

Who's the perfect 10? The answer would appear to be "who knows" given the results of a *Herald on Sunday* sizing experiment. **Alice Hudson** reports that one size does not necessarily fit all people of the same proportions.

YOU'VE SPENT months counting calories and sweating through step classes.

After all the effort, you've reached your target — the chance to join the ranks of the "perfect size 10s".

Or so you thought.

The standard measurements of yesteryear are long gone and shoppers have no guarantee that one size fits all people of the same proportions.

Top New Zealand fashion writer Stacy Gregg said today's sizing tags were a "rough estimate" at best.

"Frequently, sizes are completely meaningless."

She said top designers had told her sizing had become more generous over the years.

"What was once a 12 is now a 10 — partly to make women feel better, because we are getting bigger. It's intentional flattery."

Jenene Freer, who founded online women's magazine *nzgirl*, thought sizes were getting smaller.

"At Kookai, they won't make anything larger than a 2, which is the equivalent to a size 12."

She branched into clothing in 2005 and says the changes cause particular headaches for online shoppers.

Her site sends out two sizes of the same garment, and the buyer can return one or both if they fail to fit, no questions asked.

She said standard sizing would make life "a whole lot easier" for her staff and customers.

"It's a constant frustration in our office."

Lyle Reilly, of AUT's textile and design laboratory, said size tags meant almost nothing and things would "get worse before it gets better".

"I think a lot of people are totally confused."

The former technical manager at top British high street clothing retailer Marks & Spencer said the "vanity sizing" described by Gregg was a major reason why manufacturers had moved away from standard measurements.

He said basing measurements on our last size survey, which was done in

A QUESTION OF SIZE



Sizes vary widely depending on the retailer. *Herald on Sunday* reporter **Alice Hudson** selected five similar skirts at random and found the sizes that fitted her ranged from 4 to 12.

the 1970s and based on British measurements, was "crazy".

Body shapes had changed so substantially over the last few decades, to standardise clothing sizes to specific measurements would not solve the problem anyway.

"Perhaps it's time to have a greater understanding of our own personal sizing. The difference between a woman's waist and hips can vary dramatically depending on the body shape.

You can have someone with a very slim waist and a big bum, for example, but it's still categorised as a size 10-12."

Digital body scanning was increasingly being employed by international clothing manufacturers, like American plus size company Lane Bryant, which had introduced a new line of jeans based on scans of 14,000 customers. He said it was the way of the future.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs said sizing was not covered by legislation and was therefore up to the manufacturer.

A spokesman for Standards New Zealand said there were once six Kiwi-unique recommended measurements for children's, men's and women's clothing.

Introduced in 1973, they were thrown out in 1988, "because obviously they were out of date".

He said there had been talk about resurrecting a standard for clothing sizes, particularly after corporate T-shirts ordered by the department turned out not to fit, but it was not a high priority.

Gregg said any attempt to standardise the industry wouldn't work.

"You can't because sizes are determined by the cut of the garment, and everyone cuts garments differently."

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