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Rise up or suffer: the ugly truth about losers in looks



There are no campaign groups for the foul of face PhotoAlto/Odilon Dimier/Getty Images

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Ugly people are doomed to a life of discrimination because, unlike other historically oppressed groups, they will never rise up together to demand the same rights as better-looking rivals.

So say academics who have been studying the inequalities between the winners and losers of life's lottery of looks. They claim that the age-old beauty bias has been allowed to run rampant through society, in a way that racism, homophobia and sexism have not.

The reason: there are no campaign groups for the foul of face.

"Why haven't we been as concerned with oppression of the ugly as with other forms of oppression?" asked Jonny Thakkar, a lecturer in philosophy and humanities at Princeton University.

"One point is that we tend to address oppression when the oppressed themselves band together to complain. But ugly people do not band together: there is no conscious group formation around the idea of ugly.

"Part of this is just that one doesn't like to admit one's ugliness; ugliness is always deniable, especially given the fact that standards of beauty are culturally relative."

Mr Thakkar said that unlike other groups whose long and continuing battles for equality have led to protection in law, there is an additional obstacle standing in the way of the facially unfortunate: membership of the group is arguably a matter of opinion.

"Membership in the group can be temporary, whether because cultural standards change in your favour or because your own looks change," said Mr Thakkar, whose essay *The Ugly Truth* is published in the digital magazine, *Aeon*. He added that the

oppression of the ugly was most similar to situation of the working class.

One of the few cases to reach the courts was that of Shirley Ivey, who sued her former employer, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, in Washington in 2011, on the ground of “personal appearance-based” hostility, after she was told by her boss that he would like her more if she was prettier. She was awarded nominal damages.

Such cases are rare, said Daniel Hamermesh, Professor of Economics at Royal Holloway, University of London, because so few of the aesthetically challenged are prepared to stand up and demand compensation.

“I don’t think many people want to stand up and say, yeah, I’m ugly, give me the money,” said Professor Hamermesh, author of *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful*.

He argued that the ugly and oppressed deserved their own legal protection, saying: “It is as hard to change your looks as it is to change your gender or your ethnicity. That being the case, I see no issue in extending protection.”

His studies showed that those on the bottom sixth of the attractiveness scale suffered a loss of earnings equivalent to missing as much as an extra year and a quarter of education, when compared with their more attractive counterparts in the top third.

“These are substantial differences,” he said. “Better-looking people really are happier. There is no question about that.

“As well as all the other direct effects, such as increased income and improving success in the marriage market, it also makes you happier, because you feel better about yourself.”

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Mr H K C Thakkar

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If there really is all this discrimination against ugly people, how come so many of them manage to get themselves elected to Parliament?

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Leanora Munn

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What utter drivell. Clean and smart, making the most of yourself, and try a smile; that usually works more wonders than any face cream or plastic surgery could ever work.

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Peter Parkinson

5 hours ago

Is being old ugly and having to use the polyfilla on your face and cover up your body when it sags. A young man is going out with a plain skinny girl, he’s a good looking lad with little brain, she about the same with no looks, both go to college, they seem happy. Both may not have much future in the world but they are together for now.


Looks are not everything but a brain is.

The welfare state is not for anybody that is fit and can work but employers don’t look at looks they want people with some sort of brain who can solve problems of all types also make money for them. If you require looks then some women without brains can earn a living on the back with kids and marriage, maybe have job cleaning offices and

schools, some become dinner ladies both a valuable job in society with not much pay, after 5 kids over populating the world.

People without brains sometimes mess up and lie also get caught out and still companies still employ (Amicus Horizon Housing Association) these people who continuously lie and think they can get away with it when evidence proves different, they waste tenants money on their lies.

You have stand up against them and make a stand fighting them until they get rid of bad people.

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Dr Andrew Price

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There are many situations in which physical attractiveness is a perfectly valid qualification for a job. Think about it, if you own a company, who do want representing you in meetings with clients? The ugly fat smart guy, or the handsome lean smart guy? Same goes for women in all manner of "customer facing" roles from the boardroom to the shop floor. For ugly stupid guy there is a welfare state.

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Would such equal rights protection extend to which girl a man can ask out on a date, or if they want to 'hook up'?

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Jim Gardner

15 hours ago

And what about thick people? Should they rise up and demand compensation from the world because their lifetime earnings are likely to be lower than those of their brighter brethren?

This really is the most dreadful tosh: life is not fair, get over it.

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