

Wider-Faced Dates More Attractive as Short-Term Mates

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Women may perceive men with wider faces as more dominant and more attractive for short-term relationships, according to a new study in [*Psychological Science*](#), a journal of the [Association for Psychological Science](#).

“Our study shows that within three minutes of meeting in real life, women find more dominant, wider-faced men attractive for short-term relationships, and want to go on another date with them,” says psychological scientist and lead researcher Katherine Valentine of Singapore Management University.

According to Valentine, there’s considerable academic debate about whether physical dominance is advantageous in mating – that is, actually attractive to women. At the same time, researchers have been exploring facial width-to-height ratio (fWHR) as a possible physical indicator of male dominance.

This new study, she says, addressed both issues:

“High male fWHR has previously been associated with surviving in hand-to-hand combat, aggressiveness, self-perceived power, and CEO’s financial success,” says Valentine. “Our study shows it’s also a reasonably good indicator of perceived dominance – not only that, it piques women’s interest in a face-to-face speed-dating setting.”

Valentine and colleagues hypothesized that increased fWHR, due to its link with testosterone, would make men seem more dominant and more desirable as romantic interests in the short-term. But, because facial width is also linked with undesirable traits like aggression, women would not see these men as more desirable for long-term relationships.

The researchers studied over 150 men and women, ages 18 to 32, who participated in one of several speed-dating events. The participants were all single and they received no compensation other than the prospect of making a potential romantic match. Each speed-dating interaction lasted 3 minutes.

Male speed-daters with higher fWHR, as measured by computer software, were independently rated as more dominant. Women not only expressed more interest in short-term relationships with these men, but were also more likely to choose them for a second date. These associations held even after the researchers accounted for the men’s age and independently-rated attractiveness.

Further analyses suggest that the link between higher fWHR and greater interest in a short-term relationship could be accounted for, at least in part, by perceived dominance.

The fact that fWHR predicted whether women wanted another date with a man came as a surprise:

“The fact that women wanted to see these men again suggests that our findings are robust – women

aren't just saying they are interested, they're actually willing to be contacted by these men," says Valentine. "Previous studies have found that women prefer more dominant men for short-term relationships, but almost all of these studies were based in the lab and did not involve an interaction that could actually lead to mating and dating."

Valentine and colleagues plan on further investigating how these individual differences in men affect their overall attractiveness, and in what contexts.