

Love them or hate them, tattoos are really popular nowadays in the UK. What do you think of tattoos?

In Britain, tattoos used to be seen mainly on sailors, prisoners and bikers and were considered a sign of being a rebel. However, now they are popular with all kinds of people and it's pretty normal to have a tattoo these days.

Which design?

Japanese and Chinese characters and loved ones' names are among the most popular designs today. Mario, who runs his own tattoo parlour, says 'I have more women than men customers. Women often prefer smaller designs like stars, flowers and cherubs and men are into much bigger images'. Many well-known Brits have tattoos. Here are some of them:

- David Beckham has a crucifixion scene and his kids' names on his back. He also has a tattoo of his wife's name in Hindi.
- Victoria Beckham has stars on her back to symbolise the members of her family.
- Robbie Williams has a lion on his right arm, Maori designs on his left arm, a French phrase on his collar bone, the musical notes to *All You Need is Love* on his lower back, 'I love you mother' on his arms, two birds on his stomach and many more!
- Kate Moss has a small crown on her shoulder.
- Samantha Cameron, businesswoman and wife of a former British Prime Minister, has a dolphin tattooed on her ankle.

Tattoo events

There are annual tattoo events that attract thousands of visitors such as the International London Tattoo Convention and the Brighton Tattoo Convention. At these events you can get a tattoo done or see human bodies completely covered in tattoos.

Chris, 18, from Stratford attended the Brighton Tattoo Convention last year. What's his advice for someone thinking of having a tattoo done? 'Fashions change but tattoos are forever. Make sure that you choose a design that you like.'

Age

Tattoos are not just for the young. Many people are now going for their first tattoo in their 30s, 40s, 50s or 60s.

'My dad got a tattoo done for his 50th birthday. I thought it was going to look rubbish but it's actually pretty cool.'

Lewis, from Middlesbrough

History

A professor of sociology has studied the history of tattooing in the West. According to the professor, it was fashionable for rich people to have small tattoos in 19th-century Europe. These tattoos were designs which represented their families.

Then, tattoos became a symbol of working class masculinity. Now they are being reinvented as a middle-class symbol. As tattoos become popular with all kinds of people, the trend seems set to continue.

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