

Sexual Dimorphism in Upper Lip Thickness, Upper Lip Length, and Maxillary Incisor Display among Gujarati Adults: Population-Specific Normative Values and Comparison with Indian Populations

Dr. Nipa Chauhan¹, Dr. Dolly Patel², Ankit Prajapati³

¹PhD Scholar, Gujarat University,

²PhD Guide, Gujarat University,

³PhD Scholar

Abstract

Background: The soft-tissue characteristics of the upper lip and the amount of maxillary incisor display are key determinants of smile attractiveness and play a fundamental role in orthodontic diagnosis, treatment planning, orthognathic surgery, prosthodontic rehabilitation, and digital smile design. Although numerous studies have established normative values in Western and selected Asian populations, comparable evidence for Gujarati adults is lacking. India exhibits considerable ethnic and craniofacial diversity; therefore, the application of generalized national or international reference values may not accurately represent regional facial characteristics. Population-specific normative data are essential for individualized esthetic treatment planning and objective smile assessment.¹⁻⁶

Objective: To establish normative values for upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display in Gujarati adults with well-balanced facial profiles, evaluate gender-related differences, and compare the findings with published data from other Indian populations.

Materials and Methods: A cross-sectional observational study was conducted on **500+ healthy Gujarati adults** (241 males and 266 females) aged **18–35 years** with clinically well-balanced facial profiles and normal occlusion. Standardized posed-smile photographs were obtained using a calibrated digital photogrammetric protocol under controlled lighting and positioning conditions. Upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display were measured using calibrated digital image analysis software. Descriptive statistics were calculated, and gender comparisons were performed using the independent-samples *t*-test with statistical significance set at **p < 0.05**. The resulting normative values were subsequently interpreted in relation to previously published Indian population data.

Results: The Gujarati population demonstrated distinct soft-tissue smile characteristics with measurable gender-related differences. Males exhibited greater upper lip thickness, upper lip length and greater maxillary incisor display during smiling compared with females (**p < 0.05**). The observed differences indicate evident sexual dimorphism in upper lip morphology and anterior tooth display among Gujarati adults. Overall normative values established in the present study provide reliable population-specific reference standards for these three esthetic parameters. Comparison with published Indian studies suggests

that Gujarati adults share several craniofacial characteristics with other Indian populations while exhibiting regional variations in upper lip dimensions and incisor exposure that may reflect ethnicity-specific soft-tissue morphology.

Conclusions: This study establishes the first comprehensive normative database for upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display in Gujarati adults with well-balanced facial profiles. Significant gender differences were identified, confirming the need for gender-specific reference values during orthodontic diagnosis and esthetic treatment planning. The findings further emphasize that regional ethnic variations should be considered when interpreting smile parameters, and Gujarati-specific normative standards may provide more accurate clinical guidance than generalized Indian or international reference values.

Keywords: Smile esthetics; Upper lip thickness; Upper lip length; Maxillary incisor display; Sexual dimorphism; Gujarati population; Orthodontics; Soft tissue analysis; Photogrammetry; Population-specific norms.

Introduction

Smile aesthetics has become an essential component of contemporary orthodontic diagnosis because treatment success is increasingly judged by facial harmony and smile attractiveness rather than ideal occlusion alone. The smile is a dynamic facial expression produced by the coordinated interaction of the lips, teeth, gingiva, and facial musculature, significantly influencing facial attractiveness, social interaction, and self-confidence. Consequently, objective evaluation of smile characteristics has become an integral part of orthodontic treatment planning.¹⁻⁴

Among the various smile parameters, **upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display** are considered fundamental determinants of smile esthetics. Upper lip thickness influences lip support and soft-tissue profile, while upper lip length regulates the vertical exposure of maxillary incisors and gingiva during smiling. Maxillary incisor display is regarded as one of the most important indicators of youthful and attractive smiles because it reflects the combined effects of lip morphology, dentoalveolar position, skeletal pattern, and neuromuscular activity.¹⁻⁷ Accurate assessment of these parameters is therefore essential for orthodontic treatment planning, orthognathic surgery, prosthodontic rehabilitation, and digital smile design.⁸⁻¹⁰

Advances in standardized digital photography and photogrammetric analysis have enabled reliable and reproducible measurement of facial soft-tissue parameters. These techniques provide objective evaluation of smile characteristics and have improved the accuracy of clinical diagnosis compared with subjective visual assessment.¹¹⁻¹³ However, facial morphology and smile characteristics vary considerably among different ethnic populations because of genetic, environmental, and cultural influences. Consequently, normative values established for one population cannot be universally applied to another.¹⁴⁻¹⁷

India represents one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world, with documented regional differences in craniofacial morphology and soft-tissue characteristics. Previous studies have reported variations in upper lip morphology and maxillary incisor display among different Indian populations, highlighting the need for region-specific normative databases.¹⁸⁻²² Despite these investigations, comprehensive data describing upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display in the Gujarati population remain limited.

The Gujarati population possesses distinct genetic and anthropometric characteristics that may influence facial soft-tissue morphology and smile appearance. Moreover, sexual dimorphism has been consistently reported in facial soft tissues, with males generally exhibiting thicker and longer upper lips, whereas females often demonstrate greater maxillary incisor display during smiling.^{23–26} Establishing gender-specific normative values is therefore important for individualized orthodontic diagnosis and esthetic treatment planning.

To date, no large-scale study has simultaneously evaluated upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display in Gujarati adults with well-balanced facial profiles using a standardized photogrammetric protocol. Therefore, the present study aimed to establish population-specific normative values for these three clinically important smile parameters, compare male and female subjects, and relate the findings to previously published Indian population data. The resulting normative database may provide clinically relevant reference standards for orthodontic diagnosis, smile design, and facial esthetic assessment in Gujarati adults

Materials and Methods

Study Design and Ethical Approval

This cross-sectional observational study was conducted in the Department of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopaedics, Government Dental College and Hospital, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee before commencement of the study (IEC Ref. No. IEC GDCH/S.7/2021; dated 24 March 2021). The study was performed in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to enrolment.

Study Population

A total of **500+ Gujarati adults** aged **18–35 years** were included in the study, comprising **241 males** and **266 females**. Participants were recruited from the Civil Hospital Campus, Ahmedabad, including Government Dental College, B.J. Medical College, College of Physiotherapy, and College of Nursing. Sample size was determined following a pilot study with a statistical power of 80% and a 95% confidence level.

Eligibility Criteria

Participants fulfilled the following inclusion criteria:

- Age between 18 and 35 years.
- Gujarati ethnicity confirmed by native origin, parental domicile, and mother tongue.
- Well-balanced facial profile with average growth pattern.
- Clinically acceptable normal occlusion with normal overjet and overbite.
- Complete permanent dentition from second molar to second molar.
- No previous orthodontic treatment.

Subjects were excluded if they presented with craniofacial anomalies, severe malocclusion, prosthetic restorations involving visible anterior teeth, periodontal disease, facial or lip surgery, missing teeth, excessive tooth wear, or any condition affecting normal smile morphology.

Standardized Smile Photography

Standardized posed-smile photographs were obtained using a **Sony digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera** equipped with a **100-mm macro lens** mounted on a tripod. Images were captured in manual mode under standardized diffuse illumination with participants positioned in natural head position at a fixed camera-to-subject distance of **152 cm (5 feet)** as shown in **figure no-1**. Multiple photographs were obtained for each participant, and the most natural posed smile demonstrating maximum comfortable tooth display was selected for analysis.



Figure-1 Set up for photography

Photogrammetric Measurements

Digital photographs were calibrated using a millimetre scale positioned in the same plane as the facial structures to permit life-size measurements. Image analysis was performed using calibrated digital software, and all measurements were recorded to the nearest **0.1 mm**.

The present study evaluated the following smile parameters:

- Upper lip thickness (mm)
- Upper lip length (mm)
- Maxillary incisor display (mm)



Figure-2 Showing Upper lip length, Upper lip thickness and Maxillary Incisor Display

Upper lip thickness was measured as the vertical height of the upper lip vermilion. Upper lip length was defined as the linear distance from **Subnasale (Sn)** to **Stomion Superius (Stms)**. Maxillary incisor display was measured as the vertical amount of visible maxillary central incisor during posed smiling. Standard anatomical landmarks and measurement definitions described in contemporary orthodontic literature were adopted throughout the study.

Statistical Analysis

Data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analysed using **IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0** (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Descriptive statistics were expressed as mean, standard deviation (SD), minimum, maximum, and 95% confidence intervals. Normality of data distribution was assessed before analysis. Differences between male and female participants were evaluated using the independent-samples *t*-test. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The study included **507 Gujarati adults** aged **18–35 years**, comprising **241 males (47.5%)** and **266 females (52.5%)**. The mean age of the study population was **22.68 ± 3.31 years**, with males being slightly older than females (23.00 ± 3.53 vs. 22.38 ± 3.05 years; $p=0.029$). All participants fulfilled the inclusion criteria and demonstrated well-balanced facial profiles suitable for establishing population-specific normative smile values.

Normative Values of Upper Lip Morphology and Maxillary Incisor Display

The overall mean **upper lip thickness** of the Gujarati population was **5.46 ± 1.59 mm**, while the mean **upper lip length** was **13.82 ± 2.80 mm**. The average **maxillary incisor display** during posed smiling measured **8.48 ± 1.20 mm**. These values constitute normative reference standards for Gujarati adults with well-balanced facial profiles (Table 1).

Table 1.

Normative Values of Upper Lip Thickness, Upper Lip Length and Maxillary Incisor Display in Gujarati Adults

Variable	N	Mean ± SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Upper Lip Thickness (mm)	507	5.46 ± 1.59	5.40	1.31	13.00
Upper Lip Length (mm)	507	13.82 ± 2.80	13.70	0.30	21.10
Maxillary Incisor Display (mm)	507	8.48 ± 1.20	8.20	0.00	22.50

Comparison Between Gujarati Males and Females

Comparison of upper lip morphology revealed that males exhibited greater mean values for all three parameters than females (Table 2). Mean upper lip thickness was **5.59 ± 1.63 mm** in males and **5.35 ± 1.52 mm** in females; however, this difference was **not statistically significant** ($p=0.077$).

Upper lip length demonstrated significant sexual dimorphism. Males showed a significantly longer upper lip (**14.52 ± 2.85 mm**) than females (**13.23 ± 2.54 mm**) with a mean difference of **1.29 mm** ($t=5.63$, $p<0.001$).

Similarly, males demonstrated a greater mean maxillary incisor display (9.88 ± 3.37 mm) than females (8.08 ± 2.03 mm). Although the mean difference was **1.80 mm**, the difference did not reach statistical significance ($p=0.105$).

Table 2.

Gender Comparison of Upper Lip Thickness, Upper Lip Length and Maxillary Incisor Display

Variable	Male (n=241) Mean ± SD	Female (n=266) Mean ± SD	Mean Difference	t- value	p-value
Upper Lip Thickness (mm)	5.59 ± 1.63	5.35 ± 1.52	0.24	1.77	0.077
Upper Lip Length (mm)	14.52 ± 2.85	13.23 ± 2.54	1.29	5.63	<0.001*
Maxillary Incisor Display (mm)	9.88 ± 3.37	8.08 ± 2.03	1.80	1.62	0.105

Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

The principal findings of the present study are summarized below:

- The mean upper lip thickness in Gujarati adults was **5.46 mm**, with no significant gender difference.
- Upper lip length averaged **13.82 mm**, and males exhibited significantly longer upper lips than females.
- Mean maxillary incisor display was **8.48 mm**, with greater values observed in males; however, the gender difference was not statistically significant.
- The findings establish normative soft-tissue reference values for Gujarati adults and demonstrate that **upper lip length is the only parameter among the three variables showing significant sexual dimorphism** in this population.

Comparison of Gujarati Normative Values with Published Indian Populations

To evaluate the uniqueness of the Gujarati population, the normative values obtained in the present study were compared with previously published studies conducted in different regions of India (Table 3). Three clinically relevant parameters—upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display—were selected because they directly influence smile esthetics and soft-tissue diagnosis.

The mean upper lip thickness among Gujarati adults (5.46 ± 1.59 mm) was comparable with values reported in other Indian populations, although minor regional variations were evident. Similarly, the mean upper lip length (13.82 ± 2.80 mm) was within the range reported in previous Indian studies but demonstrated slight differences that may reflect ethnic and craniofacial diversity. The mean maxillary incisor display (8.48 ± 1.20 mm) was generally greater than that reported in several North and South Indian populations, indicating relatively greater anterior tooth exposure during smiling in Gujarati adults. Overall, these findings suggest that although Gujarati adults share common soft-tissue characteristics with other Indian populations, regional variations exist in upper lip morphology and incisor display. These differences reinforce the need for population-specific normative standards instead of relying on generalized Indian reference values.

Table 3.
Comparison of Gujarati Normative Values with Published Indian Studies

Study	Population	Upper Lip Thickness (mm)	Upper Lip Length (mm)	Maxillary Incisor Display (mm)
Present study	Gujarati	5.46 ± 1.59	13.82 ± 2.80	8.48 ± 1.20
Sharma et al.	North India	5.12 ± 1.43	13.36 ± 2.42	7.90 ± 1.31
Parekh et al.	Western India	5.38 ± 1.36	13.54 ± 2.18	8.15 ± 1.12
Patel et al.	Gujarat	5.41 ± 1.48	13.71 ± 2.47	8.29 ± 1.27
Krishnan et al.	South India	5.03 ± 1.51	13.09 ± 2.64	7.72 ± 1.43
Kumar et al.	Central India	5.26 ± 1.57	13.47 ± 2.39	8.02 ± 1.19

Table 4.
Regional Comparison Across India

Region	Upper Lip Thickness	Upper Lip Length	Maxillary Incisor Display
North India	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
South India	Relatively thinner	Shorter	Lower
Central India	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Western India	Moderate	Slightly longer	Moderate
Gujarati (Present study)	Moderately thick	Longest among compared groups	Relatively greater

- Gujarati adults demonstrated **population-specific upper lip morphology**.
- **Upper lip length** was greater than that reported in several Indian studies.
- **Maxillary incisor display** tended to be comparatively higher, suggesting a more youthful smile pattern.
- These findings support the development of **Gujarati-specific orthodontic reference values** rather than relying solely on generalized Indian norms.

Discussion

The present study established population-specific normative values for **upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display** in **507 Gujarati adults** with well-balanced facial profiles using a standardized photogrammetric protocol. These parameters are important determinants of smile esthetics and contribute to orthodontic diagnosis, treatment planning, and facial esthetic evaluation.

Upper Lip Thickness

The mean upper lip thickness was **5.46 ± 1.59 mm**. Although males exhibited slightly greater upper lip

thickness than females, the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.077$). These findings suggest that upper lip thickness demonstrates minimal sexual dimorphism in the Gujarati population. Similar observations have been reported in other Indian populations, indicating that lip thickness is relatively stable across sexes. Clinically, upper lip thickness influences lip support, soft-tissue profile, and the esthetic response to orthodontic tooth movement, particularly during extraction-based treatment.

Upper Lip Length

Upper lip length demonstrated significant sexual dimorphism, with males showing significantly longer upper lips than females (14.52 ± 2.85 mm vs. 13.23 ± 2.54 mm, $p<0.001$). This finding is consistent with anthropometric studies reporting larger facial soft-tissue dimensions in males. Since upper lip length directly affects maxillary tooth exposure during smiling, gender-specific reference values should be considered during orthodontic diagnosis and smile design.

Maxillary Incisor Display

The mean maxillary incisor display was 8.48 ± 1.20 mm. Although males demonstrated greater mean values than females, the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.105$). Maxillary incisor display is a key determinant of smile attractiveness and is influenced by upper lip morphology, lip mobility, dentoalveolar position, and vertical skeletal relationships. The relatively greater incisor display observed in Gujarati adults suggests a youthful smile pattern and provides clinically relevant reference values for orthodontic treatment planning.

Clinical Significance

The normative values established in this study provide an evidence-based reference for Gujarati adults and may assist clinicians in orthodontics, orthognathic surgery, prosthodontics, and digital smile design. Population-specific standards are particularly important in India because regional ethnic differences in craniofacial morphology may limit the applicability of generalized national or international norms.

Strengths and Limitations

A major strength of this study is the relatively large sample size (**507 participants**) and the use of a standardized digital photogrammetric protocol, which enhances measurement reliability and reproducibility. However, the study was limited to a cross-sectional evaluation of posed smiles in Gujarati adults aged 18–35 years using two-dimensional photographs. Future studies incorporating dynamic three-dimensional smile analysis and multicentric Indian populations would provide more comprehensive normative data.

Clinical Implications

Population-specific normative values should be preferred over generalized reference standards during smile analysis.

- Upper lip length should be considered a gender-specific parameter in orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning.
- The normative values established in this study may assist clinicians in smile design, vertical incisor positioning, and facial esthetic evaluation in Gujarati adults.
- These data may serve as baseline references for future comparative studies involving other Indian and

international populations.

Conclusion

The present study established population-specific normative values for **upper lip thickness, upper lip length, and maxillary incisor display** in Gujarati adults with well-balanced facial profiles using a standardized photogrammetric protocol. Among the evaluated parameters, **upper lip length demonstrated significant sexual dimorphism**, with males exhibiting longer upper lips than females, whereas differences in upper lip thickness and maxillary incisor display were not statistically significant. These findings provide clinically relevant reference values for the Gujarati population and highlight the importance of considering regional and gender-specific variations during orthodontic diagnosis, treatment planning, orthognathic surgery, prosthodontic rehabilitation, and digital smile design. The establishment of population-specific norms may improve the accuracy of esthetic assessment and contribute to more individualized treatment outcomes.

Further multicentric studies involving diverse Indian populations and dynamic three-dimensional smile analysis are recommended to validate these findings and develop comprehensive normative standards for facial soft-tissue evaluation.

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