

Smart but shy—what women want in a sperm donor

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A QUT study has revealed women using online sperm donors prefer men who are smart but shy rather than extroverted.

A QUT study into how women choose sperm donors online has revealed men who are intellectual, shy, calm and methodical are selected to produce more children than those who are extroverted.

The study, Determinants of online [sperm donor](#) success: how [women](#) choose by Stephen Whyte and Professor Benno Torgler from QUT's Queensland Behavioural Economics Group, has been published by the international journal *Applied Economics Letters*.

"Worldwide demand for sperm donors is so great an informal online market has emerged in which offspring are being produced outside of the more formal fertility clinic setting," said Mr Whyte.

"You would expect in an online setting, men would have to sell or promote themselves to women, and extroverted men should be better at doing that. But what we find is actually the opposite.

"In what we believe is the first study to include males who are donating purely through unregulated websites and forums, we interviewed and collected data from 56 men.

"This online donor market works quite differently to fertility clinics in that it facilitates more interaction between the recipient and the donor. This allows us to explore individual donor personality characteristics and how likely they are to be chosen by women as their donor.

"Women were far less likely to choose the sperm of fretful or socially awkward men but at the same time those with lively, extroverted personalities were also less successful in being chosen."

The participants for the study were aged between 23 and 66 and were from Australia, Canada, the UK, Italy, Sweden and the USA. Data was collected across 2012 and 2013 via online surveys of regulated (paid), semi-regulated and unregulated (free) online sperm donation forums and websites.

"Research has previously shown humans are good at judging personality traits as well as levels of intelligence with only minimal exposure to appearance and behaviours, and our findings certainly seem to support that," Mr Whyte said.

"We also found that 73 per cent of our participants who had children by

donation kept in touch via mail, email, phone, video link or even in person with at least one of their donor children."

More information: Stephen Whyte et al. Determinants of online sperm donor success: how women choose, *Applied Economics Letters* (2015). [DOI: 10.1080/13504851.2015.1090543](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504851.2015.1090543)

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