

# The ideal age of sexual partners is different for men and women

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New evolutionary psychology research shows gender differences in age preferences regarding sexual partners.

Men and women have different preferences regarding the age of their sexual partners and women's preferences are better realized than are men's. Regarding the age of their actual [sexual partners](#), the difference is however much smaller. Researchers in psychology at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland, suggest that this pattern reflect the fact that when it comes to mating, women control the market.

Grounding their interpretation in [evolutionary theory](#), the researchers suggest that because women are more selective than men in their sexual behavior, men are more unlikely than women to have sex with their ideal partners. Therefore men's actual behavior follows more closely women's preferences than men's own preferences.

To study this pattern in terms of preferences with regard to the partner's age the scientists gathered observations from a population-based sample of more than 12,000 Finns and found that women, on average, are interested in same-aged to somewhat older men than themselves and that this pattern displays itself across the entire life-span. Men, on the other hand, show a tendency to be sexually interested in women in their mid-twenties. This tendency is also notable when the men themselves are younger or older than this. Men younger than 20 prefer women older than themselves, while men older than 30 prefer women younger than themselves. The reason for why men's sexual interest seems directed

towards women in their mid-20s is likely because women of this age are the most fertile. This means that in our evolutionary past, men who have had sex with [women](#) in their mid-20s have had more offspring than other [men](#). This study shows that in terms of sexuality evolution has favored differences in female and male psychology.

The study only looked at heterosexual preferences and heterosexual activity. To follow this up the researchers plan to study the corresponding pattern in non-heterosexual individuals.

**More information:** The study is a piece of the research project "Parent-Child Incest: Experimental Tests of Evolutionary Mechanisms". The project is financed by the Academy of Finland 1.9.2012–31.8.2015 (project number: 260298).

Link to the on-line publication:

[authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S1090513814001111](https://authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S1090513814001111)

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