

# What Will Happen to Our Faces When Plastic Surgery Is Cheap?

**As the price of plastic surgery comes down, more and more people are opting for a nip here, and tuck there.**

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Matthew Sedacca

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When Susan Grant walked into her friend's apartment in Dubai thirty years ago, she immediately felt piercing stares from everyone in the room. All throughout her post-pubescent life, Grant's minimal bust felt like a genetic burden, garnering disparaging comments from classmates, colleagues, and even complete strangers. That night, in front of everyone, a man behind the house bar called Grant "Titless" when asking her what she wanted to drink. She still remembers that insult to this day.

Within months of moving from the Netherlands to Houston, Texas with her family 15 years ago, Grant had a date with the cosmetic surgeon's operating room. Comfortable in terms of a job, a house, and a car, the sizable cost of the treatment proved inconsequential in comparison to the self-confidence she believed it would—and eventually did—bring her.

"I remember thinking, 'My God, I wish I had done it earlier—I wish I had had the opportunity to have done it earlier,'" Grant, now 50 years old, told Motherboard over the phone. "I never thought about it ever again. I never walked into a room and thought about it. It was just wiped from my mind."

Although few are willing to admit publicly that they would undergo drastic measures to change their physical appearance, it's a possibility that has been widely contemplated. A study by market research firm Harris Interactive [found](#) that 69 percent of the subjects surveyed would go under the knife if money was not an issue. Sure, tabloids and social media users hounding celebrities like [Kim Kardashian](#) for their vanity-driven surgeries might stigmatize such expenditures as opulent and taboo for some. The growing number of procedures that are being performed, however, proves to be a blatant sign for the fact that looks still matter. Thanks to advancements in technology, the ability reduce some of the excess fat or tighten up the sagging skin that accompanies aging recently has become a possibility for individuals beyond the upper class.

[Except for 2009](#), the number of total cosmetic surgery procedures performed has increased every year for the past decade, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, whose website offers published statistical reports of cosmetic surgery procedures since 2005. The organization [recently reported](#) that between 2000 and 2015, the total procedures performed increased by 115 percent; 15.9 million surgical and minimally-invasive cosmetic procedures were performed in the U.S. in 2015, translating into a 2 percent increase over 2014.

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[Dr. Jay Shenaq](#), a board-certified plastic surgeon practicing in Houston, Texas, believes that just how joining a gym was once considered a luxury and then became a run-of-the-mill expenditure, cosmetic surgery will follow a similar path.

"I would buy a car first before I do cosmetic surgery: I would have kids first," Dr. Shenaq told Motherboard over the phone. "But nowadays, it's really becoming integral. A lot of people are willing to finance that, put it on the [credit] cards, in order to do it. It's no longer a luxury item: It's part of our lifestyle."

In addition to silencing the inner voices that stem from aesthetic imperfections as well as a desire to roll back the clock, Dr. Shenaq cites the desire to have one's exterior appearance reflect his or her interior health. This is particularly true, he claims, when applying for a job.

While more people might choose to look 40 in their 60s, the surgical procedures are bound to leave patients lighter in more than one way. In 2014, the Austin-based medical group practice Westlake Dermatology, together with the online plastic surgery forum community Realself.com, [reported the national average costs for cosmetic procedures](#). Even for the cheapest procedure listed, lip implants, customers still had to shell out just under \$2,500. Meanwhile, body lifts (toning procedures that remove excess skin and fat from the abdomen, hips, outer thighs, and buttocks) run around \$15,000, essentially [the down payment for a house in North Carolina](#).

As such, experts like [Dr. Anthony Youn](#), a plastic surgeon based in Detroit and author of *The Age Fix: How to Look Ten Years Younger*, refuse to consider cosmetic surgery a necessity, or at least the modern gym membership.

"Pure cosmetic surgery is a want, not a need (no matter what some people may say!)," Dr. Youn said in an email. "Therefore, it should be considered a luxury. It's expensive, and many of my patients save for years to pay for it."

Of course, not everyone that undergoes surgery aims to "fix" something, an idea that some like Dr. Youn might see as a higher form of indulgence in terms of cosmetic surgery. [Penny Brown](#), a YouTuber residing in San Diego, enlarged her size DD breasts to size Os. The operation set her back around \$10,000, and the online community frequently goes to town with vicious remarks, she told Motherboard in a telephone interview. But contrary to any of her commenters' preconceived claims of body dysmorphia or insecurity, she explained that "it was more exaggerating something I liked."

"If there was a surgery that I could have to fix something I didn't like—like my butt, which is naturally small—I wouldn't get it," Brown said to Motherboard. "I wouldn't stop someone else from doing it, but for me, it fosters a negative view in myself."

The aforementioned costs might prevent potential patient from a full-blown surgical nip and tuck. Jennifer Moses, a spokesperson for Realself.com, noted over the phone that less-invasive (and per session, cheaper) options are making cosmetic surgery even more approachable for the non-Hollywood types. Coolsculpting, for example, uses cooling panels to crystallize and remove fat cells in the tissue, while injectables like dermal fillers can mitigate wrinkles.

As procedures and an overall sense of "normalcy" continue to evolve, choosing to pursue one's desired look, just as Grant did, might just prove to be a commonplace luxury in the near future.

"I was so worried about dating and meeting guys and how they were going to react—it was a stressful thing," Grant said. "I thought, 'They're gonna ask me about it. They're gonna know before they know anything else about me.' And the funny thing is, the reaction has only ever been 'Oh, how much did that cost?'"

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