

My  
Visible  
Difference



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**About Changing Faces** Changing Faces is the UK's leading charity for everyone who has a mark, scar or condition that makes them look different. For over 25 years we have been providing advice and support, challenging discrimination, and campaigning for a world that respects difference.



**About our research:** ComRes interviewed 1,037 people with a mark, scar or condition that makes them look different online between 7th and 16th March 2019. Data were weighted to be representative of those with a mark, scar or condition that makes them look different by age, gender and region. This weighting scheme was sourced from a nationally representative public omnibus survey run between the 22nd and 24th March 2019. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

# Executive summary

**Over the last 26 years, Changing Faces has been providing advice and support, challenging discrimination, and campaigning for a world that respects difference.**

According to research conducted by ComRes amongst the general public across the UK, 18% of people self-identify as having a visible difference such as a mark, scar or condition<sup>1</sup>.

So what is life like for those millions of people who have a visible difference? How does looking different affect their daily lives? And what can be done to ensure they are treated equally?

This report, based on our new research conducted by ComRes, provides a unique insight into the lives of over a thousand adults with a visible difference, exploring their experiences across areas such as employment, health and wellbeing, family and relationships. These findings are reinforced with the experiences that people with a visible difference have shared with Changing Faces.

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Having a disfigurement means never having a day off. I don't get to take my scars off and forget about them. Every day when I leave my house I need to check in with myself to see how I am going to handle the stares or comments.

Tulsi, 39, Burns Survivor

”

This groundbreaking study highlights that while there have been many positive changes, millions of people with a visible difference still feel excluded from public life in the UK today - whether that's in the media, when they go out in public, at work or when socialising.

Becky Hewitt, chief executive of Changing Faces, says: *“People with a visible difference deserve to live the life they want, but are still facing multiple challenges. They are vulnerable to isolation, loneliness, social anxiety and low self-esteem. They face staring, harassment, bullying and hate crime.*

*We need to act now to challenge stigma and prejudice, achieve better representation for people with visible differences across the media and in brand campaigns, change the way society values and respects difference, and increase awareness and education across schools, workplaces and amongst the general public.*

Yet when society does get it right and treats people with respect, it makes a huge difference. Positive attitudes can be truly transformative and help ensure that people with visible difference are able to lead the lives they want.

**By Face Equality Day 2020 Changing Faces want to see:**


- ✓ **20 brands sign our Pledge To Be Seen and commit to better representing people with a visible difference**
- ✓ **Schools across the UK using our new resources to raise awareness about visible difference and appearance-related bullying**
- ✓ **Employers tackling appearance-related discrimination in the workplace and providing training for staff**
- ✓ **More police forces and other agencies committing to raising awareness of appearance-related hate crime and improve reporting procedures for victims**
- ✓ **Improved access to wellbeing care for people with a visible difference across the UK**

<sup>1</sup> ComRes interviewed 2,090 UK adults online between 22nd – 24th March 2019. Data were weighted to be representative of UK adults by age, gender, region and socio-economic grade. Full data tables can be found at [www.comresglobal.com](http://www.comresglobal.com) in the 'published polls' section.

## Health and wellbeing

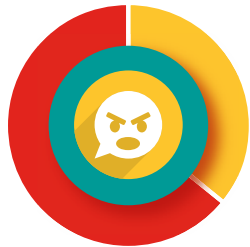


PEOPLE WITH A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE (29%) FEEL DEPRESSED, SAD OR ANXIOUS AS A RESULT OF HAVING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



ALMOST A QUARTER (23%) SAY THEY FEEL SELF-CONSCIOUS OR EMBARRASSED GOING OUT IN PUBLIC AS A RESULT OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

Hostile Behaviour



OVER A THIRD (36%) OF PEOPLE SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR BECAUSE OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



SIX IN TEN PEOPLE (58%) HAVE EXPERIENCED HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR FROM STRANGERS

## Family and friends



THREE QUARTERS (74%) OF PEOPLE FEEL WELL SUPPORTED BY FRIENDS AND FAMILY ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS REGARDING THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



AROUND A QUARTER OF PEOPLE (23%) SAY THAT THEY FEEL ISOLATED FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY BECAUSE OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

OVER 40% SAY THEIR FAMILY DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



## Discrimination in the workplace



**OVER A THIRD OF PEOPLE (36%) SAY THEY HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN JOB APPLICATIONS BECAUSE OF THEIR APPEARANCE**



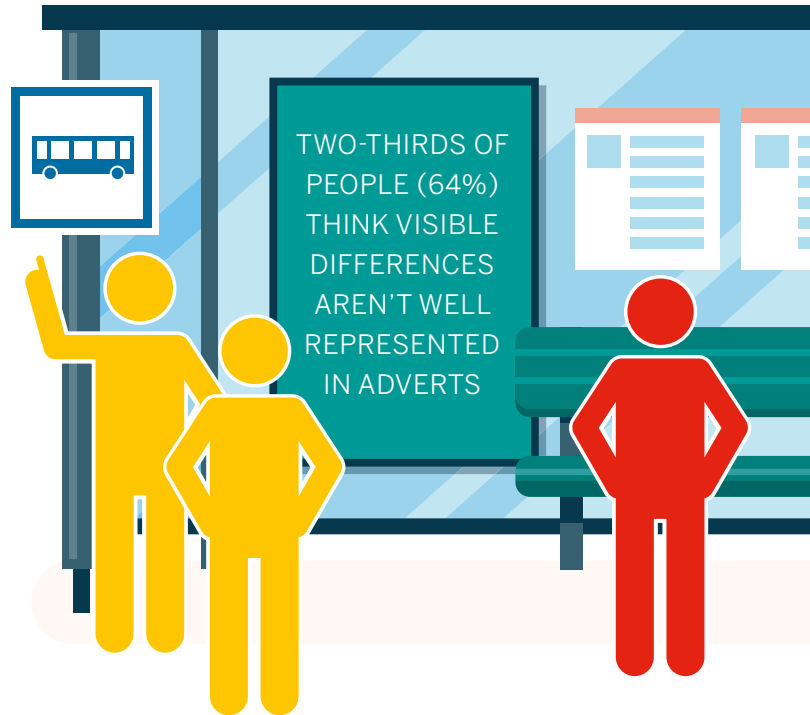
**A QUARTER OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN STARED AT IN THE WORKPLACE BECAUSE OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE**



**A THIRD (34%) OF THOSE WHO HAVE A JOB SAY THAT THEIR EMPLOYERS HAVE NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THEM IN THE WORKPLACE**



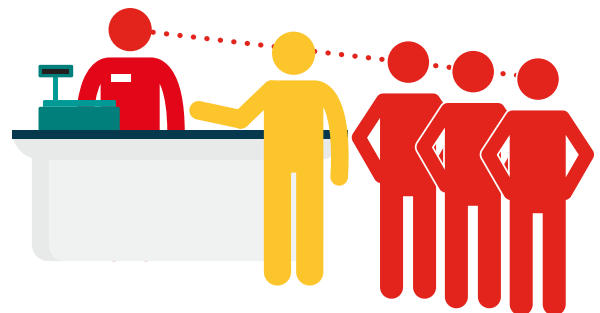
## The consumer experience



**TWO-THIRDS OF PEOPLE (64%) THINK VISIBLE DIFFERENCES AREN'T WELL REPRESENTED IN ADVERTS**



**OVER HALF (54%) SAY THAT PEOPLE WITH VISIBLE DIFFERENCES ARE REGULARLY IGNORED BY BRANDS**



**OVER A QUARTER OF PEOPLE SAY THEY ARE REGULARLY IGNORED BY SHOP ASSISTANTS (27%) AND RECEIVE BAD SERVICE BECAUSE OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE (26%)**

# Foreword

BY KATIE PIPER



© Katie Piper - Photo by Dan Kennedy

**When I was asked to write the foreword for this report I was delighted and thought can I do justice to the hundreds of people who have taken part in this research and so honestly shared their experiences of having a visible difference? But reading this report took me back to my own struggles. I know how they feel. I know what it's like to have to overcome the hardest of challenges, to battle anxiety and face comments and stares simply because you 'look different'.**

At 24 years old my life changed after I was attacked and nearly killed when acid was deliberately thrown at me. Many of you may know my story. But what you may not know are the stories of the thousands of people across the UK who have scars, marks or conditions that affect their appearance.

This report reveals that while there is lots of progress, we are still seeing people being isolated and abused simply because they aren't what people are used to seeing. Like me, many suffer from anxiety. They struggle every day to go out of the front door because of the abuse they may receive. I can remember all too well the desire to hide away because people were cruel and judged me because of my appearance.

*This has to change.*

I have spent the last ten years working hard to give people with burns and scars access to rehabilitation, and through my presenting and writing, breaking down taboos - proving to myself and others that anything is possible. We have to make sure the right clinical support is out there for those who need it, challenge discriminatory attitudes and increase awareness if we are ever going to achieve a fair and equal society. And for that we need your help.

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*From schools to businesses to the general public, we need your support so that people with visible differences are able to lead the lives they choose. If ever there was a time for people like me to be seen and heard, it's now.*

Katie Piper

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If you are reading this as a person with visible difference I imagine you could be feeling incredibly isolated, even if you're putting a brave face on it. This report shows that you aren't alone. I hope you can take comfort from the will it shows to raise awareness and take action. We cannot be, what we cannot see - so having this report out there for all to see makes me enthused that the battle is on against discrimination.

*May we become more visible in society than our differences.*

# Health and wellbeing

## ONE IN THREE IS ONE TOO MANY

**Every day we are bombarded with messages telling us we need to look a certain way. Adverts portray a very narrow view of beauty and we are under constant pressure to conform. This pressure can be difficult to deal with whoever you are. But when you have a mark, scar or condition that means you look different, it is intensified.**

*"When I first lost my hair I felt as if I had no control over anything anymore. I noticed older people avoided the subject of my hair loss. People my own age were much more brutal. I could not find a way to deal with it for the first three years and in the end I just shut down mentally and became agoraphobic."* Brenda, 33, Alopecia



**PEOPLE WITH A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE (29%)  
FEEL DEPRESSED,  
SAD OR ANXIOUS  
AS A RESULT OF HAVING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE**

Our research reveals that one in three people say they feel depressed, sad or anxious as a result of their visible difference.

This figure may be shocking, but it is not surprising. At Changing Faces we hear from many people who have faced bullying or harassment throughout their lives.

Having a visible difference can also impact body confidence and self-esteem. Almost a quarter of people (23%) with a visible difference say they feel self-conscious or embarrassed going out in public, and almost a third (31%) say they feel embarrassed about showing parts of their body.

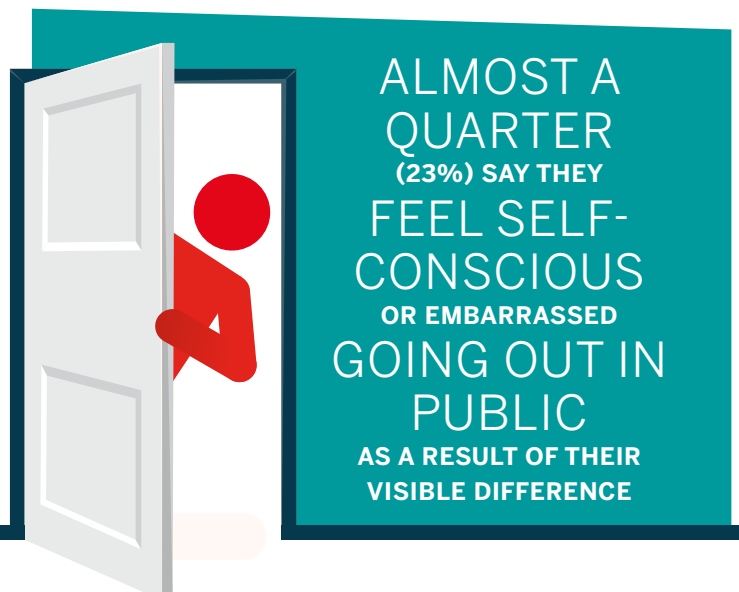
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*I was working in a shop when a woman I was serving said 'I thought you had to be pretty to work in here'. I was comfortable with my psoriasis but her comment broke me. I became very insecure, constantly felt like everyone was looking at me, and all this resulted in my depression and anxiety getting much worse.*

Jude, 26, Psoriasis

”

Gender plays a significant part when it comes to appearance, body confidence and mental health. Women with a visible difference are particularly likely to say they feel self-conscious or embarrassed about showing parts of their body (36%) and that they feel depressed, anxious or sad (33%). Women also feel more self-conscious going out in public (27%) and say that they feel embarrassed about the clothes they wear (26%).



Tulsi knows firsthand how this feels. When she was ten years old, she was in a plane crash and sustained 2nd and 3rd degree burns to 45% of her face and body. For years she was bullied about how she looked, which affected her mental health.

*"I endured bullying and staring. I associated my scars with being ugly and had no self-esteem. I would read about beautiful celebrities and want to be like them. I never felt beautiful," she says.*

These days, Tulsi is much more confident and uses her experiences to help others, including as a model for Avon as part of our Pledge to be Seen campaign which calls on brands to feature more people with a visible difference in their campaigns. Yet Tulsi still has to deal with stares and comments, something she has to mentally prepare herself for.



© Tulsi - Photo by Rankin

*"I've accepted my scars and wouldn't want to change them. However, every day people stare at me and I have to check in with myself to see how I am going to handle it," she says.*

Unfortunately, Tulsi's experiences of being bullied are not unique.

## HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR

Imagine being stared at, called names or hearing strangers talking about you to their friends just because of the way you look. This is what happens all too often for many people with a visible difference.



OVER A THIRD  
(36%) OF PEOPLE SAY THEY  
HAVE EXPERIENCED  
HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR  
BECAUSE OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

Our research reveals that over a third of people (36%) with a mark, scar or condition say they have experienced 'hostile behaviour', most of which occurs in-person. Age has a part to play, with half of 18-34 year olds saying they have experienced hostile behaviour because of their visible difference. And the figure increases to over 60% for people undergoing treatment for their visible difference. One in ten also say that people think their condition is contagious.

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*One time I was on a train with my mum and sister and I noticed that people were staring at me so I put my jacket over my head because I couldn't stand it and I just wanted to disappear.*

Michael, 30, Burns Survivor

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Frequently, this hostility comes from strangers – six in ten (58%) people with a visible difference say they have experienced hostile behaviour from someone they do not know. It is therefore unsurprising that half (51%) say they feel isolated from people they don't know and that they are worried about how strangers will react to their visible difference.

## MY (UN)SOCIAL LIFE

*"I got really depressed for a while and whilst my friends were going out a lot I would stay at home. I developed social anxiety and hated meeting new people, for fear of being treated differently, being stared at, or for comments to be made."* Kaylin, 23, Facial Cleft









Facing stares, comments and outright hostility on a regular basis can have a negative impact on many aspects of people's lives, including their social life.

Our research reveals that holidays are a particular challenge, with 45% of people saying they have felt uncomfortable because of reactions to their visible difference. Socialising and going out is also an issue for many. Nearly two in five (39%) felt uncomfortable at sports and leisure facilities and over a third felt uncomfortable in pubs and clubs. Even everyday activities can be a challenge, with over a third feeling uncomfortable at school, work and on public transport and a third feeling uncomfortable going to supermarkets and shops.

Have you ever felt uncomfortable in these places because of people's reactions?		
	On holiday	45%
	Sports and leisure facilities	39%
	School	38%
	Work	35%
	Pubs and clubs	35%
	Public transport	34%
	Shops and supermarkets	33%
	Restaurants	33%



These feelings intensify if people have already experienced hostile behaviour. Some 70% of those who have previously experienced hostile behaviour say they feel uncomfortable on holiday and around two thirds feel uncomfortable at school, work, pubs and clubs, on public transport and going to supermarkets, shops and restaurants

For those people who have experienced hostile behaviour: Have you ever felt uncomfortable in these places because of people's reactions?		
	On holiday	70%
	Sports and leisure facilities	64%
	School	64%
	Work	66%
	Pubs and clubs	65%
	Public transport	66%
	Shops and supermarkets	66%
	Restaurants	64%

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The mental side of the abuse that I had to face really halted my development from a teenager into a young man. I didn't go out with my friends at the weekend. I didn't really socialise with anyone because of the prejudice that I had to face on a daily basis.

Rory, 25, Facial Birthmark

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## “I SWORE I'D NEVER REVEAL MY SCARS PUBLICLY AGAIN”

When Hannah was fourteen she started to notice a patchwork of marks on her skin. It took 18 months to find out that the marks were caused by an autoimmune disorder called scleroderma, which affects the skin. This led to significant scarring on her back and torso. It used to make her feel “intensely self-conscious” and “ashamed”, which was made worse by the attitudes of others.

*“Once when I was on holiday, I wore a bikini. As I came out of the water, I was stared at by so many people, some of whom also made snide comments. I ran back to my towel, covered myself up and swore I'd never reveal my scars publicly again,”* she says.

*“My visible differences have had a huge impact on my self-confidence. I used to obsessively cover up and I was constantly afraid to reveal them to people. My scars made me ashamed and it had a huge impact on my general wellbeing. I refused to look at them in the mirror and it resulted in me missing two flare-ups of my medical condition,”* she adds.

These days, strangers still make comments and whisper nasty things about her, only now Hannah no longer ignores it. *“I am trying to confront people when they stare. I believe it's most effective to tackle people's rudeness head on and educate them about visible difference.”*



© Hannah - Photo by Chuck Lowry

“

I am trying to confront people when they stare. I believe it's most effective to tackle people's rudeness head on and educate them about visible difference.

Hannah, 25, Scleroderma

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## CASE STUDY:

## Michael, 30, Burns survivor



© Michael - Photo by Chuck Lowry

*I noticed that people were staring at me so I put my jacket over my head because I couldn't stand it...*

When Michael was eight months old he became trapped next to a hot water pipe and was burned down the side of his face. He went through many operations and when he was eight years old he was fitted with a prosthetic ear.

At school everything was fine until he was about nine years old when other children started calling him names.

*"They'd call me two-face and I would get so angry that I would lash out and get really upset. When I went to secondary school I had an older sister who looked out for me. On my first day someone called me a name and she confronted them and it never happened again."*

When Michael went out with his family he would notice the stares from other people and would become very self-conscious.

*"One time I was on a train with my mum and sister and I noticed that people were staring at me so I put my jacket over my head because I couldn't stand it and I just wanted to disappear."*

Michael's family were very protective until he got older and they realised he could handle people's reactions. In his teens Michael discovered a talent for athletics, his confidence improved and he became physically strong which he thinks put people off bullying him.

When he was seventeen Michael started internet dating and had a mixed experience.

*"My first proper girlfriend hadn't really noticed my scars in my photo but when we met she was absolutely okay about it and that surprised me and gave me confidence. However, another time I went to meet someone and they didn't turn up. Afterwards they told me that they had seen me but didn't go through with the date because of how I looked and that really knocked my confidence."*

Despite some really negative comments online Michael carried on dating and met Jo, his wife, when he was 23.

*"On about our fifth date, Jo asked me about my burns and I was able to talk about it really openly. It was just very natural."*

Michael and Jo now have two young children. He says his son, who is three years old, has started to notice his scars.

*"My son recently felt my burns and said 'What's that daddy?' so I told him about it. I think it's good to be open with children and talk to them about what happened."*

Michael says he still gets stares and comments and some days are better than others.

*"I usually meet stares with a smile unless I'm not in the mood then I'll just ignore them. I've had someone ask if I'm in a gang. I've also had someone say, 'Wow what's that on your face?'. I'd love for natural equality. The kind you get with children who ask questions and are inquisitive. There is no judgement, just curiosity and a desire to understand."*

# Family and relationships

## CLOSE TIES

**Family and friends play a vital role in the lives of people with a visible difference. Our research shows that they are a very important source of wellbeing support; two thirds (67%) said they speak regularly to them about how they are feeling about their visible difference. Three quarters also agreed that their family treat them like any other member of the family and totally accept and support them.**

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*My parents have always been amazing and I am very grateful for that. They sacrificed things financially, they answered the questions people asked so I didn't have to, and most of all they listened and loved me.*

Julie, 35, Alopecia

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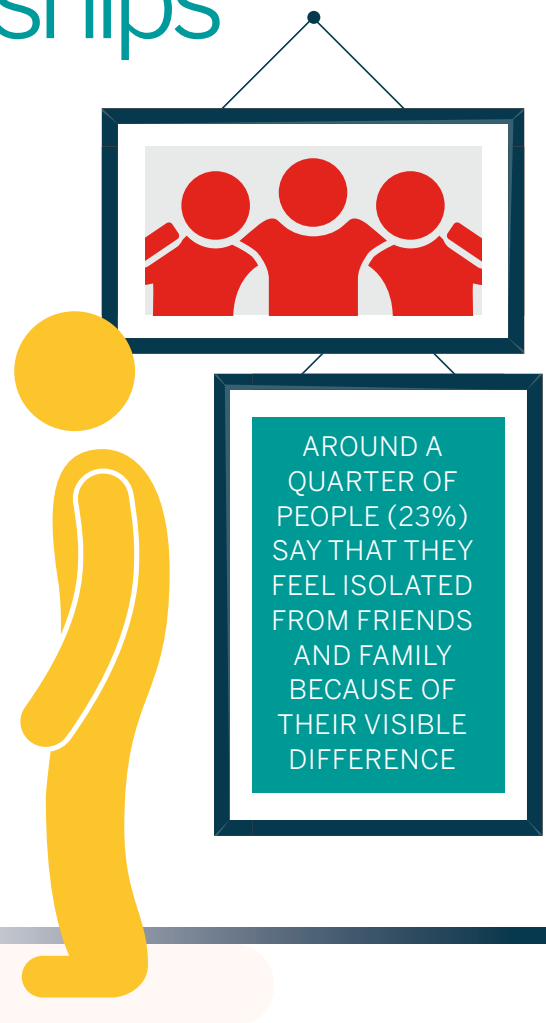
However, as with all families, our survey also revealed some tensions and areas of concern.

Around a quarter of people (23%) say that they feel isolated from friends or family because of their visible difference.

Three in ten say friends or family misunderstand the nature of their visible difference or its impact (29%) and often worry about how they react to, or behave around, their visible difference (28%).

Over 40% say their family do not understand how they feel about their visible difference, and two fifths (38%) say their family members have different opinions on how they should support them.

However, it would appear that a key reason for the misunderstandings and differing opinions is ultimately a desire among families to care for each other.



Around two in five (38%) say their family are over-protective of them and do not like to talk about their visible difference, while many are also incredibly protective of their families. Six in ten (61%) try to minimise the impact of their visible difference on their family.

*“My family have been fairly protective. My mum tends to try and ignore any comments people make towards me but my aunty used to get very vocal and angry if anyone was staring.”* Kaylin, 23, Facial Cleft

This research highlights that more support for people with a visible difference to talk about looking different with their family members could have a significant impact in improving the nature of those relationships.

*“At the start my family was just worried about my confidence. No one else in my family has Vitiligo, so I can only assume they felt a responsibility to protect me against any type of negativity surrounding it. Now, they are very happy I have accepted it for what it is.”* Shankar, 25, Vitiligo



**THREE QUARTERS**  
(74%) OF PEOPLE  
**FEEL WELL SUPPORTED BY**  
**FRIENDS AND FAMILY**  
ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS REGARDING  
THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

Relationships with family members are one thing, making friends is another. Our research shows that experiencing negative reactions, stares or comments unsurprisingly can impact self-confidence and make building social networks a challenge for some people.

One in six people with a visible difference say they have been bullied or teased for how they look. It can lead to difficulties with making friends, building relationships, and affect their sex life.

*"I wouldn't take my clothes off in front of my boyfriends, I'd want the lights off - I just didn't want to be looked at. I would put my hands over my stomach to cover up the marks. I was ashamed of how I looked."* Hannah, 25, Scleroderma

Only a quarter (25%) of people with a visible difference form friendships or relationships through school, education or work. Many rely on mutual friend networks (39%) - much more than those who form relationships through social media (22%).

When looking for love, one in ten use dating apps or websites. A fifth (20%) say they have experienced difficulties in romantic relationships because of their visible difference and find it hard to find a partner or form friendships.

*"My first proper girlfriend hadn't really noticed my scars in my photo but when we met she was absolutely okay about it and that gave me confidence. However, another time I went to meet someone and they didn't turn up. Afterwards they told me that they had seen me but didn't go through with the date because of how I looked and that really knocked my confidence."* Michael, 30, Burns Survivor

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*Whilst online dating, for a long time I only used photos of my skin when it was clear but it made it really awkward and horrible on dates when people didn't know how to ask about my psoriasis. I started eventually putting up photos that showed my psoriasis and, yes, I got a lot less matches, but a much higher calibre of people!*

Jude, 26, Psoriasis

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**OVER 40% SAY**  
**THEIR FAMILY DO**  
**NOT UNDERSTAND HOW**  
**THEY FEEL**  
ABOUT THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE



## CASE STUDY:

# Julie, 35, Alopecia



© Julie - Photo by Darragh Mason Field

*My parents have always been amazing; I'm so grateful for that...*

**When Julie was 14 years old, all her hair fell out in just a few short weeks due to alopecia. Now 35, she told us about the profound impact the condition has had on her.**

Alopecia shaped my life in a lot of ways. For a long time, I didn't really deal with how much it was affecting me - it damaged my self esteem in a big way and it's only now with hindsight that I can see that that affected every part of my life from career choices to relationships with friends and family. I spent so much time and energy trying to hide my difference that it became a kind of obsession, which was really energy draining.

It's not really about the hair; it's about the emotional impact of it - learning to accept the lack of control, coping with stares and questions, finding a way to feel feminine, beautiful, loved.

Losing my hair damaged my self-esteem to such a degree that I lost a huge amount of my confident, unstoppable personality. I didn't want to stand out, I worked very hard to blend in and not be noticed. That's really career limiting. By the time I realised I was doing this, I had missed so many opportunities career wise.

I never believed in myself enough to put myself out there and talk about what I could do and had delivered at work. I spent far too much of every day worrying about hiding patches of hair to be able to fully engage with what I was doing. Don't get me wrong, I've done fine career wise but I know I've held myself back underselling myself and not believing in myself.

My parents have always been amazing and I am very grateful for that. They sacrificed things financially so they could buy me natural wigs that would allow me to blend in and to pay for micro-bladed brows when I was a teenager. They answered the questions people asked so I didn't have to, and most of all they listened and loved me.

My husband has never made it an issue and he's done some things that he would admit were not the easiest like shaving my head for me. He views my ever changing hair choices a bit like which t-shirt I've chosen to wear that day.

My children see me with a different hairstyle every day of the week, it doesn't change who I am and hopefully they have seen that I am in no way limited by looking different to other mummies. The wonderful thing is that they and all their friends know what alopecia is and it is completely normal to them.

# Work

## EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

**There are some positive changes in the world of work for many people with a visible difference. Seven in ten (71%) say they feel that potential employers take them seriously and that they are able to showcase their skills (70%).**

However, despite the increased focus on workplace diversity and inclusion and specific legal requirements for employers set out in the Equality Act 2010, there are still some areas of concern.



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*I worked very hard to blend in and not be noticed. That's really career limiting. By the time I realised I was doing this, I had missed so many opportunities career wise. I never believed in myself enough to put myself out there and talk about what I could do. I know I've held myself back, underselling myself.*

Julie, 35, Alopecia

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For example, finding a job isn't always easy when you look different. Our research found that over a third of people (36%) with a visible difference say they have been discriminated against in job applications because of their appearance. Two in five (40%) say that they have felt judged by potential employers and that they have not applied to certain roles because of their appearance (41%).

Young adults (18-34 year olds) are particularly likely to say they have been discriminated against because of their appearance in job applications (45%). This is also true for people who are undergoing treatment for their visible difference (53%) and those who have experienced hostile behaviour (64%).



## DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

The Equality Act 2010, which looks to protect against discrimination in many aspects of life including employment and the recruitment process, considers severe disfigurement within its disability protections.

However, our findings show that over 40% of people with a visible difference feel that the law does not effectively prevent discrimination against those with visible differences in the workplace.

A third (34%) of those who have a job say that their employers have not been effective in preventing discrimination against them in the workplace, and do not feel able to approach managers or senior colleagues with these concerns. This increases to around 45% for those who have experienced hostile behaviour because of their visible difference.

It is shocking that people with a visible difference are still facing discrimination in the workplace.



© Shankar

A quarter of people say they have been stared at whilst at work because of their visible difference, and one in five (19%) have felt uncomfortable around colleagues or have received negative comments. In addition, one in ten say they have been ignored by colleagues (10%) and have difficulty making friends at work (12%).

Some feel this discrimination has directly affected their opportunities at work. Around one in twelve say they have been given tasks below their pay grade and have been overlooked for development opportunities because of their visible difference. One in fifteen say they've been passed over for promotion or wage increases because of how they look.

There is no reason why companies cannot address this. Employers need to tackle appearance-related discrimination in the workplace and key to this is providing training for staff, including senior managers, so that everyone understands and supports people with a visible difference.

“Employers should not judge your capability for a job based on your looks. And, if anything, diversity should be celebrated more in the work place, as we can all bring our backgrounds and unique qualities to create a strong team.”

Shankar, 25, Vitiligo





# Shopping

## BEING SEEN AND HEARD

**From advertising campaigns, to the way they are treated in shops, people with a visible difference such as a scar, mark or condition feel routinely overlooked. They frequently tell us that they never see anyone who looks like them in adverts or brand campaigns, and this is reflected in our findings.**

Two-thirds (64%) of people do not think visible differences are represented well in adverts, whilst over half (54%) say that people with visible differences are regularly ignored by brands.

When out shopping many people feel their visible difference directly affects the service they receive. Over a quarter of people say they are regularly ignored by shop assistants and receive bad service because of their visible difference. This figure increases for those aged 18-34, with 40% saying shop assistants regularly ignore them.

Four in ten can feel uncomfortable asking for help from shop assistants and over a third of people have had a negative experience shopping in-store (35%) because of their visible difference.

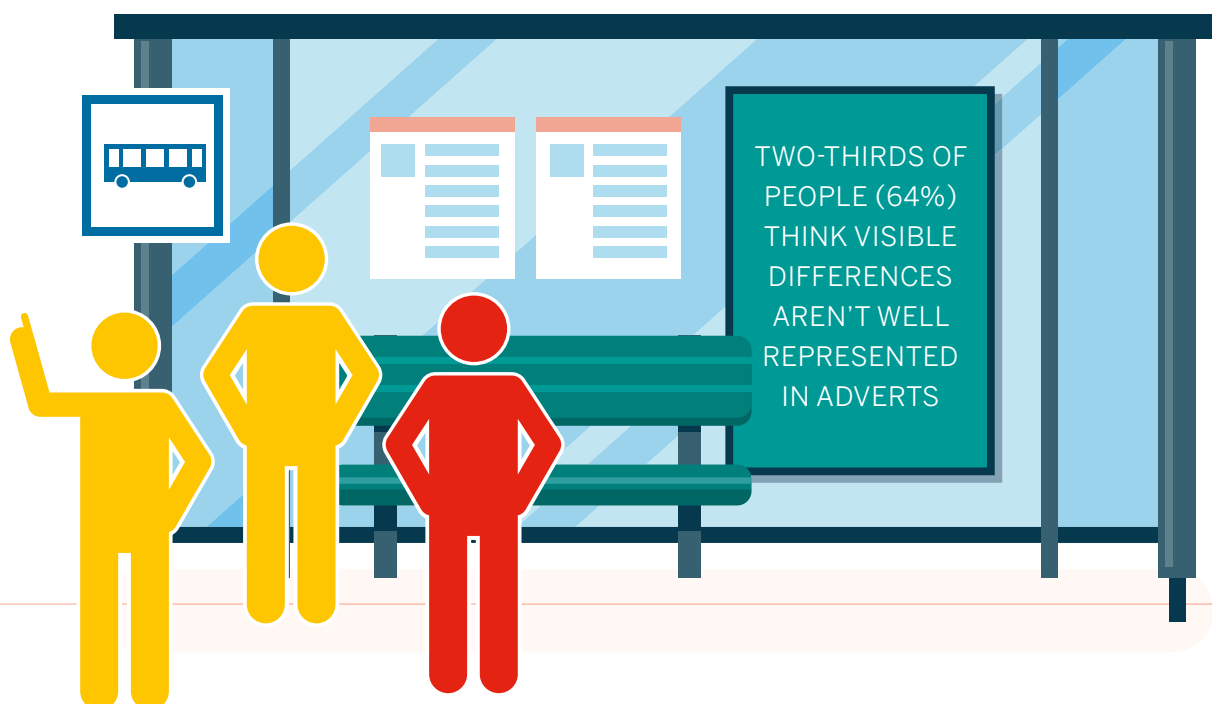
This behaviour is not only discriminatory and unacceptable; it also means brands risk alienating many potential customers. Our research shows that over 40% of people with a visible difference agreed they would be more likely to spend their money on a brand that featured someone with a visible difference in their adverts. Younger people aged 18-34 feel even more strongly with over half (53%) saying this would influence their spending decisions.

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*Brands need to authentically embrace people who look different and include them in the conversation. I would like to see more understanding of visible differences and how people deal with conditions that constantly change the way they look. I want a world where people appreciate all kinds of beauty, not the narrow version of beauty we have now.*

Hannah, 25, Scleroderma

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## CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

There are some great conversations taking place within the UK today about body positivity, yet people with visible differences are still largely absent from mainstream advertising and brand campaigns.

While some media and brands have taken important steps forward, there is still so much that needs to be done when it comes to representing people with a visible difference. By creating campaigns that better represent society, including people who look different, we can challenge ideas of perfection, and help create a world free from prejudice and discrimination.

“

*Change is happening and we are starting to see more diversity in brands and their advertisements. But it is slow and still an idealized version. I would love to see more brands in fashion and beauty embracing who their consumers really are and shouting about it! If we see an increase in the use of diverse models, we can use it to educate and increase acceptance.*

Shankar, 25, Vitiligo

”

Our Pledge to Be Seen campaign calls on brands to commit to featuring people with a visible difference in their campaigns over the next year. Beauty brand Avon was the first to sign up and we want many more to follow their lead and commit to greater diversity across their advertising campaigns.

*“When I was receiving treatments for my burns I would read magazines to pass the time and I never saw anyone who looked like me - so to be a part of a mainstream beauty campaign is so important. Hopefully these campaigns will open people’s eyes to the need for more diversity in the fashion and beauty industry and the impact this can have on people’s confidence and self-esteem.”* Catrin, 25, Burns survivor and Avon model



OVER HALF (54%)  
SAY THAT PEOPLE WITH VISIBLE DIFFERENCES  
ARE REGULARLY  
IGNORED BY BRANDS



© Catrin - Photo by Avon



OVER A QUARTER  
OF PEOPLE  
SAY THEY ARE  
REGULARLY IGNORED  
BY SHOP ASSISTANTS  
(27%) AND RECEIVE BAD SERVICE BECAUSE  
OF THEIR VISIBLE DIFFERENCE (26%)

# Conclusion

## IT IS TIME FOR THIS TO CHANGE.

### **Everyone should have the opportunity to lead the lives they want**

Our research shows that although there are many positives to celebrate, we have a long way to go before everyone with a visible difference on their face or body has the confidence, support and opportunity to lead the lives they want.

Being different in a society where there is such pressure to look a certain way is tough. Being or feeling excluded from public life because of a visible difference can have a negative impact on people's health and wellbeing, their life chances and their opportunity to live a life of their choosing.

### *It is time for this to change.*

At Changing Faces we know this change is possible but we can't do it on our own. Creating a world free from prejudice and discrimination is the responsibility of everyone – from people with a visible difference and their family and friends, through to teachers, businesses and the general public.

Whether you are an individual with a visible difference, an employer wanting to create a more inclusive workplace or a brand wanting to know how to be representative in a marketing campaign, you can work with us to achieve change.

*I love what Changing Faces represent and their efforts to promote diversity. By working with Changing Faces, I hope to give those with visible differences a platform to share their story and educate others about our journeys.*

Shankar, 25, Vitiligo

# Recommendations & next steps

## By Face Equality Day 2020 Changing Faces want to see:

- ✓ 20 brands sign our Pledge To Be Seen and commit to better representing people with a visible difference
- ✓ Schools across the UK using our new resources to raise awareness about visible difference and appearance-related bullying
- ✓ Employers tackling appearance-related discrimination in the workplace and providing training for staff
- ✓ More police forces and other agencies committing to raising awareness of appearance-related hate crime and improve reporting procedures for victims
- ✓ Improved access to wellbeing care for people with a visible difference across the UK



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[www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

Support and information line **0345 450 0275**

If you wish to support Changing Faces you can do so by:

**TEXT FACEEQUALITY TO  
70085 TO DONATE £5.**

...or donate online via [changingfaces.org.uk/donate](http://changingfaces.org.uk/donate)

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Changing Faces is a registered charity in England and Wales (1011222)  
and Scotland (SC039725)