How do body image and self-esteem change over time and are they related? A study of Scottish adolescents.

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Introduction:

Many public health campaigns in Scotland & the UK focus on healthy eating and physical exercise without looking at psychological wellbeing e.g. Recipe for Success[1].

Psychological factors play an important part in health and health behaviours especially when related to body image and self-esteem[2].

Both puberty[3] and media[4] seem to have a large influence on body image and self-esteem.

Method:

Physical Activity in Scottish Schoolchildren (PASS) survey, a longitudinal study of Scottish adolescents (n=641)

Key variables:

-Body image
-Self-esteem
- Body satisfaction
- Physical self worth

Fig. 1[5,6] is an example of a question used.

Which figure looks most like yours?

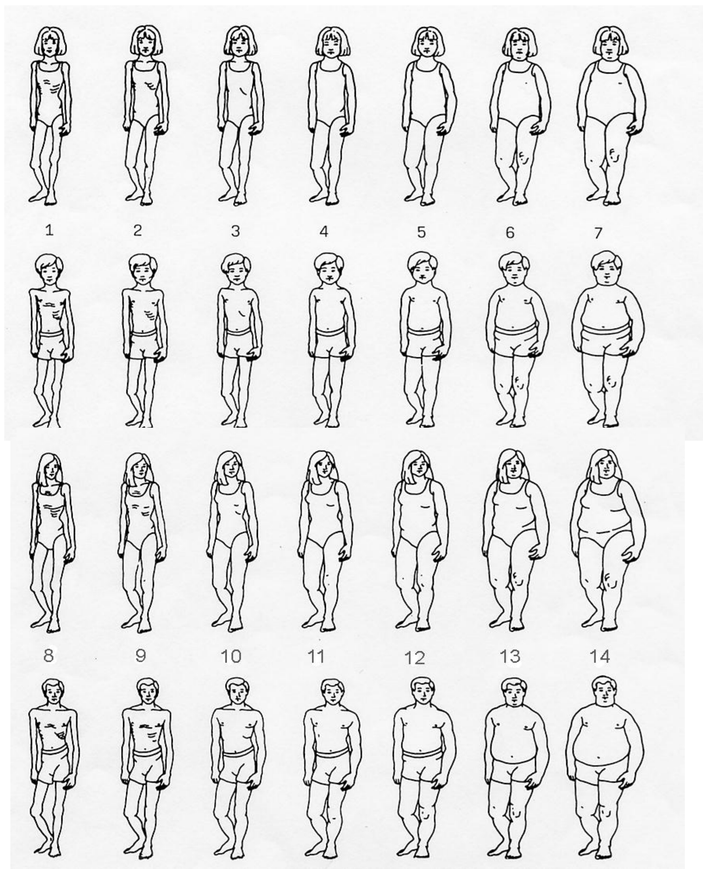


Fig. 1

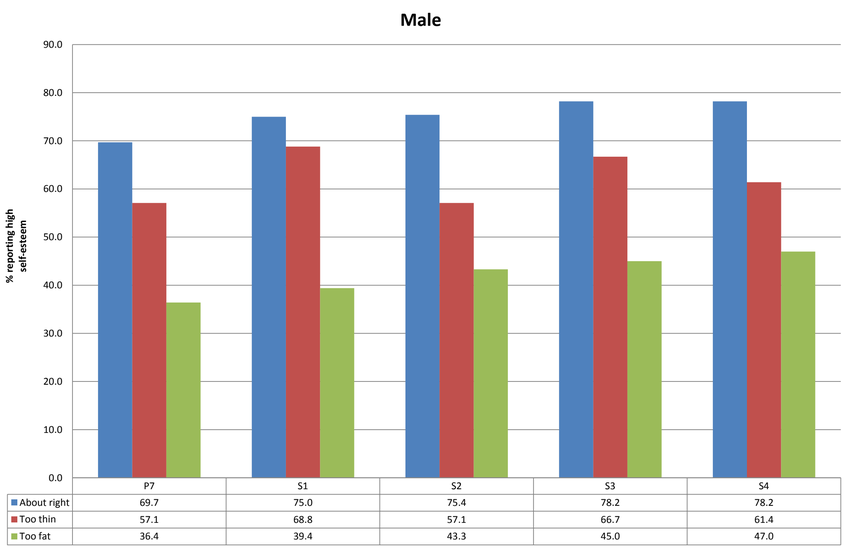
Main Findings:

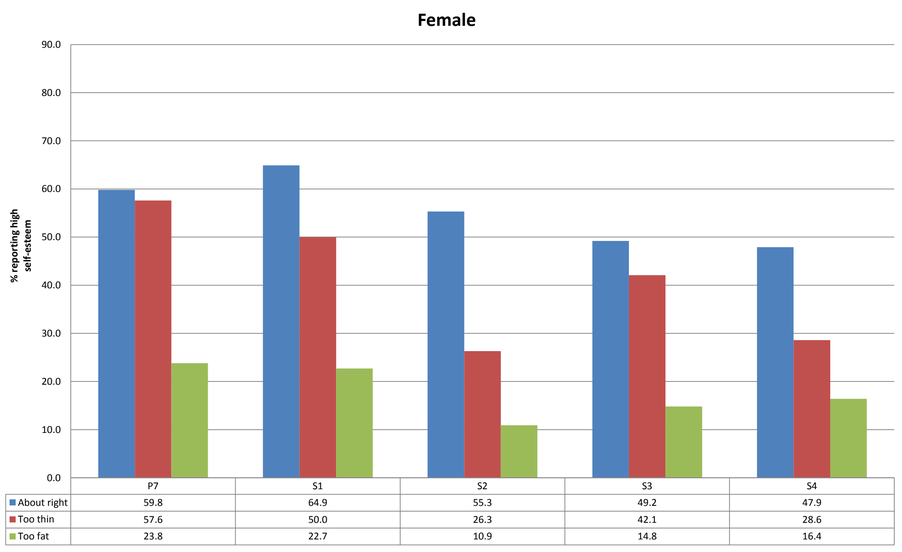
Body image and self-esteem: highly significant relationship in all 5 years, in both genders ($p \leq 0.001$).

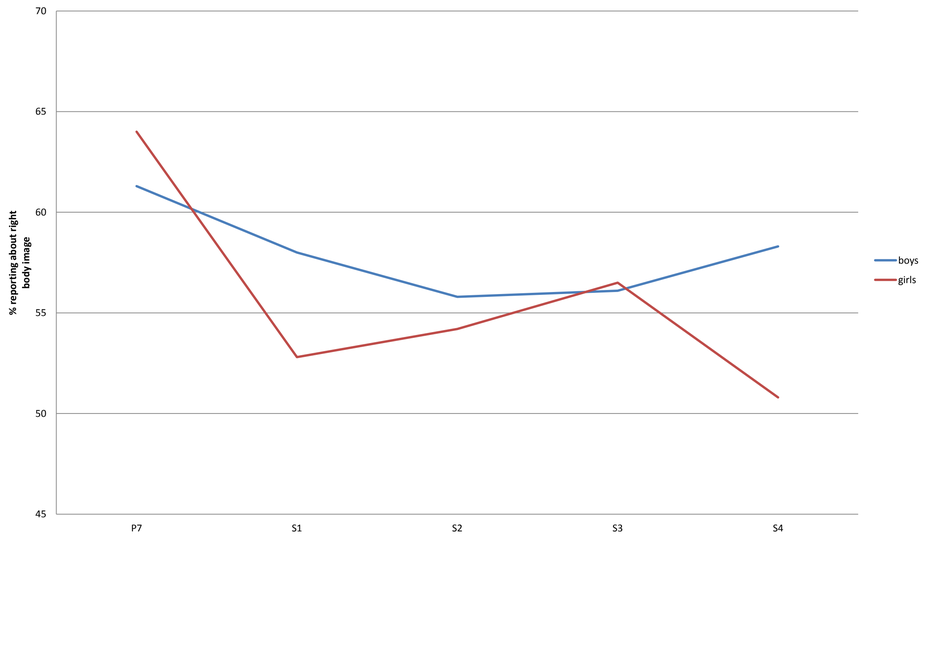
Longitudinal trends:

Males – significant decrease in physical self worth ($p \leq 0.05$) only.

Females – highly significant decrease in body image, self-esteem and physical self worth ($p \leq 0.001$).







Conclusion:

- In Scottish adolescents, there is a significant relationship between body image and self-esteem.
- There are also significant gender differences in longitudinal trends, with negative trends more evident among girls.

References:

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5. Collins ME. Body figure perceptions and preferences among preadolescent children. *Int J Eat Disord* 1991;10(2):199-208.
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