

# #35 Hey GOOD LOOKING! (Stats & Facts)

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*Episode Description Hey GOOD LOOKING! Do today's standards of attractiveness promote high or low self-esteem in men AND women?*

## **Focus of Research**

Standards of beauty throughout the ages

Body image and self-esteem

## **Standards of Beauty through Time: Thin is in and hasn't ever really been out**

“Ultrathin, ideal body image models and actresses have increasingly been featured in the media from the early 1900s with the thin, short-haired flapper to Twiggy in the 1960s to the majority of today's fashion models, centerfolds and celebrities being 15% or less of their expected body weight in regard to their age and height.”

“[T]he usual trend in the media has been to portray thin, toned, fit females while at the same time observing continued weight gain in all segments of the American population. The detrimental effect of this discrepancy, exacerbated by greater media exposure, has been increased body dissatisfaction, leading to an increase in dieting, use of weight-loss products, and eating disorder tendencies among adolescents, women, and men.”

**Source:** [Nutrition Today Journal, Volume 45, Number 3, May/June 2010](#)

## Timeline of Beauty Trends for Women (according to an article from Stylecaster.com)

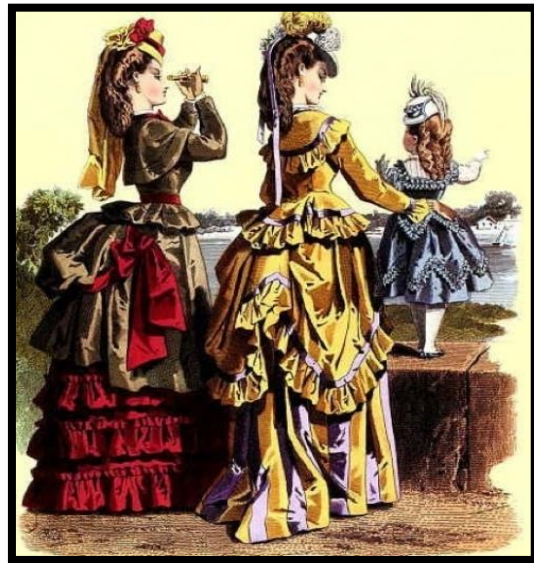
**Renaissance:** From the 1400s to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century

- **Body Type:** The ideal Renaissance woman was more voluptuous than any other time in history. Paintings from this era depict women who likely would be considered overweight by today's standard, but at that time these full-figured ladies were the epitome of sexy.
- **Beauty:** The term blondes have more fun may have stemmed from the Renaissance, because they believed that the lighter the hair color, the better. As for makeup, pale ivory skin was considered sexy, and vermillion was used to tint the lips to a deep red color.



**Victorian Era:** From 1837 to 1901 (named after Britain's Queen Victoria)

- **Body Type:** Unlike Renaissance women, Victorian women were highly body conscious. Sexy meant having the smallest waistline humanly possible, and in order to achieve this look, women wore corsets. Some were wound so tight that women could hardly breathe, to the point where sitting down was completely out of the question (and many women would even break ribs trying to get their waistlines down to an inconceivable 12 inches.) Layered petticoats, hoops, and bustles became popular, all of which magnified the derriere.
- **Beauty:** Modesty was the operative word when it came to Victorian makeup. High-class women were expected to use makeup sparingly. Bold colors were considered uncouth, and reserved for prostitutes. Some religions at the time even proclaimed beauty products to be the look of the devil. Yikes!



**The Roaring 20s:** The era that brought us Coco Chanel, shorter hemlines, and flappers.

- **Body Type:** The 1920s were a time when women aimed to hide their curves. In fact, some would even bind their chests with strips of cloth to achieve a boyish look. The loose silhouette of the short and swingy flapper dress was a stark contrast to the corseted waist of Victorian era gowns, while elastic webbed girdles replaced corsets and gave off the look of a flat abdomen.
- **Beauty:** Going right along with the boyish look, the hair bob or finger wave was a big trend. Bold makeup, which had once been considered trashy, was now considered sexy. Powder was applied to make the skin look as pale as possible and eyebrows were lifted and penciled in to appear thin and bold. Kohl was used to line the eye and achieve an overall dramatic look.



**The 1930s and 1940s: Hollywood's Golden Age**

- **Body Type:** As they became more body conscious, women started to really pay attention to what they ate. Fashion accented the arms and legs, so women lifted light weights to build muscle tone. The new padded stretch cotton bra was introduced, and designers like Chanel (credited as the originator of the “little black dress”), Dior, and Elsa Schiaparelli started designing fitted, glamorous, siren-ready attire.
- **Beauty:** Hairstyles became more feminine than they had been in the 1920s. Hair color varied depending on which movie star one was trying to emulate. Jean Harlow made platinum blond a trend, meanwhile, Rita Hayworth (right) made being a redhead popular. Last, but not least, Marlene Dietrich represented for all the brunettes out there. Makeup became a little less drag, and more girl-next-door than in the 1920s. The pasty white skin trend was finally passé, and women started opting for foundations closer to their natural complexions.



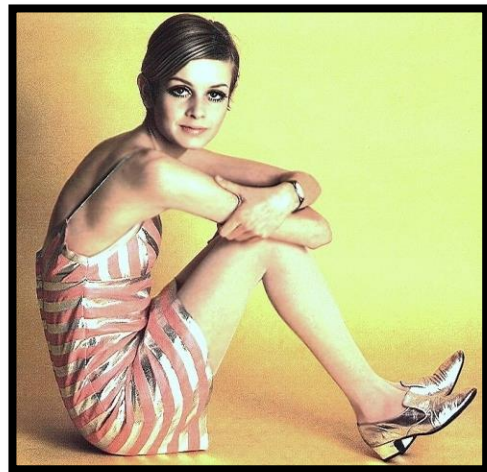
## The 1950s: Mid-Century Conservative

- **Body Type:** The desired shape in the mid-century was the hourglass figure popularized by movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly (below). Women were told that their primary goal was to catch a man and have a family, so they were taught to dress to allure, but rarely showed a great deal of skin. Rule number one was that women were never supposed to leave the house looking sloppy. Three-quarter-sleeve coats, full belted skirts, button-downs, and prim sweaters were the standard (think Betty Draper when she first appeared on “Mad Men.”)
- **Beauty:** Hair was usually kept short at just below the shoulders, and was worn in soft, curly, or wavy styles. Straight styles were considered undesirable, so rollers became a girl’s best friend. Women also began to focus more on having flawless skin than anything else. The goal was a peaches and cream complexion.



## The 1960s: The era that brought us hippies, mods, and Twiggy

- **Body Type:** Mimicking the popular skinny models of the day, like Twiggy (right), women became obsessed with being rail thin. In terms of fashion and beauty, two polar opposites emerged: the hippie flower child and the modern swinging '60s woman. The hippies put more of an emphasis on casual staples like bell-bottoms, tunics, and platform shoes, while the super-mod Twiggy-girl put time into her appearance and favored things like high boots, miniskirts, and short shift dresses.
- **Beauty:** Hippies went for long no-maintenance hairstyles and typically avoided makeup. More modern '60s girls, conversely, opted for short pixie cuts and dramatic eyes. Fake eyelashes were a must-have, and mascara was applied to achieve the popular tarantula lashes.



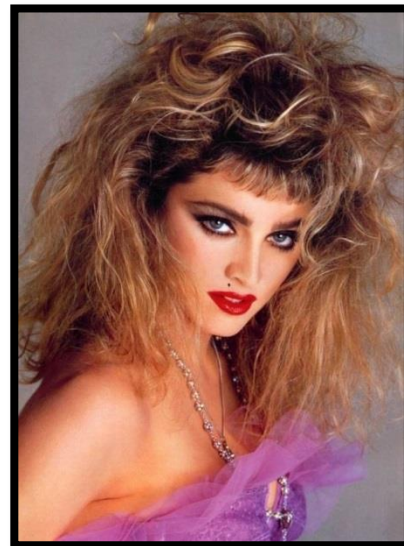
**The 1970s:** Enter the disco era.

- **Body Type:** The freewheeling 1960s forever changed the way women viewed their bodies, and by the 1970s, the thinking-thin phenomenon was in full force. Clothing was sexy and disco-ready, with lots of wrap-style dresses, oversize sunglasses, and high-waist jeans and most women aspired to emulate the ultra-glam ‘Studio 54’ look popularized by Bianca Jagger.
- **Beauty:** The late Farrah Fawcett (right) revolutionized the way women styled their hair. Her long, layered, feathery haircut became the look that every woman wanted to have. This decade also marked the beginning of the bronzed beach look and with it, the popular tanning booth trend. Women began relying on bronzers and self-tanners, things many women (and some men) still can’t do without.



**The 1980s:** The decade of big hair, big shoulders, and the Material Girl.

- **Body Type:** The aerobics exercise craze of the '80s further emphasized fitness for women. Women were expected to maintain a certain weight, but still appear toned, all without being too muscular. With all these body stipulations, it’s no wonder that the prevalence of eating disorders skyrocketed throughout the decade. The '80s also epitomized over-the-top fashion— neon, suits with football player-sized shoulder pads, and spandex were just a few of the quintessential trends of the decade that were considered sexy.
- **Beauty:** There are only two words to describe '80s hair: big and bigger. The mantra of the decade was the bigger the better, and with all those aerosol cans of hairspray, we’re sure the ozone took a pretty big hit right around this decade. Over-the-top makeup was *de rigeur*—just check out Madonna above. Women opted for brighter colors, like the infamous blue eye shadows and liners, and shiny pink pouts. Also, thanks to Brooke Shields, bushy eyebrows were also considered very sexy—something’s come back around in recent years.



**The 1990s:** The era that brought us grunge, minimalism, “Beverly Hills, 90210,” and “Saved by the Bell.”

- **Body Type:** Models like Kate Moss further perpetuated standards of extreme thinness. The heroin chic trend came about in the '90s—a strung-out and emaciated appearance was the coveted look. Thanks to a few rebellious kids in Seattle, the '90s also gave rise to the popular grunge movement, characterized by flannel shirts, Doc Martens, and an overall unkempt look. On the other side of the spectrum, the spandex and fluorescent color trends of the '80s stuck around for the early part of the decade (as evidenced by the wardrobes in “Beverly Hills, 90210,” and “Saved by the Bell.”) Lycra was introduced, and midriff-bearing tops also became fashionable which coincided with the rise of pierced belly buttons and toned tummies.
- **Beauty:** One of the most popular '90s hairstyles was the Rachel cut, named for Jennifer Aniston’s character on “Friends.” Other popular hair trends included the bob, bangs (a la Brenda Walsh), and bleach blond color (remember Donna Martin?). Kate Moss epitomized the androgynous ideal, which led many women to take a minimalist approach to makeup.



**Source:** [Stylecaster.com](http://Stylecaster.com)

### **Men’s Pursuit of the Ideal Body Image**

Men, while also influenced by our culture’s over-valuing of thinness, are often more concerned with a combination of issues related to weight, body shape and function (e.g. strength). Generally, men believe they need to be both lean and muscular to meet perceived societal expectations.

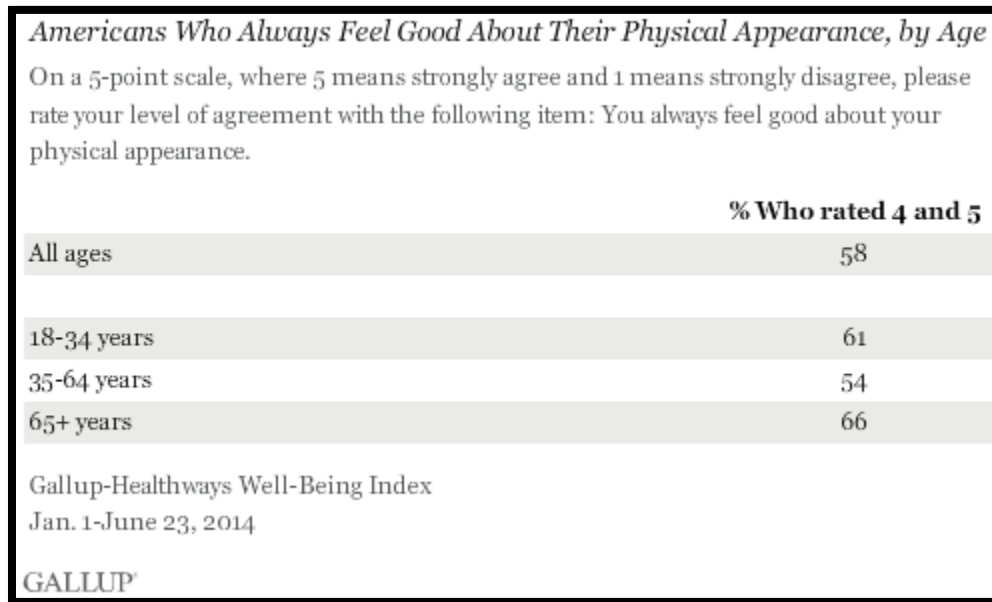
Media exposure to male body ideals as well as comparison of oneself to these ideals are positively correlated with the drive for muscularity in men (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002; Morrison, Morrison, & Hopkins, 2003).

Large scale surveys concluded that male body image concerns have dramatically increased over the past three decades from 15% to 43% of men being dissatisfied with their bodies; rates that are comparable to those found in women (Garner, 1997; Goldfield, Blouin, & Woodside, 2006; Schooler & Ward, 2006).

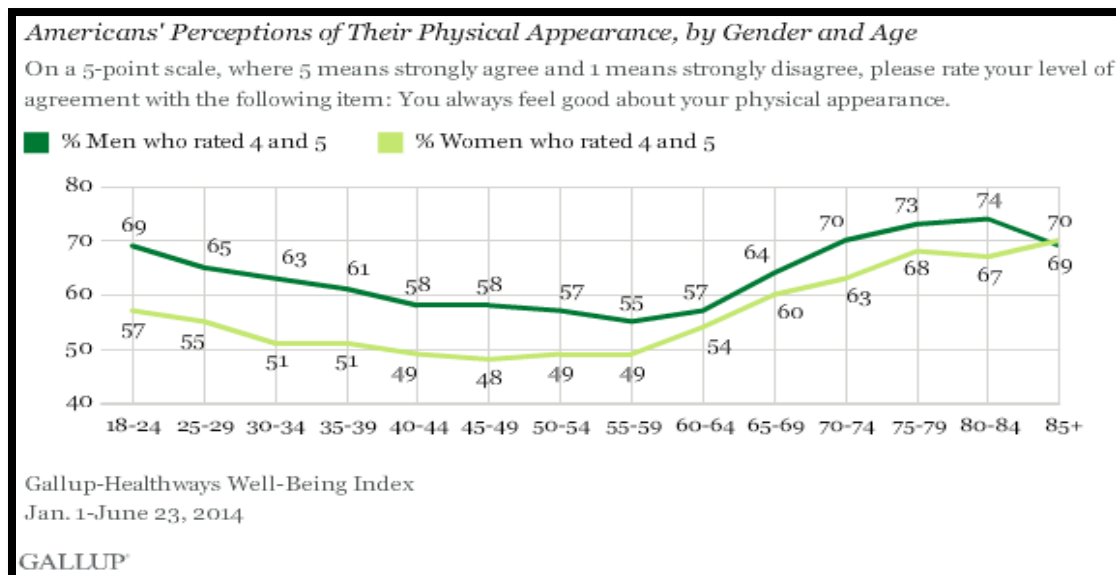
**Source:** [NationalEatingDisorders.org](http://NationalEatingDisorders.org)

## Americans and Their Looks

According to a Gallup poll conducted in 2014, 66% of Americans aged 65 and older “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they always feel good about their physical appearance, compared with 61% of 18 to 34 year olds. 54% of middle-aged Americans are the least likely to report feeling good about their appearance.



Confidence levels in physical appearance for both men and women are lower in middle age compared to young adulthood. An upward trend in confidence levels is seen in older-aged individuals. In general men have a more positive image of themselves than women across every age group.



“Blacks and Hispanics are much more likely than whites and, to a lesser extent, Asians to say they always feel good about their appearance. More than two-thirds of blacks (68%) and Hispanics (67%) report that they are confident in their physical appearance compared with 55% of whites and 62% of Asians.”

*Americans Who Always Feel Good About Their Physical Appearance, by Race and Age*

On a 5-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please rate your level of agreement with the following item: You always feel good about your physical appearance.

	<b>% Whites who rated 4 and 5</b>	<b>% Blacks who rated 4 and 5</b>	<b>% Asians who rated 4 and 5</b>	<b>% Hispanics who rated 4 and 5</b>
	%	%	%	%
All ages	55	68	62	67
18-34 years	56	68	60	67
35-64 years	49	65	65	67
65+ years	65	75	70	75

Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index  
Jan. 1-June 23, 2014

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“These patterns by race and ethnicity hold true across most age categories, except that middle-aged blacks and Hispanics are just as happy with their appearance as are middle-aged Asians.”

**Source:** [Gallup: Older Americans Feel Best About Their Physical Appearance](#)