

Is a good man still hard to find?

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(PhysOrg.com) -- On Valentine's Day couples make a special effort to celebrate their relationships. But spare a thought for the so-called 'desperate and dateless' - those people who would like to have a partner but can't find one.

Popular commentators on social trends suggested a few years ago that women, especially those in their early 30s and beyond, have it particularly tough finding a partner because there is a 'man drought'. It's been said that [females](#) outnumber [males](#) age-for-age at every age from their early 30s until [middle age](#).

For example, for every year of age between 30 and 55, there are about 2000-4000 more women than men, says Macquarie University Professor

of Legal Governance Brian Opeskin, who decided to make a detailed study of the topic.

“The study confirms that there is a net shortfall of males, age-for-age, among Australians in their 30s, 40s and 50s. But it appears to be more of a ‘dry’ than a ‘drought’,” Opeskin said.

In relative terms, the shortfall is quite shallow. It is as true today as it was a century ago that there is no serious imbalance of the sexes until older ages, when relationship formation is unlikely to be a major concern. Nevertheless, sex imbalances can be important for sub-populations identified by social status, ethnicity or geographical location - even if they are small for the population as a whole, he said.

Opeskin says it’s a near-universal phenomenon that more males are born than females.

“In most human societies, there about 105 male births for every 100 female but females have the advantage over time because they are more biologically robust. Thus the ratio of the sexes is determined by the balance between the natural processes of birth and death and any effects of migration,” he said.

But Australian females didn’t always have it so bad. Opeskin notes that during colonial days, the relative scarcity of females gave women from even modest backgrounds significant prospects for advancement. But over two centuries that advantage has eroded and the population has become significantly more feminine. Even Australia’s net migration intake has become distinctly more feminine since the 1970s, he said.

Another more sobering reason for the gender imbalance is that males in their 20s and 30s experience two to three times the level of mortality of females of similar age - due mostly to motor vehicle accidents and

suicide.

Still, whether it's a 'drought' or a 'dry' Opeskin said that Australian policy makers face important challenges in promoting gender balance in the migration program and in ameliorating the large and persistent sex differences in mortality - especially for young adult males.

Provided by Macquarie University

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