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Men view overweight females more unfavourably than women

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Men like female thinness more than women and they find female overweight more unpleasant than women do, a University of Granada study has revealed.

In addition, the study revealed that women who are not comfortable with their body perceive women with a "normal" body –i.e. women with a healthy weight– as a threat.

Specifically, when these women see a "normal" body they experience feelings of displeasure and lack of control, since they feel they have not any control on their own body and cannot make it be as they want.

Researchers at the Department of Personality, Evaluation and Psychological Treatment of the University of Granada found that women who are not comfortable with their body feel embarrassed and uneasy when they see themselves in a picture or video, especially if they are imitating the poses of a professional model.

To carry out this study, the researchers performed four experimental studies with university students. As many as 671 students participated in the study. A total of 550 students participated in the first two studies (408 women and 142 men), 61 participated in the third study (28 women highly discomforted with their body and 33 moderately unsatisfied with their body) and 60 in the fourth study (30 healthy women satisfied with their body and 30 women with bulimia nervosa unsatisfied with their body).

Blanca Ortega-Roldan Oliva –one of the authors of this study– explained that the bodies that most men and women like are those of professional female models with a normal weight.

"Men and women found these bodies highly pleasing and stimulating, although they made them feel a lack of control. This means that a sexy and stimulating body makes people feel a lack of control, as these bodies are considered difficult to attain or even unattainable," Oliva stated.

On the other hand, the study revealed that the body of a model with a normal weight negatively affects women that are highly unsatisfied with their body. Thus, unsatisfied women consider these bodies "unpleasant, very activating and unattainable (perception of lack of control)".

The reason for this perception is that these women cannot objectively evaluate a normal body in emotional terms, since they cannot avoid comparing themselves with it. This makes them feel upset, as they feel their body does not meet their beauty standards.

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