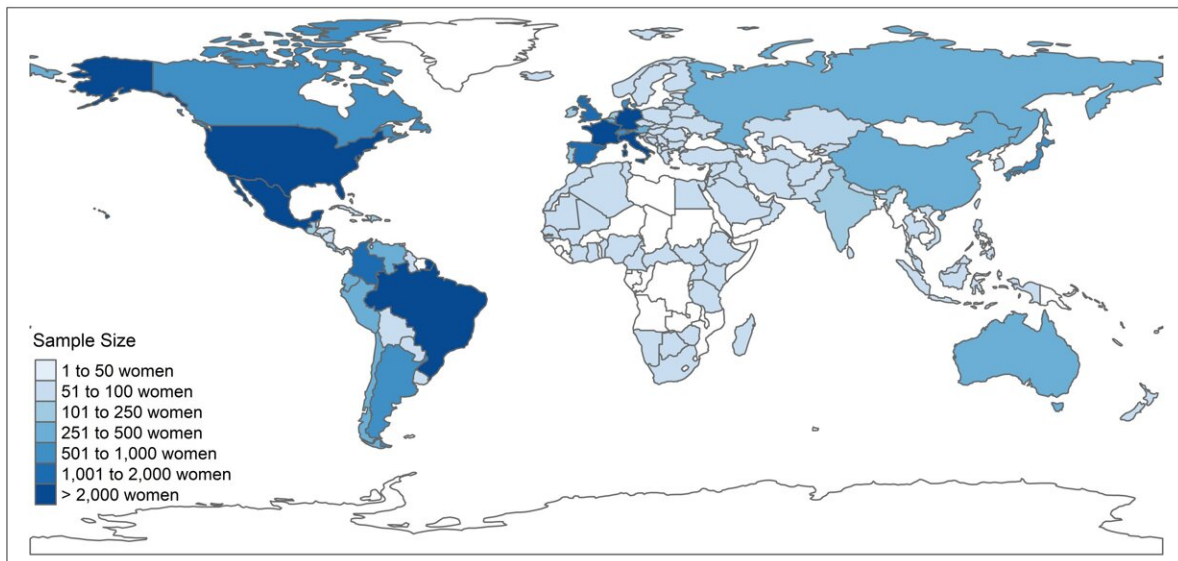


# Is age linked to the picture of the perfect partner?

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Global distribution of heterosexual women ( $n = 17,245$ ), who participated in the study. Credit: Adapted based on Laura Botzet et al., *Human Nature*, DOI: 10.1007/s12110-023-09460-4; licensed by CC BY 4.0

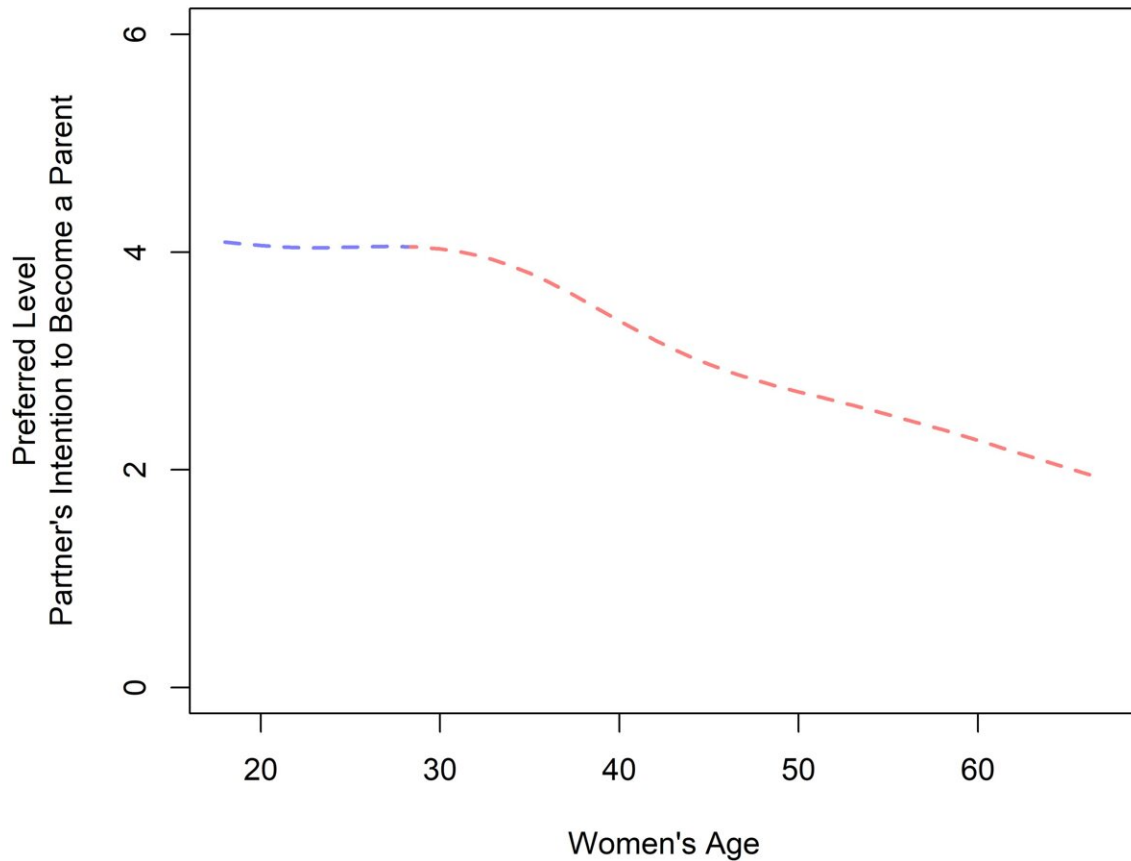
How do women picture the partner of their dreams? And how does this vary between women based on their age? A team of researchers led by the University of Göttingen investigated the complex relationships between age and preferences for a partner in a large, international sample of single women.

The study found that most preferences for a partner showed no variation between women of different ages. However, higher age was linked to a preference for confident and assertive partners, as well as acceptance of a larger age range, particularly a higher acceptance of a partner being younger than oneself.

Age was also linked to the parenting intentions of the ideal partner: consistently high in importance until approximately age 28 and then decreasing thereafter. The results were [published](#) in the journal *Human Nature*.

To answer the question of whether love knows no age, researchers from the University of Göttingen, Indiana University, and Queen's University Belfast collaborated with the female health app CLUE to reach over 20,000 [single women](#) aged 18 to 67 years from nearly 150 countries via an online questionnaire. In addition to [heterosexual women](#), this study also included two groups often neglected in [psychological research](#): bisexual and [lesbian women](#).

Respondents were asked to rate how important attributes such as attractiveness, kindness and supportiveness, [financial security](#) and success, as well as education and intelligence, were to them in their partner. They were also asked to specify the youngest and oldest ages they would be happy to accept in a romantic partner. Using rigorous methods, the role of age in partner preferences was thoroughly investigated in these three groups.



Preferred parenting intention according to own age: after the age of 28 the preferred level of partner's intention to become a parent decreases. Credit: Adapted based on Laura Botzet et al., *Human Nature*, DOI: 10.1007/s12110-023-09460-4; licensed by CC BY 4.0

Most partner preferences—including the preference for a kind and supportive partner—were consistently important, regardless of age. The study, however, revealed links between age and some specific preferences.

"What was particularly interesting for us is that for heterosexual women up to the age of 28, the importance of the ideal partner wanting to be or

become a father remained equally high but decreased thereafter," explains Laura Botzet from Göttingen University's Department of Biological Personality Psychology.

Both evolutionary theories and psychological research on the "biological clock" would have suggested a later decline, namely between the ages of 40 and 50, when women approach the end of their reproductive phase.

This unexpected earlier decrease could be linked to changing life plans, with [younger women](#) re-evaluating family goals, while older women, who already have children, prioritize different aspects of their relationship. The pattern varied by [sexual orientation](#), potentially indicating different attitudes towards own children among the groups.

Botzet concludes, "Love, it turns out, is not entirely ageless; it's nuanced. A woman's age is related to certain aspects of her desired partner, such as the preference for partners with stronger parenting intentions or the ideal age of a partner. These insights are exciting because they challenge conventional notions of how age is linked to the way women picture the partner of their dreams."

**More information:** Laura J. Botzet et al, The Link Between Age and Partner Preferences in a Large, International Sample of Single Women, *Human Nature* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s12110-023-09460-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-023-09460-4)

Provided by University of Göttingen

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