

Research shows dating stereotypes still exist in the virtual world

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More people than ever are using online dating sites, with virtual dates becoming the new normal for single people during lockdown. Now a new study shows that while the way we date may have changed, some

traditional gender stereotypes still remain.

Cognitive psychologists from the Universities of Lincoln and Swansea studied 120,000 dating profiles in partnership with dating site eHarmony, and found that the stereotype of men preferring to pursue younger [women](#) is still true, but only to a certain extent.

Dr. Robin Kramer of the University of Lincoln, UK, and Dr. Alex Jones at the University of Swansea found one in five British men is in a relationship with a woman five years younger, but that men who are fathers are more open to dating women their own age, as priorities and core values change.

The research also found that on average, women prefer to date a man at least 18 months older.

Single men cite looks and health as the key factors for dating [younger women](#), while women are looking for a partner with emotional maturity and a desire for a committed relationship.

Looking at the population as a whole, on average, men look for a partner two years younger than they are, while women look for someone 18 months older.

The reality largely aligns with this—the average age gap for a woman and her partner is 20 months, while, on average, men are in a relationship with someone 13 months younger. However, among men who don't want children, no age gap exists—indicating fertility is a key component.

Interestingly, of men in the age group of 18 to 20, those who wanted children had a minimum age preference about 18 months older than those who did not. Academics suggest that this is down to the

subconscious impact that women of about 25 years of age have the highest fertility.

Dr. Robin Kramer commented: "Even seemingly simple factors in attraction like a partner's looks often have their roots in evolutionary psychology. For example, waist to hip ratio in women—otherwise known as an hourglass figure—may indicate levels of oestrogen and testosterone, which can be a sign of good reproductive function, while emotional maturity in men indicates a more likely willingness to stick around and raise offspring.

"Examining the psychological mechanics that go on behind the scenes in modern dating can help us better understand the decisions people make in their love lives. This report demonstrates that while there is a complex patchwork of factors that have an influence on our choice of partner, to an extent, we are still being driven by fundamental biology in an increasingly complex world."

More information: The research can be read in full on the eHarmony website. www.eharmony.co.uk/

Provided by University of Lincoln

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