

# **Fashion mannequins communicate 'dangerously thin' body ideals**

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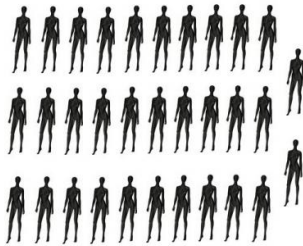
# Emaciated Mannequins



Researchers surveyed 17 fashion retailers on the high street of 2 cities in England

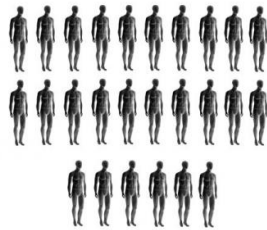


They assessed the size of:



32 female mannequins

26 male mannequins



Only 8% of the male mannequins represented an 'underweight' body size...



...but the average female mannequin represented a SEVERELY 'underweight' body size and ALL female mannequins were an 'underweight' body size

New research from the University of Liverpool shows that the body size of mannequins used to advertise female fashion in the UK are too thin and may be promoting unrealistic body ideals. Credit: Chris Deputy - University of Liverpool

New research from the University of Liverpool shows that the body size of mannequins used to advertise female fashion in the UK are too thin and may be promoting unrealistic body ideals.

In the first study of its kind researchers, led by Dr Eric Robinson from the University's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, surveyed national fashion retailers located on the high street of two cities in the UK.

The [body size](#) of 'male' and 'female' mannequins was assessed by two research assistants using visual rating scales.

## **Severely underweight**

The study, published in the *Journal of Eating Disorders* today, found that the average female [mannequin](#) body [size](#) was representative of a severely underweight woman.

The average male mannequin body size was significantly larger than the average female mannequin body size and only a small proportion of male mannequins represented an underweight body size.

## **Body image problems**

Dr Eric Robinson, said: "We became interested in this topic after seeing

some news report about members of the general public noticing that some mannequins in fashion stores were disturbingly thin.

"Around the same time we had also read news coverage that fashion retailers had responded to this concern and adopted more appropriate sized mannequins, so it felt like an interesting research question to examine. Our survey of these two high streets in the UK produced consistent results; the body size of female mannequins represented that of extremely [underweight](#) human women.

"Because ultra-thin ideals encourage the development of body image [problems](#) in young people, we need to change the environment to reduce emphasis on the value of extreme thinness.

"We of course are not saying that altering the size of high street [fashion](#) mannequins will on its own 'solve' body image problems. What we are instead saying is that presentation of ultra-thin female bodies is likely to reinforce inappropriate and unobtainable body ideals, so as a society we should be taking measures to stop this type of reinforcement.

"Given that the prevalence of [body](#) image problems and disordered eating in young people is worryingly high, positive action that challenges communication of ultra-thin ideal may be of particular benefit to children, adolescents and young adult females."

**More information:** Eric Robinson et al, Emaciated mannequins: a study of mannequin body size in high street fashion stores, *Journal of Eating Disorders* (2017). [DOI: 10.1186/s40337-017-0142-6](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-017-0142-6)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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