

# Kindness is a top priority in a long-term partner according to a new international study

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One of the top qualities that we look for in a long-term partner is kindness, according to new research by Swansea University.

In a paper published by the *Journal of Personality*, researchers had over 2,700 [college students](#) from across the globe build themselves an ideal lifelong partner by using a fixed budget to "buy" characteristics.

While traits like [physical attractiveness](#) and [financial prospects](#) were important, the one that was given the highest priority was kindness.

The study compared the dating preferences of students from Eastern countries, for example Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, and Western countries such as the UK, Norway and Australia.

Students were given eight attributes they could spend "mate dollars" on: physical attractiveness, good financial prospects, kindness, humour, chastity, religiosity, the desire for children, and creativity.

While there were some differences in behaviour between Eastern and Western students—there were also some remarkable similarities.

People typically spent 22-26% of their total budget on kindness, and large parts of their budget on physical attractiveness and good financial prospects, while traits like creativity and chastity received less than 10%.

The research team also found some interesting sex differences—both Eastern and Western men allocated more of their budget to physical attractiveness than [women](#) (22% vs 16%) while women allocated more to good financial prospects than men (18% vs 12%).

The principle researcher, Dr. Andrew G. Thomas, believes that studying mate preferences across cultures is important for understanding human behaviour.

"Looking at very different culture groups allows us to test the idea that some behaviours are human universals.

"If men and women act in a similar way across the globe, then this adds weight to the idea that some behaviours develop in spite of [culture](#) rather than because of it."

The results also showed a difference in a partner's desire for children, which was a priority only for Western women.

"We think this may have something to do with family planning," said Thomas. "In cultures where contraception is widespread, a partner's desire for children may predict the likelihood of starting a family.

"In contrast, in cultures where contraception use is less widespread, having children may be a natural consequence of sex within a relationship, making actual desire for [children](#) less relevant."

**More information:** Andrew G. Thomas et al, Mate preference priorities in the East and West: A cross-cultural test of the mate preference priority model, *Journal of Personality* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/jopy.12514](#)

Provided by Swansea University

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