

Everyone Gets Cosmetic Procedures, Says Time—and by “Everyone,” They Mean Almost No One

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“Now everyone gets work done. Will you?” reads the front-page teaser for Joel Stein’s piece about plastic surgery, “Nip. Tuck. Or Else. Why You’ll Be Getting Cosmetic Procedures Even if You Don’t Really Want To,” in the [June 29, 2015, edition](#) of Time.

The [bandwagon effect](#) continues inside: “Not having work done is now the new shame,” Stein writes. “Cosmetic surgery has become the new makeup.” He quotes a young-adult novelist: “This is the first generation that thinks about plastic surgery as almost a given.”

Stein’s article concludes: “All of our friends are going to have to keep up with us. And then all of their friends, until everyone is getting every procedure they possibly can.”

Even by the standards of newsweekly hyperbole, this is ridiculous. In the piece, Stein writes that “in the US, doctors performed over 15 million cosmetic procedures in 2014, a 13 percent increase from 2011 and more than twice as many as in 2000.”

The population of the United States is now 319 million, so 15 million is about 5 percent per capita.

Even that overstates how big “everyone” is, since most of those procedures are injections like Botox—a muscle relaxant that has to be readministered as often as [four times a year](#). Coupled with the fact that Botox can be used on multiple parts of the body—each of which may be considered a different “procedure”—the “everyone” who “gets work done” turns out to be a tiny fraction of the population.

When you go beyond injections to actual cosmetic surgery—the “new makeup,” according to Stein—the numbers are even more minuscule. “There were 1.7 million plastic surgeries in the US in 2014,” a graphic accompanying the article notes—about 1 for every 200 Americans, in other words. And that’s down 12 percent from 2000, according to a [study](#) by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons—contrary to Stein’s portrait of a society hurtling toward a brave new world where everyone gets every cosmetic intervention imaginable.

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