

# People who control their desires can face social isolation

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Desire is part of human nature, and being vulnerable to desire is part of what differentiates humans from machines. However, a new international study has found that individuals who are better able to resist

their desires are perceived as more robotic and dehumanized.

"Imagine a colleague with iron self-control—a person who has their entire day planned down to five-minute increments to eat and even to run to the bathroom. This person never sleeps in, never stops to chat with co-workers, and never misses a scheduled gym session," said Abigail Scholer, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo who co-authored the report. "Sure, they're probably productive, but how do they fare socially?"

That's the question asked by an international team of academics, including Scholer Waterloo alumni Franki Kung from Psychological Sciences at Purdue University and Justin P. Brienza from The University of Queensland Business School. Samantha P. Lapka of Purdue also contributed to the six studies involving 2,007 people.

"Whereas past research shows that people high in self-control enjoy a broad range of benefits, we're beginning to see that such people also experience some social trade-offs," said Kung. "They are more likely to be seen as robotic and less-than-human. Humans have flaws, are vulnerable to passions, and we tend to gravitate to people like that—even if they're not as reliable as those with a high degree of [self-control](#)."

This dehumanization has potential social consequences. The report notes that a person seen as less human is more likely to be socially rejected.

"What we're finding is that even if self-restraint and competence are seen as virtues leading to success, they do not necessarily translate into social success, as that person may be perceived as lacking some fundamental human qualities," said Scholer.

The research was published on *PsyArXiv*.

**More information:** Samantha Lapka et al, Determined yet Dehumanized: People Higher in Self-Control are Seen as More Robotic, *PsyArXiv* (2022). [DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/sp8aj](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/sp8aj)

Provided by University of Waterloo

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