# Where are the men in the body positivity movement?



The body positivity movement, a social crusade advocating for acceptance and representation of diverse body types, has long been regarded as primarily focussed on women. However, its roots tell a different story. The inception of this initiative can be traced back to a man named Bill Fabrey, who in 1969, dismayed by the societal treatment of his wife Joyce, founded the National Association to Aid Fat Americans. The association, now known as the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA), laid the groundwork for challenging societal norms regarding body image.

Despite these origins, the movement's narrative has often overshadowed men, leaving their struggles with body image largely unaddressed. Men, particularly young men and boys, are confronting increasing body shaming pressures, a matter compounded by pervasive societal ideals perpetuated by social media and entertainment industries.

The phenomenon known as Bigorexia, a type of body dysmorphic disorder, exemplifies the rising pressures faced by men. Unlike anorexia, which centres on weight loss, Bigorexia is characterised by an obsession with musculature. Influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok often promote extreme fitness regimes, presenting an unrealistic standard that contributes to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among young males. Moreover, these idealised body types are celebrated in television and film, setting a near-impossible standard for everyday men, who are often left feeling inadequate by media portrayals of strong, muscular protagonists.

The repercussions of body dysmorphia extend beyond mental health, potentially leading to physical health issues as well. Misinformation about nutrition and workout regimes – readily available online – can lead to improper dietary habits and serious injuries. The cultural acceptability of commenting on male bodies further exacerbates these issues, with online bullying and a lack of supportive networks leaving many young boys vulnerable.

While awareness around the negative impact of social media on body image has grown, initiatives largely focus on women and girls. However, studies indicate that body shaming affects individuals of all genders, underscoring the need for holistic approaches encompassing both male and female experiences.

In the midst of these challenges, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) present both opportunities and threats. AI has the potential to shift discourse positively by amplifying diverse male body depictions and helping design menswear that aligns with what plus-sized men want to wear. This is exemplified by companies like PixelPose, which utilise AI to gather data and advocate for diverse representations in fashion.

Additionally, platforms like Portrait Pal are leveraging AI to boost men's self-esteem by creating personalised, high-quality headshots. Such innovations could enhance men’s workplace representation and self-image, offering an alternative to traditional photography that some men may feel apprehensive about.

Conversely, the use of AI in modelling presents concerns. Tools like Deep Agency have faced criticism for producing biassed outputs that fail to capture the diversity of body types. The male modelling sector, already limited in opportunities compared to its female counterpart, risks further marginalisation as AI-generated models could potentially replace human models.

As the dialogue around body positivity evolves, the integration of AI may play a pivotal role in shaping its future. The manner in which these technologies are utilised will likely influence the trajectory of body image representation for men, determining whether the movement widens to encompass all body types or becomes more restricted.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fat_acceptance_movement> - Corroborates the founding of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) by Bill Fabrey in 1969 and the movement's roots in challenging societal norms regarding body image.
* <https://lasallefalconer.com/2022/02/creating-a-body-positivity-movement-that-is-actually-positive-starts-with-eliminating-fatphobia/> - Supports the origin of the body positivity movement as a response to fatphobia and the role of Bill Fabrey in founding NAAFA.
* <https://www.heyalma.com/the-forgotten-history-of-the-jewish-man-who-started-the-body-positivity-movement/> - Details the founding of NAAFA by Bill Fabrey and the initial 'Fat-In' protest in Central Park, highlighting the early days of the body positivity movement.
* <https://naafa.org/history> - Provides the history of NAAFA, including its founding by Bill Fabrey and its evolution into a national and global movement for fat acceptance.
* <https://centerfordiscovery.com/blog/the-origins-of-naafa/> - Explains the origins of NAAFA and the historical context of size acceptance activism since the 1960s.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fat_acceptance_movement> - Discusses the broader impact of the fat acceptance movement on societal norms and the inclusion of men in body image discussions, although it primarily focuses on women.
* <https://lasallefalconer.com/2022/02/creating-a-body-positivity-movement-that-is-actually-positive-starts-with-eliminating-fatphobia/> - Highlights the ongoing issue of fatphobia and its impact on both men and women, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to body positivity.
* <https://www.heyalma.com/the-forgotten-history-of-the-jewish-man-who-started-the-body-positivity-movement/> - Mentions the broader cultural and social movements of the 1960s that influenced the fat acceptance movement, including its impact on men.
* <https://naafa.org/history> - Details the expansion of NAAFA and fat activism beyond women, including men and diverse body types, and the use of various media platforms to spread the message.
* <https://centerfordiscovery.com/blog/the-origins-of-naafa/> - Addresses the intersection of body image issues, including those affecting men, and the historical context of fat acceptance activism.