

# Where TF Are the Non-Hourglass Plus-Size Women?

By Nicolette Mason  
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Lydia Hudgens

It feels like every day there's another body-positive headline in fashion—[airbrush-free swimsuit campaigns](#), designer collaborations, New York Fashion Week's [record number of plus-size models](#)—and while these stories represent major strides in size inclusion, there's one thing that still bothers me: Almost every time we see a woman above a size 14 in magazines, in advertisements, or on the runway, she's a perfect hourglass shape.

Think about the most famous plus-size models: They have big busts and full hips, with snatched waists and thin arms and legs. Gorgous—but also, newflash: That's not how most plus-size women look. Hell, all you need to do is look around on the street to know that many of us are sounder in the "swung" places, with full faces and thicker limbs. If you listened in on a conversation among my plus-size blogger friends or spent an hour going down a Twitter rabbit hole, you'd learn we're sick of seeing brands brag about being inclusive without accurately representing all our bodies. How progressive is body positivity if we're affirming only one plus-size body type? While other industries like film and television show a wider range of women (think *This Is Us*' [Chrissy Metz](#) and *Pitch Perfect 3*'s [Rebel Wilson](#)), the fashion world celebrates only perfect proportions—and thus implies that even though it may finally be OK to be above a size 14, your body still needs to have curves in all the right places. Because of that messaging, I've never felt like my own body was "right." My size has always fluctuated between 12 and 16, but my shape is consistently larger on top with smaller hips—my shoulders are broad, and my breasts disproportionately large. Though I'm not exactly into equating women to fruit, I call myself strawberry-shaped.



Eight years ago I started challenging the hourglass fashion norm through my blog ([nicollettemason.com](#)) and then my Instagram ([@nicollettemason](#)). While those platforms have been great sources of empowerment and a place where I can connect with fashion-minded women who look similar to me, I also get daily reminders of the bias that still exists. (As one follower recently posted, "You look like you're going to topple over.") And I can't tell you how many times commenters have told me to wear a belt to cinch my waist! Is there any escaping the tyranny of the hourglass when I'm just trying to live my life and look cute?



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I'm a self-loving 31-year-old woman, but the critique of my body still stings. Plus, the pervasive promotion of one ideal shape has practical effects: It means many plus-size women, like me, have a hard time finding clothes that match our style. While there's a world of fashion-forward silhouettes for sizes 0 to 12, like straight-cut jeans and one-shoulder tops, the majority of styles for sizes 14-plus reinforce the hourglass archetype, like fit-and-flare dresses. Some of us want shift styles, oversized jackets, and culottes too!

But know that there is hope. Plus-size women are increasingly demanding better options. After extensive feedback from its customers, Eloquii has put resources toward making a range of cuts, like the "Viola" fit, which includes tops, pants, skirts, and dresses designed for women with hips much wider than their bust. "We heard so often that women with this shape can't wear anything body-con or straight-cut without the top being too large," says Eloquii VP of design and creative director Jodi Arnold. "Or they were unable to find a blouse that fit through the shoulders without its being too tight around the hips." More good news: A fit for fuller waists is coming within the next year. Universal Standard is also trying to tackle the one-size-does-not-fit-all dilemma, starting with its fit models. "We wanted someone who had an ample bust, waist, and bottom," says cofounder and chief creative officer Alexandra Waldman, "so that we instantly see if there are issues in any of the fuller areas."

And for Los Angeles-based brand Zelic for She, designer Elann Zelic also considers her own rounder shape. "Hourglass is just one body type," she says. "When designers limit themselves to designing for that, they dismiss a group of potential customers. I used to make a lot of fit-and-flare styles, but with the oversized dresses and palazzo pants that I now make, people can adjust the garment to where their waistline lands."

While brands catch on and make changes, I continue to find solutions for styling my proportions. I shop big to fit my bust and shoulders, then have a tailor nip in the hips of my clothes. I always have my Kate Spade leather jacket on hand (the cropped silhouette hits at my natural waist). And I've found off-the-rack brands, like ASOS and NYDJ, that work for my body. I'm proof that there's more than one type of plus-size woman who loves fashion—and whether we're a size 12 or 22, strawberry, or hell, any shape, we all deserve to be well-dressed.

FEATURED VIDEO  
  
"I can't be skinny all the time. I like to drink and I like to eat. I like burgers and bagels."  
10 Celebrities That Prove Every Body Is a Beach Body