

# #39 Pull Your Pants Up (Stats & Facts)

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*Episode Description* Would you let YOUR kid sag their pants? Is it a fashion statement OR MENACE to society?

## **Focus of Research**

Origin of sagging pants

Sagging pants and crime

## **“The Murky Genesis Of Sagging”**

An NPR blog explores the topic of sagging, its history, and its origins. According to the blogger, how or where the sagging trend began is “murky.” According to the blogger, “[t]he most familiar origin myth for sagging goes something like this: Convicts prohibited from wearing belts often wore sagging prison-issued uniforms, and they carried that look with them once they were back on the outside. Another story goes that some prisoners would wear their pants low to let other inmates know they were sexually available.”

**Source:** [NPR - Sagging Pants And The Long History Of 'Dangerous' Street Fashion](#)

## **Sagging and the Law**

Some states have enacted bans against sagging and have met disapproval. According to a 2012 article from Daily Mail, the Cocoa Florida city council granted local law enforcement “the powers of a fashion police after they passed a law banning the wearing of saggy pants in public.” This ban included exposed underwear or skin more than three inches below the waistline on city property (streets, sidewalks, etc.). “Those judged by the police to be wearing inappropriately hanging pants will be handed a civil fine of \$25 for the first offence, \$75 for a third and \$100 for every time after that.”

Another Floridian city imposed a saggy pants ban and even expanded it to include women. Signs can be found through the city of Opa-Locka “warning that low-slung pants violate the city’s law.



Critics of the ban assert that it gives police the right to increase the use of their stop and frisk policy. Critics have also said that the ban could lead to racial profiling those who wear saggy pants and automatically classifying them as criminals.

**Sources:** [Daily Mail – Florida city bans saggy pants... and is accused of racial profiling for doing it](#); [Huffington Post - City Votes To Expand Saggy Pants Ban To Ladies](#)

Similar sentiments are echoed in this 2013 article from newamericamedia.org. “Saggy-pants laws violate a basic First Amendment right to free speech and the liberty interest in expression. Clothing style is one of the most personal forms of expression. An individual’s liberty interest is

a basic right that falls under the same category as the other liberties guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution. Like stop and frisk and other so-called crime-fighting initiatives, saggy-pants laws invite trouble. Based on ‘a look,’ police target certain communities, usually the African-American community, even though people of all races wear pants that might fall under the legal prohibitions. This racially based profiling leads to a disproportionate number of African Americans being stopped and searched unnecessarily, which in turn leads to unnecessary arrests for questionable minor offenses. **The fact is that no link has been found between wearing saggy pants and increased crime or threat to public safety—but clothing has become a pretext to stop and search people for other things.**” (Emphasis added)

The article adds that the fashion policing of sagging is a waste of public resources at the expense of public safety. “[L]aw enforcement professionals devote time and resources monitoring fashion while many communities face serious public-safety issues and stretched budgets. Our police and courts would serve our communities better by focusing on violent individuals who pose a threat to their neighbors. We increase the risk to ourselves by using scarce resources targeting people who have done no harm other than to dress in a way that others don’t like.”

**Source:** [A New Look for Racial Profiling – Saggy Pants Legislation](#)