

Unattainable standards of beauty for today's woman

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While the average American woman's waist circumference and dress size has increased over the past 20 years, Victoria's Secret fashion models have become more slender, with a decrease in bust, waist, hips and dress size, though their waist to hip ratio (WHR) has remained constant.

These findings represent an ideal of beauty that continuously moves further away from the characteristics of the average American woman.

Quantifying female body attractiveness is complex. Perceived attractiveness is influenced by physical and nonphysical traits and is further guided by media exposure and sociocultural standards of the time. One of the more established parameters to evaluate female body attractiveness is the WHR, which measures body fat distribution. Interestingly, WHR has continued to be an ideal beauty trait that has stayed constant over time and cross-culturally.

In order to evaluate trends of physical body attributes, researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) measured and compared Victoria's Secret models from 1995 to 2018. The first Victoria's Secret runway show debuted 23 years ago and since then has been viewed by millions annually, making it the most watched fashion show worldwide.

The data showed that over time, Victoria's Secret fashion models have become thinner, with smaller busts, waist, hips and dress size, whereas their WHR remained constant. "Conversely, the average American

woman's [waist circumference](#) and dress size has increased and varies between a misses size 16 and 18," explained corresponding author Neelam Vashi, MD, assistant professor of dermatology at BUSM.

According to the researchers, in parallel with this trend, the percentage of women seeking cosmetic surgical procedures has dramatically increased and may be due to the desire to achieve the ideal WHR, which is a narrow waist set against fuller hips. Buttock and lower body lift has increased by 4,295 percent and 256 percent, respectively since 2000.

"Our results represent a potentially changing weight ideal of beauty that is moving farther away from the characteristics of the average American woman; however, a constant idealized WHR remains intact," added Vashi, who also is director of the Boston University Cosmetic and Laser Center at Boston Medical Center.

More information: Mayra Bc Maymone et al, Unattainable Standards of Beauty: Temporal Trends of Victoria's Secret Models from 1995 to 2018, *Aesthetic Surgery Journal* (2019). [DOI: 10.1093/asj/sjz271](https://doi.org/10.1093/asj/sjz271)

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