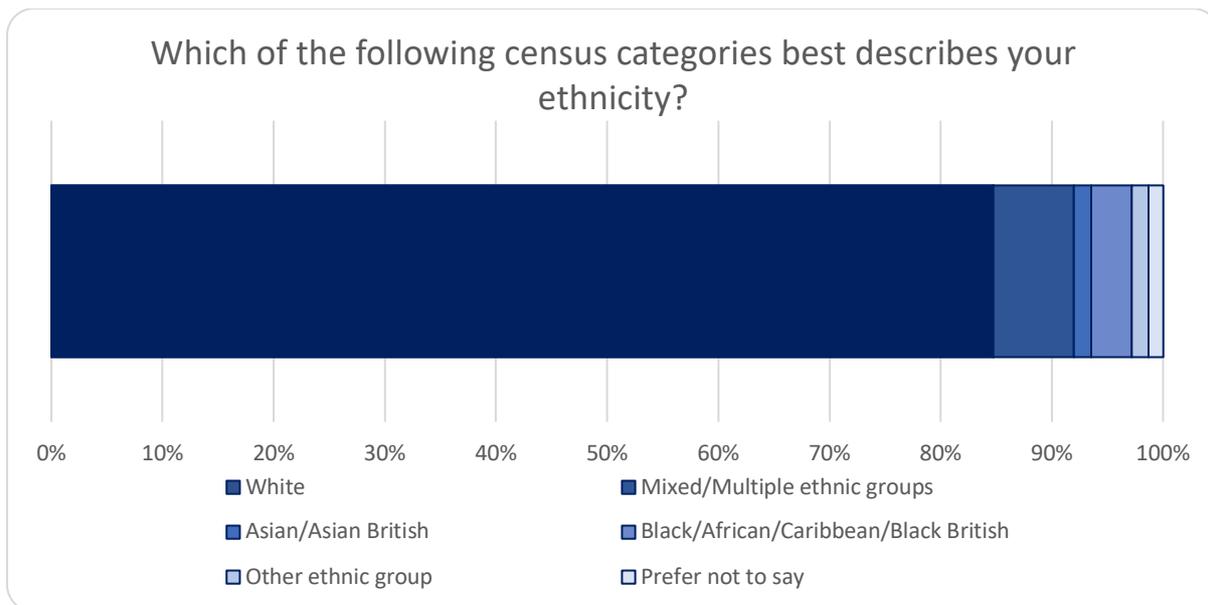


Figure 4 Which of the following Census categories best describes your ethnicity?

Participants were asked which census ethnicity category best describes their ethnic identity. For ease of reporting and to ensure no individual respondent can be identified, the eighteen categories utilised have been condensed to the five main census ethnicity headings: white, mixed/multiple ethnic groups in this report: Asian/Asian British, black/African/Caribbean/black British, and other ethnic group, as well as prefer not to say.

The majority of respondents (85%) identified as white, of whom 83% identified as white British. A further 7% identified as being from a mixed or multiple ethnic group, 2% identified as Asian or Asian British, 4% identified as black/African/Caribbean/black British, 2% identified as being from an unlisted ethnic group, and 1% elected not to say.

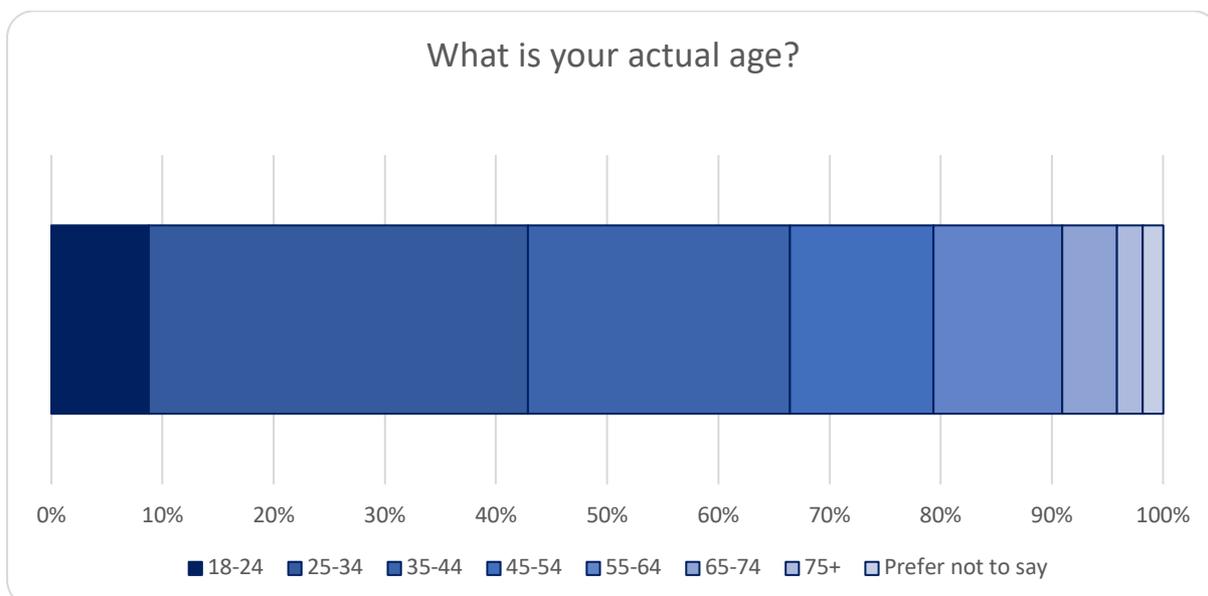


Figure 5 What is your actual age?

Respondents represented a range of ages, with 9% aged 18-24, 34% aged 25-34, 24% aged 35-44, 13% aged 45-54, 11% aged 55-64, 5% aged 65-74, and 2% aged over 75. Those electing not to say made up 2% of respondents.

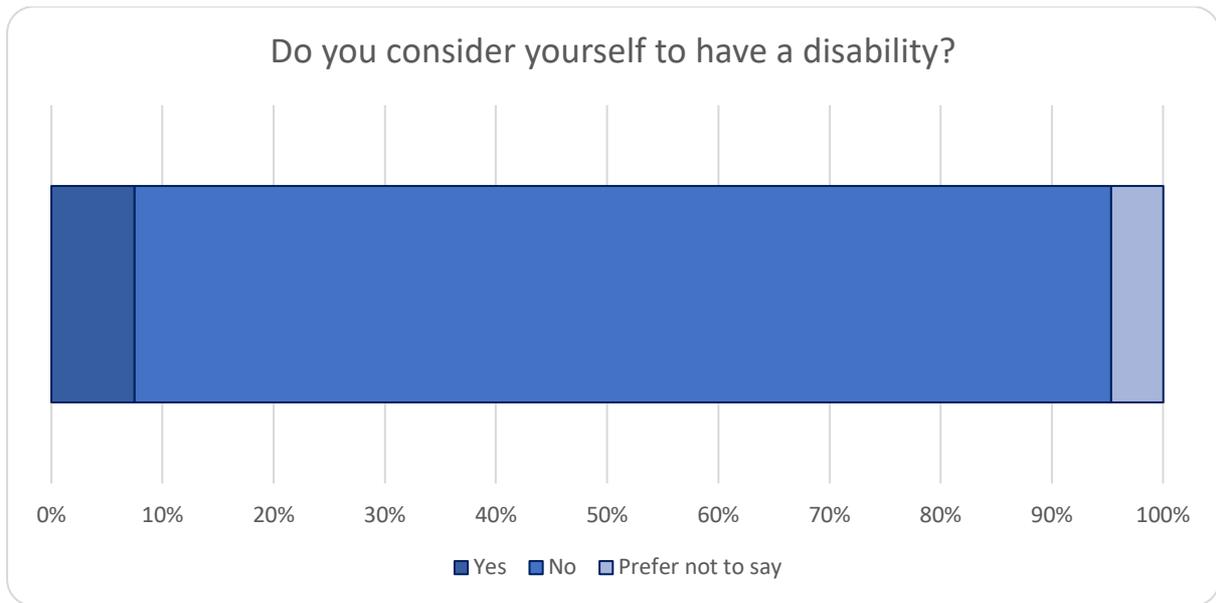


Figure 6 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Of those responding to the survey, 7% considered themselves to have a disability, while 88% did not and 5% preferred not to say.

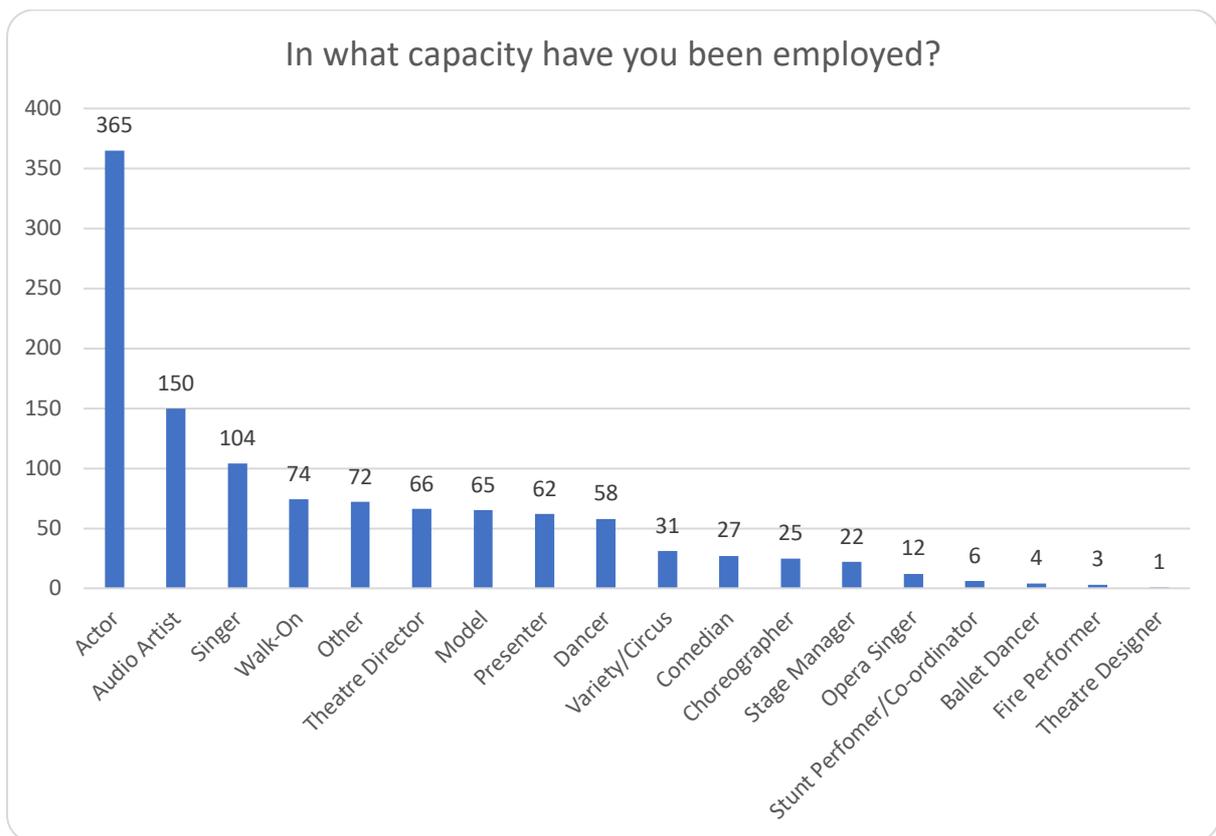


Figure 7 In what capacity have you been employed?

Participants were asked in what capacities they have been employed, with the category options reflecting the performance categories on Equity’s application form. Of those responding, 94% had been employed as an actor, alongside a variety of other performance roles. Respondents were invited to select as many categories as applied to them.

## 7.2 Aesthetic Labour and Auditions

The first section of the survey was designed to explore the kinds of changes performers are making to their appearance of their own volition in order to make themselves more “castable”. They were asked “Have you ever done any of the following to prepare for an audition or interview?” and were invited to tick as many activities as applied to them. Just sixteen respondents of 387 had never changed their appearance for an audition or interview, representing 4% of total participants. One respondent elected not to answer the question. The remaining 370 respondents had undertaken a range of activities, with some participants selecting as many as eleven activities that they had undertaken in preparation for auditions. The most common activities included buying new clothes or makeup (81%), changing hairstyle (65%), trying to lose weight (53%), and removing body-hair (52%).

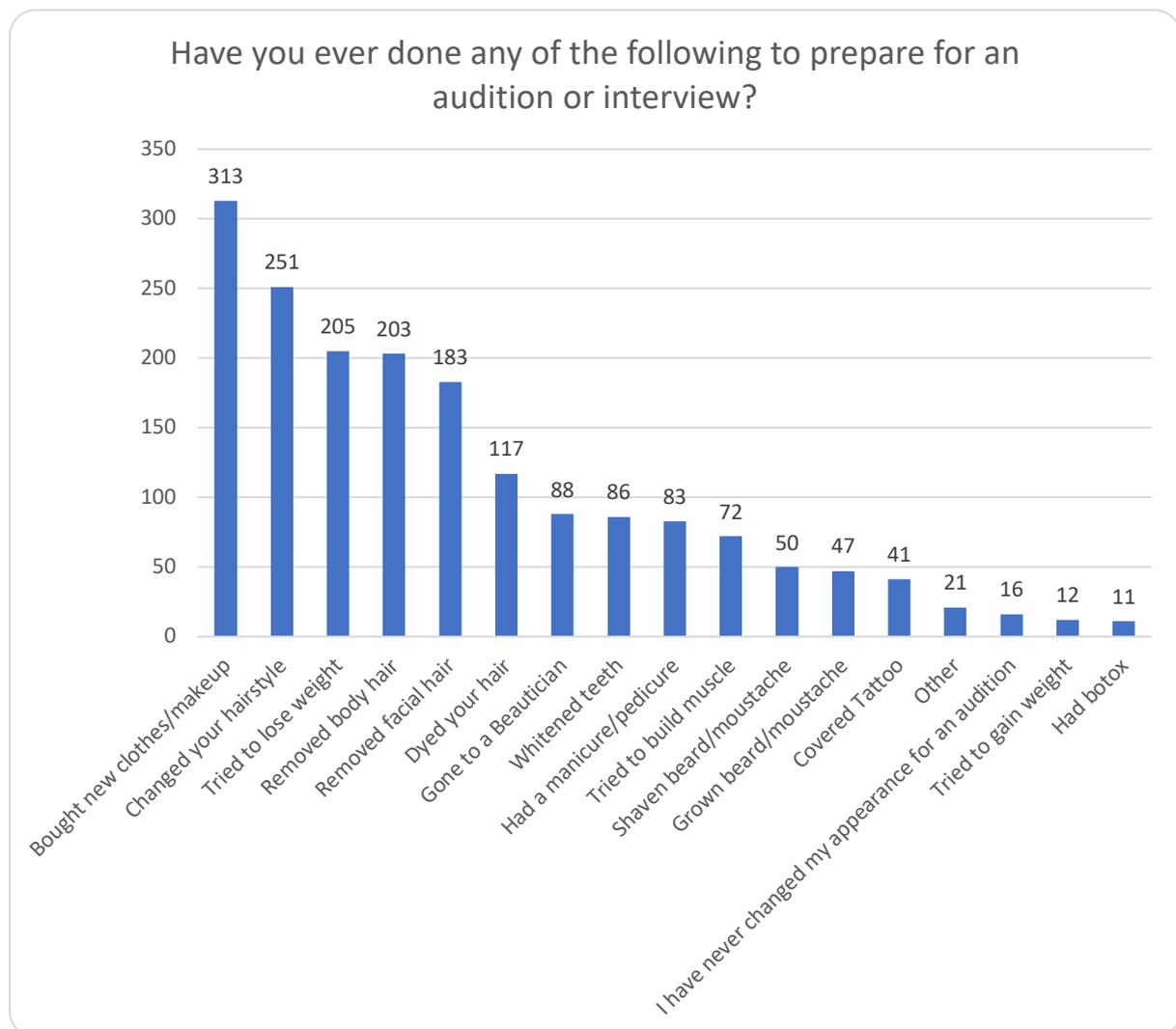


Figure 8 Have you ever done any of the following to prepare for an audition or interview?

Other activities included using fake tan, spending time on a sunbed, covering scars, and having moles removed. Some respondents elaborated on the “tried to lose weight” category, citing crash diets and bulimia as ways in which they had attempted to alter their appearance before an audition. The theme of disordered eating ahead of auditions was also raised in focus group and interview discussions, with respondents citing approaches that included dehydration, laxatives, and crash diets.

When analysed by gender, the widespread nature of the activity of growing and shaving a beard or moustache becomes evident, as 67% of respondents identifying as male had grown a beard or moustache and 69% of the same demographic had shaven a beard or moustache.

Other appearance-related activities also appear to be more common amongst some genders than others. For example, 57% of respondents identifying as female and 37% of respondents identifying as male had tried to lose weight. In contrast, 16% of respondents identifying as female had tried to build muscle ahead of an audition or interview whereas 28% of respondents identifying as male had attempted the same. Just under half of respondents who identify as non-binary had attempted to lose weight or gain muscle. Roughly two thirds of respondents identifying under other gender categories had tried to lose weight, while a third of respondents in this demographic had tried to gain muscle.

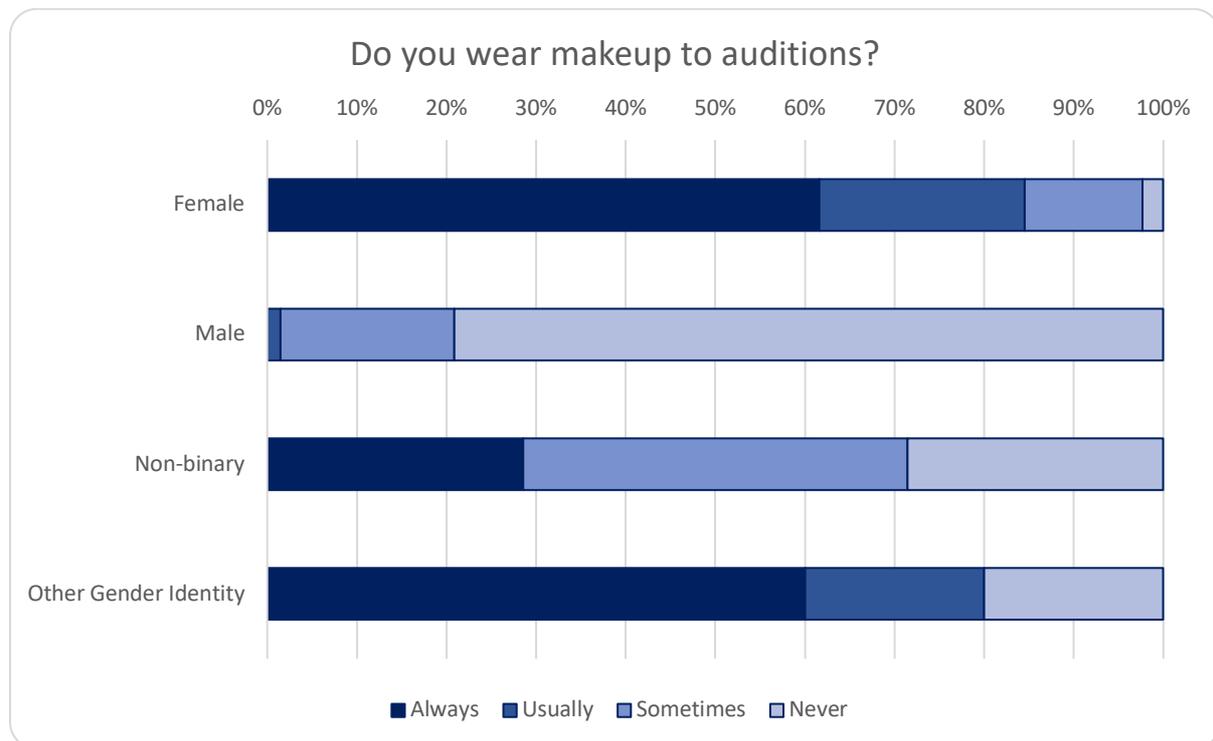


Figure 9 Do you wear makeup to auditions? (Analysed by gender)

When considering the labour involved in preparing for an audition it is noteworthy that almost half of the total respondents always wear makeup to auditions. To generate a more meaningful picture of the regularity with which respondents wear makeup to auditions, responses have been analysed by gender category. Of female-identifying respondents, 61% performers always wear makeup to auditions. In contrast 93% of male-identifying respondents never wear makeup to auditions. The response from non-binary respondents and those identifying under other gender identities was spread across a range of options.

The area of makeup is one in which gendered expectations place greater demands on performers who identify as female, as the expense of the products and the time taken to apply them fall disproportionately on women.

### How much time do you spend on your appearance before going to an audition?

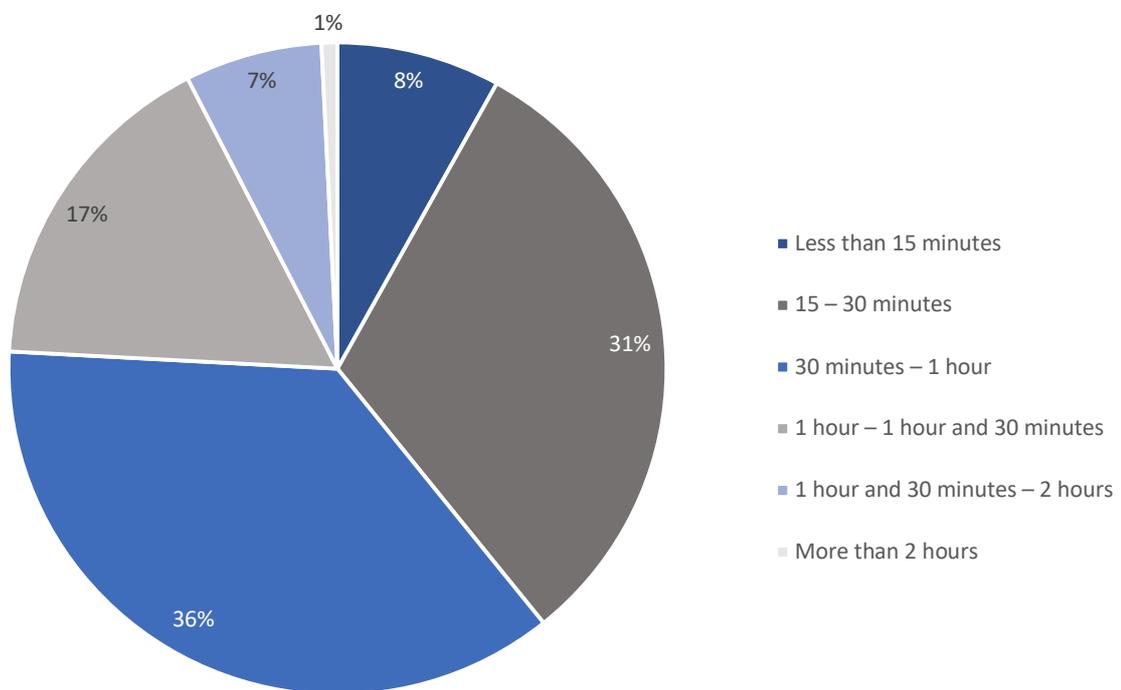


Figure 10 How much time do you spend on your appearance before going to an audition?

Preparing one’s appearance for an audition can take a considerable amount of time, with the majority of respondents spending over half an hour on their appearance for an audition.

Discussions on this theme foregrounded the thought and effort that performers put into their appearance for auditions. Responding to the casting brief, performers will make alterations to their physical appearance accordingly:

- I21: I have certainly gone and got a quick haircut or things like that, because I’ve known it’s slightly more the character that perhaps takes more care of their appearance [...] right away you’re thinking [...] “what are [the panel] looking for”. Are they looking for someone who is quite up on their appearance? And then oh god, do I need to go and get my eyebrows done? Do I need to go and get a quick haircut?<sup>ii</sup>

Interviewees also suggested that they will think carefully about their clothing choices ahead of auditions and interviews and will buy or borrow clothes in order to better fit the brief:

- P5: When I get the audition brief through and I’m looking through it [...] I’ll be thinking in my head “I’ve got that, I’ve got that, maybe I’ll need to go out and get that” which is extra time to buy. Even if it’s just nipping into Primark to get a waistcoat or something like that. Or ringing up a mate and saying “have you got this?” And generally you develop a network of people that you can contact. So it’s getting that together. And then it’s also time on the day doing whatever you need to do, whether it’s hair or makeup or trying clothes on or getting them sorted out.

As these examples suggest, the aim with these appearance changes is often to fashion an appearance that suits the production:

- I19: I went up for [a production] which was gonna be in the Victorian era, so I had to spend a bit of time thinking “ok, you’re obviously not going to put on some Victorian clothes, but you need something which is going to give a flavour of the period” – so that took quite a bit of going through my wardrobe and trying to find something. And that same day I was just about to go and have my hair cut so I didn’t do that because I thought it would be easier to tie my hair back and look a bit more period.

The type of role also contributes to the nature of the aesthetic labour undertaken by performers ahead of an audition, with most interviewees suggesting that they will try to look more like the character for which they are auditioning:

- P3: I’d also say [the effort required] depends on how closely you already fit what you think they’re looking for and how much you might think “oh, I’m going to actually have to make a few changes here to fit what they might be looking for”. Particularly if you get, as often happens, you get a casting breakdown that says “they need to be attractive or look a certain way” then you might end up trying to think a little bit more about how can I most achieve that to the best that I can with my resources kind of thing.

Depending on the performance medium, the demands associated with matching the brief can intensify. The consensus across all interview and focus group discussions was that commercial castings are the medium that require the performer to look as much like the character description as possible. One survey respondent suggested that “in commercials it sometimes felt like they may as well have been choosing props as actors” (S195). A range of activities were cited in relation to preparing for commercial castings, including tracking down bridal wear, sports kits, and even a witch’s costume in order to gain an edge in a highly competitive employment market.

One respondent articulated the logic underpinning these aesthetic choices as follows:

- I13: you don’t want to walk in and for them to say “what would happen if we put makeup on her? And if we brushed her hair?” you don’t want people to have to think too much. You just wanna walk in and them think “oh yeah, she could do it”. I think that’s what I’ve always thought: don’t make them have to really work to imagine what you could look like if you were to play a lawyer [for example].

In addition to trying to look like the character, the majority of interviewees also talked about wanting to appear “at their best” for auditions. They expressed an awareness of the importance of the headshot in getting work and the appearance-pressure to which this can lead.

- I22: The head-shot is the first bit of the whole process. [...] What other professions require you to send a headshot with your CV when you apply for a job? It decides whether you even get an audition or not. [...] The thing you’ve got to get yourself through the door is a picture. [...] the headshot is a better version of yourself and casting directors say “always make sure you look like your headshot”.

The pressure that can then come from trying to recreate that “best version of yourself” in audition preparation can be significant:

- P2: you're always trying to re-do how you looked on that day you got your headshots done, but that could have also been 2 years ago, and you might have different hair and you're never going to be able to recreate that, but [...] I have heard stories where [casting directors/producers have said] "oh no, we probably would not have got you in if we knew what you looked like now".

The headshot's role in defining a performer's professional appearance can play a significant role in performers' day-to-day lives. For, while respondents acknowledged that minor changes can be made in advance of auditions, many interviewees articulated a feeling of needing to live in a perpetual state of readiness for roles that might be just around the corner:

- I18: You know, really as a performer, particularly if you're doing [...] work where you're physically expected to look a certain way, you know, fit, toned and all the rest of it, it's your responsibility as a performer to always be ready. It's no good saying "oh, I've got this dream job come along, but give me six months so I can get in shape". So there's a certain responsibility on me to be permanently ready.

The aesthetic labour undertaken by performers of their own volition was often framed as providing an edge in a competitive performance market. The notion of investment – be it time, energy, or money – frequently came up in discussions:

- P2: if you can help [casting directors and directors] by getting into that [outfit] and them going "yes, that's exactly what we're looking for" then it increases your chance of getting that job [...] so you put that extra bit of money in and you're more likely to get the pay-off, especially when it comes to adverts and things, later on.

### 7.3 Cost

The next section of the survey was designed to explore the financial cost of aesthetic labour and its relationship with income. Respondents were asked approximately how much they earned from performance work last year, taking the tax year of April 2017 – April 2018 as an indicator.

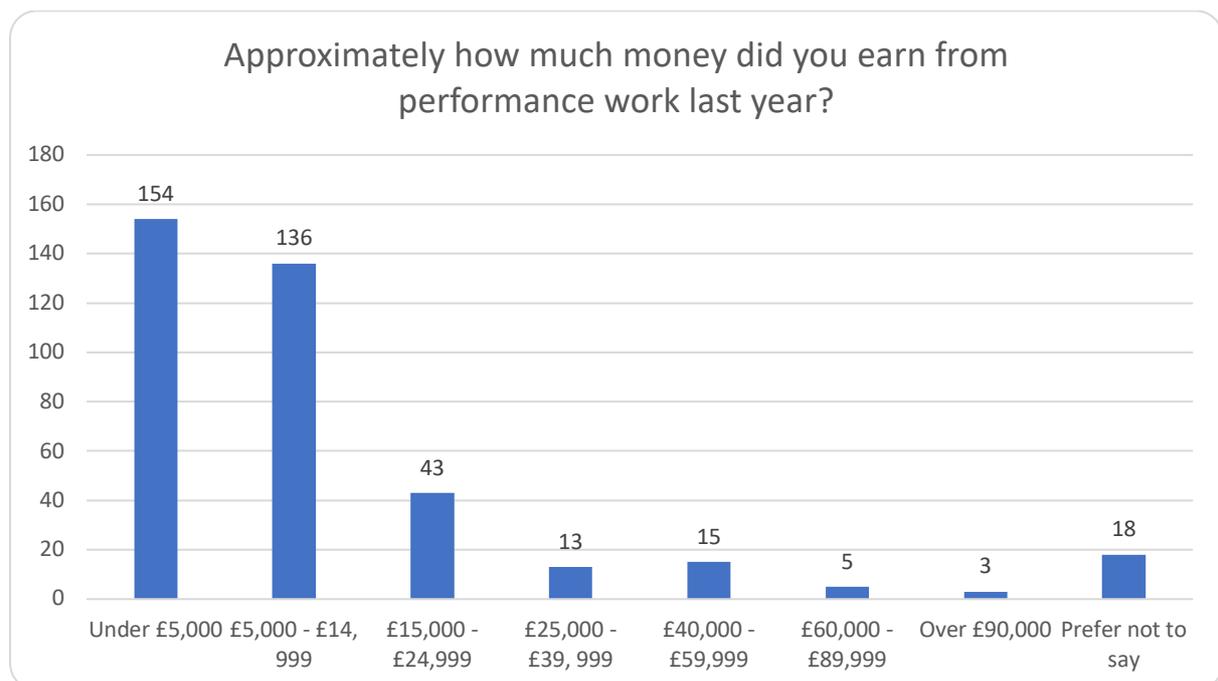


Figure 11 Approximately how much money did you earn from performance work last year?

40% of respondents earned under £5,000 from performance work in the last year, 35% earned between £5,000 and £14,999, 11% earned £15,000-£24,999, 3% earned £25,000-£39,999, 4% earned £40,000-£59,999, 1% earned £60,000-£89,999 and less than 1% earned over £90,000. 5% of respondents opted not to say.

To put these figures into context: a study undertaken by the Mandy Casting Network in October 2018 found that 63% of the 3,000 entertainment professionals surveyed had earned less than £5,000 in the last twelve months and 20% had earned over £20,000 (The Mandy Network). While the extremes of income are more pronounced in the Mandy study, the distribution broadly corresponds to that of this research.

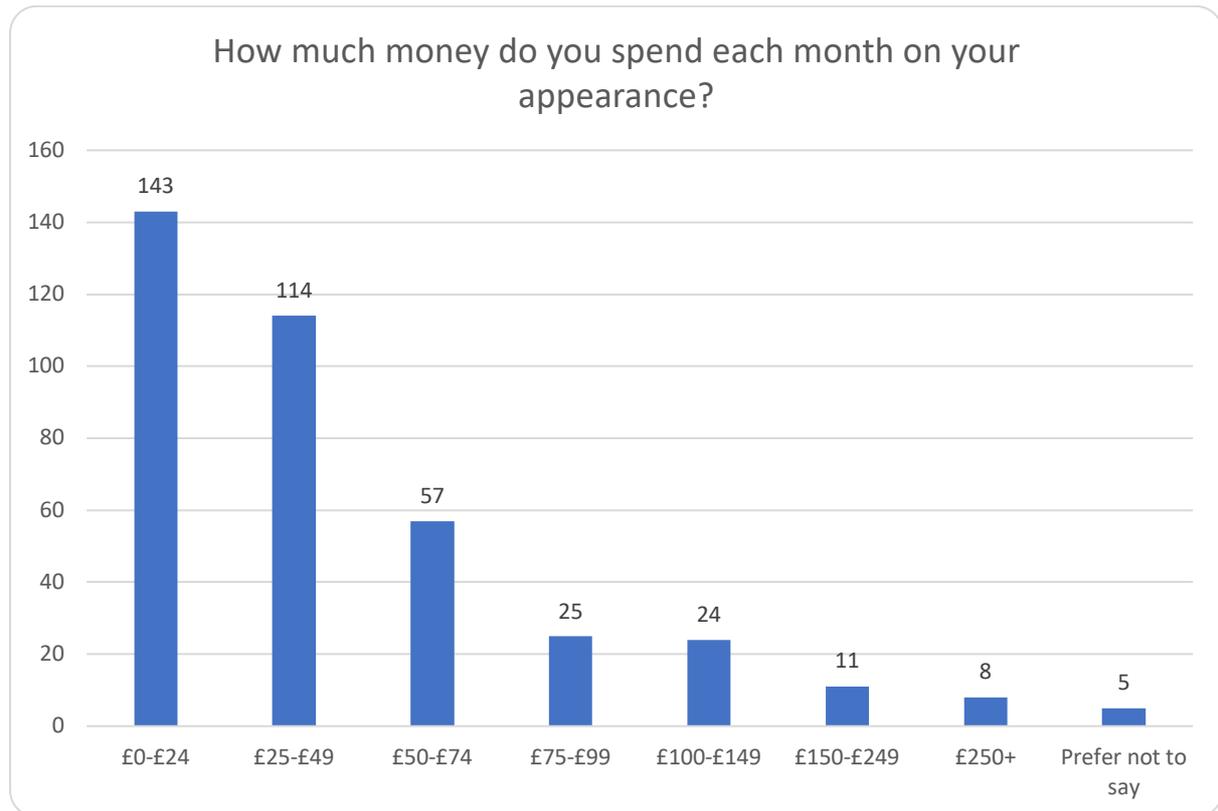


Figure 12 How much money do you spend each month on your appearance?

The question of income provides valuable context for exploring the cost of aesthetic labour. Respondents were asked how much money they spend each month on their appearance, considering expenses such as makeup, haircuts, manicures, and clothing for auditions. For this question, respondents were asked not to include gym membership or exercise classes in their total. The median category was £25-£49 per month: 37% of respondents spend between £0 and £24, 29% spend between £25-£49, 15% spend between £50-£74, 6% £75-£99, 6% £100-£149, 3% £150-£249, 2% spent more than £250.

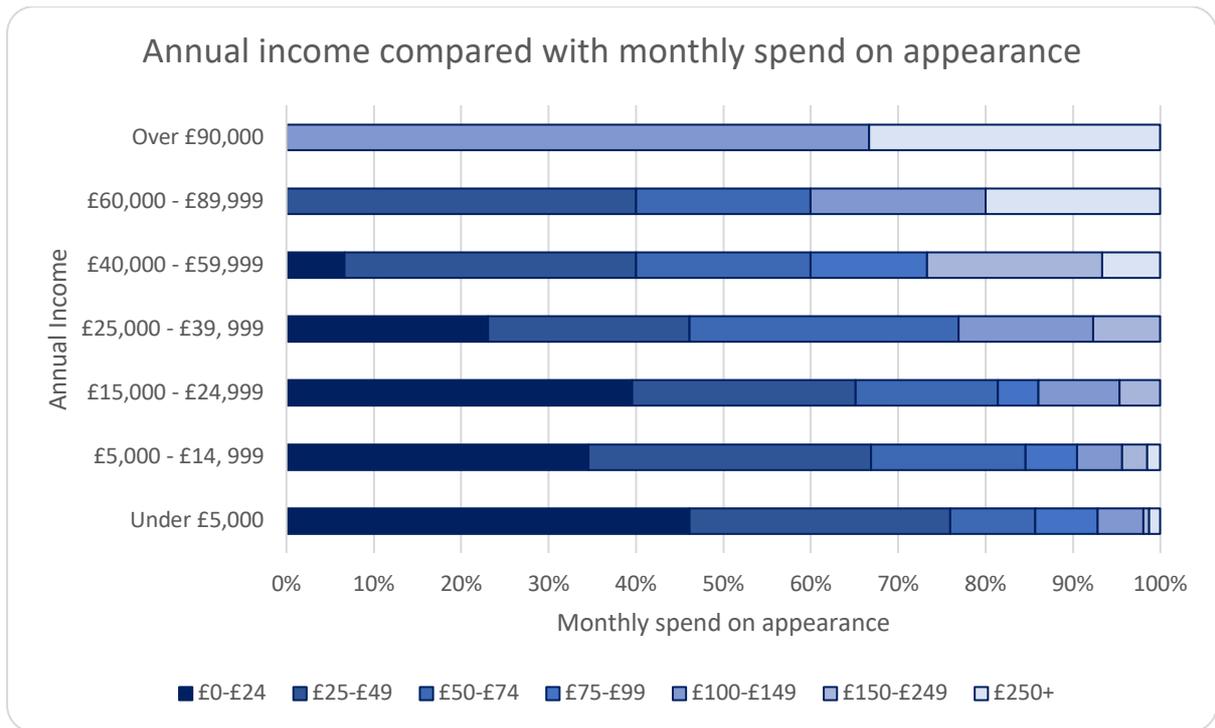


Figure 13 Annual income and monthly spend on appearance compared.

Comparing respondents’ annual income from performing with their monthly spend on appearance foregrounds what a significant proportion of their income from performing some respondents are spending on their appearance. For example, while only eight respondents said they spent more than £250 per month on their appearance (the equivalent of more than £3,000 per year), half of those earned less than £15,000 from performance work.

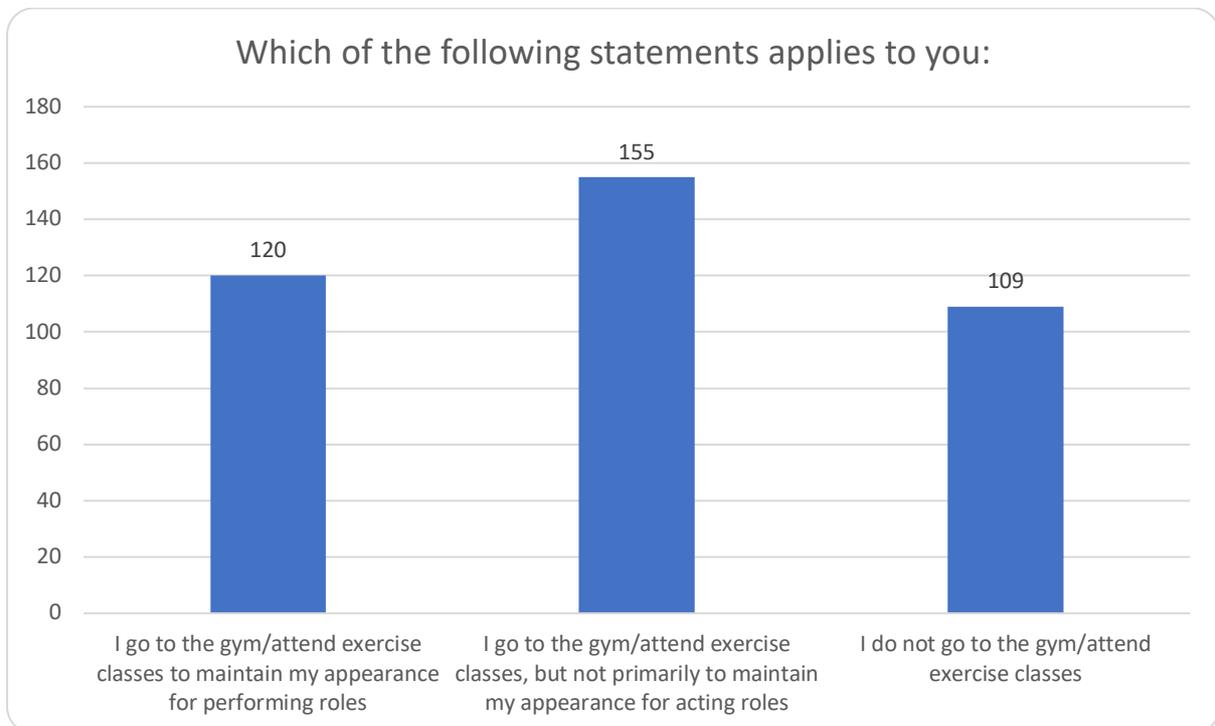


Figure 14 Gym activities and appearance maintenance

Attending the gym and/or exercise classes plays a role in maintaining an appearance for performance roles for 31% of respondents, while 40% of respondents partake in these activities, but not primarily for reasons of maintaining an appearance, 28% do not take part in these activities.

This figure may not reflect the full number of performers who undertake exercise and fitness activities for aesthetic purposes; in focus groups and interviews more than 10% of respondents observed that, as they are operating on limited resources, they choose to go running or cycling in order to maintain their weight to avoid the additional expense of the gym.

Certainly, the cost of gym membership raises the monthly spend on appearance significantly. Those respondents who do go to the gym as part of maintaining their appearance for performing roles were asked how much they spend each month on these activities.

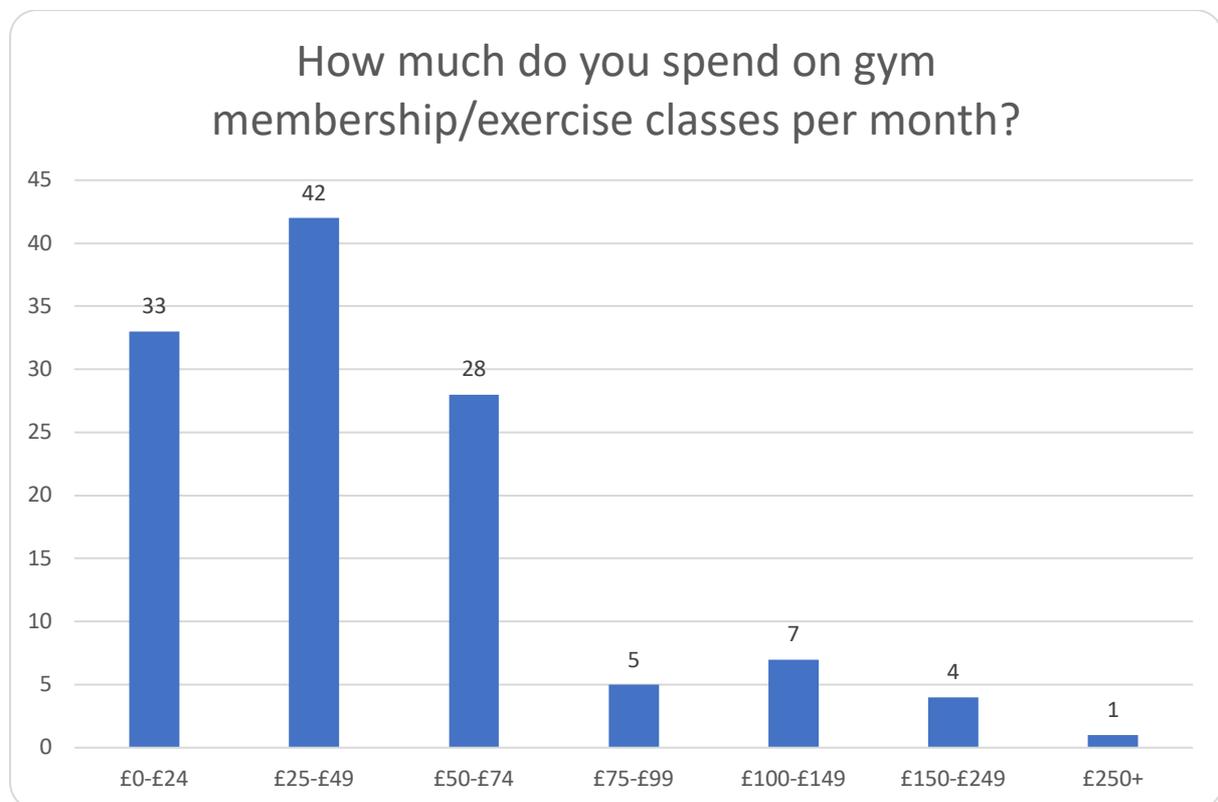


Figure 15 How much money do you spend on gym membership/exercise classes per month?

The median category of spend on gym memberships and exercise classes was £25-£49 per month, which substantially increases the monthly spend on appearance for those respondents using the gym for appearance-related reasons (see Figure 16).

How much money do you spend each month on your appearance?	How much do you spend on gym membership/exercise classes per month?							Total
	£0-£24	£25-£49	£50-£74	£75-£99	£100-£149	£150-£249	£250+	
£0-£24	14	13	7	1	0	1	0	36
£25-£49	9	10	6	1	2	0	0	28
£50-£74	3	9	6	1	2	1	0	22
£75-£99	3	4	3	0	1	1	0	12
£100-£149	2	3	4	0	2	0	0	11
£150-£249	0	2	1	2	0	1	0	6
£250+	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Total	33	41	28	5	7	4	1	119

Figure 16 Monthly spend on gym membership compared with other appearance costs

Figure 16 foregrounds the cumulative cost of gym membership and other appearance costs for performers, which in one extreme case sees more than £500 per month being spent on appearance-related activities.

Gym membership and appearance-related expenses such as haircuts and hair-styling can often be activities associated with performers trying to resemble their headshots.

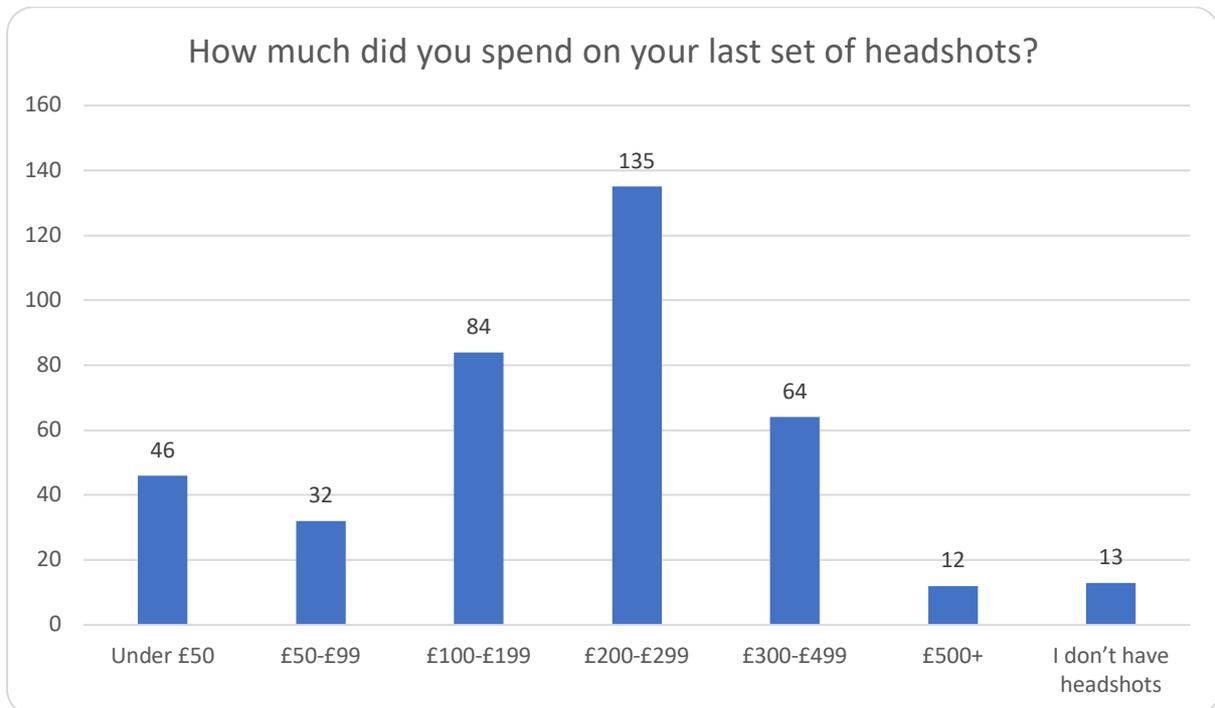


Figure 17 How much did you spend on your last set of headshots

Headshots are a significant appearance-related outlay for performers. More than 50% of respondents had spent more than £200 on their last set of headshots and the cost of getting new headshots in the event of an appearance change was raised as a concern by both survey and interview/focus group participants.

Survey data shows the significant financial demands of aesthetic labour and this was expounded on in focus group and interview discussions, in which participants foregrounded the variety of demands on their resources exacted by aesthetic labour. These resources might be categorised as money, time, space, and emotional energy.

### 7.3.1 Money

The financial costs associated with making or maintaining a professional appearance are manifold. There are the associated expenses of auditioning, which require performers to undertake activities to ensure they resemble their headshot.

- I21: thinking “oh god, my hair’s gone quite a bit longer than my headshots”, so I’ve now got to quickly go to the hairdressers, because I know that what they’ve looked at is my headshot and I need to get my hair looking similar. And it is the case of- especially women’s, because our haircuts cost so bloody much and you’ve suddenly got to go and find £80 to go and get a cut and blowdry. And you know, or – that’s not so expensive – “I’d better get my eyebrows done because they look a state”, that’s another fiver.

There are also appearance-related expenses associated with the specific casting, such as buying new clothes or making cosmetic changes, such as dying hair or painting nails, to more closely resemble the character or fit the role type:

- P4: I do remember early on in my career when I’d just graduated and I really had no money at all, that that was quite an issue actually. Particularly when you realise that you’re going up for a part that’s a particularly glamorous role or something and you’re just thinking “well I really don’t have any money to spend on that” and you do become aware that it can be a financial thing that’s letting you down in the audition room when you look around and you think “oh god, they look amazing” and you sort of have to piece something together out of whatever you’ve got at home...

### 7.3.2 Time

The time involved in creating or maintaining an appearance for work can also be substantial. One interviewee described her audition routine as follows:

- I16: I tend to make sure that I’ve cleared – particularly if it’s an early audition, I’ll clear the afternoon and evening before so I can make sure that I have time to get everything ready and time to get an early night’s sleep, so I don’t look absolutely haggard. On the day will make sure I’ve got full makeup and contact lenses [...] I will choose my clothes very carefully, [to] make sure I’m matching whatever the role is...

As well as the time involved in maintaining a particular appearance, there is also the time spent on finding suitable clothes for castings:

- I19: I often think about “how much time am I spending”, you know, I expect some actors are much more organised than me and if they’ve got a wardrobe full of nice dresses and nice wedged shoes and can go off for the mum casting then they can just pop that outfit on. But, I haven’t been up for commercials in ages because I’ve been really busy [working] and so now I’m suddenly thinking “I’m really spending ages getting all these things together or going round charity shops”. That’s a lot of hours to put in for going in for this one moment.

There was a sense that the labour involved in these activities is often unrecognised by industry gatekeepers:

- I18: I don’t think agents, clients, casting directors realise the amount of time their requests make. If I book a job, particularly if it’s a smaller job, if it’s a walk-on and I’ve only made 500 quid, I often think – it sounds like a lot of money: 500 quid for a day –

but you think the amount of time you put into casting, getting the bits together, rehearsals, everything else, self-tapes, all these things. It's very time-consuming and prep-time is also huge too, so there's so many factors on this.

Indeed, the invisibility of aesthetic labour more generally and lack of acknowledgement of the time involved in creating a fashionable physique was raised as an issue:

- P5: you need to be honest and say “there are healthy ways you can maintain a very fit and etcetera physique, but that is hard and you will need to devote your life to it. It is expensive and difficult and you won't be able to live a normal life.”

### 7.3.3 Space

Another major resource identified as related to aesthetic labour was space. One interviewee observed:

- I21: if you are a person and you're living in a little flat it's not necessarily as easy to do a workout as in a house so you might have to go to the gym because you don't have the space, or if you're sharing a one-bedroom flat with somebody and you need to get up really early to do your hair and makeup and dry you hair, you can't always do that, because you don't want to put the hairdryer on and wake everybody up. So all those sorts of things, those weird little things, come into it. So you are there trying to do your makeup on the train – which is never a good thing – because you don't wanna turn the lights on and wake your partner up or you flatmate or whatever.

Furthermore, the space required to store the variety of outfits required for casting purposes was also raised as a challenge, especially as:

- I18: [with] most of us living in London you're limited with space; if you're lucky enough to have a flat, it's probably quite small.

### 7.3.4 Emotional cost

A number of interviewees reflected that aesthetic labour has an emotional cost for them:

- I24: I think I spend quite a lot of mental health on worrying about my appearance. So I see that as spending, as well. It's not financial, but I do feel like it takes a toll on me [...] if I'm struggling maybe in the winter to keep a handle on my weight and keep it down to a point where [...] I think it's good for casting [...] That can really take a toll on me if I feel like I'm on the back foot all the time and I'm trying to attain that.

As this quotation highlights, the on-going work of maintaining an appearance can take an emotional toll. In addition to the emotional aspects of this on-going physical effort, the psychological pressure involved in navigating the expectations of appearance as a freelancer also has emotional implications:

- I16: [there is] a lot of emotional cost in maintaining appearances and worrying about “how should I look” and things like that and then telling myself off for that because I look how I look.

## 7.4 Aesthetic Labour in Employment Contexts

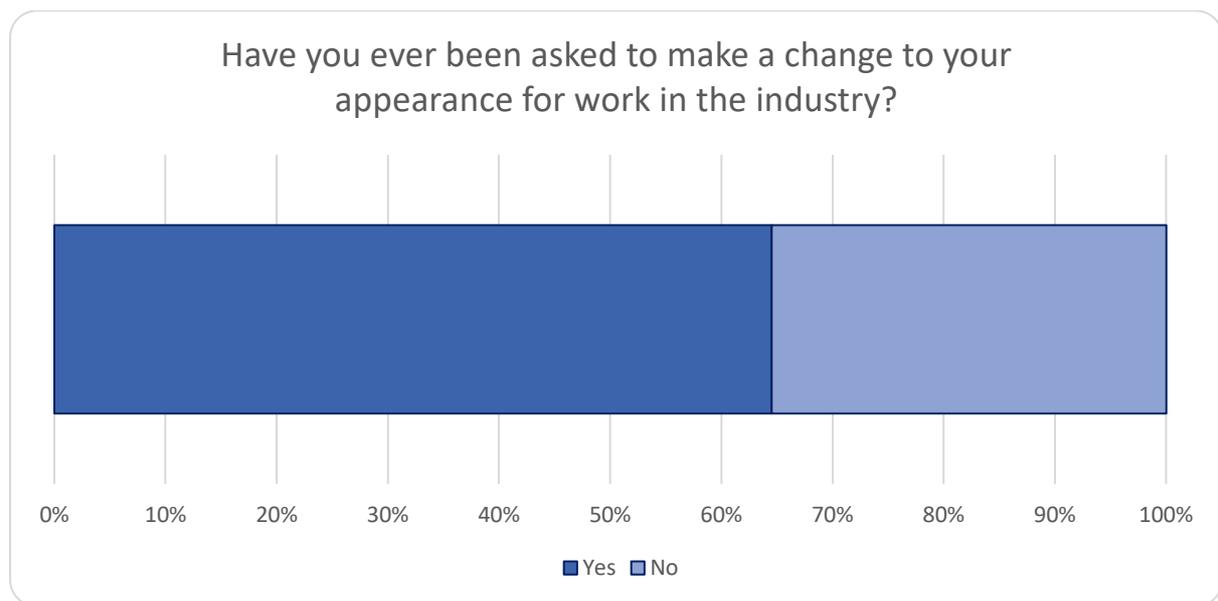


Figure 18 Have you ever been asked to make a change to your appearance for work in the industry?

As well as considering the kinds of changes performers are making to their appearance of their own volition, the research was designed to explore the kinds of changes performers are being asked to make to their appearance by industry gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are defined as those with power of admission into the industry such as drama school tutors, agents, directors, producers etc. Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents had been asked to make a change to their appearance for work in the industry.

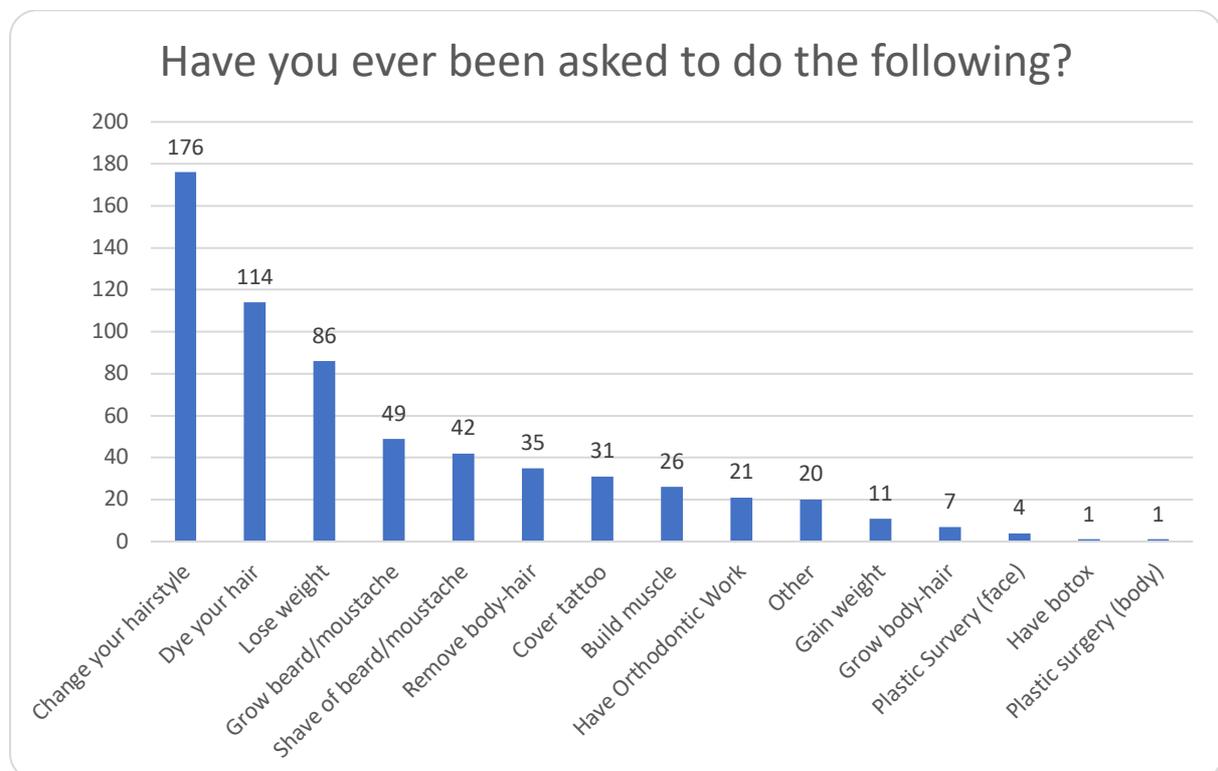


Figure 19 Have you ever been asked to make any of the following changes to your appearance for work in the industry?

Respondents had been asked to undertake a wide range of activities to alter their appearance for work in the industry. Making a change to hair was by far the most common request, with 67% of those who had been asked to alter their appearance having made a change to their hairstyle and 45% having been asked to dye their hair.

It is worth noting that 72% of respondents who identified as male had been asked to grow a beard or moustache, and 61% of the same demographic had been asked to shave a beard or moustache. Therefore, although the numbers of respondents undertaking this activity is comparatively low, as a percentage of respondents to whom this activity might apply it is very high.

33% of respondents had been asked to lose weight. In some cases, this was for a specific role, but this figure also included people who were advised by drama school tutors and agents that they should reduce their weight if they wanted to gain work in the industry.

Other requests included tanning, wearing fake tan, wearing more makeup, covering freckles, wearing contact lenses, and having a manicure/wearing false nails.

To gain a clearer impression of the context of these requests, we asked respondents how the request was conveyed, by whom and at what stage in the process.

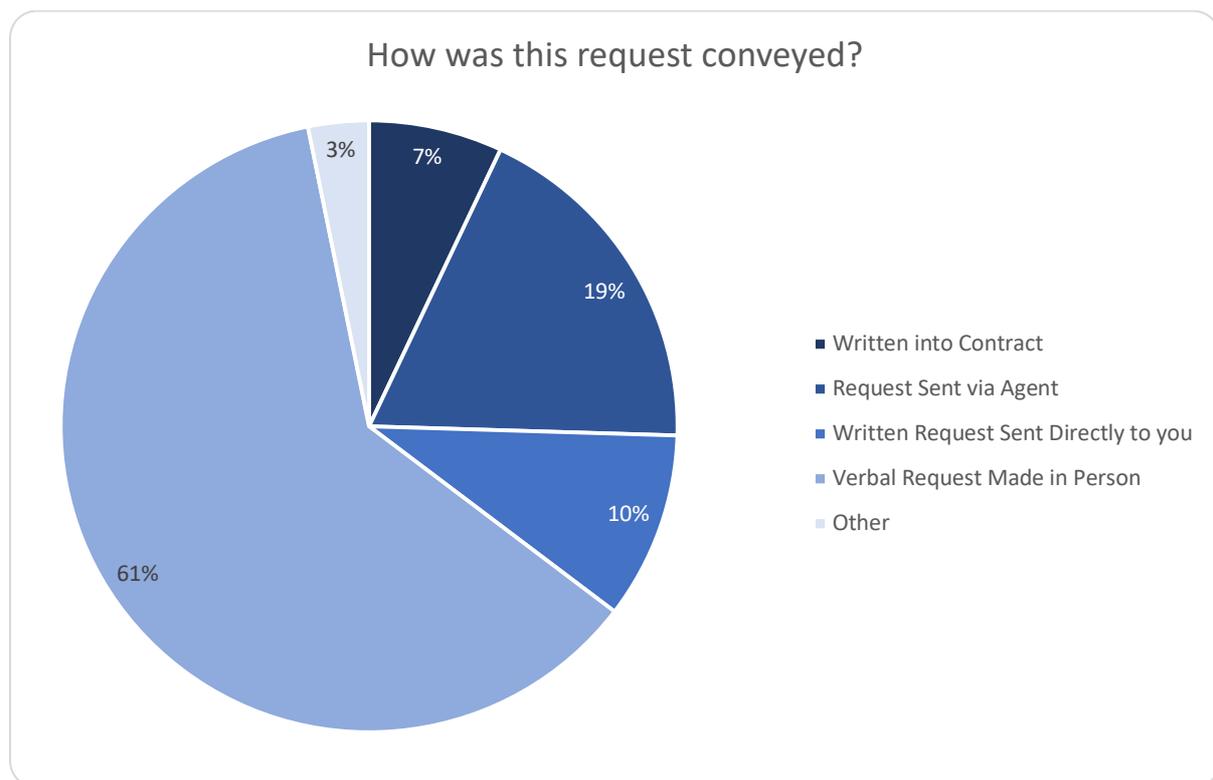


Figure 20 How was this request conveyed?

The vast majority of requests were made verbally in person, suggesting a relatively informal approach to the subject of appearance changes by industry gatekeepers.

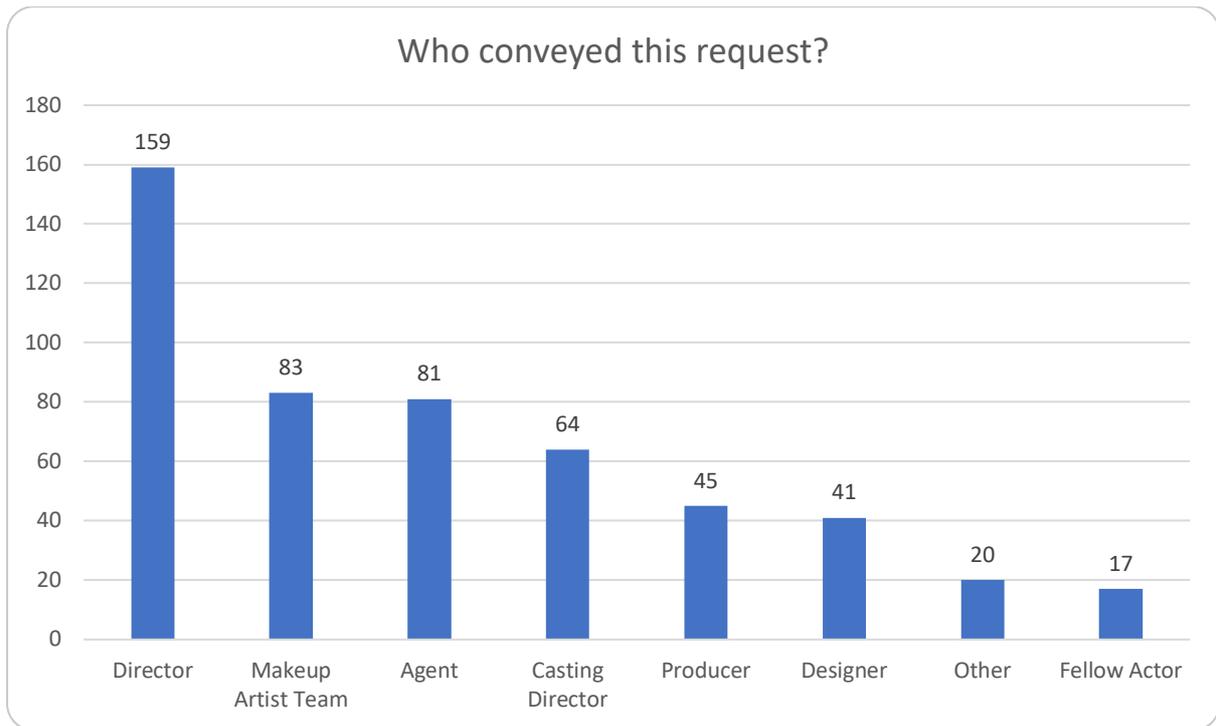


Figure 21 Who conveyed this request?

The nature of who conveys the request depended significantly on performance medium and, while these results detailed above represent the specific sample taking the survey, it remains valuable data to analyse, as it foregrounds the wide range of places from which requests to change appearance can emerge. Other examples included costumers, choreographers, talent scouts, tutors, and vocal coaches.

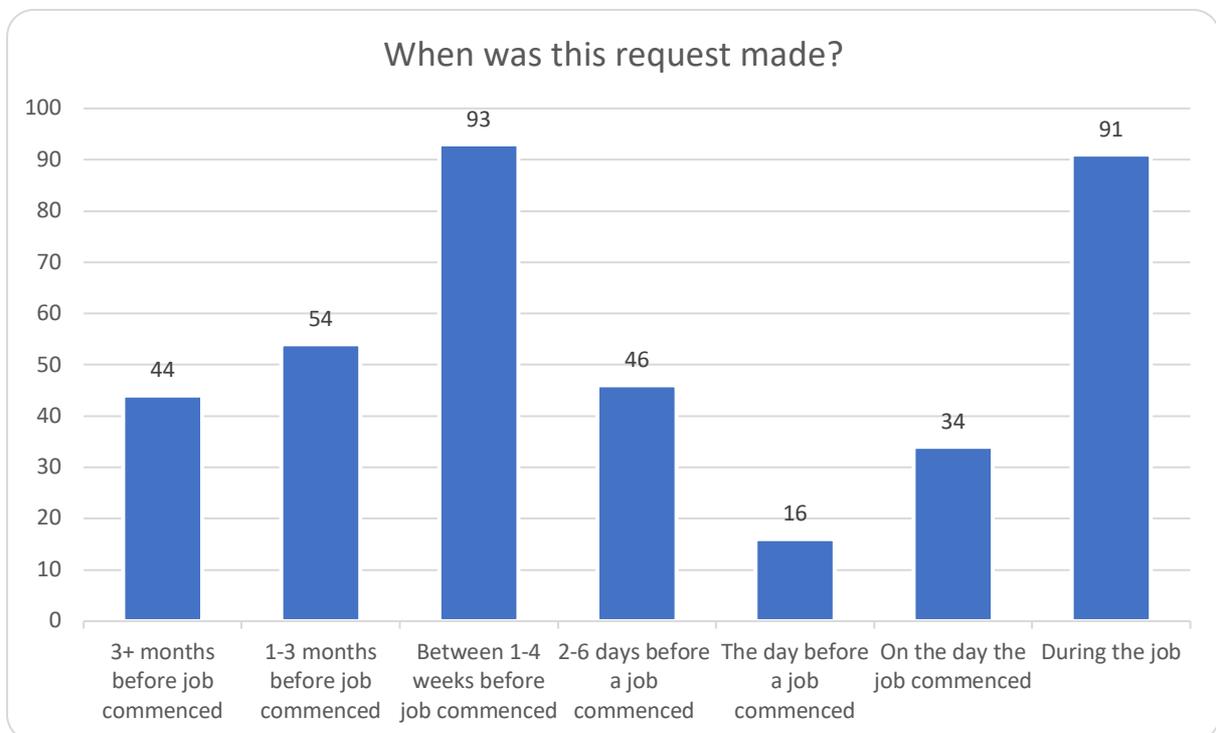


Figure 22 When was this request made?

In terms of when the request is made, this varied quite significantly, but it is noteworthy that nearly a quarter of the requests to change appearance happened during the job and, when

combined with the responses on the day the job commenced, this accounts for one third of results.

The nature of when requests to change appearance are made, as well as by whom and in what manner, can make a significant difference to whether performers feel able to refuse the request, as one survey respondent reflected:

- S250: [the appearance change request] wasn't too much of an issue for me as it was temporary, but as I'd had three auditions for the role, I did think that it was something that could have come up earlier. As it was, I did feel put on the spot, and I didn't feel that I could say no without it becoming a big deal...

### 7.5 How did respondents feel about being asked to make a change to their appearance?

Respondents were asked to comment on how being asked to make a change to their appearance made them feel and responses were coded into positive, neutral, and negative in the analysis. Some respondents' responses were coded under more than one category to reflect the complexity of the response. Where a respondent's statement did not fall under these categories – for example, responses such as “don't know” – it was not coded. Of the responses that were coded, 7% were positive, 36% were neutral, and 57% were negative.

While the majority of respondents reported experiencing negative feelings about being asked to change their appearance, it is noteworthy that a number of respondents reported experiencing positive emotions about altering their appearance. These positive feelings were generally associated with the artistic relevance of the requested change, with respondents saying they felt:

- S11: excited about what it could bring to the role
- S94: Like I was creating the character more fully.
- S281: I actually enjoy changing/transforming myself for the purpose of playing [a] character.

In addition to becoming more like the character, some respondents also suggested that in altering their appearance they felt they were taking control of an aspect of their performance:

- S46: Excited for the challenge of it, excited to become even more like the character. And also, it was an aspect of my performance that I could control which was very empowering

Another key theme in both positive and neutral emotional responses to being asked to change appearance was the idea of professionalism; many performers stated that they see altering their appearance as fundamental to their performance work.

- S120: Good. I am an actress. This is my job. To become someone else.
- S8: Accept it as part of the job.
- S355: Not offended, it seems like part of the job

A defining factor in the response to altering appearance was its relevance to the role: where participants felt the change was appropriate to the character and when it was part of a professional and respectful conversation with the employer respondents were, on the whole, willing to make changes:

- S226: I didn't mind as I could see the relevance for the role. Personally I'm fine with it. I have only ever been asked to change my appearance to better match a role. I understand it's not a personal attack on my character.

The nature of the demand was also a determining factor in respondents' responses to being asked to alter their appearance, with many indicating that superficial changes to hairstyle or colour, or facial hair changes, were acceptable:

- S228: In this instance, fine – [...] dyeing my hair didn't feel like a difficult or long-term change to my physical appearance.

Other neutral responses focussed on the nature of the change, with many suggesting that minor changes to appearance did not give them any concern:

- S217: Requests to dye hair for role/shave body hair is fine. Changes to physicality that take lots of time/effort/money are different.

While superficial changes were acceptable to most respondents, there was a sense that requests need to be sensitive to the individual performer. As one survey respondent reflected:

- S363: we all have areas we are self-conscious about [but] this is never [acknowledged] so it feels like you just have to be super confident with your body and appearance and that is seldom taken into consideration. A lot of guys my age are balding or receding but if the designer has an idea for the hairstyles in the piece you'll be asked to cut or change often without that being considered and it can be an area of shame or embarrassment

There were some striking examples in responses where communication had broken down and clear consent for the change had not been granted from the performer:

- S291: One time a makeup artist told me to close my eyes and without telling me started plucking my eyebrows. Afterwards she told me she had asked me to close my eyes because "she thought I probably wouldn't say she could if she asked".

There were also cases of performers being pressured into making a change:

- S121: [After a casting] the CD called my agent after and my agent phoned me and very firmly said that if I wanted a chance at the job I had to go home and shave my legs and go back and do the audition again that afternoon. She made me feel like there was no choice in the matter.

Some respondents found this pressure verged on bullying or harassment:

- S286: I felt blackmailed [to make the appearance-change] on the whim of the producer. I was told they would fire me if I didn't do it.

Such cases were rare, but more generally an awareness of career precarity and feeling unable to question appearance-change requests was a common theme:

- I15: I remember hearing Emma Thompson on a video saying "women seem to be required to be models and actresses lately and if you're being told you need to be thin for a role ask them why: is it because my character has an eating disorder that I have to lose all this weight?" And I was like, great, but you're Emma Thompson, I'm not. I can't fight that good fight because we live in a top-down society and a top-down industry, where at the bottom you just do what you're told and if you ask any questions we'll kick you out the door because there's another fifty behind you who also want to be famous. And that's a bit of a flaw isn't it in this industry.

Often respondents felt that that requests were arbitrary or undermining of artistic skills:

- S36: [I felt] like my appearance is the most (or only) important thing about me as a performer. I often feel that I'm only allowed to act once I've passed an arbitrary looks test.

Related to this issue, some respondents reported feeling objectified and commodified by the request:

- S80: Although we have been told constantly that it's what the 'business' is, it makes me feel like a commodity. My worth is based on my appearance, not what I bring to the role and it also makes me sad that real people are not being represented. People are all different shapes and sizes and yet we must fit to a prescribed ideal to really be considered an actor.

Responses highlighted how appearance changes are something that the performer carries with them in their day-to-day lives:

- S201: as a background artist I have been told not to shave, In response I have grown a scruffy beard as I can't grow enough facial hair on the sides of my face, Which means I can only grow a goatee. [...] I have found myself apologising to people in other work situations for looking so scruffy. It has made me feel self-conscious.

In summary then, responses indicate that performers are generally willing to make changes to their appearance in the line of work, where they relate to character and where they are treated with respect and sensitivity by those requesting the change. Where the change request is arbitrary or there is poor communication about the required change, this can cause frustration and distress.

### 7.6 Appearance & Identity

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree with the statement: I feel pressure to look a particular way in order to get work. Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 14% felt neutrally, 4% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed.

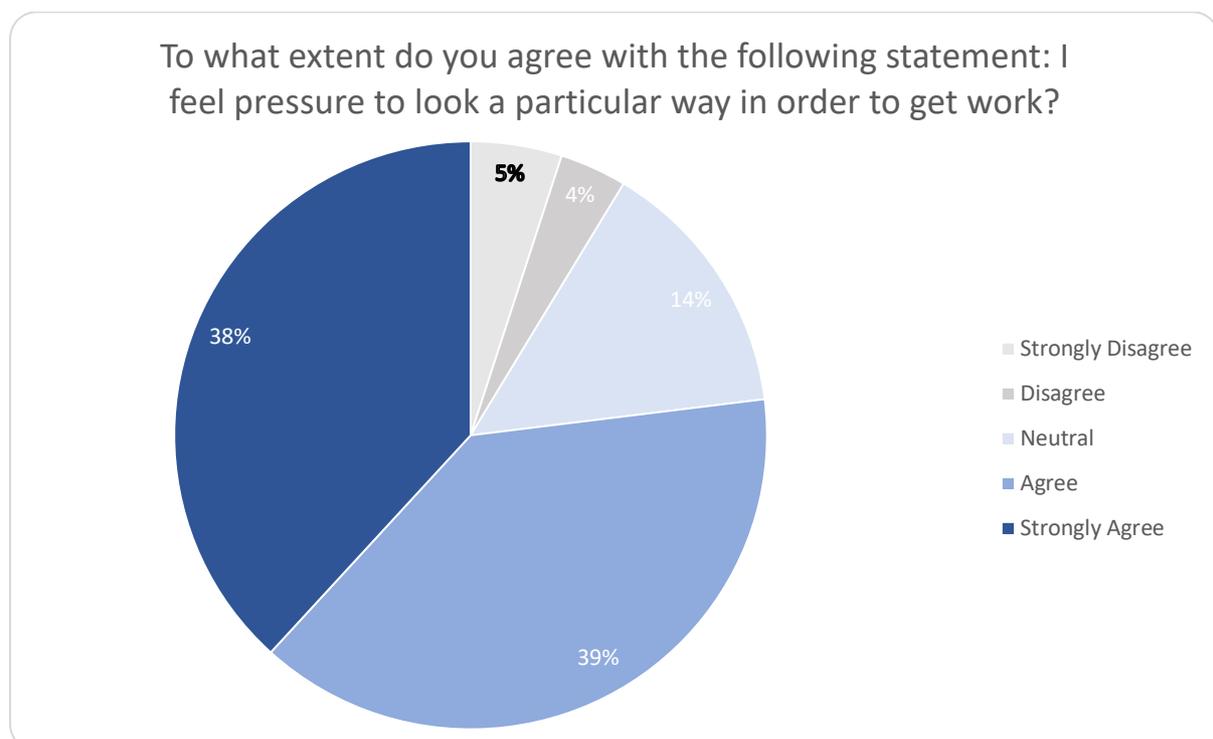


Figure 23 I feel pressure to look a particular way.

To further explore the question of appearance-pressures, respondents were asked if any aspects of their appearance make the pressure on their appearance more intense with gender, race, age, and disability as listed categories and an “other” category included in which respondents could identify another aspect of their identity which contributes to appearance pressures.

### 7.6.1 Gender

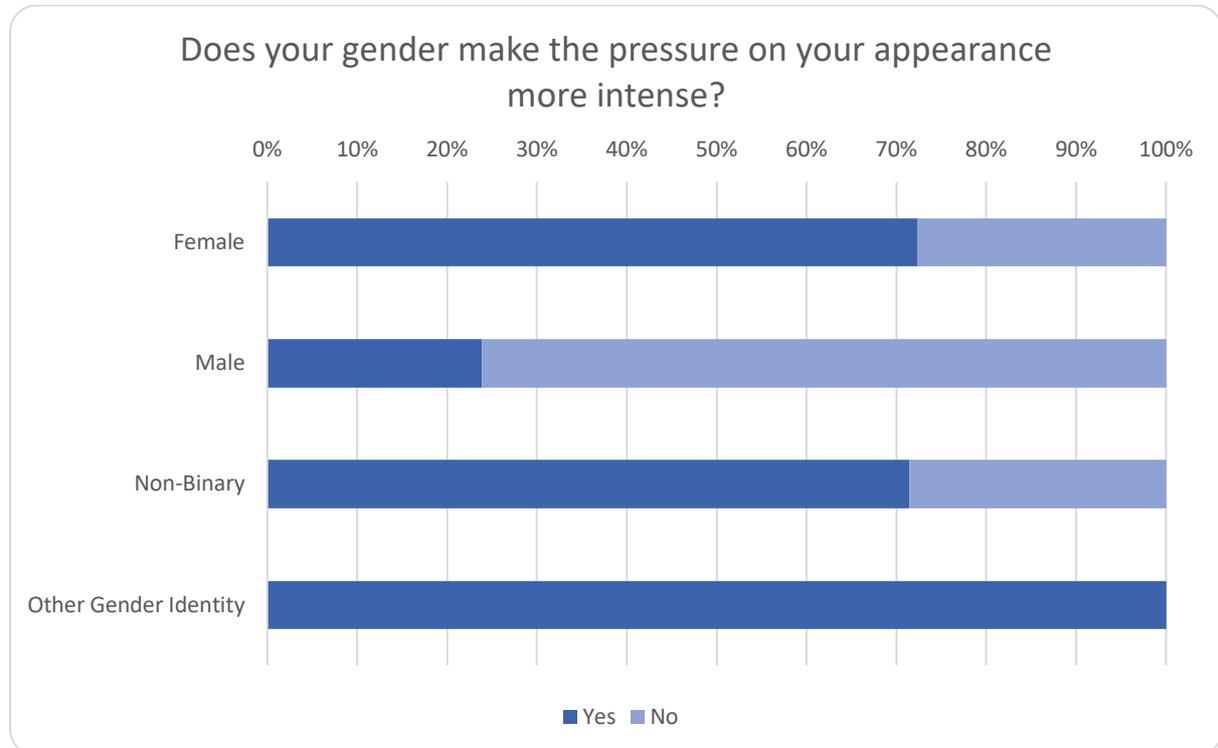


Figure 24 What aspect of you identity makes this pressure more intense: gender

Gender was felt to increase pressure on appearance by 72% of respondents identifying as female, 28% male, 71% of non-binary respondents, 100% of those identifying under other gender categories. Interview and focus group participants observed that the industry is relatively conservative in its expectations of gender:

- P1: this [is a] weird industry, which on the one hand is so open minded in the pub and really bigoted in the audition room. [gatekeepers have] narrow ideas of what masculinity and femininity means so the ideas of gender are super narrow in this industry.

This narrow definition of gender might be seen in the expectations of embodiment promoted in the industry, and society more generally, and which begin in training contexts:

- I11: There was quite a lot of body criticism in the training, which wasn't helpful, it just made everybody a bit self-conscious. And I saw it happen to other girls as well. Mostly girls, sometimes boys; some of them were told to bulk up a little bit, or that sort of thing. Whereas the girls were encouraged to slim down, so it's a bit of a gender stereotyping as well.

The aesthetic expectations of female performers were identified as being particularly demanding in the survey's comments and in focus group and interviews, by participants of all genders. One example of the additional labour expected of female performers is the hair and make-up demands associated with female roles. As one focus group participant put it:

- P3: It's a well-known fact that the women turn up a good hour or so before most of the blokes do to get ready for a show. Just because women tend to have to have their hair in a certain way or their makeup in a certain way. And you have to come in and turn your heated rollers on. So you're already taking more time, whereas most of the male actors that I know will rock up at the half: put their costume on and go.

There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, but similar experiences were echoed in survey responses:

- S347: None of the men were [...] asked to change their appearance or wear makeup but I was expected to spend my own money on an expensive haircut and come in an hour earlier (unpaid) to complete makeup etc.

The fact that in many professional theatre contexts there will not be a hair and makeup team requires female performers to develop additional skills in these areas, so that they can take responsibility for their character's aesthetic over the course of the run.

This is not to say, however, that the aesthetic demands on performers of other genders are not also acute. As one focus group participant put it:

- P5: It's evening out because the pressure that's on young men to be cut and toned and lean. I would say there is still more pressure on women, but yes, there are men coming up now and it's that thing of "well you need to be able to take your shirt off". So many auditions I see "ok guys, take your shirts off".

Interviewees and focus group attendees who identified as male articulated that they felt there was a trend in recent years for male performers to have a particular aesthetic:

- I18: It's very interesting looking at [...] guys now and guys seven years ago. You know, seven years ago if you had a good physique you were quite special. Now it's almost like everyone has a very good physique. It's as if the knowledge in how to get a good physique in the gym has really gone through the roof. I guess it's the amount of content and things online, YouTube tutorials and things like that. People really have got into good shape in general, within a certain demographic, particularly with young men. [...] I'd say if you're an actor, and not a character actor, I would also say you're expected to be in at least good shape.

The pressure male performers face in this area is borne out in an analysis of the survey responses: over a third (37%) of male respondents had tried to lose weight ahead of an audition, while over a quarter (28%) had tried to gain muscle.

This pressure on physical appearance came out in comments from male survey respondents too:

- S203: I was told that Prince Charming had arms, not spaghetti strands. I'd never get a job in a panto until I bulked up.

Performers playing hypermasculine or hyperfeminine roles were considered to have the most intensive appearance-regime:

- I24: I wonder if it's harder for males and females who are at the upper end of, or more binary end [of the gender spectrum...] they need to spend more money on hair and tanning and hair removal and all of those things...

While the activities involved in maintaining an appearance that corresponds with the expectation of highly gendered roles such as superheroes and femme fatales are arguably particularly labour-intensive, the pressures on non-binary performers' appearance is also intense, albeit different. One non-binary survey respondent reflected on how their gender was policed through the aesthetic labour demanded of them:

- S315: I get a lot of criticism across the board from (mostly cis-men) for not removing body hair or wearing traditionally feminine clothes. I've been told it comes across as lazy or unhygienic. On one job, I was told if I didn't shave my legs I would have to sit/stand in a particular way for the whole show so that my legs weren't on display.

Non-binary survey respondents reported experiencing pressure to present an appearance that adhered to the expectations of the gender binary:

- S131: I was asked to have a more feminine costume, which is at odds with my gender identity. It made me feel as if the real work and skill I put into my performance was lesser than the image. It was disappointing and belittling [...] I was told I was "there for the dads."

Another survey respondent reflected on the wider implications of such requests, suggesting:

- S357: that by changing, to for example appear less queer, or more feminine, or more normatively attractive, I was betraying underrepresented groups, actually doing a disservice to the art and to society, and contributing to a holding back of political progress on a wider transpersonal level, for the short term personal gain of having a job.

The expectations of gender in the industry and their close relationship with employment success can have a significant impact on performers' life choices. One non-binary respondent spoke of their decision not to take testosterone and how this was influenced by their decision to pursue a career in performing. While they acknowledged that a range of factors influenced their decision in this case, they stated that: "part of what made me pause and think about gender transition or indeed pursuing anything like that was 'yeah, but I'm a performer; I won't get as much work; I need to be able to fit into a bracket'. Now for many reasons I've chosen a different path, but I think if I'd chosen that path that would have been a consideration for me."

These pressures on appearance across all genders raise important questions about representation. When gendered appearance is policed within an employment context that plays such a fundamental role in shaping attitudes towards gender in wider society, this has consequences beyond the industry itself.

## 7.6.2 Race

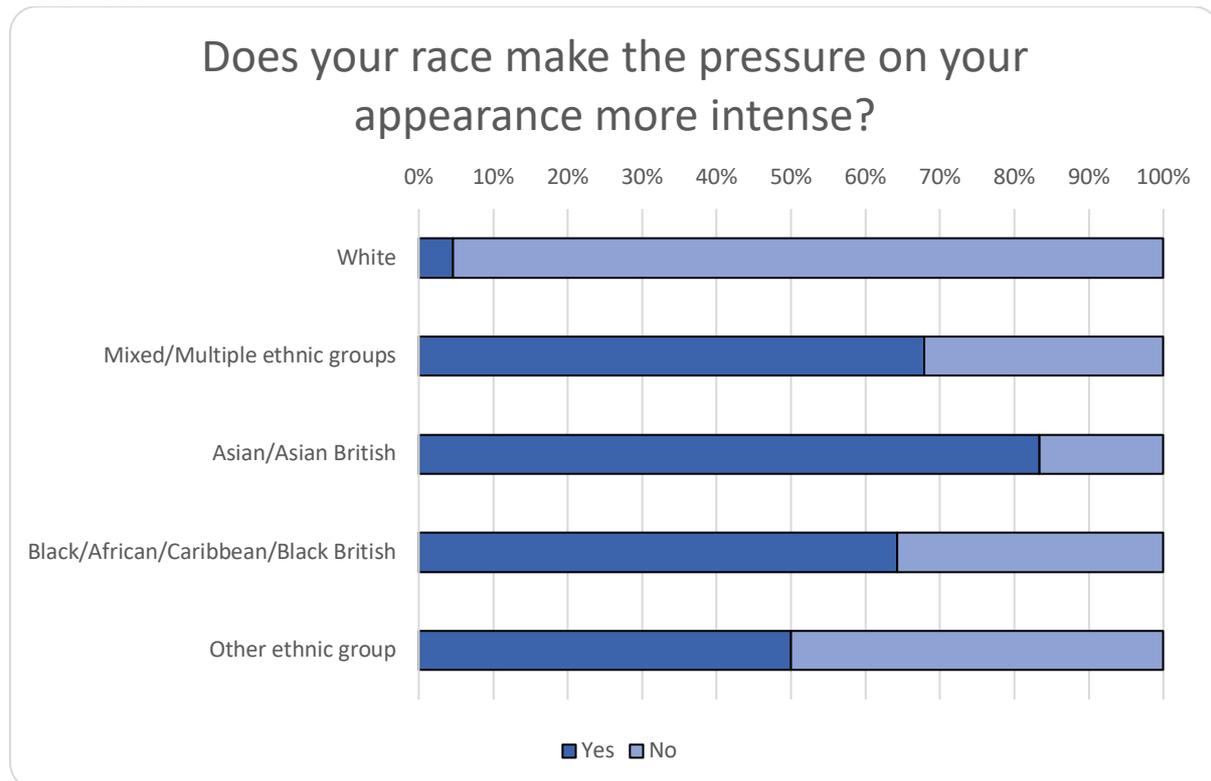


Figure 25 What aspect of you identity makes this pressure more intense: race

Race was felt to increase pressure on appearance by the majority of minority ethnic respondents. 68% of those identifying as from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, 83% of respondents identifying as Asian/Asian British, 64% of respondents from black/African/Caribbean/black British backgrounds, 50% of other ethnic groups, and 60% who chose not to share their ethnicity. Of white respondents 5% felt their race intensified the pressure on their appearance. It is noteworthy that more than half of the white respondents who chose this option identified as coming from other white backgrounds, so it is possible that ethnicity and nationality were informing responses to this question as well as race.

The appearance-related pressures facing minority ethnic performers, as reported by respondents in this study, can be divided into two broad categories: insensitivity or lack of understanding of the aesthetic needs of minority ethnic performers with regard to makeup and haircare, and the stereotyping and/or typecasting of minority ethnic performers based on their race or ethnicity.

On the theme of inadequate provisions being made for minority ethnic performers in relation to makeup and hair, one survey respondent observed:

- S342: My heritage is Caribbean so I have curly Afro hair which doesn't react well to the hair products or heat that the hair stylists normally use when they try to do my hair which makes me feel uncomfortable and awkward because it becomes a nuisance to them. This also happens with makeup because they sometimes struggle to find the correct colours and end up spending ages mixing several colours together to find a match to my skin tone.

In a related point, one minority ethnic interviewee reported that after having negative experiences with makeup artists and hair stylists who did not have suitable products, she now

brings her own makeup and hair products to shoots with her. That this respondent feels compelled to use her own resources not only to satisfy the aesthetic needs of the production, but also to avoid awkward professional encounters, foregrounds the additional demands placed on minority ethnic performers in relation to aesthetic labour, both in terms of financial cost and emotional labour.

There was a strong sense from minority ethnic respondents that their appearance is often categorised in arbitrary ways by those in the industry:

- S85: As someone “ethnically ambiguous”, i.e. mixed race, but doesn't "look" it, according to white supremacy - my facial features has made a career in the visual entertainment industries abortive. I've been advised to "pass" for other ethnicities, and repeatedly told that I don't look the ethnicity I am, and that I don't look "British" or from London. Apparently I'm "hard to place" and it's made a detrimental impact on my career.

Minority ethnic respondents reported that when their appearance does not conform to stereotypical qualities associated with a particular ethnicity their careers can be disadvantaged as a result:

- S285: not looking as “lotus” blossom like as western eyes expect East Asian females to be especially when I was very young and just starting out I was too tall, or my eyes were not almond shaped enough or they were too wide and my nose was both too broad or not Ota's enough

There was a sense across responses that the industry is slowly improving in relation to more meaningful representation of minority ethnic identities. However, the feeling was that change is not happening fast enough. Furthermore, the fact that additional aesthetic labour demands are being placed on some minority ethnic performers with regard to hair and makeup requirements suggests that aesthetic practices in the industry need greater scrutiny.

### 7.6.3 Age

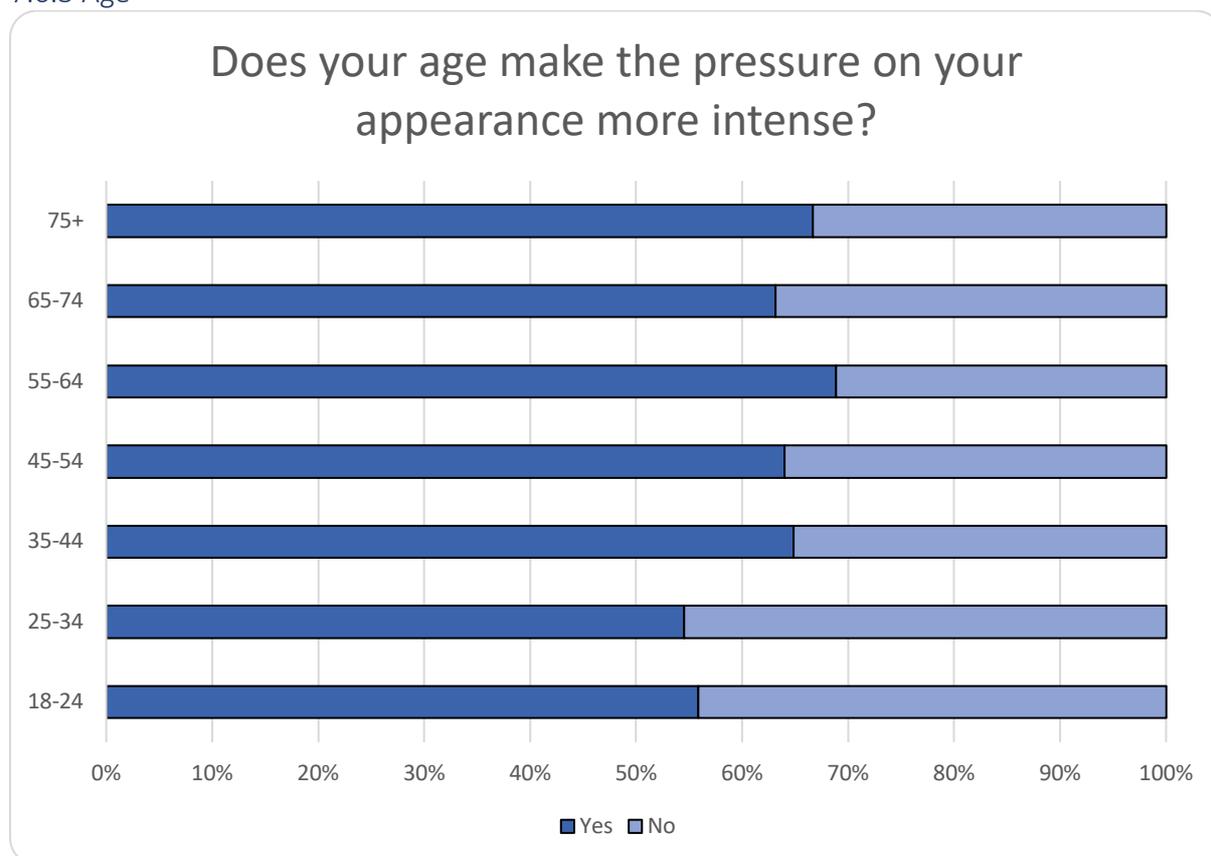


Figure 26 What aspect of you identity makes this pressure more intense: age

The response to the question of age intensifying pressure on appearance was the most evenly distributed of the identity questions: 56% of respondents aged 18-24, 55% of respondents aged 25-34, 65% of respondents aged 35-44, 64% of respondents aged 45-54, 69% of respondents aged 55-64, 63% of respondents aged 65-74, and 67% of respondents aged 75+ felt that their age increased pressure on their appearance.

The complexity of this issue came into clearer focus in the interview and focus group discussions. There was a strong sense that performers who are starting out in their career find appearance pressures particularly intense, as they try to find their place in the industry:

- I16: when I was starting out I had a very different attitude to what I do now [...] I remember applying for something and saying "I can lose weight!" [...] I can't even remember what the thing was for, obviously I never heard back from them. But I think because they were specifically looking for someone thin, which I'm typically told I'm thin, but in desperation as a new actor I was saying "I can lose weight really easily" because I was so concerned that *that* would get me the job, not what my experience as an actor is. So I definitely was more aware and terrified of it at that stage compared with how I am now.

Furthermore, the types of roles that performers are seen for when they are younger impacts on the demands on aesthetic labour. One respondent in her seventies reflected that in her twenties and thirties:

- I22: There was a great pressure to look glamorous: you had things like facelifts, which I did, as my wrinkles began to show, and had breast enhancement, just to try and conform to a certain model of look; because that's what people were looking for in that younger age bracket. But as you get older, they're looking more for character, so it's not quite such a concern. But certainly, yes, younger it was a big worry. Did I look glamorous enough, did I look pretty enough, did I look right?

While pressures on younger, especially female, performers was seen to correspond with the types of roles available, the absence of roles for older performers was raised as a concern by a number of female-identifying respondents.

- I17: I was an attractive young lady and then I was an attractive young mum, but then it stops. After the young mum there's a great big gap, because you're no longer a young mum, you can't be a femme fatale and then you start being old mum or grandma. And there's not too many roles about that stretch from being a young mum to the middle-aged mum and the older mum, they dry up a bit.

Speaking with female performers who have reached or passed middle-age it was striking how this sense of, what one respondent referred to as the "invisible years" emerged.

With the sense that the number of roles for older performers diminishes, can come a pressure to remain looking youthful for as long as possible.

- I24: I do think about ageing and how that's impacting my face, especially, and wrinkles and lines and should I be doing more? And should I be getting the expensive creams? And I think I'm at that point now, where I'm thinking I'm not sure what to do and maybe I should start to explore that a bit more. And I know that that's going to be expensive. And I probably would have some procedures, some cosmetic procedures if I felt that they were necessary. Because I want to keep working and I feel like my identity and my appearance are so wrapped up in that.

While the sense of there being fewer roles for older performers was identified as a concern by respondents, it is noteworthy that the demands on appearance in relation to these roles was deemed to be less intense than for younger roles. A number of female interviewees reflected that this had to do with how castings change with age:

- I23: it's not quite the same sexual agenda as you get older. Unless you're playing a cougar character of course, which I have done, but that's a different thing. No, different ages bring different physical requirements and expectations, certainly. And it's a continual struggle to have to try and work out what those are and adapt to those.

For some older respondents, preparing for castings involves a kind of "dressing down" in order to conform to the appearance-stereotypes associated with older women:

- I17: If she's an ordinary grandma or older lady, I tend to not wear make-up. I wear my "fat trousers" and ordinary clothes on the bland side. Because it's no good making a great effort, because I look – it might be considered an advantage, but it isn't – I look younger than I am. [...] If I went in as myself I don't think I'd get anything in that category. If they were looking for the type of person I am I would be alright, but most of the time they're not.

That a feeling of age-related appearance pressure should be distributed so broadly across respondents suggests that this is an area for further analysis and that performers would benefit from greater support with the unique pressures associated with different age brackets. The experience of ageing is significantly shaped by gender (as reflected in Deborah Dean’s 2008 study “Age, Gender and Performer Employability in Europe”) and further exploration of this area would be beneficial.

#### 7.6.4 Disability

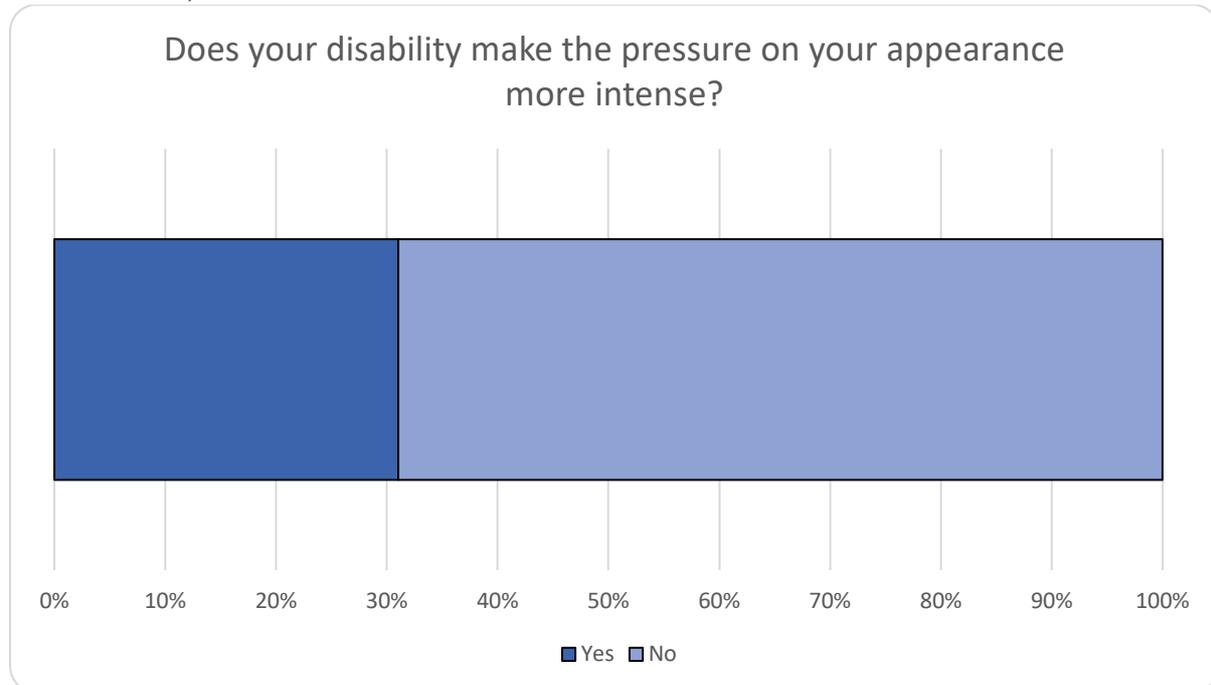


Figure 27 What aspect of your identity increases pressure on appearance: disability

Focussing specifically on responses from those who considered themselves to have a disability, 31% felt that their disability intensified pressures on appearance. The complexity of the pressures on performers with disabilities were further elaborated in survey comments and in focus group and interview discussions.

Appearance pressures take a variety of forms for disabled performers and the insensitivity of gatekeepers to physical impairments was a common theme across responses from performers with disabilities. For example, survey responses suggested that gatekeepers were often insensitive to physical difference when making requests for performers to change their bodies. One survey respondent recalled a job where:

- S100: We were trained to appear military/fit/agile for a film. However, the high level of training had detrimental effects on my health and back problems. Dietary support and recovery support were not given...

Pressures surrounding physique appear to be experienced particularly acutely by performers with physical impairments or long-term medical conditions. For example, one survey respondent recalled being advised to build muscle by a course tutor, without sensitivity to the fact that the change was inappropriate given her impairment. Another survey respondent observed that after being diagnosed with a condition that made exercise difficult, she gained weight and as a result feels she is:

- S196: suddenly being passed over because of my weight [...] I'm now a size 14 [and] I got much more period drama work when I was a size 8/10.

Expectations of appearance around costume choices were also identified as causing additional stress to performers with a disability or impairment. A number of respondents cited experiences where they were asked to wear costume which was inappropriate for them given their impairment and reported that they had felt pressurised to wear an item that in some cases exacerbated an existing impairment or caused physical discomfort.

General insensitivity to physical difference was also cited. For example, one survey respondent observed:

- S71: I've found that if I don't make a joke about my [physical difference] first, someone else gets to do it and use it to make me feel embarrassed.

Respondents with visible disabilities reflected on how this can come to define them as artists:

- S351: I hate that all my skills, training and experience are instantly dismissed because I am a visibly disabled woman – the implication being that I have no value.

As with race and age, stereotyping in casting was deemed to be an issue for performers with a visible disability:

- I2: I think there's still a general thing around disability casting in particular, there's not a sense that you can be cast beyond your impairment widely, yet. We are getting to a place where that's a possibility. So yeah, absolutely, I have a type and that's a wheelchair user.

A key consideration for performers with mobility impairments in relation to appearance was whether they would even be able to be considered by an audition panel, as their making an appearance in the room requires venues to be accessible. The Equity Manifesto for Casting states that performers should be asked about their access requirements when they are invited to audition. However, some respondents reported that this was not always acted upon in practice.

The nature of a performer's disability or impairment will impact on the demands of aesthetic labour and with a relatively small percentage of respondents who considered themselves to have a disability in this study, more research is needed into the specific challenges facing disabled performers in this area.

### 7.6.5 Other Identity Aspects

Of the other issues to come up under aspects of identity that intensify the pressure on appearance, weight and body size were by far the most common. Class was also felt to increase the pressures on appearance. Other appearance pressures that were raised by more than one respondent include sexuality, scarring, and pregnancy.

#### 7.6.5.1 Body-Size

Body-size and weight were the most common other aspect of identity that respondents listed under “other” and the variety of responses under this category suggests that it is a charged issue in the industry.

Pressure on body-size and weight was reported by all demographics responding to the survey, crossing all categories of gender, ethnicity and age. One interviewee articulated her feelings as follows:

- I14: I’m a size 10-12 and I feel fat. I’ll go into castings and I’m like “oh my god, I’m an elephant compared to all these other people”. But it’s just because there’s this pressure on people to- I don’t know why though, we just feel this pressure that we’ve gotta be small to be seen as, you know, that’s what actresses are. They’re thin.

Body-shaming was a common experience for survey respondents:

- S113: At drama school we had a costume designer who openly moaned about all the 'fat girls' to our faces. I was a size 10 at the time!

Responses paint a stark picture of body-image pressures in the industry:

- S313: An agent told me the reason they weren’t going to sign me was because I needed to lose weight, I told them I was a size 8 and they didn’t believe me.

With a focus on body-size such as this, there was a sense that size can determine whether someone is cast or not:

- S161: I so often get flatly refused auditions for roles I could certainly play, and have enough great CV credits to warrant an audition, on the basis that I’m ‘not right’. It will almost always go to a thinner, more conventionally attractive woman my age.

The idea that casting operates along a thin/fat binary was articulated by both survey respondents and interviewees, and the phrase “thin and pretty or fat and funny” came up in several interviews and focus groups. One survey respondent recalled an occasion in which she was told:

- S357: I should decide now whether I wanted to “gain two stone and be Hattie Jacques or lose two stone and be Barbara Windsor”. The explanation given was they could see me being able to make the part sexy or funny but my appearance didn’t match either of these things. I tried gently to challenge that as a binary choice - the character could be sexy AND funny and also have my body shape - and was told that would be too confusing and I was naive. Many times with my first agent, she also made a similar argument, that I was in a difficult space between the quirky fat girl roles and the pretty friend roles. She encouraged me on many occasions to gain weight...

The idea that bigger performers cannot play desirable or sexy roles was a common theme in a number of responses:

- S197: I have also felt pressure to lie about my weight before so that I would be more likely to get auditions. I have been told that due to my size (an average 14 dress size) I cannot expect to play lead roles, romantic roles, and have been excluded from casting calls that require 'beautiful' or 'attractive' actors.

It was not dress-size alone that was considered an appearance-related issue; height also came up in a number of responses. Female performers reported being disadvantaged by being too tall:

- S27: I am 6ft which for a woman makes it difficult to get roles particularly when casting against men. Although I [am classically trained] I rarely get roles in classical theatre productions. When I do they are often male roles (played as female), or unisex roles, occasionally character roles [...] I have been in a position where I have been asked to attend an audition and then received an email just beforehand cancelling it because they had just noticed my height which is clearly on my cv.

The sense that the man in heterosexual couples needs to be taller than the woman also has implications for male performers. One male-identifying survey respondent observed that "I'm 5.6 so often my stature is mentioned in a negative manner" (S367).

#### 7.6.5.2 Class

The costs associated with creating a "castable" appearance were considered prohibitive by a number of respondents who identified as working class:

- I11: most of us can't afford to take that extra half an hour in the morning to blow-dry your hair, because we need to work. It's another one of those things that puts working class actors at a disadvantage. And we can't afford the most expensive makeup and we can't afford to have a personal stylist, or expensive clothes to look good. You have to make do. We can't get a new outfit for every audition so we look perfect for the role. It's just not feasible, so, you know, you go in with your bog-standard black audition dress and hope for the best...

The demands of working a day-job alongside performing was something this participant reflected on further:

- I11: for working class actors who need to work [...] we may have to do an audition in our lunch break and if we're working a physical job, like in a café or whatever, we might be sweaty and gross from working in the morning. And then have to rock up to an audition looking decent. It's just so stressful. And having to come to work with your hair done, which then might fall out, or get messy over the course of work, but you can't do your audition any other time, because you can't take the time because you need to work to live.

The time and money involved in developing a "desirable" appearance was identified as representing a particular challenge for performers who identify as working class:

- I15: gym membership, buying expensive healthy foods, all of that stuff costs a lot of money that I don't currently have, because I'm out of work.

It was not the demands of aesthetic labour on time and money alone that made working class respondents feel disadvantaged:

- I8: I've felt a class thing more than anything; I've thought my face might not fit, or I don't quite fit the more elite world [...] to make it in the theatre world would mean that you have to be a certain kind of person or mix with a certain set of people.

### 7.7 Criticism of appearance

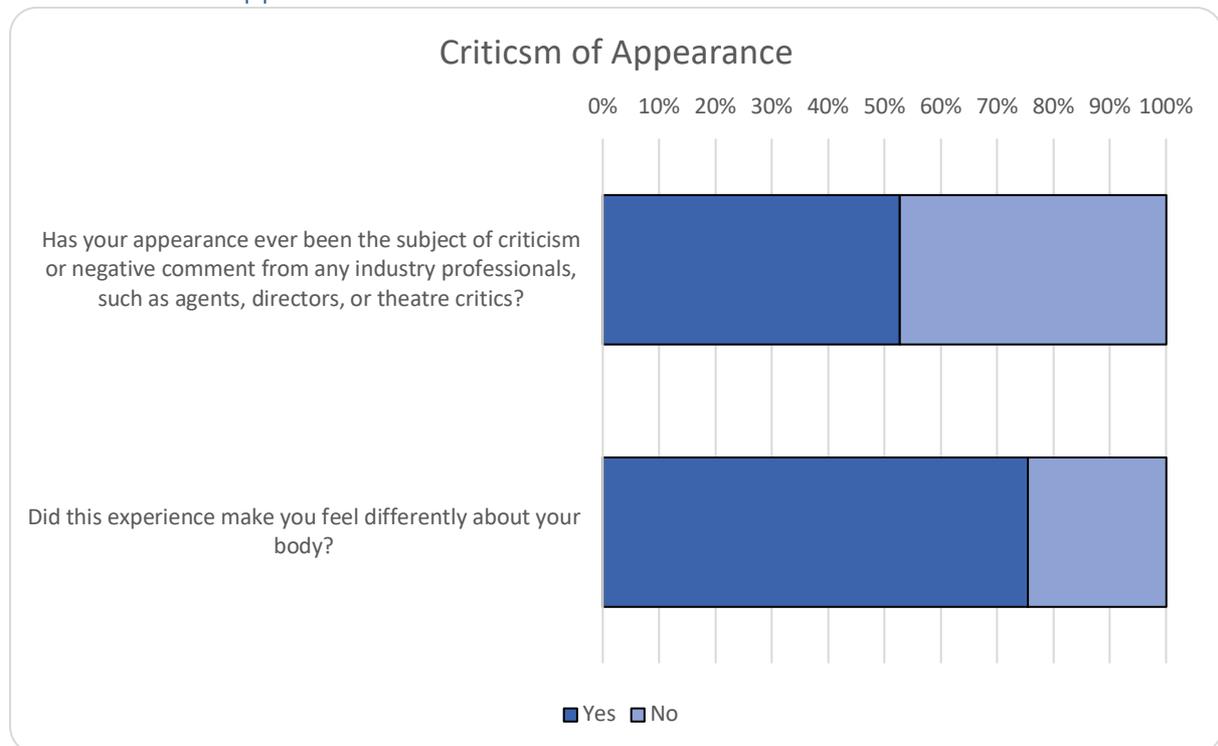


Figure 28 Has your appearance ever been subject of criticism or negative comment from any industry professionals, such as agents, directors, or theatre critics? Did this experience make you feel differently about your body?

Respondents were asked if their appearance had ever been the subject of criticism by someone in the industry and a small majority of respondents (53%) had experienced this. Comments had been made by casting directors, directors, headshot photographers, tutors in training contexts, and critics reviewing productions.

While having one's appearance commented on might seem par for the course as a performer, negative comments can have a significant impact on performers and of the 53% of respondents who had experienced negative feedback on their appearance, 76% felt that the experience had made them feel differently about their body.

## 7.8 Typecasting

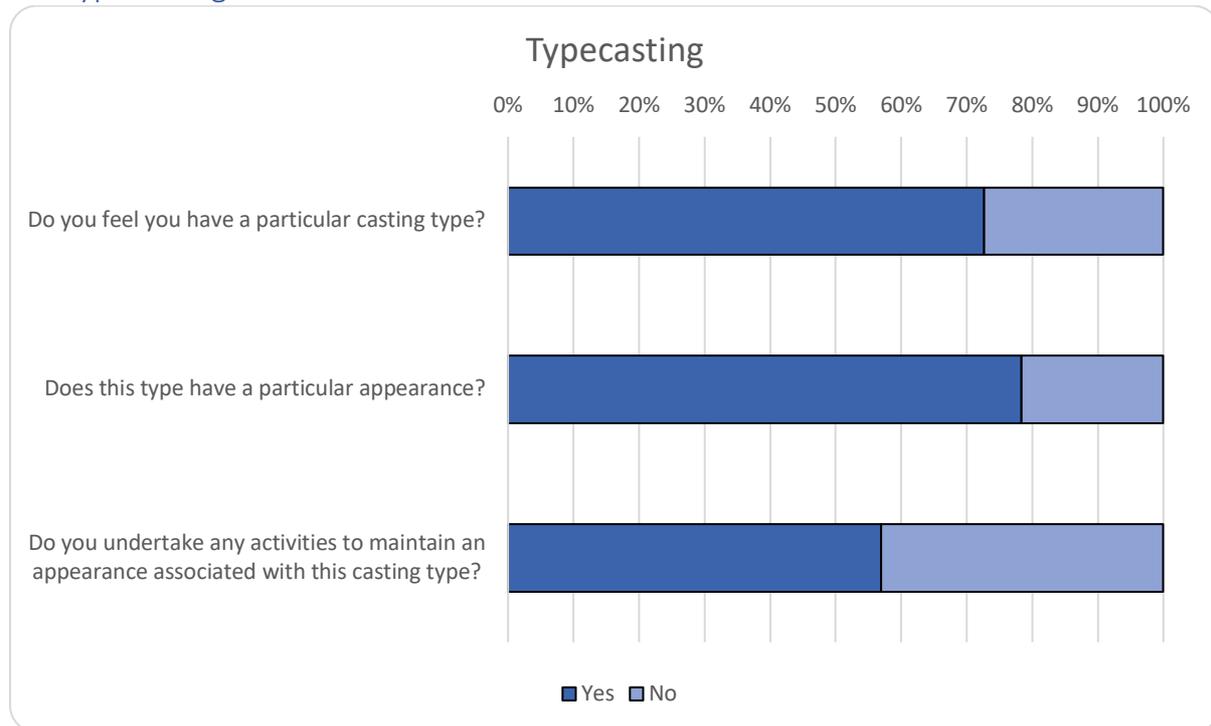


Figure 29 Do you feel you have a particular casting type? Does this type have a particular appearance? Do you undertake any activities to maintain an appearance associated with this casting type?

As typecasting is often associated with appearance, respondents were asked if they felt they had a particular casting type; 73% felt they did, while 27% felt they did not. Of those respondents who felt they had a casting type, 78% felt that their casting type has a particular appearance.

Of those respondents who felt that their casting type has a particular appearance 57% undertake activities to maintain the appearance associated with their casting type. Respondents were asked to share what activities they undertake, most of which involved diet and exercise, with other activities including skin-care regimes, tanning/fake-tanning, and grooming of hair and beard/moustache. Responses to this question foreground the on-going nature of performers' aesthetic labour: it requires continuous effort, regardless of employment status. Particular points in the performance process – such as auditioning or press nights – were considered to require more intensive aesthetic labour by participants, but because appearance is so fundamental to a performer's employability it is something that they carry with them at all times.<sup>iii</sup>

As the figures above suggest, not all performers feel they have a particular type and in interviews and focus groups roughly half of participants said they had felt stereotyped by a casting choice. What came out strongly, however, was an awareness that they would not be seen for certain roles because of their appearance and a sense that the industry generally operates on a system of types when approaching casting.

This is an awareness that respondents report is fostered in training contexts:

- P7: drama school we were told “you’re going to be stereotyped, you’re going to be put into this box; know what your box is”. And then you can play outside of that if you’re a name.

This categorisation is something that respondents feels continues into the industry:

- I17: I’m stereotyped every time I walk into a casting room. You’re stereotyped before you even go there, because they obviously screen your CV and decide who’s going to come along. And they take, what, a dozen people perhaps? Well that’s it, you’re stereotyped, you fall into that category and that’s why you’re called. So I’m already stereotyped before I walk into the room.

While typecasting is something that defines the roles a performer may play, it is important to acknowledge the fact that it also defines which roles a performer may not play:

- I14: I know that there are certain castings that I just wouldn’t get seen for: like I will never get seen for a romantic lead. No way, never, not happening. There’s just certain roles that I know I will never be able to even audition for, because people won’t see you for them because you just don’t look right. And that’s not me complaining, because, again, I knew that’s what I was coming into.

So, while not all performers felt stereotyped by roles they had been seen for, or cast in, they may nonetheless feel categorised by the roles they would not be considered for. Casting trends send messages about what is considered desirable in our culture and some respondents reported that their experience of casting stretches beyond their professional identity and into their personal identity:

- S346: Due to the saturation of the notion that desirable females are slender but busty, clear-skinned and delicate, I have never felt particularly happy with my chubby, busty, pale, and robust figure. Being told a few times by casting directors that they would have considered me for a part if I was thinner or having it suggested at workshops by directors/agents that the only way to play a leading West End role is to be slender has just cemented this feeling that I am inadequate and undesirable - both as a performer and a woman.

## 8. Interviews and Focus Groups

Interview and focus group questions were designed to build on themes that were emerging from the survey and therefore responses to most questions have been woven into the analysis above. However, one question which was asked is worthy of individual reflection. Respondents were asked if they could change one thing about the industry in relation to aesthetic labour, what would it be? The responses offer some valuable suggestions for improving industry practice that are worthy of further consideration. They can be grouped into three broad themes: employee protection, communication and respect, and casting and representation.

## Employee Protection

There was a sense that precarity in the profession and the number of performers seeking work compared with the number of roles available can lead to potentially exploitative situations:

- I21: the power imbalance needs to change, because there are the upper echelons who feel very much like “I can request what I want. I can request you to go on a crash diet, or get your teeth done, or get your hair done [...] and I know that if I request it from you, you might say no, ten other people might say no, but I know there will be hundreds that will say yes.” And because there is so little work in comparison to how many people want the work, and not enough people brave enough to say “this is not ok” they know that they can do that.

In this case, the respondent was discussing changes to appearance specifically, but the more general appearance pressures associated with casting were also considered a problem:

- I14: I think [a] shift needs to happen: where we feel like we’re ok and we have that power to be able to say something back to the people who make [casting] decisions because I feel that sometimes it can be quite a powerless situation and you don’t feel like you can say anything because you’ve got- even if you are protected by your union and they will back you, people will still, very quietly, maybe not publicly, say “I won’t work with her again”.

The close relationship between appearance-pressures, mental health, and bullying were raised by some:

- I10: It’s not so much about appearance, but something a bit deeper than that, where someone says something to you [...] and it stays with you [...] it’s the long-term thing. Things that stay with you from over a long period of time, throughout your life as a result of something that was said. Or the potential for bullying as well.

## Communication & Respect

Related to the issue of employee protection is the fostering of a culture of communication and respect in relation to appearance and appearance changes. One respondent noted the importance of conveying appearance change requests in a sensitive fashion:

- I13: you want to know that people are speaking to each other appropriately. So maybe language should be something to consider: how has somebody said that to you? Because I guess you can ask someone to change their hair without making them feel small and embarrassed. There could be a more edifying way of saying it: “oh, it would be great if your hair was down...if we did that”. As opposed to giving an opinion of what you look like and just having a go at the person doing hair and makeup. That’s not pleasant for anyone.

Also the time-scale involved in making appearance-related decisions was raised:

- I7: give an actor time to be comfortable with the wardrobe and the makeup and hair and not for it just to be a lastminute thing. Especially on screen work where it’s just cobbled together and the call time is 6am, you’ve got half an hour for hair and makeup and prior to that one has no idea what they’re going to be wearing and there’s been nothing to agree whether or not the outfit is suitable or anything like that. Just more

time taken to make sure that everyone feels comfortable with that aspect of it. The actor especially. Because at the end of the day, it's us that has to wear that with confidence and be able to portray the character as is fit. And I just think realising that we're human beings and not just dummies to be tarted up and chucked on set and just expected to do our thing. It's just sometimes a bit uncomfortable.

The invisibility of performers' aesthetic labour was considered an issue, because of all that is left unsaid. As one interviewee put it:

- I2: not pretending that we don't have to do [aesthetic] work in this industry. Because in some ways, fundamentally, performance work is about aesthetic presentation, so there's always going to be a certain level of that kind of work, but it's the pretence that it's not there that's the problem. And then that actually makes the industry a more inclusive space for everybody because [...] I think if we had an awareness that this is something that people have to do then that would fundamentally change the conversations that we have.

Fostering productive and respectful conversations about appearance was considered an important area of development in the industry:

- I22: At the moment there is no framework for how to have a productive conversation about appearance [...] How do we have safe, sensible conversations around appearance?

### Casting & Representation

The sense that casting choices are often shaped by matters of appearance was also criticised. Casting briefs that rely on physical descriptions, particularly of female characters, were considered to be particularly problematic and were criticised by many focus group and interview participants.

- I20: do you know what I think really needs to change? It's breakdowns that say "she's slim and sexy and stunning and twenty years of age and she has to look good in a bikini as well as..." I think all of that needs to change. And we should be using a language which is describing characters that are actually real. So, "she has the qualities", I really think it should be about qualities because we all have qualities [...] I can't play "sexy", but I can play "an intense young woman who wants freedom for her country" [...] I can't play, if I'm a size ten woman, I can't play "skinny", I can just play "young woman getting on the bus and going to see her boyfriend and being excited about her new love".

Casting based on appearance more generally was a repeated issue that respondents wished to change:

- I12: it would be about our talent rather than about what we look like. Or about suiting the role better. [...] the industry is hard enough already and it's already competitive without having to compete in appearance. [...] with acting it should be about performance not about your appearance. [...] there just needs to be more diversity.

A particular concern with the industry's focus on beauty and desirability is who it excludes. Several respondents reflected on the fact that "attractive" is a subjective quality, but one that is often treated as a straightforward quality within the industry and one which often excludes older performers, people of colour, people with disabilities, and plus-size people.

- I5: It's not just a beauty-standard full-stop, it's a Westernised and white and Euro-centric [...] I think you do still see a lot of colourism in casting. [...] When you say attractive, what is it precisely that you mean? [...] I think you can say attractive and stay very broad and avoid the criticism of setting a very racist standard.

There was a sense that diversity, in its broadest possible definition, is needed. The creative potential of diverse casting was celebrated by more than one interviewee:

- I24: seeing more diversity on our stages and screens I think will hopefully reduce [...] the need to put stereotypes out there. So, I don't know, I just feel like we're all individual and that's not being reflected, society's not being reflected in our art enough. And I think the more people see that a femme fatale character can maybe be a wheelchair user, or does have a scar somewhere, on their face or something. Just makes things more interesting for one and opens up the whole thing.

Many interviewees suggested that some progress is being made in relation to diversity, but that more meaningful representation is still needed, in which casting choices move beyond types and are less defined by appearance.

## 9. Consequences

A performer's appearance is directly related to the kind of work they will get in the industry and, as a result, many performers will make alterations to the way they look in order to try and make themselves more employable. Some participants spoke of approaching their appearance as if it were a can of baked beans or a website: something that they treat as separate to their personal identity and which can be altered and marketed as part of their performance work. However, the majority of respondents suggested that appearance is a deeply personal quality, tied closely to identity, and not something easily separated from work.

The way in which appearance pressures manifest themselves along lines of gender, race, age, and disability make them both personal and political concerns, linked with matters of inclusion and representation. From the responses received, the consequences of these appearance pressures can leave female and non-binary, minority ethnic, and older performers, and performers with disabilities feeling marginalised. They can also result in a significant amount of pressure and anxiety for younger performers.

Appearance pressures manifest themselves in a variety of ways, from pressures that are manifest in society more generally but which intensify in an image-focussed profession, to the specific appearance-related demands from industry gatekeepers. In an unstructured profession with little career security, performers rarely receive feedback when they are unsuccessful in a casting opportunity and several respondents identified this as placing particular pressure on appearance. One survey respondent observed that:

- S232: I think about [appearance] constantly in auditions and when I don't get jobs I wonder if it played a part.

Furthermore, when work is short, performers may identify their appearance as a means to gain work, as this survey respondent reflected:

- S310: the majority of these [appearance-change] requests have come when I have been out of work and the suggestion has often been framed "maybe if you tried to..." so if I didn't initially take the "advice" and the unemployment continued, then self-blame would follow after that.

Unsurprisingly these aspects can take a toll on performers' mental health and pressures on wellbeing were cited as a concern by many respondents.

### Mental Health

While respondents were willing to make changes to their appearance where they were appropriate for the character and conveyed with sensitivity and respect, it is clear that current practice can have serious consequences for performers working in the industry. There were frequent examples in the survey and focus groups/interviews in which respondents' mental health had suffered as a result of appearance-pressures in the industry.

When they were asked how they felt about being asked to change their appearance a number of survey respondents foregrounded the pressure such comments put on mental health:

- S361: I don't think I have thought about my weight, body and teeth as much as I have [since] entering the business. It has been the strongest contributor to stress levels. It is obvious to me that giving a good audition is not top of the list. Typecasting is how our business functions and being slim and light skinned is still favoured.

Pressures particularly relate to disordered eating, which was raised by a number of survey respondents:

- S387: [being told to lose weight] at drama school [...] is probably one of the top 5 reasons I have disordered eating as well as binge eating disorder.

As this example illustrates, when performers are advised or requested to make changes to their appearance, particularly with regard to weight and body-shape this can trigger or exacerbate eating disorders. In response to the question "how did being asked to make a change to your appearance make you feel?" slightly over 1% of respondents reflected that the experience had triggered or exacerbated an eating disorder.

Even change requests that are more benign or superficial can cause distress if not handled with sensitivity and, in extreme cases, pressure to make changes verges on bullying and harassment.

While aesthetic labour might be an integral part of performance work, these testimonies foreground the vital importance of these issues being handled with professionalism and sensitivity by industry gatekeepers. Training institutions were seen to be particularly toxic contexts in relation to body-image, though responses from recent graduates suggested that

institutions are making increasing efforts to support students with their mental health, something they welcomed.

More generally, discussions in interviews and focus groups suggest that the wellbeing of performers can be significantly impacted by appearance pressures:

- I12: I think I've paid the price of my emotional wellbeing in order to be an actor because I desperately want to perform, so badly, but I do feel the pressure every day of having to maintain an appearance. [...] I think I could be a lot healthier if I wasn't an actor, in terms of my self-esteem and body-image and that kind of thing. But it's a difficult balance because I think I'd also be really miserable if I didn't act. [...] I think it's really sad and I imagine there's a lot of people in a similar situation who have had to leave for their mental health; not because they can't hack the job or because they wouldn't be amazing actors, but because of the unreasonable expectations on their appearance.

One survey respondent described this vividly as a kind of attrition on wellbeing:

- S161: I feel as though it has been a very slow, toxic process of shedding away my true qualities to focus on things that make me not enough. There is so much focus on the things we are not. In my case, that I am not beautiful. That I am not thin. I have a very strange and difficult relationship with food that has harmed my body. At drama school I developed an eating disorder and it's still something that I fall back on when I really, really want a part. I have most certainly found most success in my career when I have been at my thinnest.

Also linked to the issue of mental health and wellbeing is when appearance pressures turn into bullying or harassment and performers are pressured into making appearance changes or are body-shamed by industry gatekeepers.

## 10. Future Directions

The findings of this research raise some important questions about the way in which the performance industries engage with matters of appearance and this report should be treated as the beginning of a conversation about these issues. Some of the key questions to be taken forward might include:

- **Employer responsibility:** What might best-practice in relation to body-image pressures and appearance-modification look like? How can employers be encouraged to adopt responsible practices?
- **Mental health:** What model of support might help performers deal with work-related body-image pressures? How might future performers be supported with developing a positive relationship with their appearance?
- **Access and inclusion:** Who is excluded/disadvantaged by current appearance-related activities? How do we address the barriers to access caused by the demands on performers' aesthetic labour?
- **Representation:** How can we promote more meaningful representation on stage and screen, moving beyond narrow casting types? How can we avoid the objectification of performers, both in specific roles and in the industry more generally? Is it possible to imagine an industry that's not defined by "lookism"?

A common response from participants in this research was that they had never before considered their aesthetic labour as work, but that, on reflection, the time, money, and thought that they invest in appearance is substantial. This report offers a starting point for further consideration of the role of aesthetic labour in performance work and is hopefully the first step in developing a healthier and more inclusive conversation around issues of appearance in our industry.

## 11. References & Suggested Further Reading

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## 12. Appendices

### 12. 1 Appendix One: Survey Questions

Are you over 18?
Do you work in the UK?
Are you a member of Equity UK?
With which gender do you most identify?
Which of the following Census categories best describes your ethnicity?
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?
Please describe your disability
What is your actual age?
What is the lowest age you could realistically play?
What is the highest age you could realistically play?
Into which of the following "appearance" categories do you place yourself?
In what capacity have you been employed?
Have you ever done any of the following to prepare for an audition or interview?
Do you wear make-up to auditions?
How much time do you spend on your appearance before going to an audition?
Approximately how much money did you earn from performance work last year? (Please use the April 2017 - April 2018 tax year as an indicator of your income.)
How much money do you spend each month on your appearance? This might include makeup, haircuts, manicures, clothing for auditions, but should not include gym membership or exercise classes
Which of the following statements applies to you: NB. Exercise classes might include Zumba, yoga, Pilates.
How much do you spend on gym membership/exercise classes per month?
How much did you spend on your last set of headshots?
Have you ever been asked to make a change to your appearance for work in the industry? N.B. This might be for a specific role, or it might be more generally to make yourself more likely to be cast in a role.
Have you ever been asked to do any of the following: Please tick all that apply
How have you been asked to make a change to your appearance? Please tick all that apply -
When have you asked to make a change to your appearance? Please tick all that apply
Who has conveyed a request for you to change to your appearance? Please tick all that apply -
For what kind of work have you been asked to make a change to your appearance? Please tick all that apply -
How did being asked to change your body make you feel?
To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel pressure to look a particular way in order to get work?
Do you feel that any particular aspects of your identity make this pressure more intense?
Which of the following aspects of your identity make this pressure more intense? Please tick all that apply

Has your appearance ever been the subject of criticism or negative comment from any industry professionals, such as agents, directors, or theatre critics?
Did this experience make you feel differently about your body?
If you are willing to share the details of this experience please use the box below to do so. Please don't include any details that would uniquely identify you or the other people involved, but please do give as much detail as possible about the experience(s) you had.
Do you feel you have a particular casting type?
Does this type have a particular appearance?
Please describe the physical characteristics of this casting type:
Do you undertake any activities to maintain an appearance associated with this casting type?
Please describe these activities:

## 12.2 Appendix Two: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself by saying your name, the field of performance that you work in, and give a rough sense of how long you've been working in this area.
  
2. We want to explore how different points in the performing process might impact on how often you think about your appearance and to consider whether you think about your appearance differently at these points in the process. Please could you talk me through the following points:
  - Auditioning: what are your first thoughts in relation to appearance when you receive a call to book in an audition? How often do you think about your appearance in the days/hours running up to your audition?
  - Rehearsing: how much do you think about your appearance during the rehearsal process? Is it something you are aware of? Are there any points in the process (e.g. costume fittings, rehearsal shots) when you're particularly aware of your appearance?
  - Performing: how often are you thinking about your appearance when your work is performed in front of an audience for the first time?
  - Reception (e.g. press night or premier): how does having an industry audience watching a performance impact on how often and the way in which you're thinking about your appearance?
  
3. Think back to when you first started out as a performer, did your training or your early industry experiences enable you to develop a positive relationship with your body?
  
4. Do you think that being a performer has changed your relationship with your body? If so, how?
  
5. Do you think you've ever been casting in a role *primarily* because of your appearance?
  
6. Have you ever felt stereotyped by a casting choice?

7. Do you think that the expectations of appearance vary depending on performance medium? Please reflect on the following forms:

- Theatre
- Television
- Film
- Radio/Voice-over

8. Do you feel you have the resources to create/maintain the sort of appearance you need in order to get work? (Resources might include money, time, space, support, and materials/products – such as access to a good hairdresser, a suitable gym, etc.)

9. If you could change one thing about the industry in relation to aesthetic labour, what would it be?

10. Is there anything else you think we should be considering that we haven't covered?

## 13. Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Rounding up responses to the nearest full percentage means that the total responses will sometimes total over 100%.

<sup>ii</sup> Participants have been allocated a number to protect confidentiality.

<sup>iii</sup> Entwistle and Wissenger made this observation in relation to the work of models in their 2006 paper "Keeping Up Appearances: Aesthetic Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industries of London and New York."