

# Body Culture: How Media Shapes Our Thoughts and Ideas About Beauty, Eating, and Image

Over the past four decades the prevalence of eating disorders has doubled. During that same time, mass media has more than ever presented thinner ideals of the female body.

## Movies that explore the ideas of beauty, weight, body image, etc:

Black Swan • America The Beautiful • Eat, Pray, Love • Real Women Have Curves • Shallow Hal • Bridget Jones Diary

MEDIA FIGURES PROVIDE BODY IMAGE ROLE MODELS FOR THE MAJORITY OF MEN AND WOMEN UNDER 40 (INSTEAD OF FAMILY MEMBERS)



**FOR MEN:**  
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
AND JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME  
ARE FAVORITES



**FOR WOMEN:**  
MODELS AND ACTRESSES (CLAUDIA SCHIFFER,  
ELLE, CHRISTY TURLINGTON, DEMI MOORE,  
HALLE BERRY)

RESEARCHERS HAVE REPORTED THAT  $\frac{3}{4}$  OF FEMALE SITUATION COMEDY ACTORS ARE UNDERWEIGHT AND ONLY 1 IN 20 IS ABOVE AVERAGE SIZE.

**Madrid banned ultra-thin models from the runway in 2006**

20 YEARS AGO THE AVERAGE MODEL WEIGHED 8% LESS THAN THE AVERAGE WOMAN.

**TODAY'S MODELS WEIGH 23% LESS THAN THE AVERAGE WOMAN.**

**Barbie** Researchers generating a computer model of a woman with Barbie-doll proportions, for example, found that her back would be too weak to support the weight of her upper body, and her body would be too narrow to contain more than half a liver and a few centimeters of bowel. A real woman built that way would suffer from chronic diarrhea and eventually DIE from malnutrition. **99% of girls under the age of 10 own a Barbie doll.**

## Models & Advertising

The **average U.S. woman is 5'4"** and weighs **140 lb.**



In contrast the average **U.S. model who is 5'11"** & weighs **117 lb. [1]**

The body type portrayed in advertising is actually possessed by only **5%** of American females. [2]

A STUDY FOUND THAT 25% OF PLAYBOY CENTERFOLDS MET THE WEIGHT CRITERIA FOR ANOREXIA. [3]



Kate Moss is 5'7" and weighs 95 pounds. **That is 30% below ideal body weight.** [4]

**Twiggy, who rose to fame as the as a supermodel in the 1960s, was 5'7" and 91 pounds at the height of her fame.**

**Following the viewing of images of female fashion models, seven out of ten women felt more depressed and angrier than prior to viewing the images.** [5]

**69%** of 5-12th grade girls reported that magazine pictures influence their idea of the perfect body shape

**One in every three (37%)** articles in leading teen girl magazines also included a focus on appearance, and most of the advertisements (50%) used an appeal to beauty to sell their products. [7]

**47%** of 5-12th grade girls reported wanting to lose weight because of magazine pictures [6]

## Television

1 OUT OF 4 TV COMMERCIALS SENDS OUT SOME SORT OF MESSAGE ABOUT ATTRACTIVENESS [8]

**80% of women who answered a People magazine survey responded that images of women on television and in the movies make them feel insecure** [4]

THOSE WHO WATCH TELEVISION AT LEAST 3 NIGHTS A WEEK ARE 50% MORE LIKELY THAN NON-VIEWERS TO FEEL OVERWEIGHT OR FAT.

15% OF THE VIEWERS ADMITTED TO VOMITING TO LOSE WEIGHT AND 2/3 OF THE FEMALE VIEWERS DIETED AS A RESULT OF THE IMAGES THEY SAW. [9]



## Self-Perception and Eating Disorders

30% OF WOMEN  
CHOSE AN IDEAL  
BODY SHAPE THAT IS  
**20% UNDERWEIGHT**

*additionally...*

44% OF WOMEN  
CHOSE AN IDEAL  
BODY SHAPE THAT IS  
**10% UNDERWEIGHT [1]**



IN ONE STUDY, 3 OUT OF 4 WOMEN STATED THAT THEY WERE OVERWEIGHT, ALTHOUGH ONLY 1 OUT OF 4 ACTUALLY WERE. [3]



**86% of those with eating disorders report onset by age of 20.** [2]

**95% OF THOSE WITH EATING DISORDERS ARE AGES 12-25.** [3]

## Young Girls

**80% OF 13-YEAR OLDS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO LOSE WEIGHT.** [6]

**11% of high school students may have a diagnosable eating disorder.** [1]

**80%** of 13-year olds have attempted to lose weight. [8]

**11%** of high school students have a diagnosable eating disorder [1]

**ANOREXIA** is the 3rd most chronic illness among adolescents. [3]

**42% OF 1ST-3RD GRADE GIRLS WANT TO BE THINNER.** [3]

**81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.** [3]

**51% of nine and ten year old girls stated they felt better about themselves when they were adhering to a diet.** [3]

## STATEMENT MADE BY CELEBRITIES SEEMINGLY ENCOURAGING EATING DISORDERS:

*"Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels."*  
– Supermodel Kate Moss (2009 interview with WWD)

*"I've always thought Marilyn Monroe looked fabulous, but I'd kill myself if I was that fat."*  
– Model/actress Elizabeth Hurley (in Allure magazine).

## THE DIETING INDUSTRY:

*Diet and diet related products are a 33 billion dollar a year industry.* [1]

## Sources

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