

Shorter woman, taller man: Preferences for partner height translate into actual partner choices

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Finding Mr. or Ms. Right is a complicated process, and choosing a mate may involve compromising on less important factors like their height. However, research published January 16 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Gert Stulp and colleagues from the University of Groningen, Netherlands suggests that despite the many other factors involved, people's preferences for a partner's height are reflected in real couples in the UK.

Given the average heights of [men and women](#) in typical Western populations, two out of every hundred couples should comprise a woman who is taller than her male companion. However, such couples are seen much less frequently than this. Previous studies show that men generally prefer to pair with women shorter than themselves, and women prefer men who are taller than they are. However, short women and tall men appear to prefer larger [height](#) differences with their partner, whereas tall women and short men prefer smaller differences in height.

These trends have previously been studied only in terms of preferences or expectations. In the current study, the authors analyze to what extent these preferences translate into actual partner choices. Their results suggest that all of these trends do exist in a sample of over 10,000 couples in the UK, and the difference in height between a man and woman in a couple tends to be less than 8 inches. However, the patterns observed in actual [couples](#) were not seen as frequently as would be

expected based on people's preferences from previous studies.

According to the authors, their results suggest that "while preferences for partner height generally translate into actual pairing, they do so only modestly."

More information: Stulp G, Buunk AP, Pollet TV, Nettle D, Verhulst S (2013) Are Human Mating Preferences with Respect to Height Reflected in Actual Pairings? PLoS ONE 8(1): e54186.

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