

Three in Ten Americans with a Tattoo Say Having One Makes Them Feel Sexier

Just under Half of Adults without a Tattoo Say Those with One are Less Attractive

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 12, 2008 – Tattoos are a much discussed form of body art. Who has them? How many do they have and what do they mean? And, what does having a tattoo make people feel/do differently? Currently, 14 percent of the population says they have a tattoo, just slightly down from 2003, when 16 percent had a tattoo. Certain groups are more likely to have a tattoo than others. One in five (20%) of those who live in the West have a tattoo, compared to just 10 percent of those who live in the Midwest.

Among age groups, one-third (32%) of those ages 25-29 and one-quarter (25%) of those 30-39 have tattoos, as do 12 percent of those 40-49. The youngest age group (18-24) is one of the age groups least likely to have a tattoo (9%), the same as the oldest age group of 65 and older. Men are just slightly more likely to have a tattoo than women (15% versus 13%) and Democrats are a little more likely to have tattoos (15%) than Republicans and Independents (13% each).

These are some of the results of a nationwide Harris Poll of 2,302 U.S. adults surveyed online between January 15 and 22, 2008 by Harris Interactive®.

Not Many Regrets

Most people with a tattoo do not regret getting it (84%). As to why they have this regret, one in five (20%) say it's because they were too young when they got the tattoo while 19 percent say it's because it is permanent and they are market for life. Others say they regret the tattoo because they don't like it (18%) while 16 percent regret their tattoo because they fade over time.

How Tattoos Make People Feel

When presented with eight different personal characteristics, majorities say that compared to not having a tattoo, having one makes them feel no different. This is especially true when attributed to being healthy, athletic or intelligent, where more than nine in ten with tattoos say it makes no difference in how they feel. Over one-third (36%) of those with a tattoo, however, saying having it makes them feel more rebellious, up from 29 percent who felt this way in 2003, and three in ten (31%) say the tattoo makes them feel sexy. One in five (19%) each say having the tattoo makes them feel attractive and strong.

What People Without Tattoos Think About People With Them

One-third of those without a tattoo (32%) say people with tattoos are more likely to do something most people would consider deviant compared to 12 percent of those with a tattoo who say the same. Two-thirds (67%) of those without a tattoo say having a tattoo makes no difference in whether someone would do something deviant.

The Harris Poll® #15, February 12, 2008

By Regina A. Corso, Director, *The Harris Poll*, Harris Interactive

Over half of those without a tattoo (54%) do believe that someone with one is more rebellious, almost the same as those who thought this in 2003 (57%).

While those with a tattoo may think it makes them look attractive, those without do not agree as just under half (47%) say people with tattoos are less attractive (up from 42% who felt this way in 2003) and two in five (39%) of those without one, say people with a tattoo are less sexy. Just about one-quarter of those without tattoos, say those with are less intelligent (27%) and less healthy (25%).

What About Piercings and Henna Tattoos?

This year we also asked about other things people might have. First, half of all adults have pierced ears (50%) while half do not have them (50%). When it comes to other types of piercings, the number drops drastically. Just 5 percent of adults have a piercing on their body, but not on their face, while 2 percent of adults have a piercing on their face, but not their ears. The number of adults who have a henna tattoo, that is tattoos that are not permanent, is also very small, just two percent.

There is a difference among those who have tattoos and those who do not among these other items. Two-thirds (65%) of those with a tattoo have pierced ears compared to 47 percent of those who do not have tattoos. Other piercings are also more common among those with tattoos as 16 percent have something on their body, but not on their face, pierced and 6 percent have a piercing on their face, but not their ears compared to just 3 percent and 1 percent respectively of those with no tattoo.

So What?

In the past five years, much has been discussed about the stigmas of those with tattoos. But, that does not seem to have much of an impact of the number of people who have them as just 2 percent fewer Americans say they have tattoos. Also, the number who regrets their tattoo has also not really changed in the past five years. But, if the number of the youngest age group continues to shun tattoos, and that continues as younger teens hit 18, there may be a change in those having tattoos in the long run.

**TABLE 1
WHO HAS TATTOOS?**

“How many tattoos do you currently have on your body?”
(People saying “one or more”)

Base: All Adults

| | 2003 | 2008 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| | % | % |
| All Adults | 16 | 14 |
| Region | | |
| East | 14 | 12 |
| Midwest | 14 | 10 |
| South | 15 | 13 |
| West | 20 | 20 |
| Age | | |
| 18 – 24 | 13 | 9 |
| 25 – 29 | 36 | 32 |
| 30 – 39 | 28 | 25 |
| 40 – 49 | 14 | 12 |
| 50 – 64 | 10 | 8 |
| 65 + | 7 | 9 |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 16 | 15 |
| Female | 15 | 13 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | |
| White | 16 | 15 |
| Black | 14 | 7 |
| Hispanic | 18 | 15 |
| Party I.D. | | |
| Republican | 14 | 13 |
| Democratic | 18 | 15 |
| Independent | 12 | 13 |
| Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual | 31 | 25 |

**TABLE 2
REGRET HAVING A TATTOO?**

“Do you ever regret getting a tattoo?”

Base: Currently Have a Tattoo

| | 2003 | 2008 |
|-----|------|------|
| | % | % |
| Yes | 17 | 16 |
| No | 83 | 84 |

TABLE 3
WHY REGRET HAVING A TATTOO?

"Why do you regret getting a tattoo?"

Base: Yes, Regret Getting a Tattoo

| | Total |
|--|-------|
| | % |
| Too young when I got the tattoo | 20 |
| Permanent (marked for life) | 19 |
| Don't like it | 18 |
| They fade over time | 16 |
| Location (too hard to hide) | 12 |
| Poor choice/picked the wrong tattoo | 11 |
| Was stupid/dumb thing to do | 10 |
| Poorly done/doesn't look professional | 9 |
| Cost too much to remove | 7 |
| Ugly/doesn't look good | 7 |
| Personality changes/doesn't fit my present lifestyle | 3 |
| Other | 5 |

TABLE 4
TATTOOS AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

"Do you think people with tattoos are more or less likely to do something most people would consider deviant?"

Base: All adults

| | Totals | | 2008 – Have tattoo | |
|---------------|--------|------|--------------------|-------------|
| | 2003 | 2008 | Have | Do not have |
| | % | % | % | % |
| More likely | 27 | 29 | 12 | 32 |
| Less likely | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| No difference | 71 | 69 | 86 | 67 |

TABLE 5
HOW HAVE A TATTOO MAKES ME FEEL

"Please complete the following sentence: 'Compared to not having a tattoo...having a tattoo has made me feel...?'"

Base: Currently Have a Tattoo

| | | More | Less | No Difference |
|-------------|---|------|------|---------------|
| Rebellious | % | 36 | 2 | 62 |
| Sexy | % | 31 | 1 | 68 |
| Attractive | % | 19 | 3 | 78 |
| Strong | % | 19 | * | 81 |
| Spiritual | % | 13 | 5 | 82 |
| Intelligent | % | 5 | 2 | 93 |
| Athletic | % | 5 | 1 | 94 |
| Healthy | % | 4 | 3 | 93 |

Note: * indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 6
HOW HAVE A TATTOO MAKES ME FEEL - TREND

“Please complete the following sentence: ‘Compared to not having a tattoo...having a tattoo has made me feel...?’”

Those saying more

Base: Currently Have a Tattoo

| | | 2003 | 2008 |
|-------------|---|------|------|
| Rebellious | % | 29 | 36 |
| Sexy | % | 34 | 31 |
| Attractive | % | 26 | 19 |
| Strong | % | 16 | 19 |
| Spiritual | % | 20 | 13 |
| Intelligent | % | 5 | 5 |
| Athletic | % | 3 | 5 |
| Healthy | % | 4 | 4 |

TABLE 7
ATTITUDES OF THOSE WITHOUT A TATTOO

“Please complete the following sentence: ‘Compared to people without tattoos, I think people with tattoos are...?’”

Base: All Without Tattoos

| | | More | Less | No Difference |
|-------------|---|------|------|---------------|
| Intelligent | % | 1 | 27 | 71 |
| Sexy | % | 6 | 39 | 55 |
| Spiritual | % | 5 | 25 | 70 |
| Rebellious | % | 54 | 3 | 43 |
| Attractive | % | 4 | 47 | 49 |
| Athletic | % | 5 | 13 | 82 |
| Healthy | % | 2 | 25 | 73 |
| Strong | % | 8 | 10 | 82 |

TABLE 8
ATTITUDES OF THOSE WITHOUT A TATTOO - TREND

“Please complete the following sentence: ‘Compared to people without tattoos, I think people with tattoos are...?’”

Base: All Without Tattoos

| | | More | | Less | |
|-------------|---|------|------|------|------|
| | | 2003 | 2008 | 2003 | 2008 |
| Intelligent | % | * | 1 | 31 | 27 |
| Sexy | % | 8 | 6 | 36 | 39 |
| Spiritual | % | 3 | 5 | 29 | 25 |
| Rebellious | % | 57 | 54 | 2 | 3 |
| Attractive | % | 4 | 4 | 42 | 47 |
| Athletic | % | 4 | 5 | 14 | 13 |
| Healthy | % | 1 | 2 | 21 | 25 |
| Strong | % | 8 | 8 | 8 | 10 |

TABLE 9
PIERCINGS AND HENNA TATTOOS
 "Do you have any of the following?"

Base: All Adults

| | | Have | Do not have | Decline to answer |
|---|---|------|-------------|-------------------|
| Pierced ears | % | 50 | 50 | * |
| A piercing on your body, but not on your face | % | 5 | 95 | 1 |
| Henna tattoos, that is tattoos that are not permanent | % | 2 | 97 | 1 |
| A piercing on your face, but not on your ears | % | 2 | 98 | 1 |

Note: * indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 10
PIERCINGS AND HENNA TATTOOS
 "Do you have any of the following?"
Those saying have

Base: All Adults

| | Total | Tattoos | |
|---|-------|---------|-------------|
| | | Have | Do not have |
| | | % | % |
| Pierced ears | 50 | 65 | 47 |
| A piercing on your body, but not on your face | 5 | 16 | 3 |
| Henna tattoos, that is tattoos that are not permanent | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| A piercing on your face, but not on your ears | 2 | 6 | 1 |

Methodology

This Harris Poll® was conducted online within the United States January 15 and 22, 2008, among 2,302 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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Q855, 865, 870, 875, 880, 885, 890

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