
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Are models too skinny?



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob...

Finn

...and I'm Finn. Hello, Rob.

Rob

Hi there, Finn. I have to say you've got a lean and hungry look today!

Finn

Oh really? I'll take that as a compliment, shall I?

Rob

Please do. Do you want a doughnut?

Finn

Actually, yeah – can I have two? So what are we talking about today, Rob?

Rob

We're talking about **skinny** – or very thin – models and whether there should be a law banning them from working on the catwalk. And a **catwalk** is the long runway that models walk down at fashion shows.

Finn

Well, no danger there for me there Rob – I think I like eating a little bit too much.

Rob

And there's no danger of you becoming a model anyway, Finn – because you're not good looking enough, I'm afraid!

Finn

Oh really. OK. Thank you, Rob. That's very nice of you. I think it's time for today's quiz question, please.

Rob

OK – well, here goes. Which country banned the use of underweight models in 2013? Was it...

- a) Israel
- b) Canada
- or c) the US

Finn

You know what? I've got no idea. So I'll take a guess and say a) Israel.

Rob

OK. Well, we'll find out if that's the right answer later on. So come on, Finn, what do you think? Are the models we see on the catwalk and in the media too skinny?

Finn

Well, yeah, I think some models do look fantastic but others look painfully thin. Now, the **media**, by the way, refers to the different ways information is communicated to us, so, for example, through TV, radio, magazines, and often the internet and newspapers.

Rob

OK. Well let's listen to Jamie Gavin, founder and managing director of media agency inPress, talking about a new French law being discussed, preventing the use of underweight models. Can you spot a phrase that means a limit or an ending?

Jamie Gavin, founder and managing director of media agency inPress

I think it's a BMI of 18 or less, that's hopefully going to be banned by the French Assembly today. This is what the US health organization states as being kind of clinically unhealthy. So it's almost like a cut-off point. Yes, be thin, yes be thinner than the general population, but once it starts getting to unhealthy territory really that's time to start banning it.

Finn

And the French Assembly did pass this law a few days later. Now, did you spot the phrase for a limit or an ending? It's **cut-off point**.

Rob

So models that are too thin will be **banned** – or won't be allowed – to work. And the cut-off point is a BMI of 18 or less.

Finn

Now **BMI** stands for body mass index. And this is the ratio of a person's height to their weight. **Ratio** means the relationship between two things, showing how big one thing is compared to another.

Rob

But what happens if you're just naturally really thin? The authorities could be accused of **discrimination** against skinny people – or treating some people less fairly than others.

Finn

That's right. It's a good point. And that's why the French authorities and those of some other countries are using BMI as a way of deciding. So, models with a BMI of 18 or less weigh too little when compared to how tall they are.

Rob

And **clinically** unhealthy – what does that mean?

Finn

It means when you need medical treatment for a condition or illness.

Rob

Now **anorexia** is an illness where a person refuses to eat in order to lose weight. But some models these days are so skinny they do look anorexic.

Finn

You're right. Let's hear more from Jamie Gavin talking about protecting the health of models. What phrase is used to mean 'the responsibility'?

Jamie Gavin, founder and managing director of media agency inPress

The theatrical agents and the modelling agents that have got a responsibility to look after their clients. There's a huge amount of pressure on both the agent and on the models themselves and really the buck lies with them to make sure these people are healthy and that they're looking after their careers as well.

Rob

So the problem with the modelling industry is that the agents who employ the girls **put pressure on** – or strongly persuade – them to lose weight.

Finn

And in this way they aren't taking care of their clients, they are actually putting them at risk. Now, why's that, Rob?

Rob

It's because many people in the fashion industry prefer very thin models so it's a case of **supply and demand**. The agents are simply supplying the fashion industry with the type of girls they want.

Finn

Right. And what does the reporter mean when he says the buck lies with the agents?

Rob

When **the buck lies – or stops – with someone** it means it's his or her responsibility, not someone else's. And agents who employed underweight models can face fines of up to 75,000 euros, or even prison sentences.

Finn

OK, shall we hear the answer to today's quiz question?

Rob

OK. Well, I asked you which country banned the use of underweight models in 2013? Was it... a) Israel b) Canada or c) the US?

Finn

I said a) Israel.

Rob

And you were right, Finn! Well done. Now, shall we listen to the words we learned today?

Finn

We heard:

skinny

catwalk

media

cut-off point

banned

BMI (body mass index)

ratio

discrimination

clinically

anorexia

put pressure on

supply and demand

the buck stops with or the buck lies with

Rob

Thank you. Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you had a healthy interest in today's programme. Please join us again soon.

Finn

Doughnut?

Rob

Go on then.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

skinny

very thin

catwalk

raised platform at a fashion show that models walk along

media

the different ways information is communicated to us, for example through tv, radio, magazines and newspapers

cut-off point

limit or an ending

banned

not allowed by law

bmi

(abbreviation) body mass index

ratio

relationship between two things, showing how big one thing is compared to the other

discrimination

treating some people less fairly than others

clinically

in a medical context

anorexia

an illness where a person refuses to eat in order to lose weight

put pressure on

strongly persuade

supply and demand

the relationship between what people want and what is available

the buck lies/stops with

your own responsibility