

Women are better at forgiving: study

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Women have a greater empathetic capacity than males. Credit: SINC.

A study by the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) has carried out the first Spanish study into the emotional differences between the sexes and generations in terms of forgiveness. According to the study, parents forgive more than children, while women are better at forgiving than men.

"This study has great application for teaching values, because it shows us what reasons people have for forgiving men and women, and the popular conception of forgiveness", Maite Garaigordobil, co-author of the study and a senior professor at the [Psychology](#) Faculty of the UPV, tells SINC.

This study, which has been published in the *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, is the first to have been carried out in Spain. It shows that [parents](#) find it easier to forgive than their children, and that women are better at forgiving than men.

"A decisive factor in the capacity to forgive is [empathy](#), and women have a greater empathetic capacity than males", Carmen Maganto, co-author of the study and a tenured professor at the Psychology Faculty of the UPV, tells SINC.

The results, which were measured using a scale to assess the ability to forgive (CAPER), and a scale of forgiveness and facilitating factors (ESPER), show that there are differences in the reasons that encourage forgiveness according to people's age and sex.

What drives forgiveness?

Children believe that "one forgives with time", while parents point to reasons such as "remorsefulness and forgiving the other person" and "legal justice".

The authors of this study say that parents who have forgiven most over the course of their lives have an increased capacity to forgive "in all areas". Parents and children use similar definitions of forgiveness. Not bearing a grudge, reconciliation and understanding-empathy are the terms most used by both groups to define forgiveness.

However, there are greater differences between men and [women](#). Both see "not bearing a grudge" as the best definition of forgiveness, but men place greater importance on this characteristic.

Lack of bitterness is the key

The study, which was carried out with the collaboration of 140 participants (parents and children aged between 45 and 60, and 17 and 25, respectively), highlights two key conditions for a person to be forgiven. One is for them to "show remorse" and the second is for the

person who has been offended "not to bear a grudge".

The experts say the family environment plays a key role in transmitting ethical values. "This result is especially interesting in situations where families are in crisis and no basic education can be expected of them in terms of values. This education is largely transferred to the school", the researchers explain.

The research "opens up many new questions" for the two investigators, who believe it is "necessary to study the role that [forgiveness](#) plays in psychological treatment, especially among victims of sexual abuse, physical and psychological maltreatment and marital infidelity, as well as other situations".

More information: Maganto, Carmen, Garaigordobil, Maite. "Evaluación del perdón: Diferencias generacionales y diferencias de sexo". Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología 42 (3): 391-403, Sept 2010. ISSN 0120-0534

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