

# Political preferences play different role in dating, mating

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New research suggests that individuals attempting to attract a mate often avoid advertising their political leanings. The findings, co-authored by political scientists Rose McDermott of Brown University, Casey A. Klofstad of the University of Miami, and Peter K. Hatemi, a genetic epidemiologist at Pennsylvania State University, are published in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior*.

"Because we know that long-term mates are more politically similar than random attachment might predict, we were interested to see how people seeking a mate end up with people who share their political values," said McDermott. "This is particularly important because [political ideology](#) appears to be in part heritable, and so mates pass their ideology on to their children."

For their study, titled "Do bedroom eyes wear political glasses? The role of [politics](#) in human mate attraction," the research team randomly sampled 2,944 profiles from a popular Internet [dating site](#) and examined whether people indicated an interest in politics or selected a specific political view. They found that only 14 percent of online daters included "political interests" in their profile, which ranked 23rd out of 27 interest categories — just below "video games" and above "business networking" and "book club."

To put this in perspective, the authors write, "When asked to describe their body type, a larger proportion of our sample voluntarily described themselves as either 'heavy set,' having 'a few extra pounds,' or 'stocky'

(17%) than listed 'politics' as one of their interests.

Other findings:

- Few individuals were willing to express a definitive political preference. Of those that listed politics as an interest, the majority — 57 percent — reported that their politics were "middle of the road."
- Women were 8 percent less likely to report being interested in politics.
- A higher income, education, and degree of civil engagement (i.e., volunteerism) increased the likelihood of listing politics as an interest.
- Older daters and those with higher education levels were more willing to express a definitive political preference, such as "very liberal" or "ultra conservative."

### **Politics in dating vs. mating**

The researchers note that the apparent reluctance to reveal political preferences is interesting because previous studies have shown that spouses share political views more than almost any other trait, with religious affiliation being the exception. They ask, "What steps between mate selection and actual mating occur that drive politically similar people to long-term partnership?"

They point to two possible explanations. First, that humans desire compatibility in their long-term relationships, which, from an evolutionary perspective, should increase the likelihood of being able to raise offspring successfully. Perhaps individuals are not choosy about politics at the outset of the relationship, but are likely to pursue long-term commitments with individuals who share political attitudes.

Second, people could be making long-term choices based on nonpolitical characteristics that correlate with political leanings, such as religion, thus unintentionally sorting on politics.

"At some point in the dating process we somehow filter out people who do not share our political preferences," said Klofstad. "Our best guess is that in the short-run most people want to cast as wide a net as possible when dating. However, in the long-run shared political preferences become a critical foundation of lasting relationships, despite the fact that many Americans are not even interested in politics."

Provided by Brown University

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