

# Hair ageing and quality of life for women of African descent living in the UK

Poster ID: 444

Gabriela Daniels, Young-Jin Hur, Ameerah Khadaroo,  
Caroline Searing, Hannah Zeilig

London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London, UK

## Introduction:

The most curly/kinky hair is associated with people of African descent. Such hair has been reported to have more knotting and a higher percentage of naturally broken fibres (1) as well as lower mechanical strength than straighter hair (2,3).

A perception and/or concern with significant hair breakage by otherwise healthy individuals has also been reported by personal experience. In addition practices such as relaxing and braiding have been reported to cause structural damage to the hair (4,5,6), dermatosis, temporary or permanent loss of hair.

A further challenge to maintaining hair appears with age, notably due to greying (7,8) but also due to ageing of the scalp skin (9).

Studies have found that ageing of hair limits the choice of hair styles (10), but women will still consider styles appearing less old to avoid being treated as such (11).

**Aim:** This study explores the age related changes in hair management and styling techniques and related measures of satisfaction and Quality of Life (QoL) of women from African and Afro-Caribbean descent of age over 60, living in the UK.

## Methods:

An online survey, including QoL questionnaire was conducted using Qualtrics software (Qualtrics XM, USA).

T-tests and correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 28.0.0.0) (IBM, USA)

## Quotations from free text:

"Leaving my hair out in its natural state requires a lot of moisturizing, like every day, and that takes a lot of work and effort to do, so its more manageable if I have it in cornrows and I wear a wig."

"But in an ideal world, yes, I'd love to just wake up and have this - just shake and go."

"It labels you, your grey hair as an older person and then suddenly you're in this category that is not young anymore. And maybe you can't do as many things...You are kind of... put in a box. An old box."

## Conclusions:

A preference towards natural styles post menopause was demonstrated, with current hair length and texture being associated with positive attitudes.

A reported perception of decreased hair manageability could be related to the requirement to complete more haircare and styling tasks at home and more frequently than if the hair was subjected to a long-lasting styling technique such as relaxing or weaving.

Hair colour was commonly used to cover grey.

These changes to appearance, styling and personal effort increased satisfaction with hair but had no impact on the quality of life of the participants.

## Acknowledgements:

The authors wish to thank Sandra Gittens and Grace Abamba for their invaluable advice relating to construction of the survey.

## References:

1. Khamalo NP, Doe PT, Dambler RFR, Ferguson DJP (2000) What is normal black African hair? A light and scanning electron-microscopic study. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 43(5):814-820.
2. Frankburg A, Hollegel P, Toussin C, Leroy F (2003) Current research on ethnic hair. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 49(6):515-519.
3. Ngoepe MN, Cloete E, van den Berg C, Khamalo NP (2021) The evolving mechanical response of curly fibres subject to fatigue testing. *J Mech Behav Biomed Mater [Internet]* doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmbmm.2021.104394>
4. Khamalo NP, Stone J, Gurnette F, McGrath E, Ngonyani M, de Berker D (2010) 'Relaxers' damage hair: Evidence from amino acid analysis. *J Am Acad Dermatol [Internet]* doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2009.04.061>
5. Blech LD, Gashyama AM, Dario MF, Escudero CC, Samir FD, Velasco MHR et al (2019) Chemical and physical treatments damage Caucasian and Afro-ethnic hair fibres: analytical and image assays. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venerol* 33(11):2158-2167.
6. Molamodi K, Fajuyigbe D, Sewari P, Gichuri J, Sijoko B, Galliano A et al (2021) Int. *J Cosmet Sci* 43(3):321-331.
7. Duval L, Herfal A, Daniels L, King R, Hillebrand GG (2019) Age, lifestyle and self-perceptions of hair: Is there an association with hair diameter and tensile properties? *Int J Cosmet Sci* 41(5):509-515
8. O'Sullivan JDR, Nica C, Picard M, Chetani J, Bedogri B, Tabor D et al (2021) The biology of human hair greying. *Biol Rev* 96(3):107-128
9. Williams R, Westgate GE, Pawluk AD, Sikirak SK, Thornton MJ (2021) Age related changes in female scalp dermal sheath and dermal fibroblasts: How the hair follicle environment impacts hair aging. *J Invest Dermatol [Internet]* doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jid.2020.11.119>
10. Ispahnik-Bouret V (2017) It's a great benefit to have gray hair!: The intersection of gender, age and visibility in middle professional women's narratives. *J Women Aging [Internet]* doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08952841.2016.1142773>.
11. Ward R, Holland C (2011) "I look old, I will be treated old": Hair and later-life image. *Altemus, Aging Soc* 31(2):289-307

## Results & Discussion:

### Participants (n=46)

Age: 87% of age 60-69; Curl type: VI=35%, VII and VIII=65%;  
Grey hair: 32%=high intensity  
Hair treatment: 78%=hair not chemically altered

### Comparing hair styling before and after menopause

- Less likely to relax, braid or weave hair
- Less frequent visits to the hairdresser
- Hair colouring equally likely before and after menopause

### Comparing hair perception before and after menopause

- Growth rate and thickness not changed after the menopause
- Overall manageability decreased after the menopause

### Attitudes

- Satisfaction with current hair colour, length and texture is correlated with feeling positive about natural hair and the attractiveness of natural hair

### Quality of Life

- Wellbeing and overall happiness were not correlated with natural hair styles

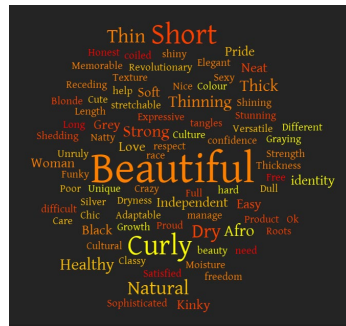


Fig 1 Word cloud reflecting the frequency of hair descriptors used in the free text questions

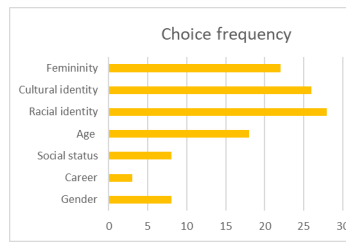


Fig 2 Multiple choice answer to hair and identity question (frequency of chosen options)