

Academic study finds women wearing heavy makeup less likely to be perceived as leaders

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Women wearing heavy makeup are less likely to be thought of as good leaders, new research from Abertay University has found.

A study led by Dr Christopher Watkins of Abertay's Division of Psychology, published today in *Perception* journal, revealed that the amount of makeup a woman is wearing can have a negative impact on perceptions of her leadership ability.

Study participants were asked to view a series of images featuring the same woman without cosmetics and with makeup applied for a "social night out".

Computer software was used to manipulate the [faces](#) and the amount of makeup was also manipulated in the [face images](#).

Each participant completed a face [perception](#) task where they judged sixteen face-pairs, indicating how much better a leader they felt their chosen face to be compared to the other face.

It was found that both men and women evaluated women more negatively as a leader if the image suggested she was wearing a lot of makeup.

Dr Watkins said: "This research follows previous work in this area, which suggests that wearing makeup enhances how dominant a woman looks.

"While the previous findings suggest that we are inclined to show some deference to a woman with a good looking face, our new research suggests that [makeup](#) does not enhance a [woman](#)'s dominance by benefitting how we evaluate her in a leadership role.

"This work is a good example of the diverse and interesting research ongoing within the Division of Psychology."

The study was carried out by Abertay graduates Esther James and

Shauny Jenkins and used a measurement scale common in face perception research, which calculates the first-impressions of the participant group as a whole, working out an average verdict.

Dr Watkins has carried out previous high-profile studies including work looking at how [women](#) remember the faces potential love rivals and the role of traits related to dominance in our choice of allies, colleagues and friends.

More information: *Perception*, [journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/...
177/0301006618763263](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0301006618763263)

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