

Sexual orientation affects how we navigate and recall lost objects, but age just targets gender

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Researchers at the University of Warwick have found that sexual orientation has a real effect on how we perform mental tasks such as navigating with a map in a car but that old age does not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation and withers all men's minds alike just ahead of women's.

The University of Warwick researchers worked with the BBC to collect data from over 198,000 people aged 20–65 years (109,612 men and 88,509 women). As expected they found men outperformed women on tests such as mentally rotating objects (NB the researchers' tests used abstract objects but the skills used are also those one would use in real life to navigate with a map). They found that women outperformed men in verbal dexterity tests, and remembering the locations of objects. However for a number of tasks the University of Warwick researchers found key differences across the range of sexual orientations studied.

For instance in mental rotation (a task where men usually perform better) they found that the table of best performance to worst was:

- Heterosexual men
- Bisexual men
- Homosexual men
- Homosexual women
- Bisexual women

-- Heterosexual women

In general, over the range of tasks measured, where a gender performed better in a task heterosexuals of that gender tended to perform better than non-heterosexuals. When a particular gender was poorer at a task homosexual and bisexual people tended to perform better than heterosexual members of that gender.

However age was found to discriminate on gender grounds but not sexual orientation. The study found that men's mental abilities declined faster than women's and that sexual orientation made no difference to the rate of that decline either for men or women.

The paper has just been published in *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* April 2007 DOI 10.1007/s10508-006-9155-y and is entitled "Gender and Sexual Orientation Differences in Cognition Across Adulthood: Age Is Kinder to Women than to Men Regardless of Sexual Orientation".

Source: University of Warwick

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