

Love not in the stars

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Lonely hearts who turn to horoscopes to find their perfect partner are wasting their time, according to the largest test of astrology ever carried out.

Dr David Voas from The University of Manchester said that zodiac 'love signs' have no impact on our chances of marrying — and staying married.

The Senior Research Fellow at the University's Centre for Census and Survey Research analysed the birthdays of all 20 million husbands and wives in England and Wales.

The investigation — using 2001 census data — failed to reveal any evidence of attraction between star signs.

He said: "If the more than twenty million married people in England and Wales are any guide, there's no special compatibility between people of particular signs.

"If there is even the smallest tendency for Virgos to fancy Capricorns, or for Libras to like Leos, then we should see it in the marriage statistics.

"When you have a population of ten million couples, then even if only one pair in a thousand is influenced by the stars, you'd have ten thousand more couples than expected with certain combinations of signs.

"There's no such evidence, though: the numbers are just what we'd

predict on the basis of chance."

He added. "Astrologers are likely to argue that full birth charts are needed to predict personality accurately.

"But what ordinary people talk about is sun signs; if those are useless when it comes to sizing up a mate, then that knocks a big hole in everyday belief.

"In any case, the basic sun signs are important even in professional charts. If they had any influence at all, however small, the giant magnifying glass of this huge sample would detect it. There's nothing there."

But Dr Voas, from Manchester's School of Social Sciences, believes the popularity of astrologers such as Mystic Meg, Russell Grant and Jonathan Cainer will continue — whatever the evidence.

He said: "I'm under no illusion that these findings will undermine astrology's popularity.

"The enthusiasm for zodiac-based personality profiling seems undiminished by hundreds of previous studies debunking astrology.

"An internet search on Google for 'love' and 'astrology' produces three and a half million hits.

"And the books on relationships by the astrologer Linda Goodman — including Sun Signs and Love Signs — have sold more than one hundred million copies worldwide in the past 40 years.

"The public appetite for horoscopes makes media astrologers wealthy.

"These results won't put them out of business. When it comes to love, people will try anything."

Source: University of Manchester

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