

Independence equals success for women in the dating game

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A new UQ study has revealed that independent women have more romantic success.

Women have an outdated idea of what men want in a potential partner – and they should feel more comfortable being themselves, according to University of Queensland research.

Professor Matthew Hornsey, from UQ's School of Psychology, said many women grew up feeling they had to fundamentally change themselves in order to find love.

"In particular, there is a belief among women that they need to be conformist in order to be attractive to men," Professor Hornsey said.

"Our research shows that there is a pervasive belief that men go for relatively conformist women, but all our data suggests the opposite."

Professor Hornsey and collaborators Dr Fiona Barlow (now at Griffith University), Richard Wellauer and Dr Jason McIntyre ran several studies testing the attractiveness of various dating prospects.

They drew on popular dating apps and sites, presenting people with profiles of potential dates who were conformist or non-conformist in their dress, attitudes and tastes. In each case, men preferred non-conformist women.

In other studies, people filled out personality questionnaires and rated how successful they had been in attracting dates.

Women who said they were more independent reported more romantic success.

Professor Hornsey said on the rare occasions where results varied for male and female participants, it was women who benefitted most from non-conformity.

He said the findings were overwhelmingly positive for women and busted some long-held myths.

"A cursory glance at early 20th Century books on etiquette, courting and 'properness' all deliver an expectation that women should be subdued, modest and agreeable," he said.

"But times have changed. Society now tells us that independence is a

sign of integrity and strong character.

"The old gender stereotype – that men go for conformist, submissive women – has been slow to die.

"The consequence may be that [women](#) rein themselves in when dating, when they would be better served by just being themselves."

More information: "A Critical Test of the Assumption That Men Prefer Conformist Women and Women Prefer Nonconformist Men." *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 0146167215577366, first published on March 24, 2015 [DOI: 10.1177/0146167215577366](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215577366)

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