

Summary

A national Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) survey completed in December 2009 reported that girls age 13 to 17 years old, find the body image sold by the fashion industry to be unrealistic and creates an unattainable model of beauty. This survey included more than 1,000 girls throughout the United States. Nearly 90% of the girls surveyed said the fashion industry (89 percent) and/or the media (88 percent) place a lot of pressure on them to be thin. However, despite the criticism of these industries, 3 out of 4 girls say that fashion is “really important” to them. The Girl Scout Research Institute, formed in 2000, is a vital extension of Girl Scouts of the USA’s commitment to addressing the complex and ever-changing needs of girls. Comprised of a dedicated staff and advisors who are experts in child development, academia, government, business, and the not-for-profit sector, the institute conducts groundbreaking studies, releases critical facts and findings, and provides resources essential for the advancement of the well-being and safety of girls living in today’s world.



Girls and Body Image

Girl Scouts of the USA/Girl Scout Research Institute

KEY MESSAGES & FINDINGS

- **Girls attribute media and fashion to the pressure to be thin.**
 - Nine in ten girls say the fashion industry (89%) and/or the media (88%) place *a lot of pressure* on teenage girls to be thin.
 - **Girls say they would prefer to see more “natural”/“real” images in the media.**
 - Eighty-one percent of girls would rather see “real” or “natural” photos of models than touched-up, airbrushed versions.
 - Seventy-five percent would be more likely to buy clothes they see on “real-size models” than on super-skinny ones.
 - **Girls have a love/hate relationship with the fashion industry.**
 - Three in four girls (75%) say that fashion is *really important* to them.
 - Forty-eight percent wish they were *as skinny* as the models in fashion magazines.
 - Forty-seven percent say fashion magazines give them *a body image to strive for*.
 - Forty-one percent say they prefer to see the latest fashions on *skinny models* rather than on fuller-sized women.
- However:**
- Sixty-five percent of girls think that the body image represented by the fashion industry is *too skinny*; 63% think it is *unrealistic*; and 47% think it is *unhealthy*. More than a quarter (28%) say the fashion industry body image looks *sick*.
 - Sixty percent say that they *compare their bodies* to fashion models.
 - Only 46% think the fashion industry does a good job of representing people of all races and ethnicities, with Caucasian girls the most likely to say this (52%, compared to only 42% of Hispanics and 32% of African Americans).
 - Thirty-one percent of girls admit to *starving themselves or refusing to eat* as a strategy to lose weight.
- **African American and Hispanic girls have a more positive body image.**
 - A higher percentage of Hispanic girls (79%) say they are *satisfied* with their bodies compared to their African American (76%) and Caucasian (72%) counterparts.
 - Seventeen percent of African American girls are *completely satisfied* with the way their body looks, compared to 14% of Hispanic and 10% of Caucasian girls.