

Weight matters: 'Normal' sized girls are judged to be more attractive by young men

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Researchers have found that despite the size zero trend, boys really do prefer 'normal' girls of an average weight and build.

The study suggests that Hollywood actresses Scarlett Johansson and Jennifer Lopez are considered more [attractive](#) and healthy-looking than contemporaries Paris Hilton or Nicole Ritchie.

Researchers say that the findings send a strong message to [young women](#) who believe that you need to be underweight to be considered attractive.

The team at the University of St Andrews surveyed a group of students, asking them to rate photographs of female faces for attractiveness and health. They found that young men rated girls in the 'normal' weight range as the most attractive and healthy looking.

Lead researcher Vinet Coetzee commented, "We often remark on how healthy or unhealthy someone looks, but it can be very difficult to say precisely how we know this. Scientists have been trying to answer this question for decades, and have made many breakthroughs in our understanding of health and attractiveness, but until now they have tended to overlook the influence of weight."

The findings are published today (Wednesday 28 October) in the scientific journal *Perception*.

Vinet and her colleagues at the University's Perception Lab asked 84

female students a variety of questions on their health, took their blood pressure and photographed them. The photographs were then shown to a group of male students who were asked to rate them for health, attractiveness and weight.

Vinet explained, "We studied a group of young healthy students. However, amongst this group, those students that were rated as more [overweight](#) reported more frequent and longer lasting cold and flu bouts, used antibiotics more frequently and had higher [blood pressure](#) than the students that were considered [normal weight](#).

"Even at this young age, their health was already suffering because they were overweight, and what is more, other people can spot this in their face."

Vinet's supervisor Professor David Perrett commented, "A take home message for young people is that maintaining a normal weight benefits current health and will improve good looks.

"In our study, people in the normal weight range were judged healthier and more attractive than under or overweight individuals. This sends a strong message to all the girls out there who believe you have to be underweight to be attractive. The people making judgments in our study were all between the ages of 18 and 26 and they did not rate underweight girls most attractive. They preferred normal weight girls."

More information: The paper, "Facial adiposity: A cue to health?" by Vinet Coetzee, David I. Perrett and Ian D. Stephen is published online by the journal *Perception*.

Provided by University of St Andrews

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