

Does Barbie cause girls to have negative feelings about their bodies?

Nature asked [clinical health psychologist Jennifer] Webb for her assessment of whether Barbie is or can become a force for good in girls' and women's lives.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

Do you think Barbie has overall been good or bad for girls and women?

Wow. That's a very complicated question. Limiting that to just the psychology research literature, in the past 20 years, we've had about two handfuls of studies that have looked at some of these issues. And it's a relatively mixed bag.

...

When we look at those specific slices, we do see some evidence that having some exposure to Barbie or other thin-type dolls similar to Barbie does impact young girls' experiences of body image. For example, we see lower body esteem and greater thin-ideal internalization.

We also know from some of this research that weight bias really gets ingrained at really young ages. Some of the research has looked at girls ranging in age from 3 to 10 years old presented with dolls of diverse body sizes, including either a larger-figured Barbie-like doll or the newer-generation curvy Barbie. Typically, the larger-figured doll or curvy Barbie tended to be ascribed more negative characteristics.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)