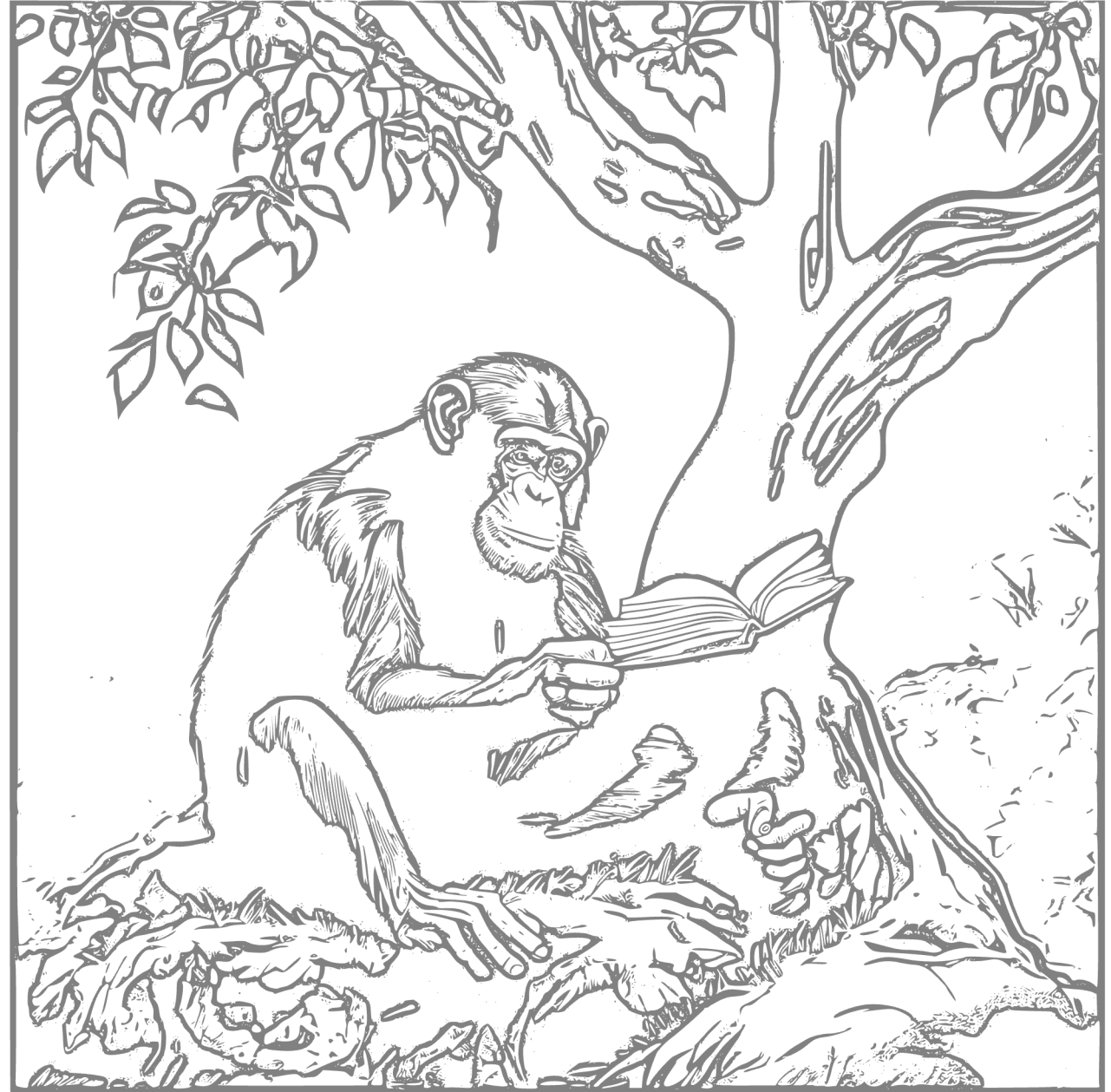


Power of a Smile

How much can a man's smile impact attraction in online dating?

Mireya Arteaga, Owner: Human Stories LLC
July 2024



Background

This study was inspired by a 2008 study¹ which stated: **"Women rate an incredible 80% of guys as worse-looking than medium."** This study has inspired online articles² and internet discussions³ for **16 years.**

Objective

Discover if the quality of the photograph of a man will have a large impact on perceived attractiveness? Specifically: **will the simple addition of a smile increase attraction and willingness to connect?**



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Attractive and interest scores
for general population

03 **Sequence of viewing**
Order of photos and its effect
on scores

04 **Women online daters**
Perspective of straight/bisexual
women on dating apps

05 **Key findings**
Summary and next steps



Methodology

Phase I

- Online survey to 210 U.S. women aged 18 and older via SurveyMonkey
- Participants were shown nine (three sets of three) color headshots of AI-created men, both smiling and unsmiling
- Participants rated each man on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely) attractive
- Each man was grouped into High/Medium/Low attractiveness rating based on the following average attractiveness scores (Less<3, Medium >4, High >7)
- Two random men from each attractiveness group were selected for phase 2 and converted to black & white to keep as uniform as possible

Phase II

- Online survey to 3,218 U.S. men and women 18+ via [YouGov's proprietary panel](#).
- Participants were shown three sets of black & white headshots of AI-created men, either smiling or unsmiling
- Participants were asked to answer two questions for each photo and rate each from 0 (not at all) to 20 (extremely):
 - “How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?”
 - “How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?”
- Scores were converted to a 1-10 scale
- Statistical tests were performed to determine significance at the 95% confidence level where sample size allows

Test flow - each respondent sees one experience:

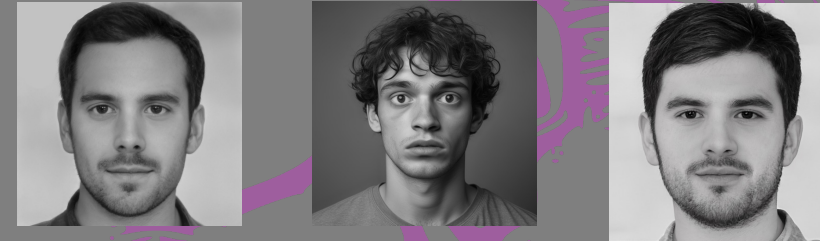
Experience #1 all smiling

Three randomized photos with one each High/Medium/Low



Experience #2 all unsmiling

Three randomized photos with one each High/Medium/Low



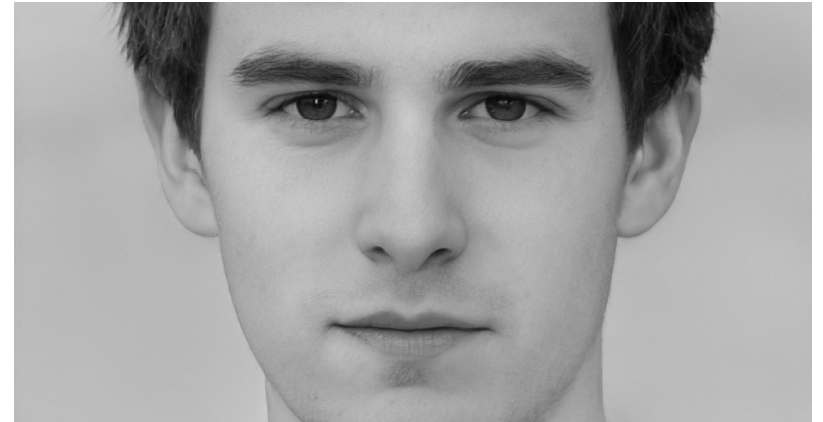
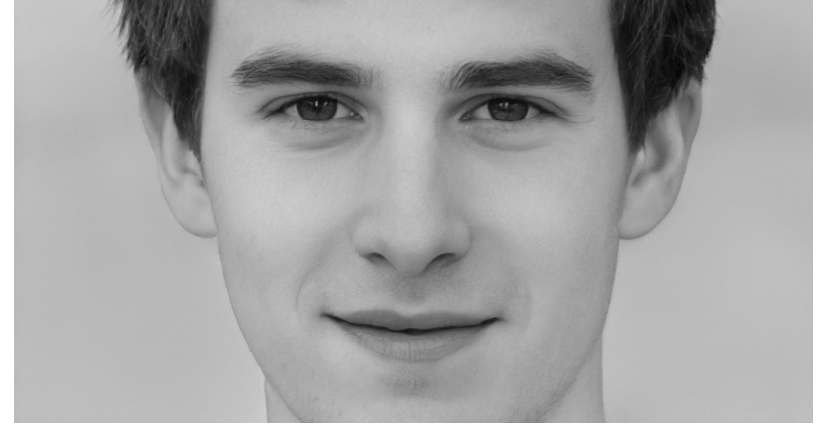
Both experiences answer two questions for each photo:

1. “How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?” (Not at all to extremely)
2. “How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?” (Not at all to extremely)



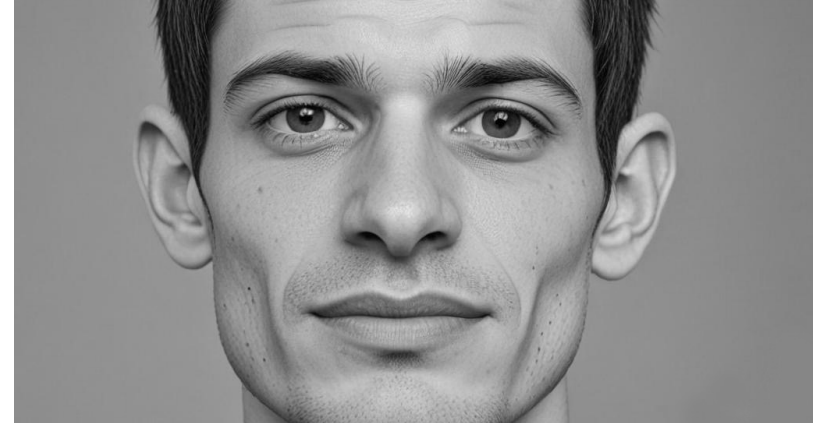
Final men : High attractiveness rating





Final men : Medium attractiveness rating





Final men : Low attractiveness rating



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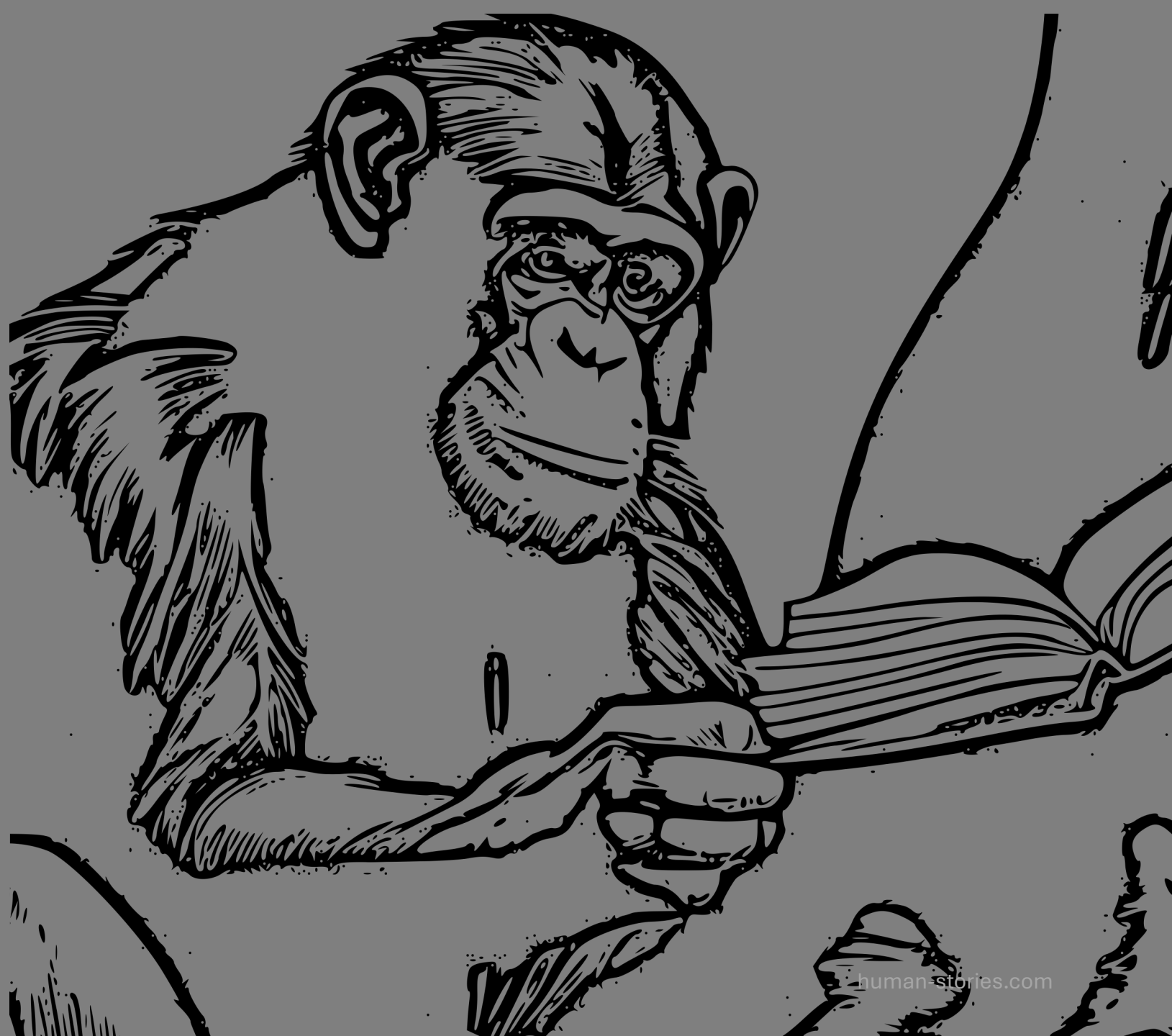
Women online daters

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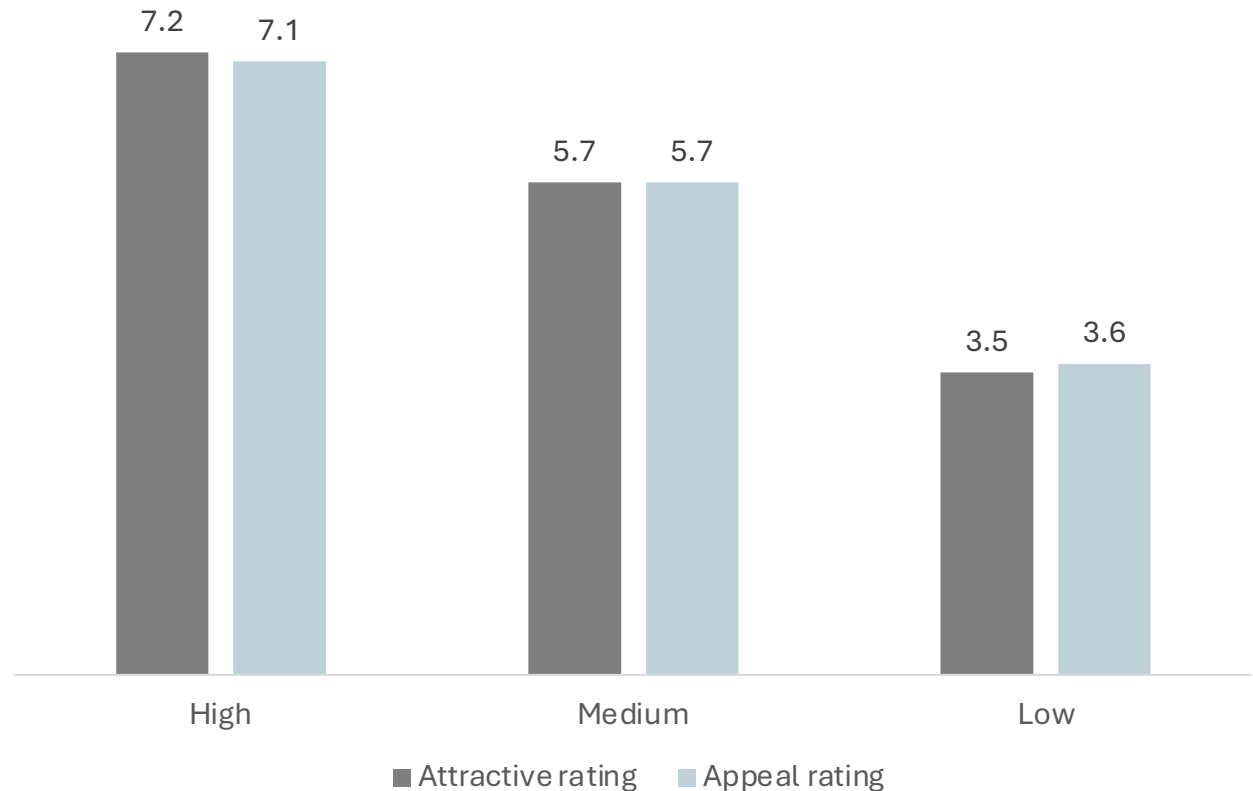


Overall scores

Both men and women believe that **level of attractiveness will dictate an equal level of interest in online dating**

Highly attractive men are assumed to be highly appealing to online daters

Overall scores for attraction and interest



Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person? How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?

n=3128

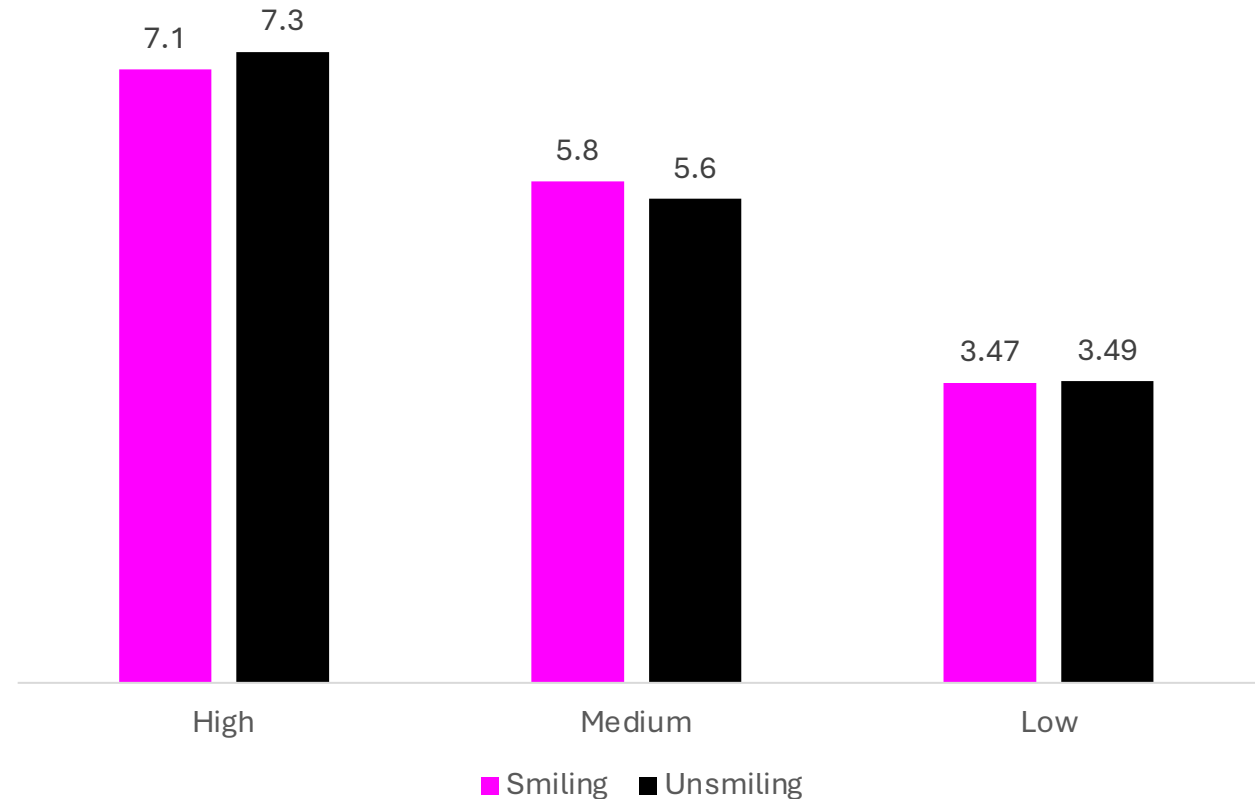
Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Smiling impact on attraction

Men who are **smiling** do not have a **significant increase in estimated attractiveness** to online daters

Overall, there's a **slight boost in estimated appeal** for men who have a **neutral** expression.

Overall scores for attractiveness based on smiling or unsmiling



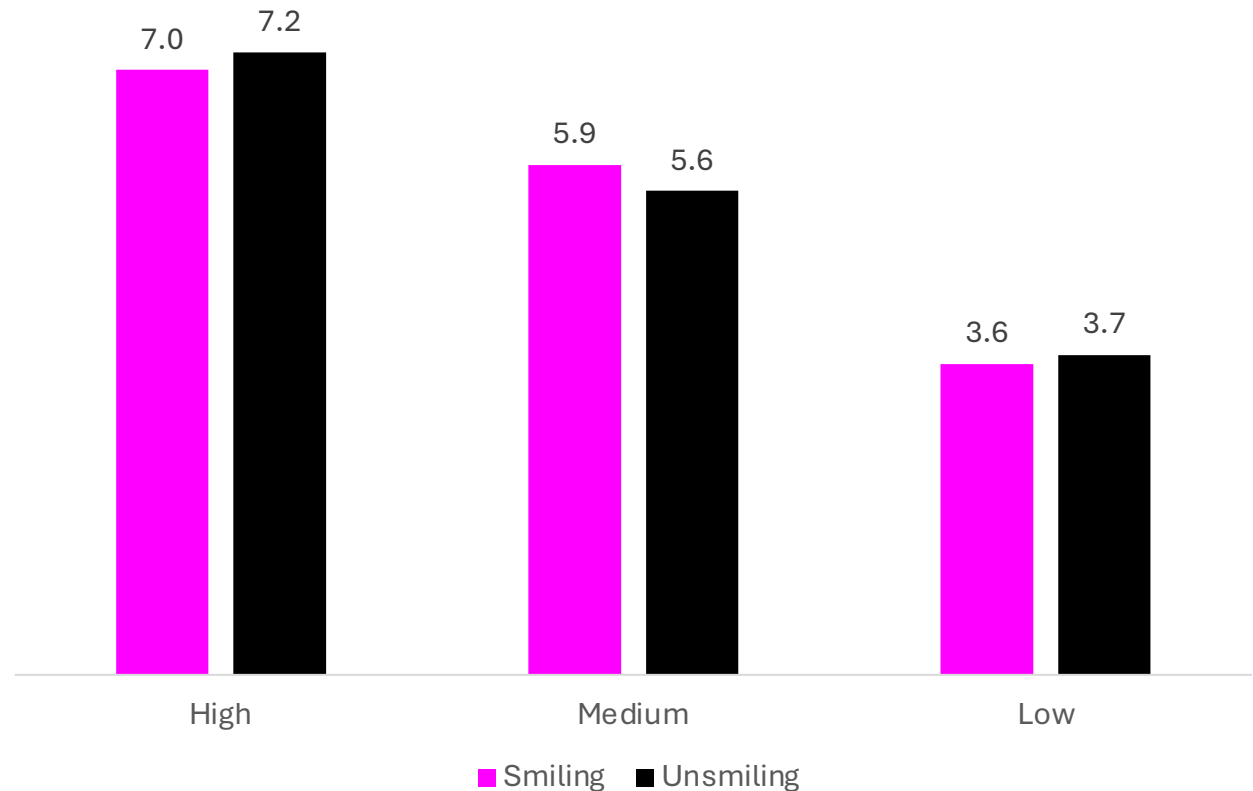
Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person? How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?
n=3128
Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Smiling impact on interest

There's also a **slight overall boost in estimated interest for men who have a neutral expression**

Men rated in extremes (High or Low) drive the slight boost in both attractiveness and interest scores.

Overall scores for interest based on smiling or unsmiling



Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person? How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?

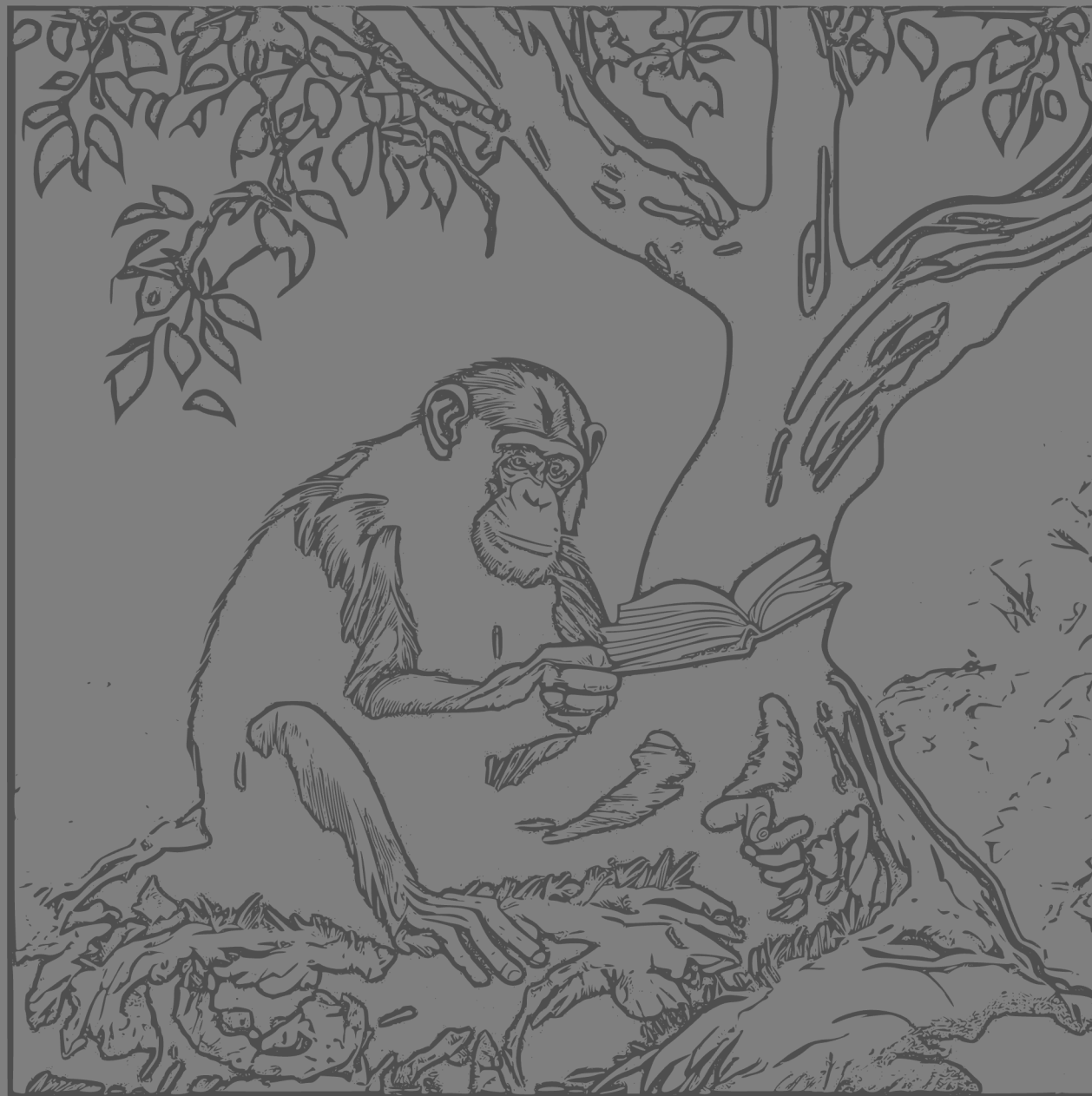
n=3128

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Key finding – overall sample

Overall, there are **no statistically significant differences between smiling and unsmiling** for any level of attractiveness for any demo

When in doubt, **a neutral expression may increase a man's appeal**



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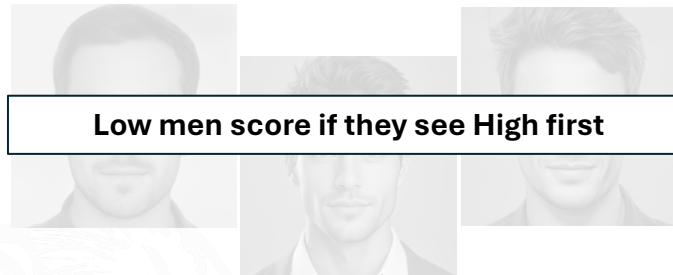
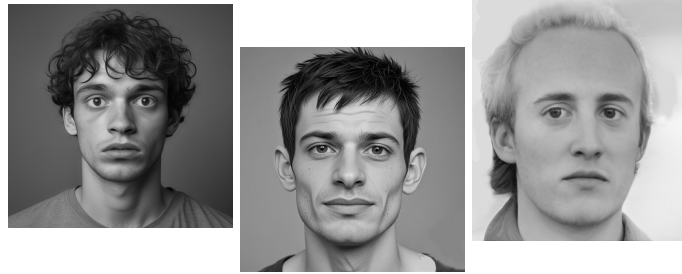
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women on dating apps

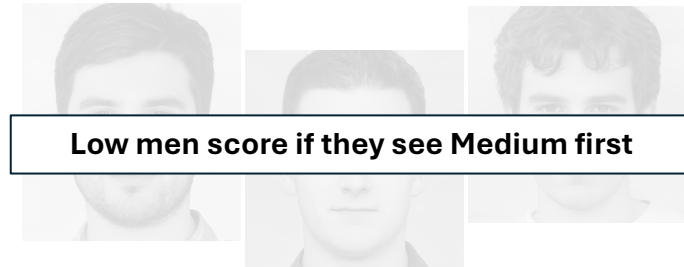
05 Key findings
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Will the score of a “Low” attractive man change depending on who is seen before him?



Low men score if they see High first



Low men score if they see Medium first

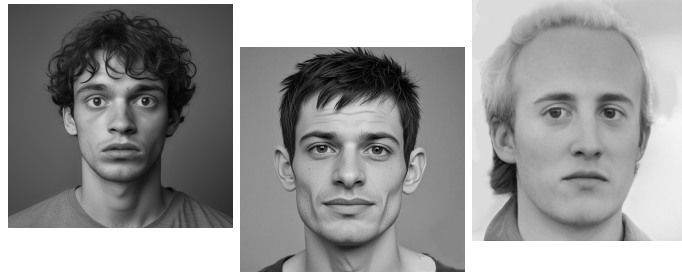


Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

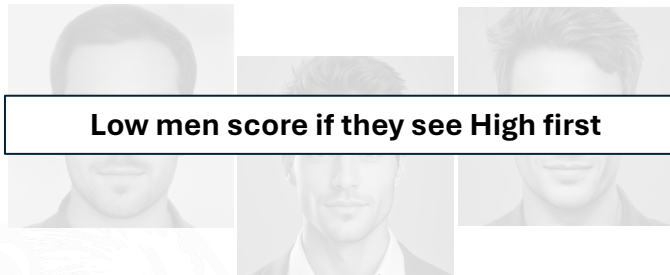
Saw Low n=3128, Saw High then Low n=522 (instructions n=253, no instructions n=269), saw Medium then Low n=546 (instructions n=299, no instructions n=247)

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

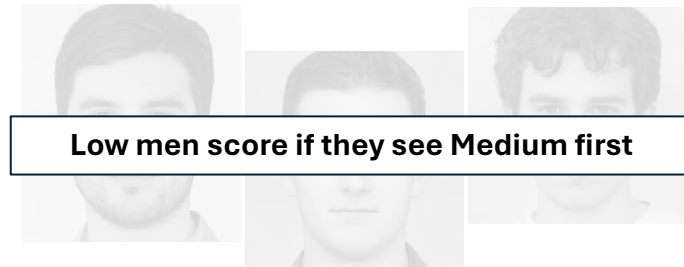
Scores for “Low” attractive men remain steady regardless of attractiveness level of man shown before



Low attractive men average score



Low men score if they see High first



Low men score if they see Medium first

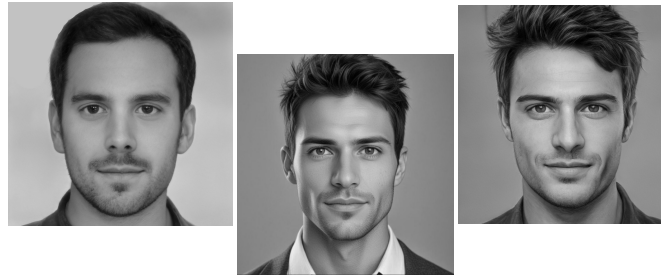


Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

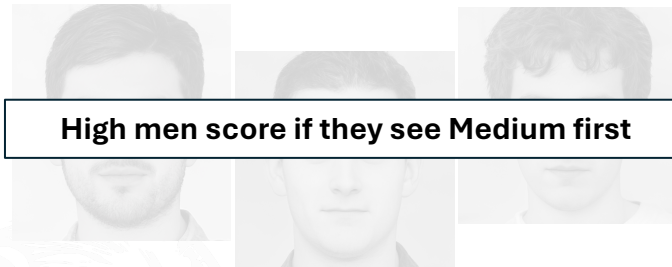
Saw Low n=3128, Saw High then Low n=522 (instructions n=253, no instructions n=269), saw Medium then Low n=546 (instructions n=299, no instructions n=247)

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

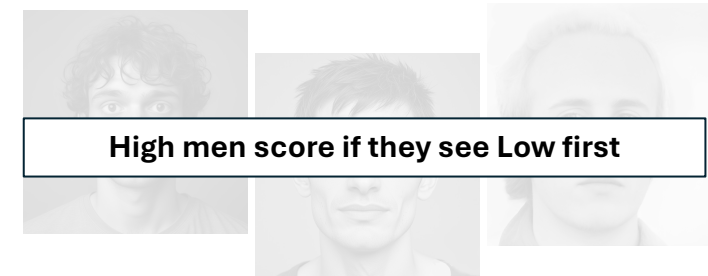
How will highly attractive men's scores change?



High attractive men average score



High men score if they see Medium first



High men score if they see Low first

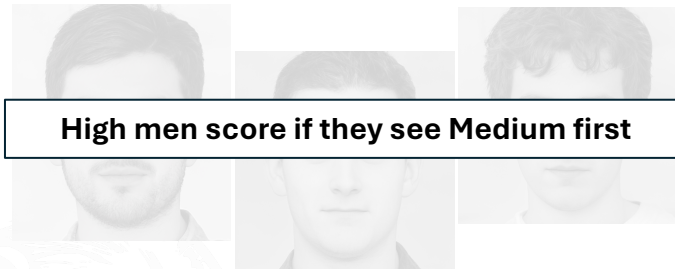


Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

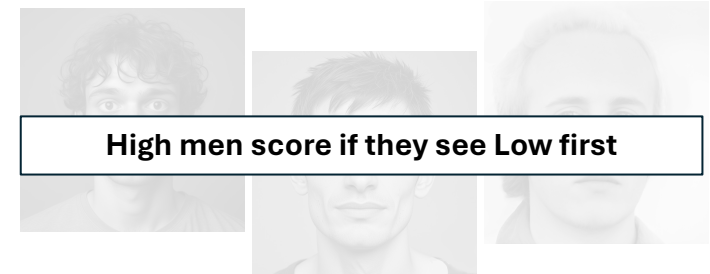
Saw High n=3128, Saw Medium then High n=508 (instructions n=250, no instructions n=258), saw Low then High n=499 (instructions n=241, no instructions n=258)

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Scores for highly attractive men are judged higher only if they see a Low attractive man first



High men score if they see Medium first



High men score if they see Low first

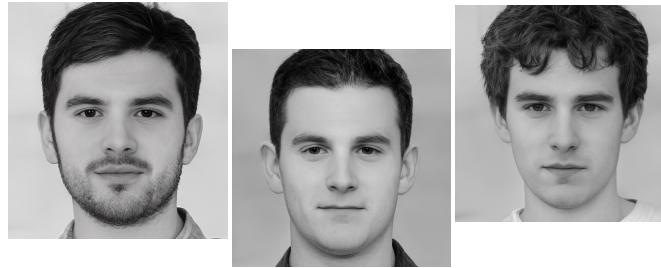


Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

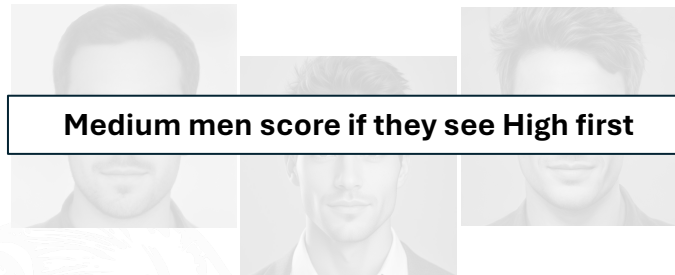
Saw High n=3128, Saw Medium then High n=508 (instructions n=250, no instructions n=258), saw Low then High n=499 (instructions n=241, no instructions n=258)

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

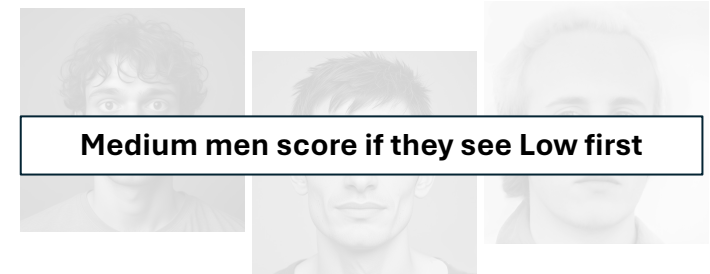
Scores for Medium attractive men are also impacted in the same way as higher attractive but to a lesser degree



Medium attractive men average score



Medium men score if they see High first



Medium men score if they see Low first



Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

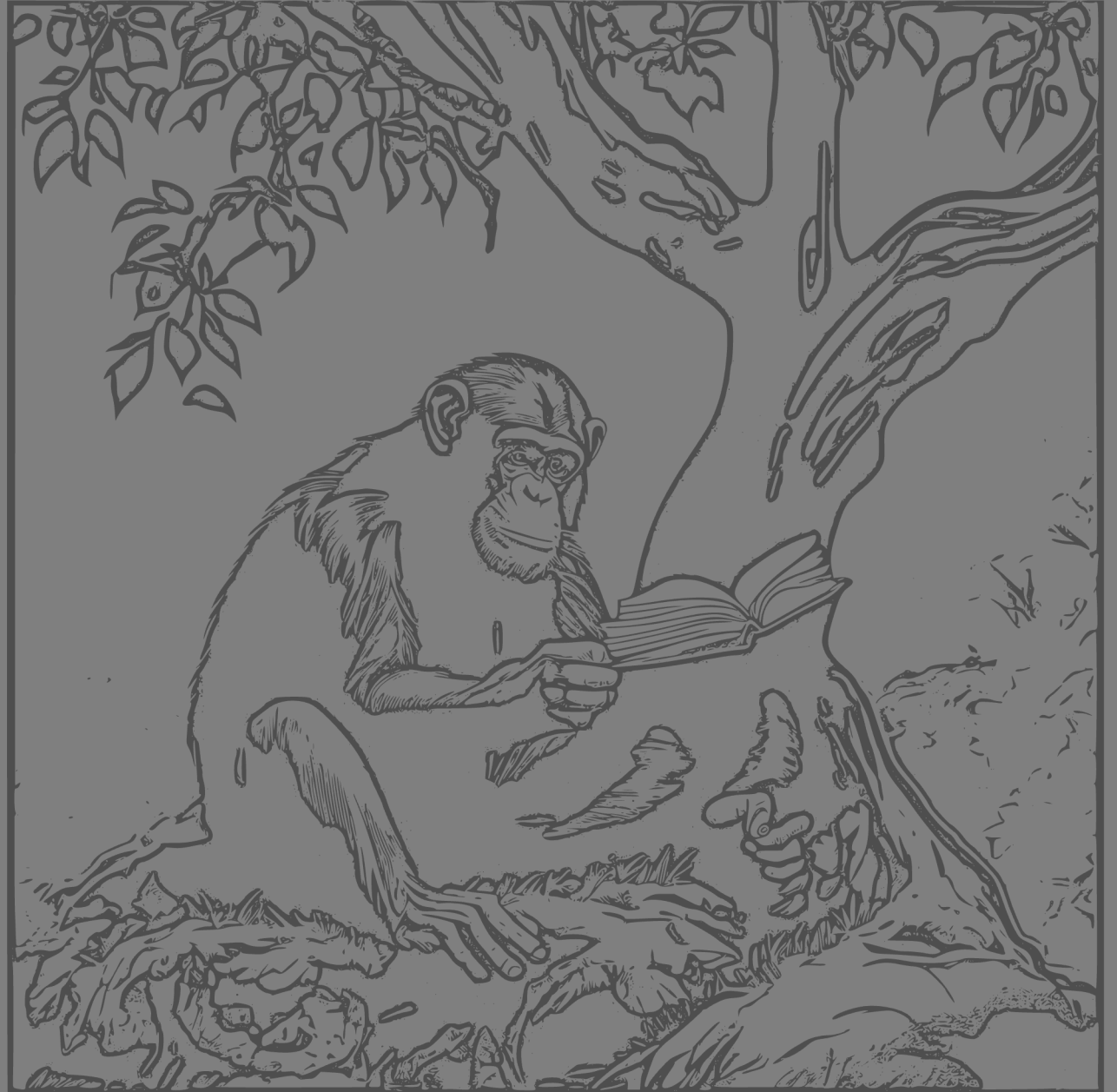
Saw Medium n=3128, Saw High then Medium n=427 (instructions n=205, no instructions n=222), saw Low then Medium n=551 (instructions n=265, no instructions n=286)

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Key finding – overall sample

**Order impacts
perceived
attractiveness** but only
for Medium and High
men

**Order is important but
can't be controlled in
online dating**



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Spotlight: Women online daters

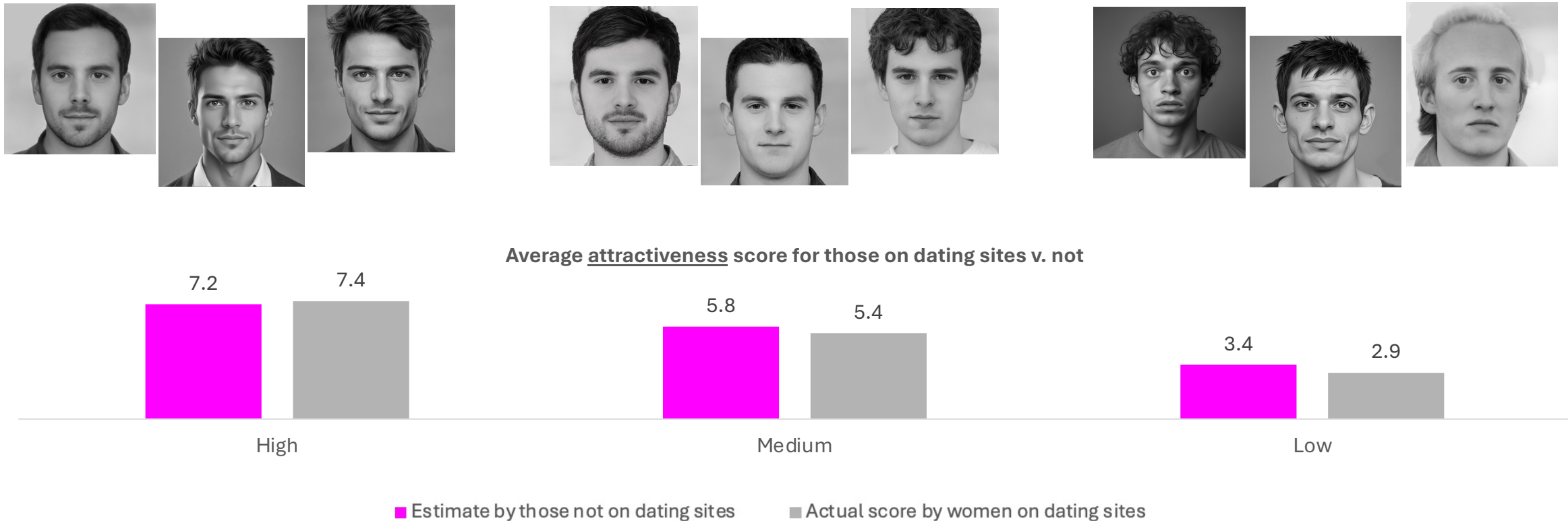
n=190 straight/bisexual women
who are online dating currently

v.

n=2,472 men/women who
are not



Those not on dating sites were accurate in judging the attractiveness for women on dating sites

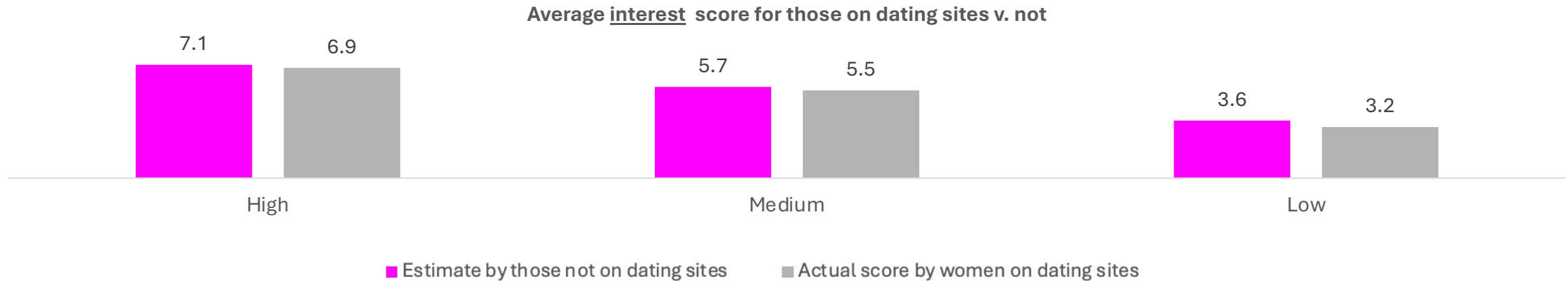
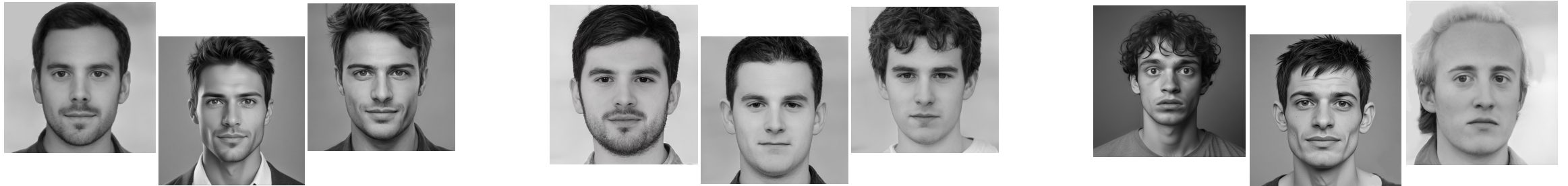


Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

n=190 straight/bisexual women on dating sites currently or have within the last year, n=2472 men/women who are not on dating sites currently nor have been within past year

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

They were also accurate in judging interest levels



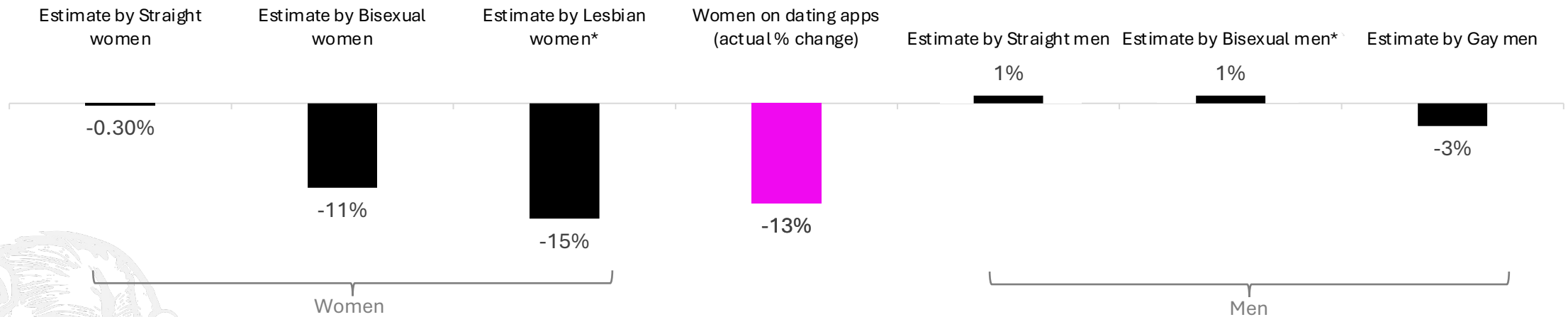
Q: How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?

n=190 straight/bisexual women on dating sites currently or have within the last year, n=2472 men/women who are not on dating sites currently nor have been within past year

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

They were not accurate in judging the negative impact of a smile for women on dating apps

How much more attractive would a woman on a dating site find a man if he smiles?
by every gender/sexuality



Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?

n=190 straight/bisexual women on dating sites currently or have within the last year, n=2472 men/women who are not on dating sites currently nor have been within past year

Overall – across all tiers and is NOT broken out by High Medium or Low

Note: Calculated as ((smiling-unsmiling)/smiling))

Sample tested at a 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error

Key finding – online daters

Gen pop is an accurate judge of what might be attractive or appealing to women online daters

Gen pop is not an accurate judge of how impactful expression is for women online daters



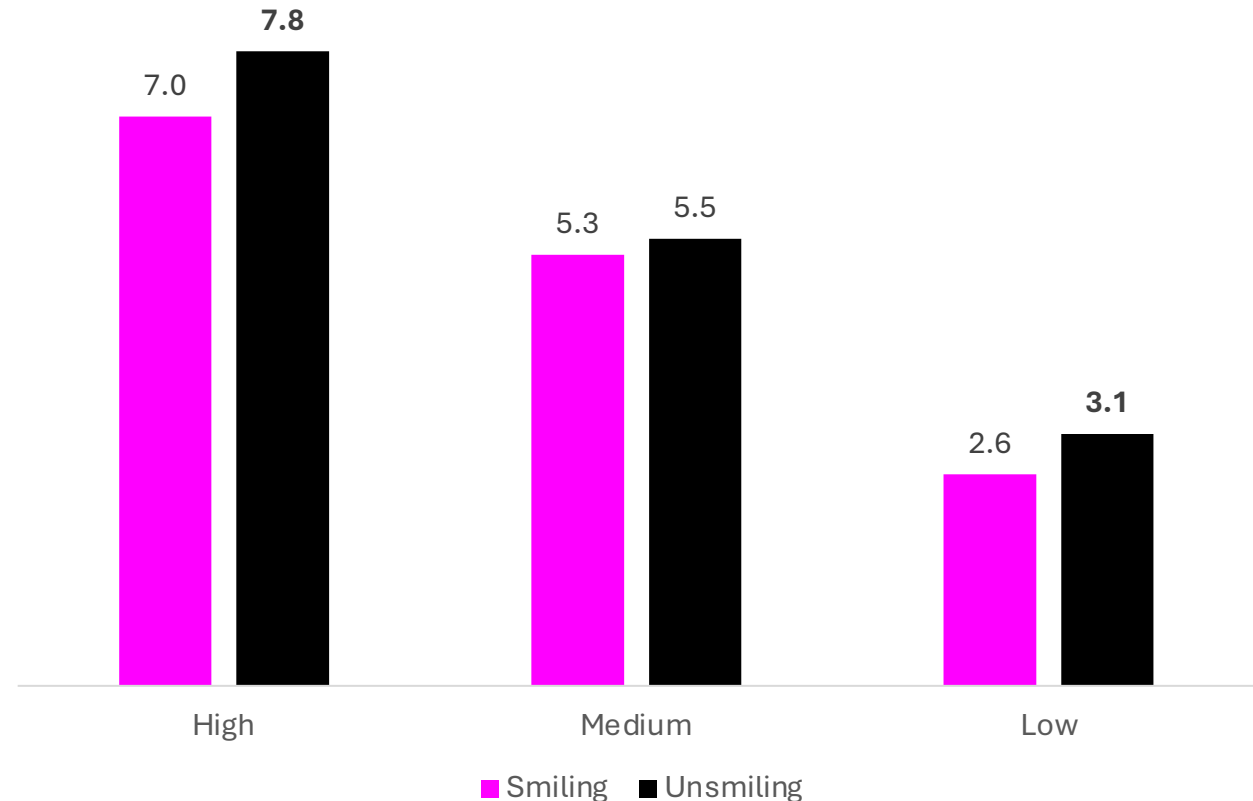
Smiling impact on attraction – for women on dating apps

Women who are on dating sites feel a neutral expression is preferred for any level of attractiveness, not just High and Low

Photos of men in extreme categories (High or Low attractiveness scores) drive a much larger boost versus overall population

Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?
n=190 straight bi on dating apps currently or within last year
Sample sizes between each column are too small for stat testing

Overall scores for attractiveness based on expression
for women on dating apps

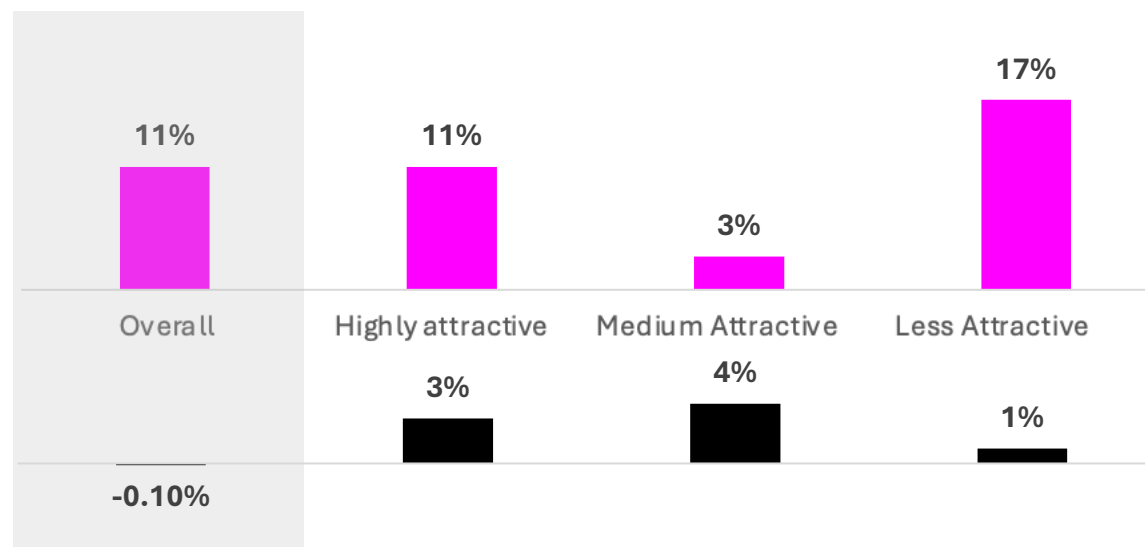


Positive impact of neutral expression on attractiveness score for women daters

Overall change is not significant for all respondents, but **for women on dating apps, the positive impact of a neutral expression is extreme**

For women online daters, there is a ~11% lift in attractiveness score with no smile

Overall % change for attractiveness scores
based on expression
for women on dating apps



■ Overall % change women daters

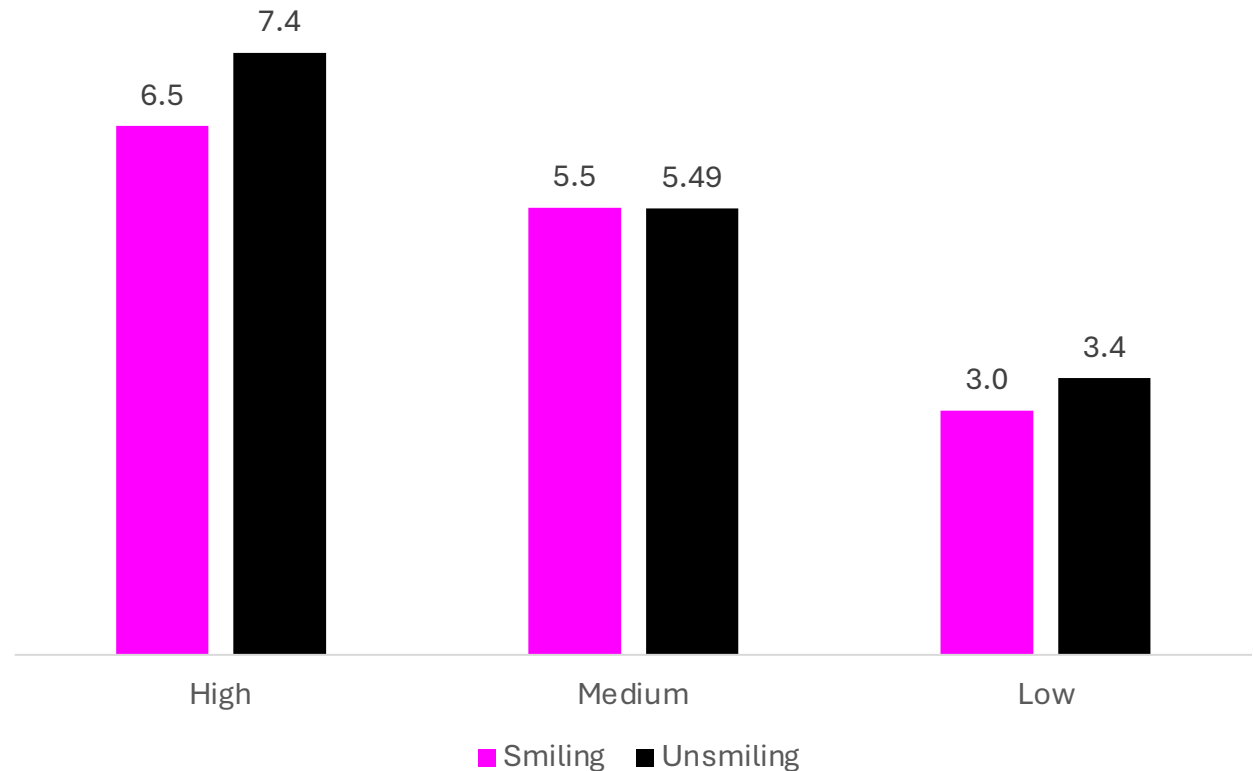
■ Overall % change all respondents

Q: How physically attractive would a woman on a dating site find this person?
n=190 straight bi on dating apps currently or within last year, n=3xxx all respondents
Sample sizes between each column are too small for stat testing except for overall which was tested and found significant

Smiling impact on interest

There's also a **slight boost in estimated interest for men who have a neutral expression**

Overall scores for interest based on expression
for women on dating apps



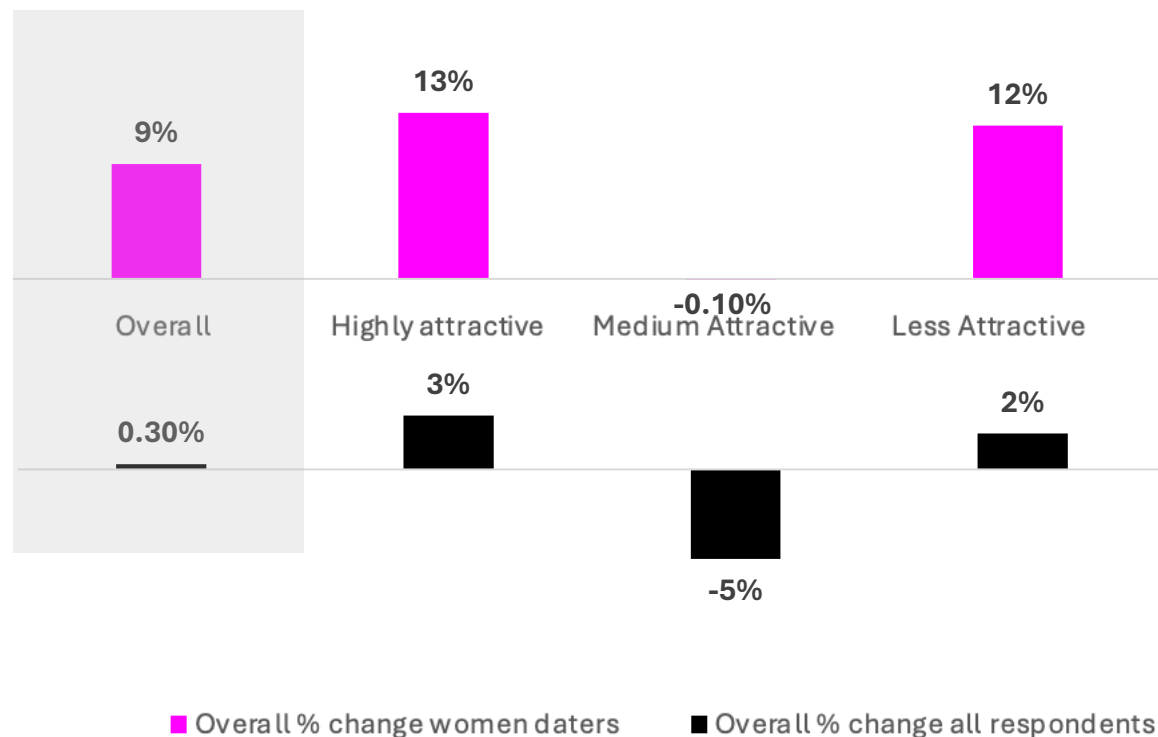
Q: How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?
n=190 straight bi on dating apps currently or within last year
Sample sizes between each column are too small for stat testing

Positive impact of neutral expression on interest score for women daters

Like attractiveness score, overall change is not significant for all respondents, but **for women on dating apps, the positive impact of a neutral expression on interest is largely positive**

For women online daters, there is a ~9% lift in interest score with no smile

Overall % change for interest scores based on expression for women on dating apps



Q: How interested would a woman on a dating website be to find out more about this person?

n=190 straight bi on dating apps currently or within last year, n=3xxx all respondents

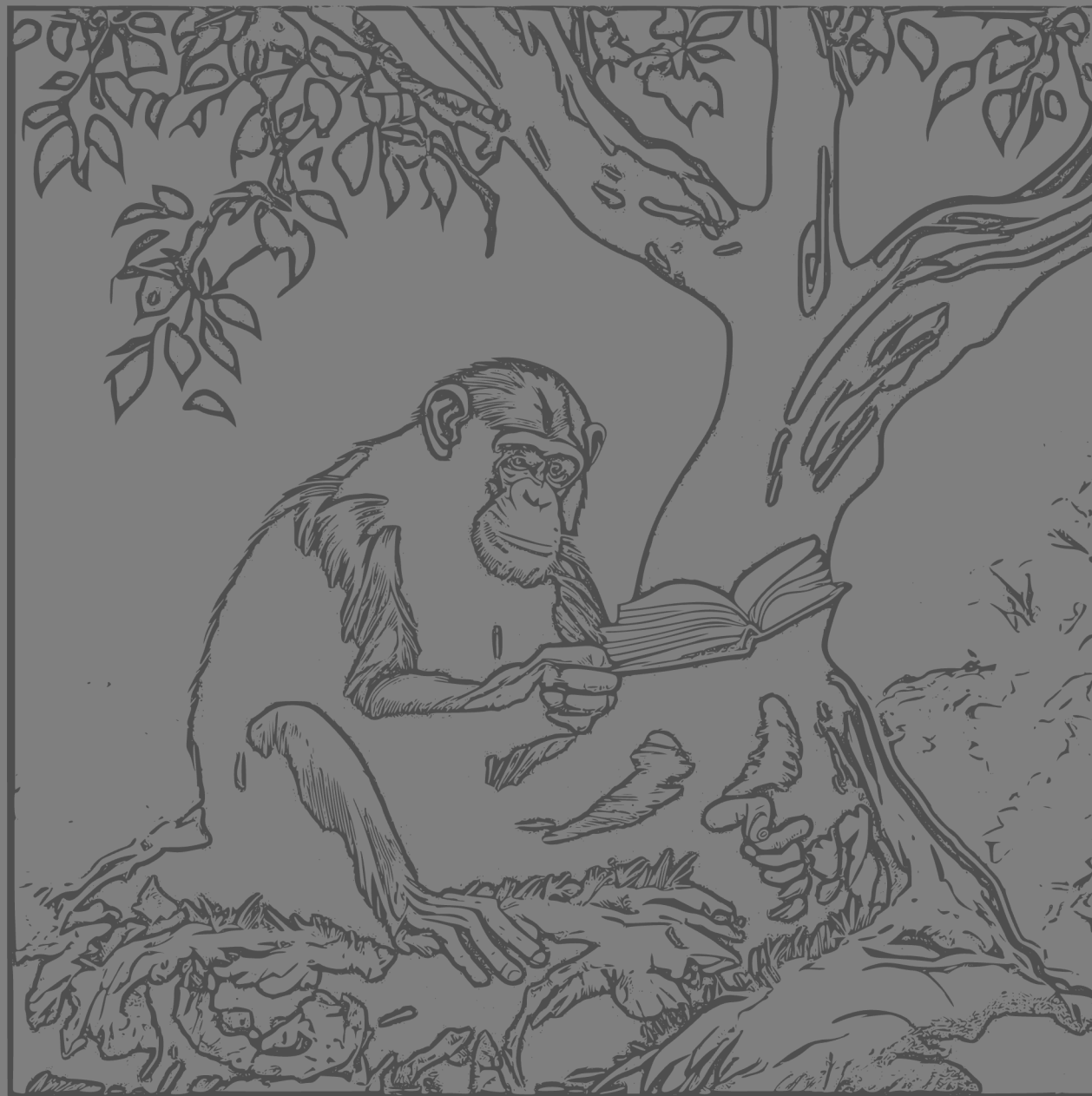
Sample sizes between each column are too small for stat testing except for overall which was tested and found significant

human-stories.com

Key finding – online daters

Men are rated more attractive and more interesting to women online daters when they have a neutral expression

Women online daters are significantly more likely to be positively impacted by a neutral expression compared to non online daters



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Overall, men are rated the same in attractiveness and appeal to women regardless of smile

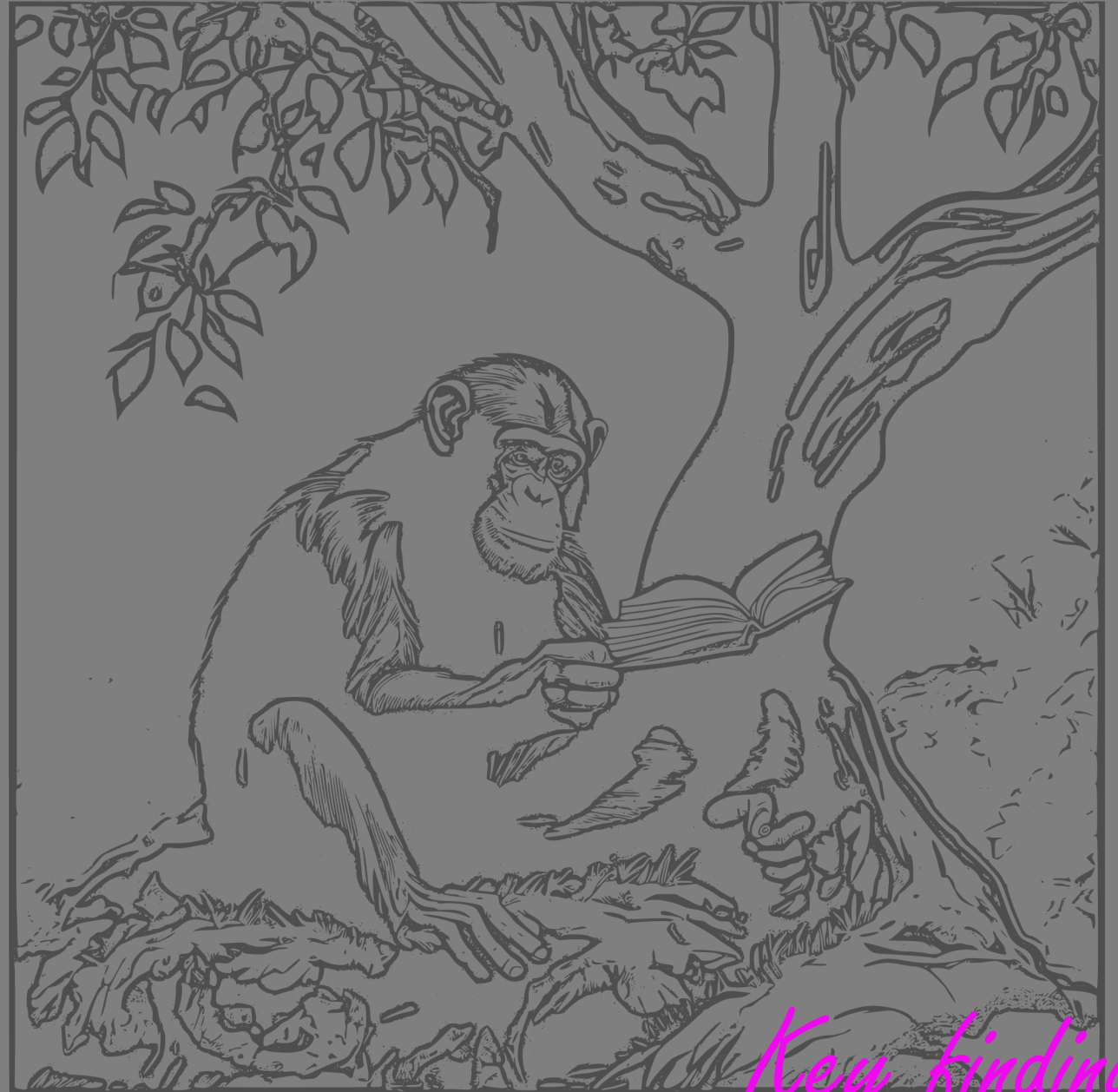
However, women who are on dating sites are much more likely to prefer a man with a neutral expression than those who are not on dating sites

Highly attractive/unattractive men will have the largest negative impact in attractiveness and interest by smiling in photographs

Those who are not on dating sites are able to accurately identify the levels of attractiveness and interest of men for women on dating sites

Those who are not on dating sites were unable to accurately predict the magnitude of negative impact of a smile in appeal to women on dating sites

Photo order matters: an attractive man shown after a Low attractive one is rated more attractive than if he were shown first



Key findings
human-stories.com

Access raw dataset or to be added to readout list email:

mireya@human-stories.com

Special acknowledgment to Dr. Brad Jones, Research Director for programming, fielding, and methodological advice. Write up on [YouGov](#) soon!

OSF (Open Science Framework) registered study. [Read study methodology and hypotheses here.](#)

