



COSMOPOLITAN

British women scared to bare

Cosmopolitan and Weight Watchers survey exposes the nation's body insecurities

9 June 2010 – Some British women dislike their bodies so much they'd prefer not to go on holiday than wear a bikini on the beach. More than one in 10 women are on a permanent diet and 40% wish it was winter so they could hide their bodies away. These are the results of The Body Confidence survey jointly conducted by Cosmopolitan and Weight Watchers UK.

Only a quarter of British women consider themselves body confident – 16% hate what they see in the mirror and 73% claim that losing weight would make them more self-assured. Whilst more than a third of women think they're less attractive than their friends, women in the East Midlands have the lowest self-esteem with 46% considering their friends prettier than them. Confidence also plummets in Wales and the North East where 20% and 19% of women respectively detest their appearance.

When it comes to holidays, one in ten women – and a quarter in Wales – have opted not to go away with friends because of freak-outs over stripping down to their bikini. Women in Scotland are so concerned about their bodies that a quarter of them are dreading their time away this summer.

Instead of feeling a post-sunshine glow, British women are also bringing their body angst back from the beach. Four in ten return from holiday feeling guilty for overindulging, 15% return feeling worse about themselves and more than 10% feel 'horrendous' after comparing themselves with other women.

A fifth of women in Scotland and 29% in Northern Ireland feel dreadful after returning home as 'seeing all those bikini bodies' makes them feel inadequate. Whilst 25% of women in London prefer winter to their summer holiday so they can hide their bodies under layers of clothes.

More than 70% of women think losing weight would boost their confidence. A third of women (42% in Northern Ireland) believe being overweight stops them from having a good time; 12% believe it would stop them getting their dream job; and 22% their dream man.

In an ideal world, the majority of women in the study would like to lose between one and two stone, but 29% of women in Northern Ireland would like to lose more. One in five admit to taking their diets to extremes by consuming 1,000 calories or less every day, this increases to 24% in the North East, 23% in Wales and 21% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Women in the West Midlands (56%), the South West (56%) and London (53%) are most likely to cut down on food before drink to keep their weight down and 14% of women overall have been on so many diets they have 'lost count'.

Across the board, women are most insecure about their tummies, but a quarter of women in the North East hate 'the whole lot'. Fake tan is deemed the best body-confidence invention by 27% of women, followed by the Nintendo Wii Fit (23%). When it comes to fashion, size 10 is considered the perfect dress size, but almost a third of women (31%) refuse to wear shorts because of their legs or a jumpsuit because of their figure (32%).

"Women naturally compare themselves to those around them, but too many women in the UK are suffering a body-confidence crisis," said Louise Court, editor of Cosmopolitan. "Our research demonstrates the extreme and varying views of body image and dieting, but we're urging women across the country to unite in loving every inch of their bodies."

Zoe Hellman, Weight Watchers UK Company Dietitian, comments "We know everyone has different body hang ups, but when it stops people from enjoying life, like not going on holiday, then it's often a motivating trigger to do something about it. What is worrying is that so many women are going to extreme measures to lose weight. We know that simply cutting calories doesn't work; indeed diets don't work for the long term. Instead small, achievable changes to everyday behaviour are key to successful sustainable weight loss. Something as simple as writing down what you eat and drink everyday is shown to aid weight loss because you're more aware of what you're doing."

The full results can be seen in the August 'Body Confidence' issue of Cosmopolitan (on sale now).

- ENDS -

Notes to Editor:

*1,500 women surveyed by One Poll

Weight Watchers of Ireland, is a franchise of Weight Watchers International, Inc.