

Back in black for singletons trying to find love

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Credit: University of Lincoln

Black beats red as the colour of choice when it comes to finding new love, according to new research based on the hit TV series *First Dates*, which shows that single people wear more of the darker hue when meeting a potential partner for the first time.

The study builds on previous research into the use of [clothing](#) colour to increase attractiveness, which suggests that red increases the perceived sexual receptivity of the wearer, while black increases how fashionable the person is thought to be.

Psychology researchers analysed episodes from the popular Channel 4 reality TV programme, which follows singletons on their journey to find love, and compared how much black, red, and blue clothing was worn by daters in the pre-date interview with how much they wore on the first date itself.

The study examined the dressing habits of 546 daters across six series of the show and found that both men and women wore more red clothing during the date scenario compared with the pre-date interview, but there was a larger increase in the amount of black clothing on display – for example black shoes, trousers, and dresses – during the dates. The researchers also found that more black than red was worn overall in both contexts.

The increase in red and black worn on the date itself was found for both heterosexual and same-sex dates. Crucially, all daters were free to wear their own choices of clothing for the show. There was no difference in the amount of blue clothing worn between the interview and date scenarios.

The research, led by the University of Lincoln, UK, reveals insights into the mechanisms people employ to increase their attractiveness and show their intentions to potential partners.

Dr. Robin Kramer, lead researcher from the University of Lincoln's School of Psychology, said: "Red is traditionally seen as the colour of love but more recently research has shown that both black and red are perceived as equally [attractive](#), and that the two colours may simply

increase attractiveness in different ways.

"While red may increase perceived attractiveness through evolutionary mechanisms, dates appear to rely more heavily on black in order to attract a potential mate, suggesting that cultural and societal influences may play a much larger role in the way people dress than the use of evolutionary signals.

Co-author Jerrica Mulgrew, a research assistant at Trent University Canada, added: "Our results provide the first real-world demonstration that people display more red and black clothing when meeting a potential partner for the first time and it was particularly interesting to find a larger increase in the amount of black worn as this wasn't the focus when we designed the study."

Researchers now plan to investigate this phenomenon further to determine if these different motivations manifest in real-world dating scenarios or whether daters were employing a more conservative approach until they had established the attractiveness of their [date](#).

The study, "Displaying Red and Black on a First Date: A Field Study Using the "First Dates" Television Series," has been published in the journal *Evolutionary Psychology*.

More information: Robin S. S. Kramer et al. Displaying Red and Black on a First Date: A Field Study Using the "First Dates" Television Series, *Evolutionary Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/1474704918769417](https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704918769417)

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