

How big (or small) is large?

March 17 2009

Trousers have to be tried on - the variation between size labeling and actual clothing size is huge. This is shown by the report "Large? Clothing sizes and size labeling", which looks at the relationship between clothing sizes and the actual clothing measurements as well as consumers' views on and experiences of this.

The report is based on a [consumer survey](#), measurements of [trousers](#) in Norway, Sweden and Finland, and in-depth interviews in Norway. The report is written by researchers at the National Institute for Consumer Research in Norway (SIFO). Viveka Berggren Torell from the Center for Consumer Science at the University of Gothenburg, together with a representative of the National Consumer Research Centre in Finland, has contributed translation and dissemination of the web-based questionnaire.

The report shows that the sizing systems used today are perceived as confusing and varied by consumers. The results of the measurements of the trousers support this as they show enormous variations between and within [clothing sizes](#). Trousers labeled as size L can in some cases even be smaller than trousers labeled as size S. The variations are greater for women's trousers than for men's trousers, especially women's trousers in big sizes. Despite this, the report shows that there are few systematic variations between sizes and [size labeling](#) that can be referred to the country of origin of the clothing make, the producing country, or general differences between the [Nordic countries](#). The exception is shops aimed at young women, in which the trousers were slightly smaller than they were in shops for adult customers.

There are currently many different labeling systems for clothing sizes and they are used in different ways. The European committee for [standardisation](#) is working to develop a new common standard for size labeling of clothes. According to the survey, the consumers feel that the current labeling is adequate, but there is still support for a common labeling standard.

Improved knowledge about the link between the body, clothes and size labeling will make it easier for consumers to find clothes that fit and thereby also reduce the number of incorrect purchases. This knowledge is also important in relation to current discussions on body weight and body ideals.

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

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