# Fashion's portrayal of womanhood faces critical challenges in 2025



Fashion’s portrayal of womanhood faces critical challenges in 2025, with notable shifts in inclusivity and aesthetic ideals marking a fractured reflection of contemporary women’s realities. According to Vogue Business’ Autumn/Winter 2025 size inclusivity report, the representation of plus-size models on runways has dramatically declined. Across 198 shows featuring 8,703 looks, only 0.3 per cent were plus-size (US 14+), a steep decrease from 0.8 per cent in the previous season. This stark drop highlights a regression in size inclusivity after a brief period where body positivity appeared to gain momentum.

This regression has sparked controversy, exemplified by the response to Dutch designer Duran Lantink’s show, which featured a slender, white male model wearing exaggeratedly bouncy fake breasts. The audience reaction was a mix of laughter and pointing, which then led to online backlash over the portrayal. Such moments encapsulate the tensions currently playing out in fashion’s approach to gender and body representation.

Concurrently, the cultural zeitgeist is witnessing a resurgence of conservative femininity aesthetics. Following the 2023 surge of Barbie-inspired girl power, the tradwife look—characterised by modesty, muted tones, and traditional matrimonial motifs like white taffetas and satin gloves—has taken centre stage. This shift is epitomised by brands like PrettyLittleThing, which recently rebranded away from bold bodycon dresses and lash extensions toward more restrained, Stepford wife-inspired styles. Influencers such as Nara Smith and Ballerina Farm have helped popularise this aesthetic, which contrasts sharply with the more overtly feminist and diverse representations of the past decade.

Vogue Business highlights that this shift in fashion aesthetics mirrors broader societal changes. Globally, women’s rights face setbacks, with reproductive freedoms curtailed in the US and parts of Europe, and trans women subjected to increasing political scapegoating and restrictive legislation. At the same time, the wellness industry—partly driven by weight-loss treatments like Ozempic—is intensifying pressures on women to conform to narrow standards of femininity.

Fashion commentator Ashantéa Austin has commented on these developments, noting, “We’ve all really felt the regression of size inclusivity and diversity alongside these conflicting references to femininity and there’s definitely consumer fatigue.” Austin observes that consumers, herself included, are demanding more substantive efforts from fashion brands, pushing beyond superficial messaging toward true commitments in equity, transparency, and representation that mirrors the diverse realities of women’s lives.

In the past several years, the cultural icon of the ‘girl’—embodying youthfulness, playfulness, and a pink, saccharine aesthetic—dominated fashion and internet culture. This image was deeply entwined with the ‘girlboss’ narrative, a soft feminism that was visually appealing but often overlooked systemic issues related to inequality and power dynamics. Biz Sherbert, host of the ‘Nymphet Alumni’ podcast and writer of the American Style newsletter, reflected on this shift, telling Vogue Business, “The figure of the girl doesn’t feel right for this moment — she took over during the last administration, and we’ve just entered a political era that feels more disruptive and masculine. I think people also wised up to the emptiness of the girlhood aesthetic as it was being offered. It was total ideological candy floss — there is power in protecting and uplifting girlhood, but that rarely came across in popular representations of it in consumer culture.”

These insights from Vogue Business reveal a fashion industry and cultural environment at a crossroads, dealing with competing ideals of womanhood while grappling with rising demands for authenticity and inclusiveness.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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