

# The Mini Skirt

## 1925 – 1973

A sourced timeline of the hemline that rewrote the rules: the laws that measured it, the shops that sold it, the people who fought it, and the one question nobody can settle.

*atelier du mini*

A free field guide · every line sourced

# Every hem has a ruler.

A number is only as good as the point it was measured from.

**1925**

Hems sit **10 to 12 inches off the floor**. Measured from the ground, not the knee.

P. Parmal, 'Hemlines'

**1927**

**15 inches off the floor.** Flappers showed the knee, barely, for about two years.

P. Parmal, 'Hemlines'

**1942**

US order **L-85** caps a size-16 wool skirt at **28 inches from the back waistband.** A maximum: shorter was always legal. Home dressmakers were named too; bridal, maternity and burial gowns were exempt.

Federal Register, 10 Apr 1942 (order L-85)

**c. 1959**

A Mary Quant **Bazaar** dress. The V&A's record: **"Skirt has been altered so it is shorter than originally designed."** The customer moved the hem first.

V&A, record O1460135

**28 in**

The longest a size-16 skirt could legally be in 1942.



# Who named it, who sold it.

| | |
|---|---|
| 29 Jul 1962 | **'Mini-skirt'** appears in the **Brownsville Herald, Texas**, in a wire story datelined Mexico City, before it was a London legend.<br>Antedating by lexicographer John Baker (ADS-L) |
| 1962–63 | Quant signs with **JC Penney** (1,700 US stores), then launches the **Ginger Group**, her cheaper, mass-produced line. Even her tights were made by another firm to her design.<br>V&A, Mary Quant; V&A T.101H-1983 |
| 1964–65 | **André Courrèges** takes it to couture, but one fashion school gives it three different seasons on its own pages.<br>FIT (Paula Reed; condition report; 1960s page) |
| Who? | The V&A gave Quant a retrospective in 2019-20 and still says there is **no conclusive evidence** she invented it. Courrèges has the runway, Bates the press, Quant the shop.<br>V&A; UAL case study |

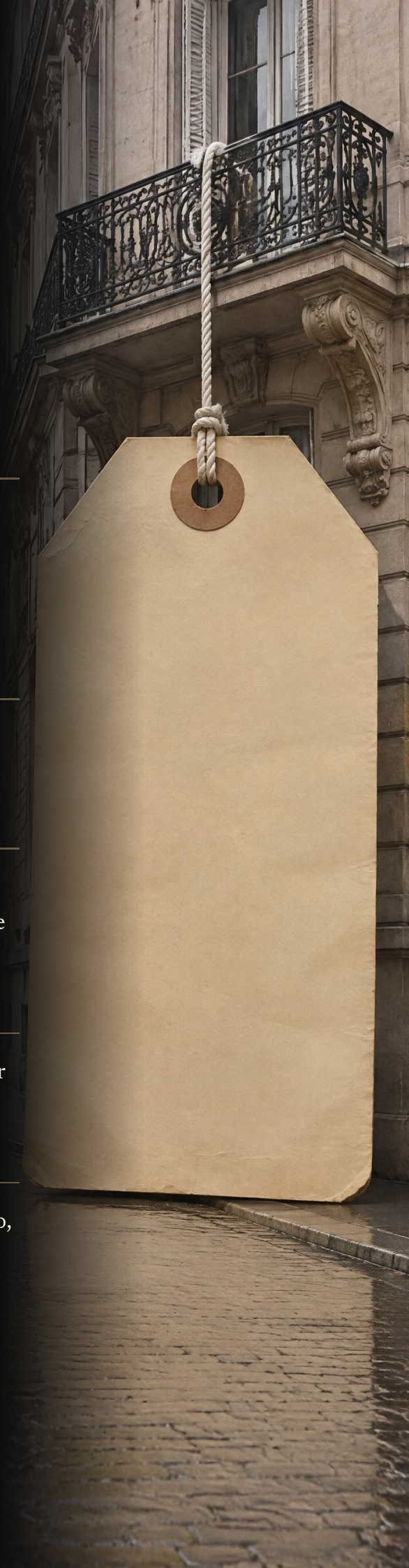
**7,000,000**

Women with at least one Quant product by the end of the 1960s, the V&A estimates.

# Measured, banned, fought.

## *"An exhibition of meat."*

Coco Chanel, quoted by TIME



**30 Oct 1965**

**Jean Shrimpton** at Derby Day, Flemington: no hat, no gloves. **4 inches** above the knee says the Victoria Racing Club; **5** said Melbourne's Sun.

Victoria Racing Club; The Sun via CNN

**1960s**

US high schools ban the mini for **'distraction'**.

TIME

**1968**

Tanzania: a ruling-party Youth League campaign against the mini. No source we read cites a statute.

A. Ivaska

**5 Jun 1972**

Uganda's **Mini-Skirts Decree**: no higher than **3 inches above the knee**.

The Observer, 2024

**1973**

South Korea measures from the knee too, printed three ways: **17, 10 and 20 cm**.

Korea Times 2019, 2013; CNN 2013

Studio plates generated with AI; documents and records are real.



# 59%

for the mini, 32% for the midi. A 1970 Louis Harris poll for Virginia Slims.

## The Midi War, and after.

**1969**

**Mr Freedom**, London: the V&A holds dated hot pants a year before WWD named them in 1970.

V&A T.636-1996

**1970**

Shops push mid-calf; protesters take scissors to it. By late 1970, retailers admitted defeat.

LIFE via TIME; Saturday Evening Post

**1971**

Southwest Airlines dresses its first hostesses in **hot pants and go-go boots**.

PaperCity; Contingent

**1975**

The mini survives, but not as the default: the V&A's 'Yum Yum' ensemble by Quant is hemmed **below the knee**.

V&A; FIDM

One sourced lesson a day continues on Instagram and YouTube at **@atelierdumini**.

*atelier du mini*