

# Study supports the theory that 'men are idiots'

December 11 2014

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The theory that men are idiots and often do stupid things is backed up by evidence in the Christmas issue of *The BMJ*. The findings are based on an analyses of sex differences in idiotic behaviour.

Sex differences in risk seeking behaviour, emergency hospital admissions, and mortality are well documented. Males are more likely to be admitted to an emergency department after accidental injuries, more likely to be admitted with a sporting injury, and more likely to be involved in a fatal road traffic collision.

However, little is known about [sex differences](#) in idiotic risk taking behaviour. So researchers in north east England decided to test "male idiot theory" (MIT) that many of the differences in risk seeking behaviour may be explained by the observation that men are idiots and idiots do stupid things.

They reviewed data on idiotic behaviours demonstrated by winners of the Darwin Award over a 20 year period (1995 to 2014), noting the sex of the winner. To qualify, nominees must improve the gene pool by eliminating themselves from the human race using astonishingly stupid methods.

Worthy candidates include a man stealing a ride home by hitching a shopping trolley to the back of a train, only to be dragged two miles to his death before the train was able to stop; and the terrorist who posted a letter bomb with insufficient postage stamps and who, on its return,

unthinkingly opened his own letter.

Of the 413 Darwin Award nominations, 332 were independently verified and confirmed by the Darwin Awards Committee. Of these, 14 were shared by male and female nominees - usually overly adventurous couples in compromising positions - leaving 318 valid cases for statistical testing.

Of these 318 cases, 282 Darwin Awards were awarded to males, and just 36 awards given to females. Males thus made up 88.7% of Darwin Award winners, and this sex difference is highly statistically significant, say the authors.

This finding is entirely consistent with male idiot theory (MIT) and supports the hypothesis that men are idiots and idiots do stupid things.

However, this study has limitations, add the authors. For example, women may be more likely to nominate men for a Darwin Award or the sex difference may reflect differences in alcohol use between men and women.

Despite this, it is puzzling that males are willing to take such unnecessary risks - simply as a rite of passage, in pursuit of male social esteem, or solely in exchange for "bragging rights," say the authors.

They believe male idiot theory deserves further investigation, and, "with the festive season upon us, we intend to follow up with observational field studies and an experimental study - males and females, with and without alcohol - in a semi-naturalistic Christmas party setting," they conclude.

**More information:** *BMJ*, [www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.g7094](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.g7094)

Provided by British Medical Journal

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