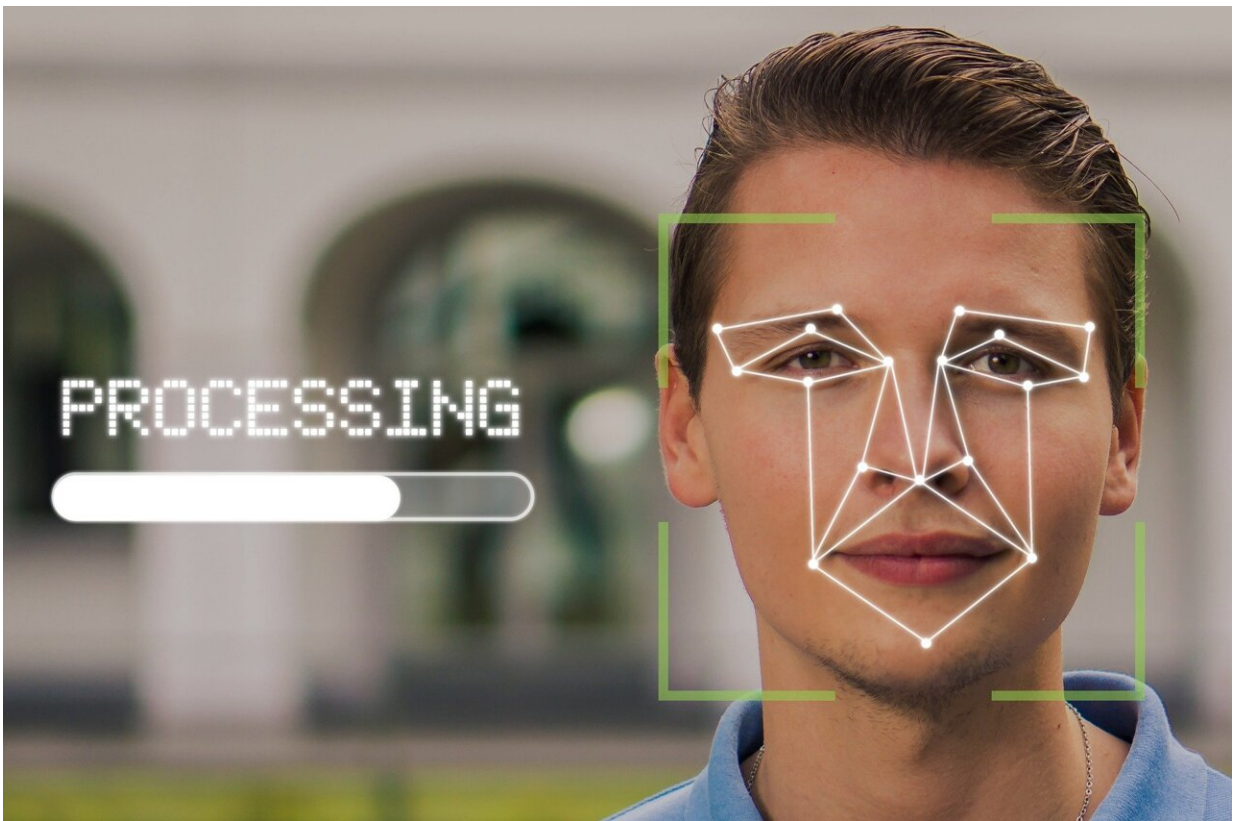


New study finds link between facial attractiveness and lifespan

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A new study published in *Social Science and Medicine* has uncovered a significant relationship between facial attractiveness and life expectancy, with the least attractive people living substantially shorter lives, on

average, than the rest of the cohort.

In their [paper](#), "Looks and longevity: Do prettier people live longer?" researchers from The University of Texas at Austin and Arizona State University analyzed data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS), which followed more than 8,000 high school graduates from the class of 1957 from ages 18 through 83.

"The shorter lives of less attractive women and men represent yet another penalty on those who do not look good," says study co-author Daniel Hamermesh, professor emeritus of economics at UT Austin.

"This adds to a growing body of research on the effects of [facial attractiveness](#) from infancy onward, including impacts on fertility, cognitive development, and labor-market success.

To quantify "attractiveness," high-school yearbook photographs from the WLS were rated on an 11-point scale, from not at all attractive to extremely attractive. The raters, six men and six women, were selected from the same birth cohort as the [high-school graduates](#). They went through a training process, and then rated every yearbook photo in the sample.

The attractiveness ratings were then compared to the survey's mortality data, while controlling for factors like high-school achievement, [family background](#), earnings as adults, and [mental health](#). Key findings included:

- The least attractive 1/6 of the sample had shorter lifespans compared to others.
- Among women at age 20, life expectancy was nearly two years less for the least attractive group.
- Among men at age 20, life expectancy was nearly one year less for the least attractive group.

- The effect persisted even after controlling for factors like education, income, and health behaviors.
- The effect is primarily on the least attractive people; relative attractiveness among the other 5/6 of the sample doesn't show much impact on longevity.

"Our research stresses the importance of equitable treatment regardless of looks," said co-author Connor Sheehan, associate professor of social and family dynamics at Arizona State University and Ph.D. alumnus of UT Austin.

While the exact mechanisms behind this relationship remain unclear, the researchers suggest that factors like [social stigma](#), [employment discrimination](#), and disparities in medical care may play a role.

More information: Connor M. Sheehan et al, Looks and longevity: Do prettier people live longer?, *Social Science & Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.117076](#)

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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