

Actually, opposites don't attract, study finds

Initial attraction to dissimilar partner doesn't often work out in the long run

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Do opposites really attract? A new study finds that when it comes to personality, people seek partners with their same qualities — but claim to want someone who is different.

The study, recently published in the journal *Evolutionary Psychology*, asked 760 members of an [online dating](#) site to answer questionnaires regarding their personality traits, as well as the traits they would want in an ideal long-term partner. They then were asked if they most wanted a [partner](#) that complemented them, or resembled them.

The answers showed a preference for someone with the same sort of [personality](#); the traits, which included neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, all had positive participant-to-partner correlations, ranging from .51 to .62.

These findings are supported by previous research. A study conducted by the University of Iowa in 2005, for example, stated that similarity in personality was more important than similarities in attitude, religion, and values in forming a [happy marriage](#). Like-minded people validate each other's beliefs and views, and there tend to be [fewer conflicts](#) as a result.

But despite the personality correlations, the new study has found that 85.7 percent of participants claim to want someone who has their opposite traits.

"When asked about their preferences for a mate, people may partially draw upon lay theories of romantic attraction rather than their true desires for a mate," says Pieterneel Dijkstra, a professor at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and the study's lead researcher.

One popular theory is that opposites attract; another is that having a similar partner would be "boring." But Dijkstra says these theories often prove untenable in real life.

"Although many individuals occasionally feel attracted to 'opposites,' attractions between opposites often do not develop into serious intimate relationships and, when they do, these relationships often end prematurely," she said.

The study also found that in addition to looking for a similar partner, women wanted men who were conscientious, outgoing, and emotionally stable, all traits that indicate an investment in the relationship and in any potential children.

However, "there were no particular traits that men seemed to prefer more than women," Dijkstra told [LiveScience](#). For both sexes, finding common ground is a top priority.