

COMMENTARY

ATTITUDES TOWARD DENTAL APPEARANCE IN 50- AND 60-YEAR-OLD SUBJECTS LIVING IN SWEDEN

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This article describes the attitudes of two large populations of subjects in Sweden regarding their dental appearance. The samples included 50- and 60-year-old males and females. The sample was asked to respond to four questions on a questionnaire that surveyed the opinions of over 30,000 subjects, with a response rate of over 70%. So the study design and sample size were appropriate and sufficient, respectively. All in all, this was an impressive study documenting the perceived importance of dental esthetics in mature subjects. With that said, I was surprised at some of the findings. First of all, I would have expected older individuals to be less concerned about dental esthetics than younger individuals. However, this was not true. Older subjects more strongly believed that their dental appearance affected how others would perceive them. Now, this study was performed in Sweden. I wonder if a similar response would be found in a population of 50- and 60-year-old subjects in the United States. My hypothesis would be that younger individuals living in the United States would be more concerned about appearance as it relates to the perception of others. Second, in this article, men were more concerned about dental appearance than women in Sweden. Would that response differ in other countries in Europe or in the United States? After all, in Sweden, dental care operates under a predominantly socialized system. Does the system of remuneration for dental treatment affect a person's perception of the importance of a pleasing smile? Dental esthetics drives much of the dental economy in the United States in the early 21st century. How would subjects outside of Sweden, outside of Scandinavia, or outside of Western Europe answer this survey? Perhaps, in the future, this survey will be applied to other populations to determine the importance of esthetics in other parts of the world. In the meantime, congratulations to the authors for an important contribution to the dental literature on the perception of esthetics.

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