



The Real Cost of Beauty

*Turning up the volume on a
\$500bn national silent public health crisis*



Summary

For 20 years, **Dove's purpose has been to make a positive experience of beauty universally accessible** to girls, women and female-identifying individuals. As part of this, the brand launched the Dove Self Esteem Project (DSEP), focusing on boosting body confidence and self esteem in young girls.

The Dove Self Esteem Project's "Real Cost of Beauty Ideals" study and campaign spotlights the disproportionate impact body dissatisfaction and appearance-based discrimination have on young girls. **It costs American society \$500bn every year due to low educational achievement, lost employment, lost productivity, and pressure on our health and penal systems.¹**

But the harsher consequence that no one talks about - not the victims, perpetrators or bystanders - is the self esteem issues that cost young girls their physical and mental health and even their lives. **In fact, the study shows 757,000 years of healthy life were lost in 2019 alone.²**

While the data is staggering, we realized on its own, it was dry. We needed to humanize it in order to give voice and scale to this national, silent public health epidemic. We needed to reframe it as a 'code red' issue with young girls paying the biggest price.



The Objective

Dove has taken several actions over the years to challenge harmful beauty ideals and create a safer, healthier world for young girls specifically under the auspices of the Dove Self Esteem Project. Along with Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health & Deloitte, **The Real Cost of Beauty Ideals study birthed a new and compelling narrative to expose the root of a \$500bn silent public health crisis overtaking the country.**

We needed to unpack the shocking data, in order to:

GET American society

TO realize that body dissatisfaction & appearance-based discrimination is a silent public health epidemic

BY dramatizing in a tangible way, the immense, negative cost, especially to young girls.

In addition to introducing audiences to an ignored systemic issue, we also needed to drive a national conversation that matched the scale of the problem itself.

The real cost of beauty ideals

The staggering economic and social cost of body dissatisfaction and appearance-based discrimination in the United States



Dove 

Let's **Change** Beauty | **October 2022**

Prepared with
Deloitte Access Economics

The Cultural Context

Throughout 2022, US culture showed us time and again that a woman's body is never her own and will always be subject to scrutiny, surveillance, censure and violence.

The US Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade meant women lost the fundamental right to bodily safety and control over their future - a decision that reverses decades of progress and slows the fight for gender equality for generations to come. Meanwhile, state and local legislatures introduced bills to prevent trans girls and women from playing on female sports teams, barred trans youth from using restrooms that align with their gender identity and restricted access to gender-affirming medical care – all while the trans community became the target of unprecedented brutality. And across social media, dangerously thin beauty ideals returned, driven by pharmaceutical interventions.

Dove seized this moment to ignite a new conversation about another dangerous national paradigm - the exponential impact of systemic toxic beauty standards that cost young American women and girls their health, their happiness, and even their lives.





The Issue

Despite the dangers of narrow beauty ideals, American society tends to view beauty and physical appearance concerns as superficial. They fail to recognize their gravity and severity, particularly amidst the multitude of other existential issues they are grappling with.

Moreover, nearly every issue is exacerbated by a polarizing and politicizing environment in America which means consensus over even the most obvious crises is rarely reached.

We had the daunting challenge of inspiring already fatigued audiences to **unequivocally and collectively care about yet another crisis.**

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The Insight

To demand urgent and unified attention across the country, we needed to dramatically raise the danger level of Body Dissatisfaction & Appearance Discrimination. We needed Gen Pop to see this as a deeply pervasive systemic health issue rather than a personal issue faced only by some.

We realized that we needed to reframe a silent public health crisis into a ‘code red’ issue impacting young girls, not just today, but for life.

A ‘code red ’ issue became the rallying cry across the entire national, cross-channel campaign.



3 key strategic decisions shaped the campaign and brought a ‘code red’ issue to life nationally



1. NAME

We translated the complicated concept of body dissatisfaction & appearance-based discrimination into an instantly telegraphic expression that could become part of the vernacular. **We called it Appearance Hate.**

2. JUXTAPOSE

We raised its danger level by placing appearance hate alongside other teen health and safety threats, such as distracted driving and under-age drinking. **Threats that American society is already conditioned to worry about when it comes to young girls.**

3. HUMANIZE

To care, society needed more than data, they needed to hear directly from the young people affected most by appearance hate. We captured the lived experiences of girls and female-identifying individuals across America coping with diverse issues, such as race-based hair discrimination, weight-based bullying and anti LGBTQIA+ prejudice.

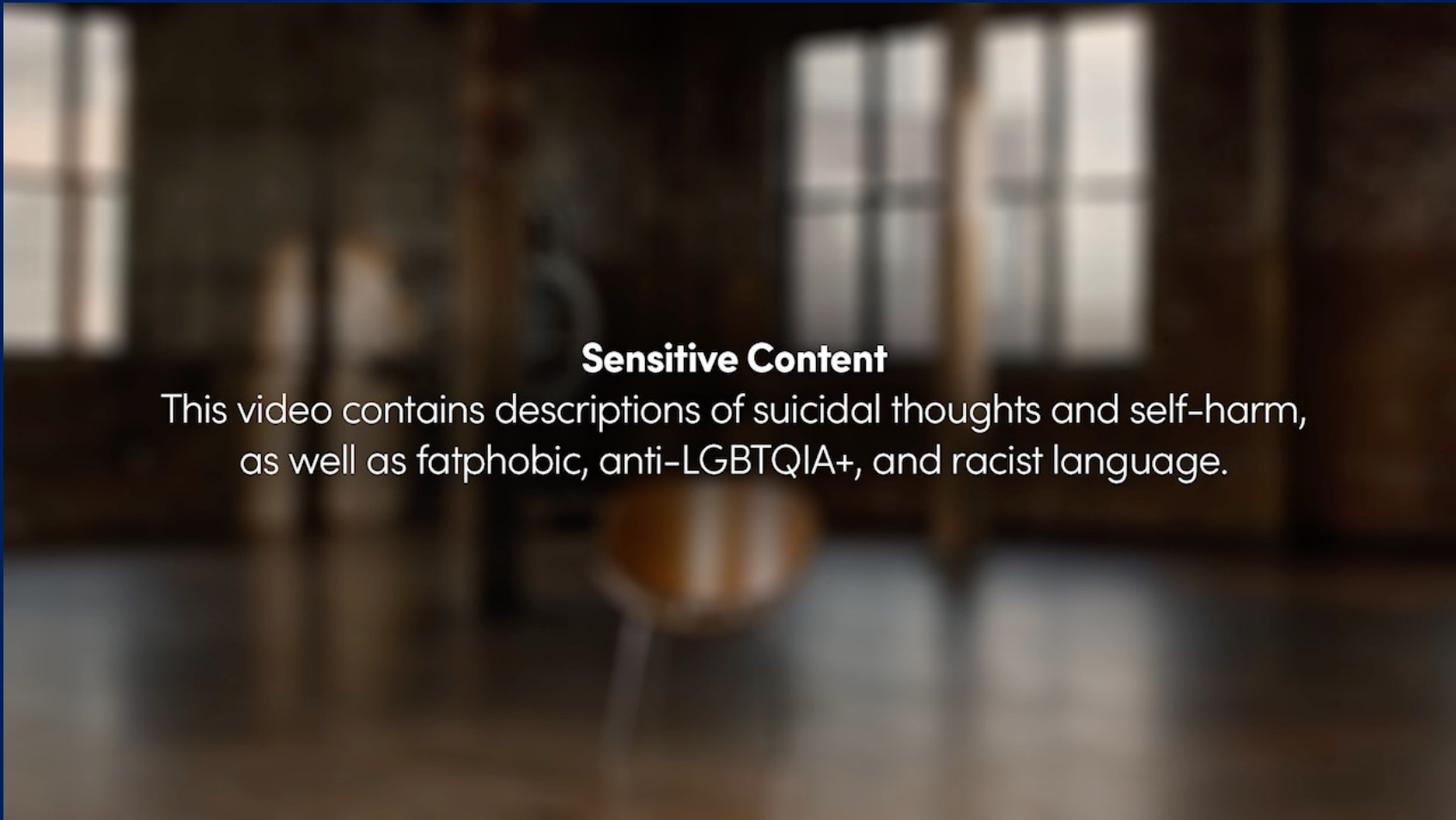


The Creative Approach

We matched the pervasiveness of a 'code red' issue with the pervasiveness of the campaign itself.

Launched on International Day of the Girl, a national, multi-pronged earned-first campaign used data and powerful personal storytelling to make the experience of appearance hate real and visible in a variety of ways.

At the heart of the campaign, five extraordinary young people shared their experience with appearance hate in a long-form video where they united to speak truth to power and call for real change. Each story personalized a code red issue, including weight-based bullying, anti-LGBTQIA+ prejudice, and race-based hair discrimination.



Sensitive Content

This video contains descriptions of suicidal thoughts and self-harm, as well as fatphobic, anti-LGBTQIA+, and racist language.

To capture the country's attention, we ran a two-page ad nationally in "The New York Times" comparing the outsized impact of appearance hate to other youth crises, like alcohol abuse and distracted driving.

Dove
Self-esteem project

Who pays the real cost of a
\$500+ billion public health crisis?

She does.

New research from Dove reveals that the appearance hate and discrimination caused by toxic beauty standards costs Americans more than \$500 billion per year – and young people pay the biggest price.

Discover the real cost of this silent public health crisis in The Real Cost of Beauty: Toxic & Groundswelling report from Dove. Together we can end appearance hate.

Get involved & take action:
Dove.com/RealCostofBeauty

Appearance Hate & Discrimination
\$500+ billion

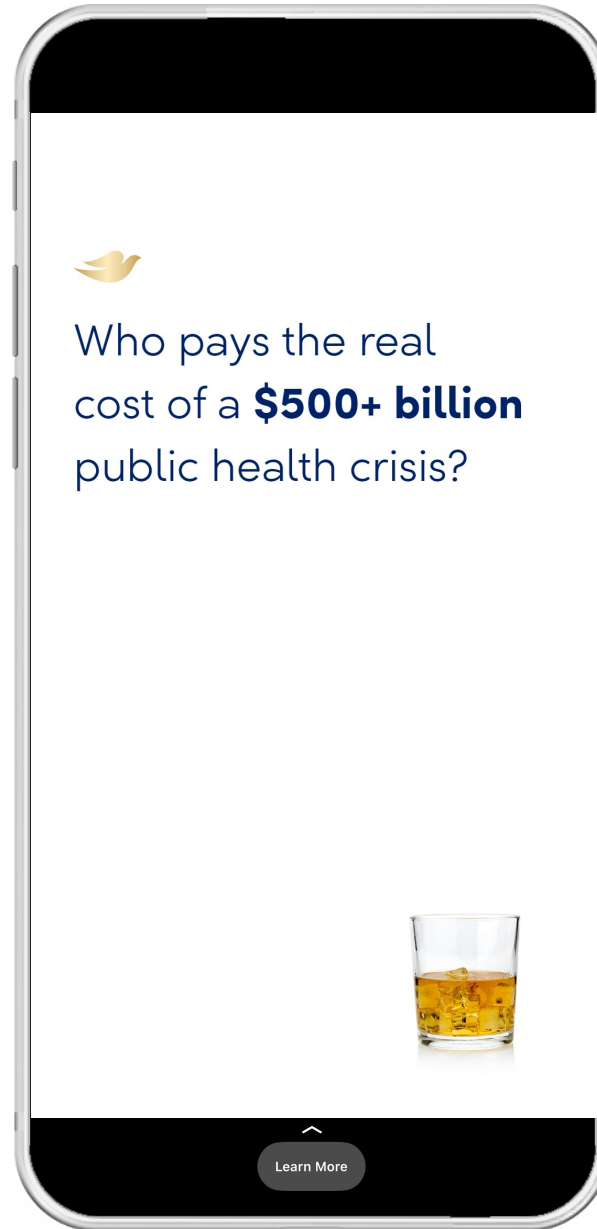
Underage Drinking
\$28 billion

Distracted Driving
\$203 billion

Let's Change Beauty

*Based on research by Dove & researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. **Based on research by the Strategic Marketing Institute for the University of Pennsylvania. ***Based on research by the University of Pennsylvania. ****Based on research by the University of Pennsylvania. *****Based on research by the University of Pennsylvania.

We also created paid social media assets highlighting the economic and emotional impact of appearance hate, urging audiences nationally to take action.



Finally, all assets drove audiences to realcostofbeauty.dove.com, a custom digital experience spotlighting the personal stories, data, and impact of appearance hate in America.

Dove 

What is the real cost of toxic beauty standards?

scroll





National Results

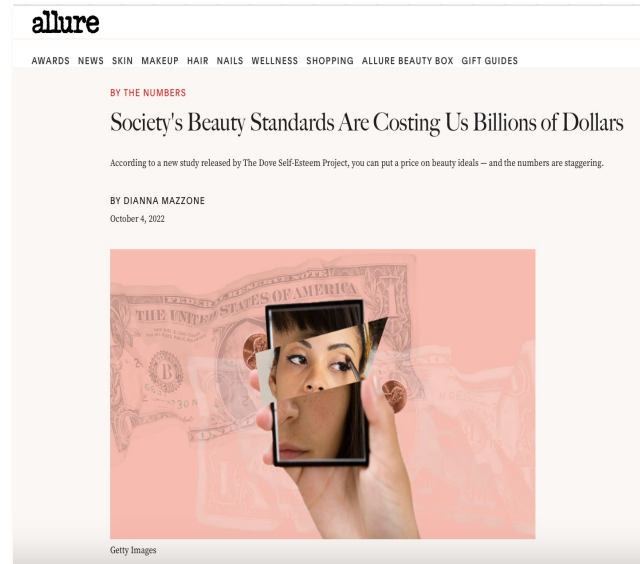
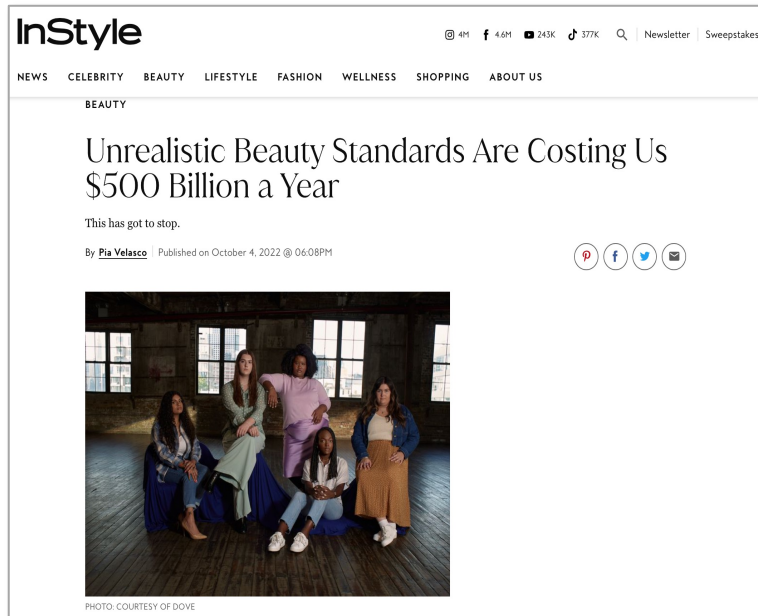
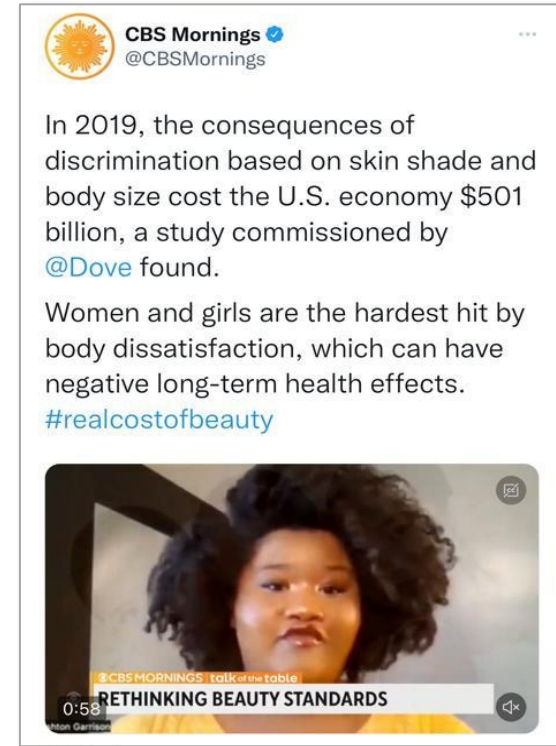
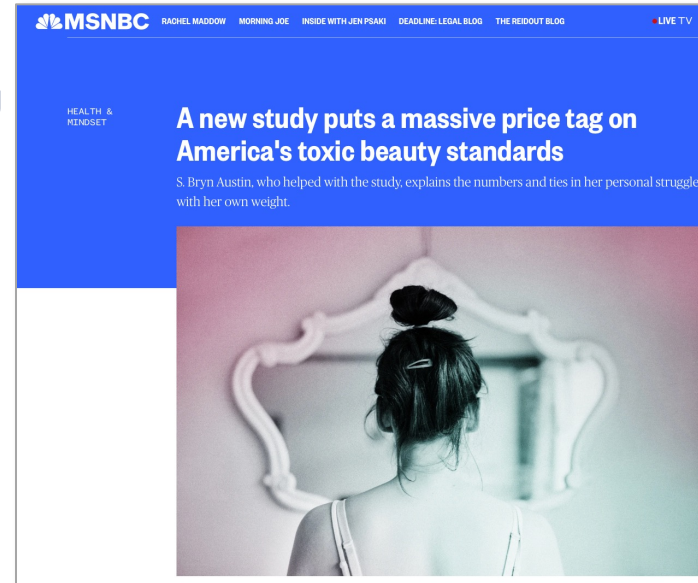
In just ten days, despite limited paid media, **this earned-first national campaign exceeded all expectations and launched the first real conversation about a silent public health crisis affecting millions of young girls and women in America.**

The campaign garnered:³

104 media outlets

1.9 billion estimated reach

19 point lift in brand power (+5pts vs KPI set)





Morgann N
@MorgannN

I had the privilege to speak to the principals and administrators at the school district I graduated from about the **Dove campaign**....

I felt so **empowered** to speak to the people who have the ability to **create change**...

I walked away feeling excited to share my story so other kids of color feel empowered to say something, **DO something**.

The Real Impact

But the most significant outcome came from the young people featured in the campaign videos, who grabbed the campaign spotlight to become true activists for change across the country. They spread the conversation on social media and appeared at events to call upon authorities to take action against appearance hate in their communities.



Sources

1. Dove Real Cost of Beauty Ideals Study
2. Dove Real Cost of Beauty Ideals Study
3. Real Cost of Beauty Campaign Wrap Report



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Dove
Self-esteem project