

New research shows most women report more body dissatisfaction directly after seeing fashion and bikini models

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Chapman University has published research measuring women's perceptions of how media impacts their body image. Results showed that many women reported feeling worse about their bodies when shown media images of bikini or fashion models, compared to those shown images of paintings or products.

In Study 1, the percentage of [adult women](#) who said the [images](#) of models made them feel worse about each aspect of their bodies: stomach (57%), weight (50%), waist (50%), overall appearance (50%), muscle tone (46%), legs (45%), thighs (40%), buttocks (40%), hips (40%), arms (39%), and breasts (34%). Results in Study 2 were similar.

"Our results show that seeing slender and bikini-clad models had an immediate and direct impact on how women feel about their own bodies- and that impact was mostly negative," said David A. Frederick, Ph.D, assistant professor of health psychology at Chapman University and lead author on this study. "Our findings highlight the important role of media in shaping women's feelings about their bodies."

This approach differs from previous studies that relied on women's general recollections or impressions of how media affected them. The current study contributes to the ongoing debate about how much media matters in determining how attractive someone feels. The participants provided researchers with statements describing how the images made

them feel about their bodies. These include:

"The images made me feel worse about myself because the models' bodies were all so toned and beautiful. They were tall, skinny, had smooth skin, and had perfect breasts. Compared to them, I felt ugly and not attractive."

"They all look so fit and healthy. I look much worse in comparison. I feel worse because there is nothing that I could do to look like them."

Another significant result from the study indicated that women who viewed the bikini/ fashion model images showed more interest in dieting and exercising to lose weight. Nearly half said the images made them less interested in wearing a swimsuit in public.

The study, called Exposure to thin-ideal media affect most, but not all, women: Results from the perceived effects of media exposure scale and open-ended responses, was published in the journal *Body Image*. Researchers questioned 1,426 women across two studies to share how they felt about their bodies after exposure to 10 [fashion models](#), bikini models, paintings, or products. Results showed that most [women](#) reported feeling worse about some aspect of their [body](#) immediately after seeing the fashion and bikini models.

More information: David A. Frederick et al. Exposure to thin-ideal media affect most, but not all, women: Results from the Perceived Effects of Media Exposure Scale and open-ended responses, *Body Image* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.10.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.10.006)

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