

ARE WE TAKING OUR LOVE ISLAND OBSESSION TOO FAR?

With the UK cosmetic surgery industry now worth over £3billion and a boom in under-40s having work done, Fabulous investigates the Love Island effect

BY EMILY COPE

Recovering in her hospital bed after a £6,000 breast augmentation, Saffron Grey slowly propped herself up and switched on the TV.

"I'd never missed an episode of *Love Island* and being in hospital wasn't going to change that," says the 22-year-old nursing student from London. "As my screen filled with gorgeous girls strutting around in their bikinis, I looked down at my new boobs and smiled. I was finally a step closer to looking like them."

Saffron isn't the only person to resort to cosmetic surgery to look like her reality show idols.

Dubbed the "*Love Island* effect" by Harley Street cosmetic surgeon Dr Julian de Silva, the average age of women going under the knife for the first time has dropped from 42 in 2012 to 37 in 2018 - making it the youngest it's ever been.

Figures also show that non-surgical treatments favoured by villa contestants, such as Botox and fillers, now account for nine out of 10 procedures and are worth a staggering £2.75billion.

On top of that, research from BBC Radio 5 Live discovered that after watching just a couple of episodes, 11% of 18-34 year olds were more likely to consider lip fillers, while nearly a third wanted to lose weight.

In Manchester, one aesthetic clinic reported a 200% increase in demand for a plumper pout following Megan Barton-Hanson's entrance into the villa last summer. It even put together a *Love Island* package consisting of Botox, lip fillers and an optional non-surgical rhinoplasty to cater for the demand.

Dr Tijion Esho, founder of Harley Street's The Esho Clinic, says that the show has had a massive impact on young women's desire to get the *Love Island* look.

"I've seen a huge rise in the number of 18-25 year olds seeking lip fillers since the show began," he explains. "Many young women are coming to my clinic with pictures of the show's contestants and asking how they can achieve that appearance."

Since *Love Island's* relaunch in 2015 after a nine-year hiatus, it now attracts more than 85,000 applications from wannabe Islanders each year and averages 2.95 million viewers per series, peaking at 3.6 million during last year's finale.

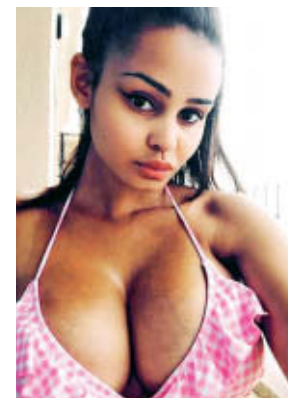
The majority of the participants are fairly open about the work they've had done. Most famous is Megan, 25, who has reportedly spent £25,000 on a nose job, veneers, lip fillers and breast augmentation. Even last year's winner, girl next door Dani Dyer, confessed to having lip fillers prior to hitting our screens.

But what has sparked our obsession with emulating these women? "Evolution has hard-wired humans to be fascinated by beautiful people," explains Harley Street therapist Adam Cox. "We also come with a need for validation and desire, so when something becomes a socially accepted form of beauty for a certain generation - for example, white teeth, pert boobs and big lips - it also becomes the new benchmark. If you don't match up to it, you can either decide to accept it or try to fix it. Because most of the contestants have had surgery before they go on the show, it's clear that the aesthetic can't be achieved by gym and diet alone, which is why so many young people are opting for cosmetic

REPORT



Saffron before surgery



After being boosted to a 30G

enhancements. These days, surgery is also less taboo than it used to be, plus more accessible and affordable."

It was during the first series of *Love Island* in 2015 that Saffron was first inspired to get a boob job. She wanted to look like contestant Hannah Elizabeth, a glamour model who admitted to splashing out £15,000 on two boob jobs, lip fillers and Botox.

"I'd always been unhappy with my boobs because they were asymmetrical - one was a big B cup, while the other was a little B," explains Saffron. "When I watched *Love Island* I'd feel so jealous of the women's figures, especially Hannah's, because they didn't have a single flaw. After the show, I'd spend hours scrolling through Instagram, studying their bodies and researching how I could make mine like theirs."

Eventually, in April 2017, Saffron confessed to her mum that she was thinking about having cosmetic surgery.

"Thankfully, she understood that I was unhappy, so she agreed to help me pay for a £6,000 boob job," says Saffron. "Some friends told me I didn't need it, but they always supported my decision. It was a lot of money, but I felt so self-conscious that I knew it would be worth it."

In July 2017, Saffron underwent the procedure, which took her up five cup sizes

to a 30G. "It was a big leap in size, but I love the hourglass look," she says. "Luckily, the recovery was much quicker than expected and when the bandages came off two weeks later, it instantly boosted my self-esteem. I started wearing low-cut tops, which I'd previously shied away from, and my friends and family noticed I was much more confident."

Despite loving her new boobs, though, Saffron still wasn't completely happy with how she looked. "When I compared myself to the girls on the show and social media, I felt I still had problem areas, such as my stomach and hips," she says. "It was annoying because I ate healthily and went to the gym, but I just wasn't getting the toned, slim physique I was aiming for. As my initial surgery helped me feel so much better about myself, I didn't see the problem in having more procedures."

In September 2017, Saffron paid £300 for lip fillers and spent a further £8,000 of her savings and money from her mum on vaser liposuction - a body-sculpting procedure that uses ultrasound technology to break down fat cells - to suck out three litres of fat from her hips and stomach. The liposuction made her drop from a size 8 to a size 6. →

