

Differences in education, values between men and women cause mismatches when seeking a partner, finds Spanish study

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The educational expansion of women has led to changes in the differences in educational level of men and women when looking for a partner.

Research conducted by the UAB Center for Demographic Studies (CED-CERCA) has examined for the first time the role of discrepancies in gender role values and education among potential spouses.

According to the study, about a third of [women](#) in favor of gender equality and with a higher education would not be able to find a homogamous male partner. The work is [published](#) in the journal *Perspectives Demogràfiques*.

In recent decades the "couple's market" has changed dramatically. The most well-known changes in the structure of this market are to be found in the discrepancies in the educational level of potential spouses due to the educational expansion of women.

If there is no potential spouse available (in a given population) with similar resources or characteristics, there is no possibility of having a homogamous partner, being for many the preferred one.

The importance of the second half of the gender revolution cannot be overlooked. One would expect that, as feminism spreads, the role of men in [household chores](#) would increase in importance and, therefore, women would increasingly seek a potential partner who values such an egalitarian view.

Using the most recent Fertility Survey available (2018) for young Spanish men and women, the research examines the combined gender gap (taking into account both the difference in education and in values) in Spain.

The study distinguishes the values of gender roles in both aspects of the private sphere and aspects of the public sphere. The difference between men and women in terms of education and egalitarian values is small for people with a low and medium level of education.

However, in the case of people with higher education, there is a "deficit" of men with the same characteristics as women. This "deficit" of men represents 15% for values in the private sphere and 12% for values in

the public sphere.

This corresponds to a male deficit in the total population and would imply that about one third of women in favor of gender equality and with higher education would not be able to find a homogamous male partner, while men with a low or medium level of education would face a "female deficit" of women with similar characteristics, although in this case it would be small in absolute terms.

Perhaps this gap in education and egalitarian values could explain, in part, the growing number of single women with [higher education](#) and single men with low educational levels. To confirm this and observe the evolution of this gap in recent years, CED researchers believe that a new Fertility Survey is necessary, with new data on singles, families, their resources and their values.

The authors of the study also recommend support to reduce these differences in education and values, and point out that, in the meantime, potential couples should be aware of the imperfect [partner](#) market of young Spanish adults.

More information: Maike van Damme, Desajustes en la búsqueda de pareja: educación y valores de género en el mercado matrimonial español, *Perspectives Demogràfiques* (2024). [DOI: 10.46710/ced.pd.esp.35](#)

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