

**Newsweek Poll
Beauty (GP)
Princeton Survey Research Associates International**

FINAL SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

June 30, 2010

Does physical appearance determine a person's ability to succeed in the workplace? According to an exclusive NEWSWEEK poll, Americans widely regard a person's looks as playing an important role in their ability to get ahead in the workplace. "Lookism" is seen as having an especially big impact on women – both for the positive and the negative. People are more likely to think attractive women benefit than they are to think the same about good-looking men. However, women are also more likely than men to be seen as being held back at work because of their looks.

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS SEE GOOD LOOKS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Overall, close to two-thirds (64%) of the public thinks that good-looking people have an easier time getting ahead at work. When asked to rate the importance of being good-looking, Americans rate appearance somewhat higher as a factor in landing a job (mean score of 6.1) than in getting a promotion (5.5). This is consistent with the results of two other survey questions that queried respondents first about the impact of physical attractiveness on a *man's* chances of a) getting a job (63% advantage) and b) getting promotions at work (58% advantage). As far as a *woman's* chances being affected, the same number of people think good looks is an advantage for getting a job (72%) as say it is advantageous in terms of promotions (72%).

WOMEN SEEN AS MORE AFFECTED BY LOOKS DISCRIMINATION

On all survey questions where people were asked separately about the impact of looks on men in the workplace and women in the workplace, appearance is more often seen as affecting females than males.

- While 52% think good-looking men have an easier time getting ahead at work, 68% think this is true for good-looking women.
- While 63% think an attractive male has an advantage in getting a job, 72% think this is true for an attractive female job candidate.
- While 58% think an attractive male has a better chance to get a promotion at work, 72% think this is true for an attractive female.

The survey did not find a big gender difference in perceptions about how looks play out as a factor impacting people's success in the workplace. Both men and women are both somewhat more likely to see looks working to the advantage of attractive females than they are to see it benefitting attractive males.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES MAY DRIVE BELIEF THAT WOMEN ARE MORE AFFECTED

For many, views about the impact of looks on the job prospects of men and women may be rooted in personal experience. Overall, one in four (24%) employed U.S. adults says they know someone in their workplace who has gotten ahead because of their looks. When asked to identify the gender of the person helped out by their appearance, more people say it is a woman (17%) than say it is a man (9%). This is true of both women and men who participated in the new poll.

Close to one in three adult Americans (30%) say they know someone impacted at work negatively because of their looks. In total, 21% say they know a woman held back professionally because of her looks while 15% say they know a man affected in this way. In this case, men are more likely to say they know an affected male than an affected female (22% vs. 15%), while the opposite is true for women (26% know

affected female vs. 9% know affected male). However, this might be attributed to the fact that people's friends tend to be of the same gender.

CAN GOOD LOOKS BE A DISADVANTAGE?

While the poll results make it very clear that being physically attractive is more often a plus than a minus in terms of career prospects, there is some sentiment that looks sometimes work against a person. Compared with a PSRA survey done 20 years ago for a newspaper client (1990 Times Mirror Body Image survey), more Americans today express the contrary view that good-looking men (12% current vs. 5% in 1990) and good-looking women (9% current vs. 4% in 1990) are at a *disadvantage* in getting a job.

In fact, 10% of those polled claim to know someone who has been held back professionally for being too good-looking. In this case, similar numbers say they know an affected male (5%) and an affected female (6%).

WOMEN WORKERS DON'T CARE MORE ABOUT APPEARANCE

Despite the sentiment that looks have a greater impact on employed women than employed men, women workers are surprisingly most apt to say "looking good" is important at work. Women and men are about equally likely to say they feel better at work when they look good (72% women and 76% men). Overall, about four in five employed women (81%) and men (80%) say it is very or somewhat important to look good at work. But employed men are somewhat more likely than employed women to say it is very important (44% vs. 36%).

BEING OVERWEIGHT WIDELY SEEN AS A NEGATIVE; LOOKING OLDER LESS SO

The new poll dug deeper to see what specifics about appearance can put someone at a disadvantage at work. More than three-quarters (78%) of all adults – including 83% of women and 74% of men – say that very overweight people have a harder time getting ahead at work.

In contrast, less than half (42%) regard "looking older" as a disadvantage professionally. In another indication that looks-bias hurts women more, 47% of women vs. 37% of men say looking older is a disadvantage at work. People age 50 and over are more likely than those under 50 to say looking older is a negative at work (53% vs. 33%). Among women age 50+, 57% feel this way.

MORE THAN ONE IN 10 WOULD CONSIDER COSMETIC SURGERY TO BOOST CAREER

Among those currently in the workforce (either employed or looking for work), more than one in 10 (12%) say they would consider cosmetic surgery to improve their chances of getting a job or advancing in their career. Thirteen percent of women – compared with 10% of men – say they are open to cosmetic surgery. However, this gender difference is not large enough to be statistically significant. Non-whites are more likely than whites to say they would consider having work done (19% vs. 9%).

OPINION ABOUT POLICY AND LAW TO DISCOURAGE LOOKS DISCRIMINATION

Most people see looks-bias in the workplace, but they have mixed opinions about taking steps to deal with it. When asked about whether the practice of hiring someone based on looks to be the "face" of the company, a 55% majority – including 59% of women and 51% of men – say this should not be allowed. But when asked if they would personally favor or oppose a law making hiring based on appearance illegal, the public divides almost evenly (46% favor vs. 49% oppose). Men lean toward opposition to such a law (43% favor vs. 52% oppose); women lean toward support (49% favor vs. 46% oppose).

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Results are based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 964 adults, age 18 years and over. Interviewing was conducted from June 23-24, 2010 under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The overall margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points for results based on total adults. Results based on smaller subgroups are subject to larger margins of sampling error. In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting surveys can also introduce error or bias to poll results.