# How the ‘beach body ready’ obsession has staged an alarming comeback a decade on



The societal obsession with physical appearance is a cycle recently reignited by the 2015 Protein World advertising campaign, which infamously asked "Are you beach body ready?" against a backdrop of slender perfection. This provocative image—featuring a slim woman donned in a bright yellow bikini—sparked a public outcry, leading to its eventual ban in the UK. Critics underscored how it perpetuated unrealistic beauty standards, suggesting that purchasing their weight loss supplement was key to achieving an acceptable body for summer exposure. The campaign not only highlighted the pervasive pressures women face regarding body image but also catalysed a much-needed discussion about body positivity and self-acceptance.

In the wake of that controversy, a broader movement towards body acceptance emerged, as women began to challenge traditional beauty norms through viral social media campaigns, essays, and inclusive hashtags celebrating diverse body types. For a time, it appeared that society was gradually shifting towards a more accepting posture regarding different shapes and sizes. However, as we mark the campaign's tenth anniversary, there are signs that this progress may be faltering, and the glorification of thinner body types is creeping back into mainstream discourse.

The narrative surrounding body image has become increasingly defined by diet culture cloaked in wellness rhetoric. This year's trends revolve around terms like “hot girl summer” and various restrictive diets aimed at attaining a 'bikini body', subtly promoting the idea that only those adhering to specific beauty standards deserve to enjoy summer leisure in swimwear. The insidious nature of this messaging is evidenced by the surge in popularity of weight loss drugs like Ozempic. Originally developed for diabetes management, retailing for its appetite-suppressing qualities has prompted off-label use among individuals keen to shed pounds, often leading them to overlook potential risks.

Reports indicate that the rise in off-label usage has resulted in alarming health issues. In the United States, lawsuits are emerging from patients alleging severe side effects tied to GLP-1 agonists like Ozempic and Wegovy, including gastrointestinal distress and even potential threats to vision. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports escalating cases of emergency room visits connected to these drugs, the categorical obsession with achieving a certain body shape raises questions about prioritising thinness over overall health.

Moreover, the fashion industry reflects and amplifies these standards, with models predominantly showcasing a singular, slim body type. That focus creates a narrow definition of beauty, inadvertently ostracising those who do not fit within these confines. The confluence of social media trends, celebrity culture—including speculation around the Kardashians and their evolving body images—and traditional marketing pressures reveals an ecosystem where the value attached to thinness is felt more acutely than ever.

The term "bikini tax" has emerged, particularly on platforms like TikTok, symbolising the supposed need to conform to these narrow beauty standards and the accompanying anxiety about summer readiness. This pressure cultivates discussions centred around diets, exercise regimes, and aesthetic value, echoing the same problematic sentiment that Protein World’s advertisement conveyed nearly a decade ago: that societal worth is inversely proportional to size.

As we navigate through this landscape, it is crucial to recognise how pervasive these narratives are. The concern about youth and those with eating disorders intensifies, as increased discussions around extreme dieting and weight loss medications can act as triggers, undermining recovery efforts for many. The rhetoric that equates beauty with thinness can have devastating consequences, illuminating the urgent need for honest dialogue about health, inclusivity, and the complexities particularly women face regarding body image.

On the surface, while a sea change towards body positivity once seemed imminent, the currents of social media and cultural expectations have pulled us back, perhaps further than we were a decade ago. The age-old societal narrative—that to be beautiful is to be thin—remains as potent as ever.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/beach-body-ready-ad-bikini-tax-b2758497.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/beach-body-ready-ad-bikini-tax-b2758497.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/beach-body-ready-ad-bikini-tax-b2758497.html), [[3]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/science/article/2024/06/13/the-quest-for-a-slimmer-figure-is-driving-some-people-to-do-anything-to-get-their-hands-on-ozempic_6674629_10.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://time.com/7130456/ozempic-side-effects-wegovy-mounjaro-gastroparesis-weight-loss/), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/498c2c5e-fb9c-461e-8e9c-5429696b56a6)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://apnews.com/article/92fa95115429c163eb7fa527ca6d94ce)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/beach-body-ready-ad-bikini-tax-b2758497.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/beach-body-ready-ad-bikini-tax-b2758497.html> - In 2015, Protein World launched a controversial 'Beach Body Ready' advertisement featuring a slim woman in a yellow bikini, sparking widespread outrage and discussions about body image. The ad was banned in the UK for promoting unrealistic beauty standards and implying that their weight loss supplement was essential for achieving a bikini-ready body. This incident highlighted societal pressures on women to conform to specific body types, leading to a broader conversation about body positivity and the impact of such marketing strategies on self-esteem.
3. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/science/article/2024/06/13/the-quest-for-a-slimmer-figure-is-driving-some-people-to-do-anything-to-get-their-hands-on-ozempic_6674629_10.html> - The misuse of GLP-1 analogs like Ozempic, originally intended for diabetes management, has surged among individuals seeking weight loss. This off-label use, driven by social media trends, raises safety concerns, including gastrointestinal issues and potential thyroid cancer risks. The French pharmacology society recommends restricting initial prescriptions to specialists to ensure proper medical oversight and minimize misuse, emphasizing the need for careful regulation and awareness among healthcare professionals.
4. <https://time.com/7130456/ozempic-side-effects-wegovy-mounjaro-gastroparesis-weight-loss/> - Patients are filing lawsuits over severe side effects linked to GLP-1 agonist drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, and Zepbound. These medications, praised for managing diabetes and obesity, have been associated with severe gastrointestinal issues such as gastroparesis, intestinal blockages, and other serious conditions. Legal actions claim inadequate risk disclosure, highlighting the need for deeper investigations into these drugs' effects and the balance between their benefits and risks.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/498c2c5e-fb9c-461e-8e9c-5429696b56a6> - The fashion industry has seen significant physical transformations among its members due to the widespread use of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy. Despite their effectiveness, many users are reluctant to openly discuss their use due to societal stigmas around weight loss. The industry's tendency to secretly or indirectly address drug use highlights persistent cultural biases against easy weight loss and the notion that thinness must be earned through traditional means.
6. <https://time.com/6259572/ozempic-eating-disorders/> - The increasing popularity of Ozempic, a diabetes drug being prescribed off-label for weight loss, is causing concern among people with eating disorders and health professionals. Media portrayals of thinness and extreme diets have previously contributed to eating disorders, and continuous coverage of Ozempic is potentially triggering for those in recovery. Experts advise those triggered by such content to mute or avoid it and to seek support through therapeutic strategies and professional help.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/92fa95115429c163eb7fa527ca6d94ce> - WeightWatchers announced its acquisition of telehealth company Sequence for $132 million to prescribe anti-obesity drugs, entering the growing market of weight loss prescription drugs. The drugs most talked about are GLP-1 agonists such as Ozempic and Wegovy. Ozempic is used for type 2 diabetes but not approved for weight loss, while Wegovy was approved for obesity in adults and adolescents. These medications work by boosting insulin release and suppressing appetite, resulting in significant weight loss.