

# Research into the correlation between beauty and body size shows that women are the harshest judges

April 7 2016

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New research published today in the journal *Economics and Human Biology* has described the relationship between attractiveness, BMI and gender, showing that while women are both the harshest judges of weight in relation to beauty, they are also judged negatively by both men and women for being overweight. When these findings are applied to trends in wages, there is evidence that anthropometric attributes play a significant role in wage regressions in addition to attractiveness, showing that body size cannot be dismissed as a simple component of beauty.

Researchers from the University of Surrey and University of Oxford assessed how male and female interviewers scored the attractiveness of interviewees of both genders, looking at how BMI affects perceptions of [beauty](#). They found that female interviewers would judge both men and women with higher BMIs as less [attractive](#), whereas men would judge their fellow [gender](#) much less harshly.

"This is the first study that looks at the relationship between BMI and attractiveness, from both gender's perspective" explained Professor Sonia Oreffice, of the University of Surrey.

"When it comes to 'beauty', being an overweight woman is judged negatively by both sexes whereas men are a lot more forgiving towards each other. There is plenty of research that shows how beauty is related to socioeconomic detriment, from schooling to crime to [wages](#). Similar

research also explores the negative correlation with BMI but what we have shown is that weight is intrinsically linked to attractiveness and that women are the harshest judges and most harshly judged. Perhaps BMI is not able to distinguish fat from muscular mass, and this is particularly important for male BMI"

The researchers took this relationship between [body size](#) and beauty and applied it to patterns of wages. Body size —height for both men and women, BMI for [men](#) only— explains wages above and beyond beauty, even when controlling for health status and accounting for selection into working.

Professor Oreffice concluded, "While we are not entirely surprised with the results that correlate BMI and attractiveness, what is remarkable is that gender of the interviewer makes a difference and that body size matters for wages not simply as proxy for beauty."

This should prompt future researchers to seriously consider and account for the gender of the interviewer in any beauty analysis. This contributes to bridge the gap between studies on the economics of anthropometric measures (including height and BMI), on one hand, and the economics of beauty, on the other, estimating the relevance of body size and beauty.

**More information:** Sonia Oreffice et al, Beauty, body size and wages: Evidence from a unique data set, *Economics & Human Biology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ehb.2016.01.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2016.01.003)

Provided by University of Surrey

Citation: Research into the correlation between beauty and body size shows that women are the harshest judges (2016, April 7) retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-04-beauty-body-size-women-harshest.html>

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