

# Surprise! If you're like these women, you're thinner than you think!

Although it's been a while since the waif look was in (heck, even new mom Kate Moss has filled out!), we're still our own worst body bashers, able to spot an ounce of flab, real or imagined, in a mirror from 40 paces. In fact, in the largest body-image survey to date, a whopping 89 percent of women said they needed to shed pounds—even though only 25 percent were overweight. And girls as young as six have said they want to be thinner.

Why are we so hard on ourselves? "We're taught to strive for an airbrushed perfection that just isn't

realistic—or necessarily desirable," says Rachel Gaunt, director of Just Think Foundation's Body Image Project. Meanwhile, survey after survey has found that most men prefer curvier proportions. "Yet when women look in a mirror, they often see someone unattractive. And only rarely do they see the person who's really there," adds Gaunt.

First decided to put that theory to the test and asked two women to pick themselves out of a lineup of three photos, two of which were digitally altered. Here, the surprising results.

## "I'd love to change the whole package!"

My boyfriend and I were taking our kids to the park on a brisk day, so I tossed on purple sweats without a second thought. When he looked at me, he said, "All right, let's go, Barney." I couldn't believe my ears. Boy, did he get an earful once I got over the shock! And while I'm so sure he'll never make that mistake again, I have to admit his words stayed with me.

I inherited my full figure from my grandmother. And it's not that I don't love her, but did I have to be the *only* one in the family shaped like her? I get a brutal reminder each time I walk past a mirror or slip into something that's suddenly too tight. The worst part is my stomach. I've been on every diet program out there, I do crunches, I walk (although with a two-year-old and a five-year-old, my energy level is zero), and it doesn't seem to make a difference.

That little pouch just won't go away. So now I just watch what I eat and concentrate on taking care of my kids.

Someday, I'd love to be the weight I was back in my twenties: 135 pounds. Hey, it's not like I haven't tried, but unfortunately, I know I'm never going to be a little petite thing. I guess that's okay. I'm just big-boned—like Grandma.

—Paula Crews, 37, 5'6", 175 lbs

### PAULA'S PHOTO PICK:

Paula picked photo #1 as her real picture, but she is, in fact, the more slender #3. "Really? I guess I *am* thinner than I think," she says with a laugh. "Seriously, it does make me feel better about my body, but it's not going to stop me from getting myself on a healthy regimen—even if it's just so I can keep up with my little ones!"



## "My thigh bulges drive me crazy!"

Whenever I struggle to squeeze into a pair of jeans, I find myself cursing my *other* genes: the Tumpletee ones I inherited from my mother. After all, it's those darned DNA strands that are responsible for my Tumpletee saddlebags.

The bulges showed up to stay after I had my first child two years ago. Walking five days a week helps but not enough to eliminate the problem. Just the other day I was flipping through a Victoria's Secret catalog—not a smart move when you're having a low-self-esteem day—and I couldn't help but envy the models' perfectly lean thighs.

My husband tells me that he really likes the way I look and that a shapelier woman is more feminine to him. I love him for saying that, but don't think for a second that I wouldn't *kill* for Naomi Campbell's super-slim thighs!

—Cathy Polcaro, 38, 5'8", 130 lbs.



**CATHY'S PHOTO PICK:** Cathy thought image #1 was her actual photo, but the slimmer Cathy in photo #2 was the real deal. "Wow! I feel a little better about myself, and I probably look better to people than I think I do," she says. "I guess I'll cut myself a break and have a couple of Oreos tonight! But you *still* won't catch me wearing a thong on the beach."

### You're perfect just the way you are! Here's proof:

For a more realistic (and no doubt, more favorable) idea of what your body looks like, try this tip from Pamela Garber, a psychotherapist who treats people with body dysmorphic disorder and eating disorders. Lie down on a big sheet of paper and have a friend trace around your body. Then tape it to a wall and look at it. "It'll help you see your size with a more objective eye," she says. "Chances are, you'll be pleasantly surprised!"

### The skinny on wanting to be thin

The average model weighs 23 percent less than the average woman; 20 years ago the differential was only 8 percent.

SOURCE: Social Issues Research Centre

Fifty-six percent of women dislike their appearance, compared with 43 percent of men.

SOURCE: National Women's Health Information Center

Photo: Paula Peter Sakas. Hair and makeup: Darryl Hamond for Mark Edward Inc.  
Photo: Cathy: Dan Howell. Hair and makeup: Stephanie Paron for Mark Edward Inc.  
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