

# Lookism; *'is appearance a pre-cursor to role suitability'*

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# What is lookism?



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**‘prejudice or discrimination  
on the grounds of a person's  
appearance.’**

# Aim of the research



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The aim of the research looked to understand the extent, if any, to which lookism plays a part in the recruitment process of candidates at a medium-sized acute hospital in London. The findings looked to enable better understanding of the issue, and allow potential changes to the training of recruiting managers.

# Objectives

Understand the perception of recruiting managers with regard to both positive and negative appearance factors considered during a recruitment and selection episode.

What was recruiting managers experience of lookism in practice

What were the appearance factors that had a positive or negative impact on the appointment of candidates at the institution in question

To what extent, if any, could the findings be used to better support recruiting managers make sound and justifiable recruitment decisions

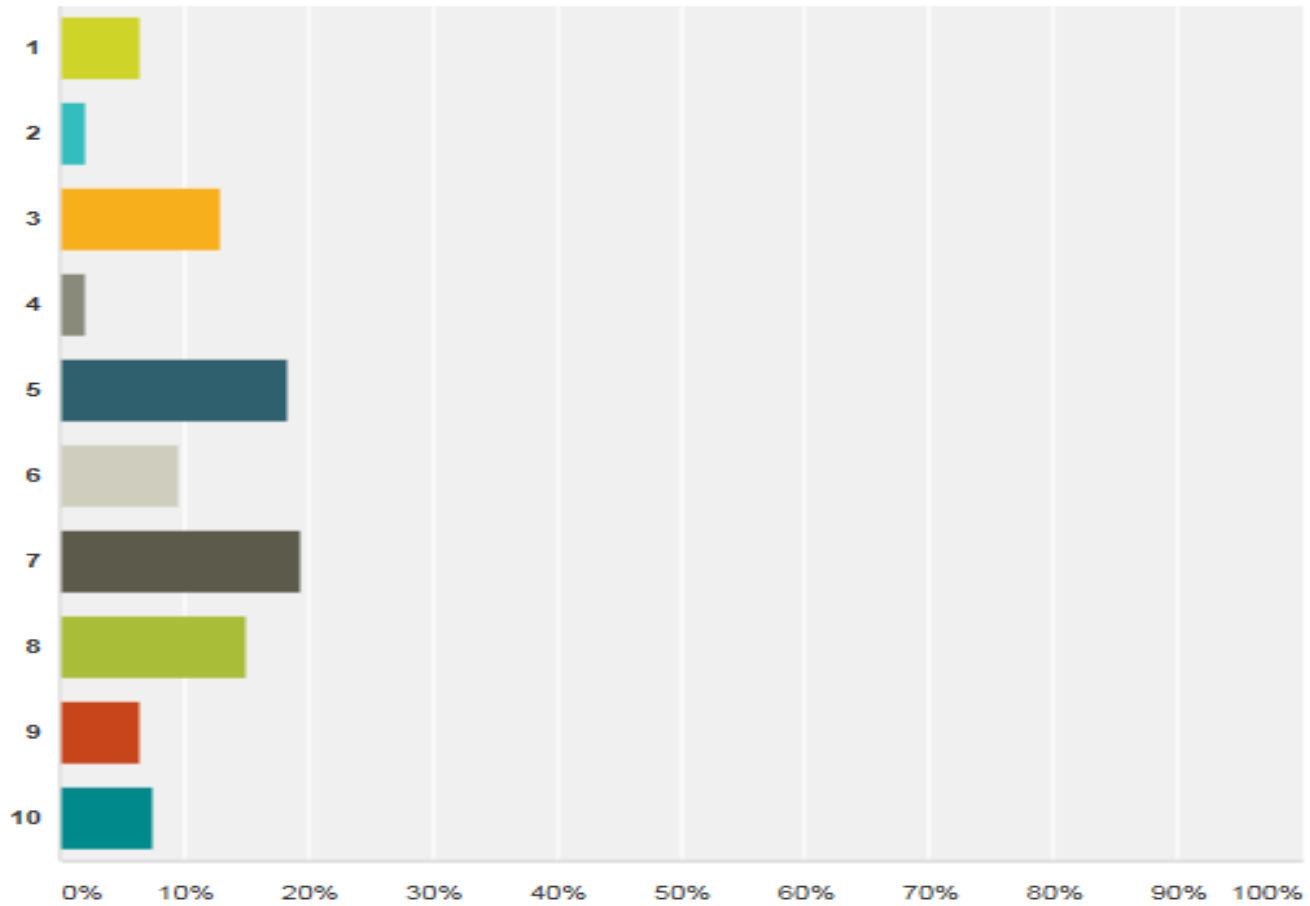


**NOTHING IS  
INTERESTING IF  
YOU'RE NOT  
INTERESTED.**



**On a scale of 1-10, how likely would you be to take appearance into consideration when assessing a candidates suitability for a role (1 is not likely, 10 is very likely)**

Answered: 93 Skipped: 0

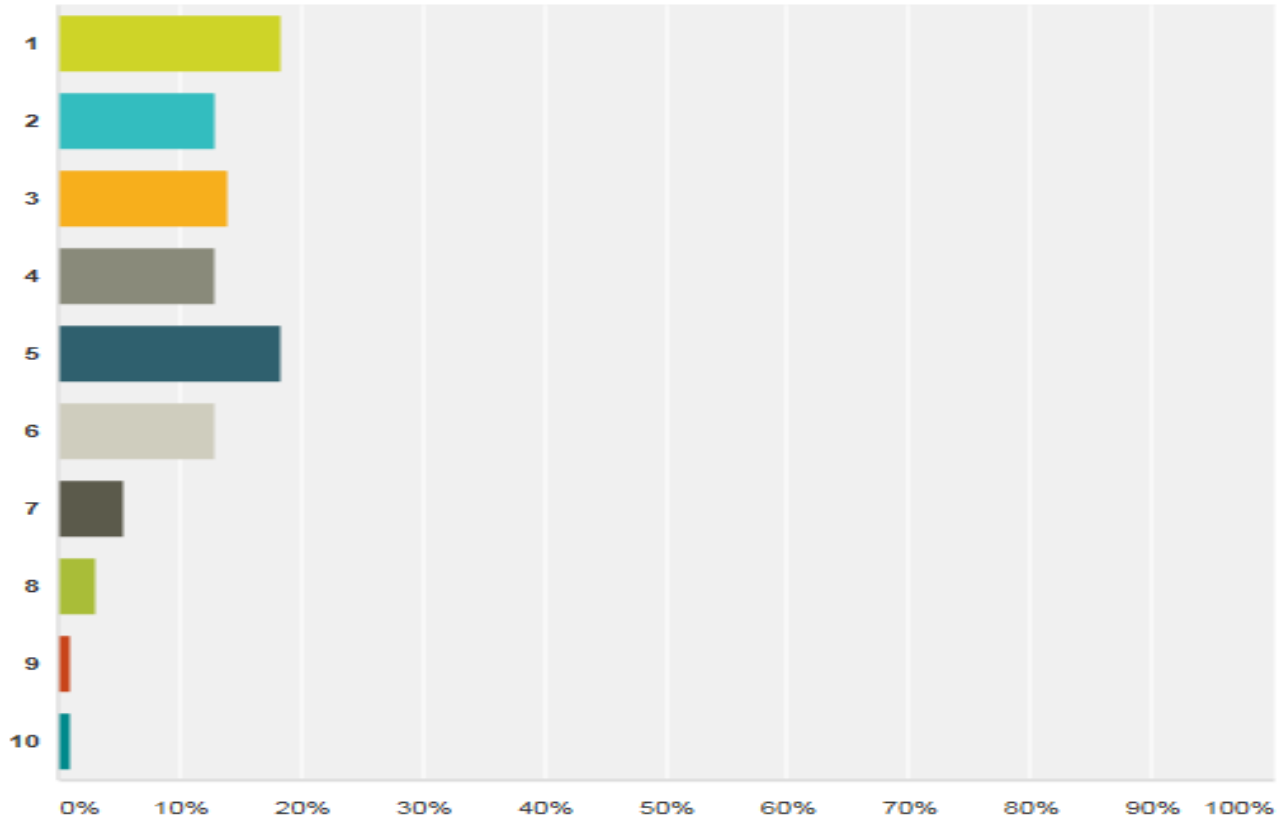


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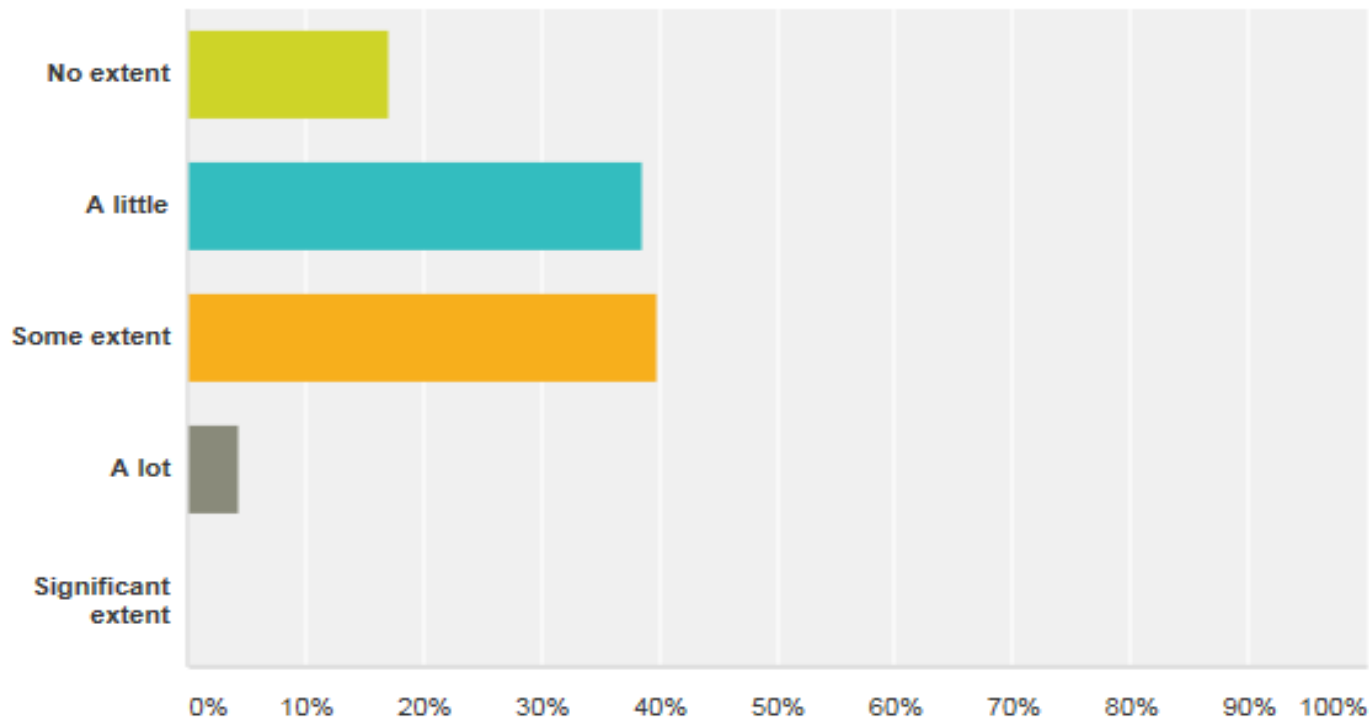
**On a scale of 1 - 10, how likely would you be to make a recruitment decision based on the appearance of a candidate? (1 being not likely, 10 being very likely)**

Answered: 93 Skipped: 0



# To what extent do you believe a candidates appearance defines the outcome of a selection process (interview) at [redacted] (considerations should include immediate reactions to physical appearance by panel members)

Answered: 93 Skipped: 0





Question twelve reviewed respondents responses to those characteristics that had a negative impact on decision making in the context of recruitment. The top five responses of those having a negative impact were recorded as (i) tattoos, (ii) perceived smell, (iii) piercings, (iiii) clothing/shoes and (v) how much make-up a candidate wears. The five lowest responses recorded were (i) race, (ii) gender, (iii) assumed sexual orientation, (iiii) height and (v) age.

Question thirteen asked the same question, but with a focus on positive physical characteristics when considering role suitability. Those having a positive impact were recorded as (i) clothing/shoes, (ii) teeth/smile, (iii) hairstyle/colour, (iiii) age). There were three physical characteristics scoring the same; weight, how much make-up a candidate wears and smell. Those scoring lowest in this ranking order were (i) assumed sexual orientation, (ii) race, (iii) piercings, (iiii) gender) and (v) height.



Nearly a fifth of UK adults have had tattoos, with those under 40 significantly more likely to have them.

ACAS have stated that negative attitudes about visible tattoos are outdated, and fear that employers could be drastically reducing the pool of potential recruits because so many young people now have tattoos



# Is Lookism a pre-cursor to role suitability?



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It can be concluded with some certainty that a candidate's physical appearance is considered by panel members during a recruitment episode; with particular characteristics strongly positively and negatively influencing recruiting managers' perception of candidates and their suitability for positions.

‘we are not *born* to  
stereotype’



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Devine, J.R., & Coulson, P.A., (2016) '*Lookism; is a candidates appearance a precursor for role suitability?*' A review focussing on a medium size acute hospital in London