

# Women in management who wear provocative clothing are seen as less competent

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Females who wear provocative clothing at work are more likely to be seen as incompetent than those that dress more conservatively by other females, finds research from the University of Hertfordshire.

## Based on first impressions

Participants, consisting of UK female students and employed females, viewed images of females who were given job titles of either senior manager or receptionist and who were wearing [clothing](#) in slightly different ways (more or less provocatively) and rated each picture on a number of items, based on their first impression.

Researchers found that only [women](#) with the higher status (senior manager) as opposed to low status (receptionist) were the ones who were judged harsher in the provocative clothing.

## Choice of clothing

The range of clothing choices available to women compared to men, presents women with the challenge of balancing attractiveness and professionalism at work and this study investigated how minor manipulations in women's work clothing, for example shorter skirts and lower buttoned blouses, affect how they are judged in the workplace.

## Affecting perceptions

Karen Pine, lead researcher said: "Women who even subtly sexualize their [work](#) attire may be detrimentally affecting the way they are perceived by other [females](#). We manipulated very small changes in how clothing is worn and so our findings have clear implications for working women about how their appearance is perceived by other women."

**More information:** "Unbuttoned: The Interaction Between Provocativeness of Female Work Attire and Occupational Status." *Sex Roles* February 2015, Volume 72, Issue 3-4, pp 105-116. [DOI: 10.1007/s11199-015-0450-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0450-8)

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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