To horrified parents, they are indecent.

Take National University of Singapore accountancy undergraduate Samantha Kho, who wears shorts to school almost every day. "It's the norm in school - you see a lot of people wearing them," she says.

While the 21-year-old does not know if such short shorts are allowed on campus, she adds: "I know they encourage us not to wear slippers, but you don't have to listen."

A check with tertiary institutions reveals that while dress codes are in place, they are generally not strictly enforced.

"We treat our students as young adults and grant them freedom in their choice of dressing. When students are required to make presentations in class or attend formal events, most of them do come in formal or business attire," says Associate Professor Low Aik Meng, dean of students at the Singapore Management University.

However, 53-year-old housewife Han-nah Ang does not think such shorts are hot stuff and considers them indecent. She says: "I see so many students wearing these shorts. They portray such a slutty image, I wouldn't even wear them at home."

Over two days in Orchard Road, lifestyle spotted at least 50 women - both young and not so young - clad in mini-shorts. Many different body types were spotted, from the pre-pubescent nubile teenager to the more-than-voluptuous teen wannabe. These shorts of all shapes and sizes were paired with oversized, billowy blouses or skimpy tank tops.

Wearers included 34-year-old Annie Owong, who owns more than 10 pairs of shorts in various colours.

The retail assistant, who was on her way to work in her short shorts, says matter of factly: "The weather in Singapore is so hot, so shorts are very comfortable and convenient, especially for my work."

Hot pants are short, tight shorts that were popular in the early 1970s. They were usually worn to the disco and paired with platform shoes or high heels.

Now, they are worn, butt cheeks exposed, a la Lady Gaga style. The flamboyant American singer appears in her music videos, such as her hit song Just Dance, sporting them.

Local fashion designer Thomas Wee says: "Fashion comes and goes. Hipster pants from the 1970s were the rage not too long ago, together with that comes the hot pants. It's no surprise."

Ever'ley, a retail store in Far East Plaza, sells at least one pair of shorts a day that cost from $23.90 upwards. Owner Sandy Pah, 44, says: "My customers are as young as 11. There's a lot of peer pressure to wear these shorts."

She adds: "Nowadays, the style is very careless, so people can be lazy when they dress up."

Hot pants are also being spotted at theatres and restaurants. But operators do not seem to mind. Victoria Concert Hall and the Esplanade do not impose dress codes on their patrons.

An Esplanade spokesman says: "They wear shorts for us to see. If the girls don't have nice legs, then we just have to avert our eyes."

Restaurant group Les Amis does have a dress code for its fine-dining restaurants, but it has yet to turn diners away because of their attire.

Group spokesman Raymond Lim says: "Should they decide to come in outfits that may make other diners uncomfortable, we will provide them with the appropriate attire, such as long pants and shawls, discreetly."

Hot pants do have an uncomfortable side to them - and Lifestyle is not referring to their being too tight. Unwanted attention from leering men makes some wearers uneasy.

Miss Kho says: "It's usually the old guys. To the younger ones, us girls wearing shorts makes no difference."

For guys, these leg-baring females are a feast for the eyes. Student Mathew Ong, 17, says: "They wear shorts for us to see. If the girls don't have nice legs, then we just have to avert our eyes."

Do you think wearing hot pants everywhere is appropriate? Send your views to suntimes@sph.com.sg