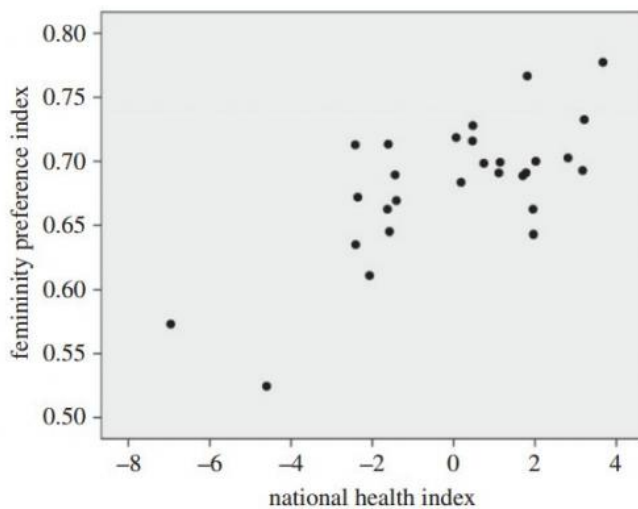


# Study shows men find women with more feminine faces more attractive, but less so in harsh environments

30 April 2014, by Bob Yirka



Relationship between femininity preference index and NHI. Credit: *Biology Letters*, Published 30 April 2014 doi: 10.1098/rsbl.2013.0850

(Medical Xpress)—A large team made up of researchers from around the globe has found that men are less attracted to a feminine female face if they are living in under harsh conditions. In their paper published in the journal *Biology Letters*, the team describes how they showed male volunteers pictures of altered female faces while asking which they found more sexually attractive, and what they learned as a result.

It's no secret that men like feminine looking faces on [women](#), oftentimes such women are seen as "prettier." But, what happens when people are living under harsh economic conditions? Does it change what men find attractive in women? That's what the researchers with this new effort sought to learn.

To gain a better perspective on feminine female

facial attraction, the researchers sought out the opinions of 1,972 male heterosexual men (age 18 to 24) living in 28 different countries. Each was shown multiple pairs of photographs of Caucasian women's faces. Each pair consisted of digitally altered images of the same woman—one picture showed a more feminine face (fuller lips, bigger eyes, etc.), the other with more masculine traits. The men were asked which of each pair they found more sexually attractive.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of men from every country represented chose the more feminine version of the women as more sexually attractive. But, the ratio's differed significantly. The researchers found that men in more advanced countries, such as Japan, Sweden or even Singapore, were much more likely (three fourths of the time) to choose the more feminine faces, than were men who lived in places like Nigeria or Nepal, (they chose the more feminine face just over half the time) where economic conditions are rough, to say the least.

The findings suggest, the researchers claim, that men living in a harsh world might find stronger looking women more desirable—their offspring might have a better chance of survival. Or perhaps, they may play a stronger or more dominant role in social settings, making them seem the better partner. There is also the possibility that men living in [harsh conditions](#) have lower levels of testosterone than those who are better nourished living in more healthy environments—prior studies have shown that such levels have an impact on how strongly [men](#) are attracted to feminine traits in women.

**More information:** Cross-cultural variation in men's preference for sexual dimorphism in women's faces, *Biology Letters*, Published 30 April 2014 DOI: [10.1098/rsbl.2013.0850](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2013.0850)

## Abstract

Both attractiveness judgements and mate preferences vary considerably cross-culturally. We investigated whether men's preference for femininity in women's faces varies between 28 countries with diverse health conditions by analysing responses of 1972 heterosexual participants. Although men in all countries preferred feminized over masculinized female faces, we found substantial differences between countries in the magnitude of men's preferences. Using an average femininity preference for each country, we found men's facial femininity preferences correlated positively with the health of the nation, which explained 50.4% of the variation among countries. The weakest preferences for femininity were found in Nepal and strongest in Japan. As high femininity in women is associated with lower success in competition for resources and lower dominance, it is possible that in harsher environments, men prefer cues to resource holding potential over high fecundity.

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