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Left or right? The link between political orientation and partner preferences in a multinational sample of single women

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Abstract

Political orientation is related to many aspects of our lives. Here, we investigate how political orientation relates to how women from different parts of the world picture their ideal partner. Using data from the *Ideal Partner Survey*, we analyzed relationships between political orientation and long-term partner preferences in a sample of 13,257 heterosexual, single women from 144 countries. Replicating previous work, political orientation was related to a preference for political similarity, such that women holding more extreme political views showed the strongest preferences for political similarity. In addition, women leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum held higher preferences for ethnic and religious similarity. Partly consistent with the possibility that political orientation relates to women's attraction towards men conforming to a masculine, male breadwinner stereotype, more right-leaning views were not only linked to preferring a financially secure and successful partner, but also to ascribing more importance to a partner´s height. No or only negligible relationships with political orientation were found for partner´s kindness-supportiveness and level of height. For all other preferences, results were less conclusive. In sum, results indicate that who women want as a romantic partner is partly related to their political orientation.

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Political orientation, left-right, partner preferences, ideal partner, multinational data

Introduction

Our political orientation influences our lives and our political behavior in turn forms the society we live in. Given the pivotal role political orientation plays, it is important to understand which areas of our lives are affected by it. The current study addresses the question whether our political orientation may affect our partner preferences (i.e., the ideas we hold about what an ideal partner should be like) and thereby our partner choice (e.g., Huber & Malhotra, 2017; Hudde & Grunow, 2024).

Psychological research on political orientation has extensively investigated the links between political orientation and personal values as well as personality traits. Individuals use their personal values to organize their beliefs regarding political issues (e.g., Caprara et al., 2006; Feldman, 2003), to make political decisions (Schwartz et al., 2010), and to communicate about political topics (Caprara et al., 2006). Personal values can be seen as the basic principles underlying political ideologies (e.g., Converse, 1964; Schwartz et al., 2010). Universalism and benevolence values are more strongly endorsed by individuals with left-wing political orientation, while conformity and tradition values appeal more to those leaning to the right of the political spectrum (Piurko et al., 2011). Complementarily, studies have found a positive relationship between Big Five conscientiousness and right-wing political orientation or conservative political views, while openness was negatively linked to right-wing political orientation or conservative political views (Fatke, 2016; Furnham & Fenton-O'Creevy, 2018; Krieger et al., 2019). These findings have also been cross-culturally replicated on the basis of large multinational samples (Sibley et al., 2012).

Considering that individuals differ in their personalities depending on their political standing and that their personality is, in turn, related to their partner preferences (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012; Neyt et al., 2020), it stands to reason that people with different political beliefs and values might differ in their long-term partner preferences. The current study seeks to investigate these relationships in a large, multinational sample of single women.

Political orientation and partner preferences

Preferences for similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity and religion. Research on the relationship between political orientation and partner preferences supports the validity of a similarity model for political orientation. In the study by Alford et al. (2011), political attitudes showed some of the strongest positive associations between spouses. Investigating large online dating communities, Hitsch et al. (2010) found conservatives to dislike liberals as potential partners and vice versa, while ideological similarity and shared views about the importance of politics predicted which relationships form (Huber & Malhotra, 2017). In addition, recent research looking at existing relationships suggests that diverging political stances of romantic partners are negatively associated with relationship quality (Gordon et al., 2024), and Furnham and Tsoi (2012) found participants holding

strong political views to prefer political compatibility. Taken together, individuals desire and seek out politically similar partners and the more extreme the political view, the more important political similarity becomes in a partner.

Concerning the relationship between political orientation and preferences for ethnic similarity, Anderson et al. (2014) showed that the tendency to express same-race preferences increased with political conservatism, an effect that was particularly salient for women. Other studies examined the association of political orientation with in-group favoritism in romantic contexts (Eastwick et al., 2009). Overall, politically conservative individuals prefer partners who are ethnically more similar to themselves.

Finally, based on data from 33 countries, Lee et al. (2018) found religiosity linked to a more right-leaning political stance. More generally, conservatives were found to be less accepting of dissimilarity (Jost et al., 2004; Klofstad et al., 2013). Taken together, individuals leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum should prefer a partner with a similar political, ethnic, and religious background.

Partner preference attributes. Other studies investigated relationships between political orientation and specific attributes of an ideal partner, most prominently preferences for financial security and social status. More right-leaning individuals showed a higher preference for good occupation and wealth (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012) and stressed the importance of a partner´s socio-economic status (Doosje et al., 1999). Dovetailing with these results, right-wing authoritarianism as a disposition goes along with a pronounced preference for high-resource partners (Sibley & Overall, 2011). Taken together, women with more right-leaning political views can be expected to prefer a financially secure partner of high social status.

While the relationship between political orientation and the preference for financial security and social status has been studied repeatedly, comparably little is known about political orientation's role for other preference attributes. A preference dimension that up until now has received comparably less attention is a partner´s confidence and assertiveness (Gerlach et al., 2019)—attributes that can be conceived of as stereotypically male (Abele, 2003) and are likely to be conducive to a partner´s occupational success and career attainment (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011; Minbashian et al., 2009). Because women leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum can be expected to desire a partner who more closely resembles the stereotypical image of masculinity and to whom ascending social and professional hierarchies would come more naturally, we expect a more right-leaning stance to go along with a higher preference for confidence and assertiveness.

Regarding preferences for education and intelligence, some scholars (e.g., Klofstad et al., 2012) have contended that liberal individuals compared to conservative individuals might prefer a more educated partner. This notion was presumably based on the finding that both conservative and liberal individuals prefer partners that are similar to themselves and Klofstad and colleagues' finding (2012) of level of education being positively related to liberal views. However, the authors provide no direct evidence supporting their contention. As education and intelligence have been shown to be instrumental in ascending social and professional hierarchies (e.g., Deary et al., 2005), and more right-

leaning women can be assumed to prefer high status, successful partners, it would also be plausible that a more right-leaning stance was positively linked to a preference for education and intelligence. Because no clear prediction could be made, we hypothesized a null or negligible relationship between preferences for education and intelligence and political orientation.

To the best of our knowledge, no empirical studies exist on the relationship between political orientation and preference for kindness and supportiveness. Kindness and supportiveness are among the most valued traits of an ideal partner (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2004). We expect that women value kindness and supportiveness in a potential long-term partner irrespective of their political standing, i.e., hypothesize a null or negligible relationship between this preference and political orientation.

Concerning preferences for physical attractiveness, Doosje et al. (1999) found no effect of political orientation: Individuals with right- versus left-wing political views attached value to a partner´s physical attractiveness to a similar extent. We therefore hypothesized a null or negligible relationship between women's political orientation and their valuation of an ideal partner´s physical attractiveness.

Preferences for partner's age and height. Individuals pay considerable attention to observable characteristics of a potential partner such as age (e.g., Zirima, 2020) and height (e.g., Valentova et al., 2016). Why should age and height matter when it comes to an ideal partner and how might age and height preferences relate to political orientation? Research has shown that women prefer partners of their own age or several years older (e.g., Kenrick et al., 1996; but see Botzet et al., 2023). The traditional breadwinner stereotype implies that women are looking for a partner with good resources (e.g., financial security) who is able to support a family. Because a man who is older, on average, had more time to invest in his career and increase his earnings, a man's age might operate as an indicator of social status and resources. Based on this account, we assumed that women leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum with their preferences for status and resources might also place higher importance on the age of a potential partner. In addition, a partner older than oneself would also more closely resemble the prototypical gender norm, which again might be more appealing to right- versus left-leaning women.

Women typically place high importance on a man's height (Yancey & Emerson, 2016) and usually prefer men taller than themselves as a partner (e.g., Stulp et al., 2013). These height preferences may reflect internalized social or gender stereotypes that stipulate a shorter partner for men and a taller partner for women (e.g., Cameron et al., 1977). In addition, they mirror gender role norms that prescribe tall men to be masculine (Helgeson, 1994). From a functional perspective, tall stature in men may signal the ability to secure resources (Higham & Carment, 1992; Judge & Cable, 2004). A man's height has been shown to be linked to income (e.g., Tyrrell et al., 2016). Thus, we hypothesized that women leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum, with their preference for a partner who is financially well-off and resembling the stereotypical image of masculinity, should be especially interested in taller men. In contrast, more left-leaning women should not ascribe as much importance to a partner's height.

The current study

Unlike previous studies that used relatively small samples and investigated a very limited selection of partner characteristics, in the current study, we used data from the *Ideal Partner Survey*—a large-scale study into women's relationship ideals including a comprehensive set of partner preferences. This data allowed us to examine the relationships of political orientation and partner preferences in a multinational sample, and further afforded the opportunity to explore heterogeneity of effects between countries (see Supplement I) and regions (see Supplement J).

Hypotheses

Table 1 shows our hypotheses for relationships between political orientation and partner preferences (see Supplement A for the original verbatim hypotheses).[1]

Method

The data used for the current study was collected as part of the *Ideal Partner Survey*, a large-scale project conducted in collaboration with the FemTech app *Clue*. A total of 68,100 individuals from 180 countries participated in the survey. Botzet et al. (2023) used the *Ideal Partner Survey* to study the link between age and partner preferences. For additional information, please refer to the project page on the Open Science Framework (OSF): https://osf.io/wkzng.

Table 1. Hypotheses for preferred political, ethnic and religious similarity; partner preference attributes; and preferred age and height.

Hypothesis	Outcome	Effect of political orientation	Expected effect
H1a(1)	Preferred political similarity	Linear	None/negligible
H1a(2)	Preferred political similarity	Quadratic	Positive
H1b	Preferred ethnic similarity	Linear	Positive
H1c	Preferred religious similarity	Linear	Positive
H2a	Financial security-successfulness (level)	Linear	Positive
H2b	Confidence-assertiveness (level)	Linear	Positive
H2c	Education-intelligence (level)	Linear	None/negligible
H2d	Kindness-supportiveness (level)	Linear	None/negligible
H2e	Attractiveness (level)	Linear	None/negligible
H3a(1)	Ideal age (importance)	Linear	Positive
H3a(2)	Ideal age (level)	Linear	Positive
H3b(1)	Ideal height (importance)	Linear	Positive
H3b(2)	Ideal height (level)	Linear	Positive

Participants

Recruitment. As the *Clue* user base consists predominantly of women, *Clue* collaborated with the condom company *MyOne* to reach a sizable number of men. Nevertheless, we restricted our analyses to women only.[2] Participants were recruited via email campaigns to the respective user bases, push messages within the *Clue* app, and social media channels. Sample size was based on time constraints.

Exclusion criteria. Total number of responses was 68,100. To be eligible for participation, participants had to be at least 18 years old. For purposes of comparability with previous research, we focused on heterosexual women. To sidestep potential biases in partner preferences based on characteristics of the actual romantic partner (Campbell & Stanton, 2014; Kučerováa et al., 2018), we only included single women in our analyses. Consequently, we excluded the following participants: all participants who (1) did not identify as women; (2) did not identify as heterosexual; (3) indicated being in a romantic relationship or where it was not sure whether participants were currently single; (4) did not specify their political orientation; (5) did not answer the survey seriously or chose not to answer the seriousness question.[3] See Figure S1 in Supplement D for an illustration of exclusion steps. This left a total sample of $N = 13{,}257$ heterosexual, single women for our analyses (referred to as the analysis sample).[4]

Procedure

Ten parallel language versions of the *Ideal Partner Survey* were developed and then implemented in the survey software Typeform v2 (https://www.typeform.com/). Prior to starting the survey, participants were informed that the study was about the qualities of their ideal partner(s). However, participants were not informed about any specific hypotheses. The first section of the survey focused on demographic information. In the second section, participants responded to a 10-min survey focusing on partner preferences for a long-term partner and questions asking them to describe themselves on the same attributes. In a third step, they could answer an optional survey part, consisting of questions on past relationships and preferences for different relationship options. Optionally, participants could choose to answer questions about preferences for a short-term partner. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to leave comments and answered a seriousness question.

Measures

In the following, we describe the measures that are relevant to the current study. An overview of these variables can be found in Table S1 in Supplement B. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the included measures and corresponding 95% confidence intervals are reported in Table S4 in Supplement G.

Political orientation was measured with one item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (0 = *LEFT* to 6 = *RIGHT*). Social scientists commonly consider the left-right measure to be the

most powerful and frugal way of classifying political attitudes (e.g., Feldman, 2003; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). A separate validation study in a German sample demonstrated that the 1-item measure of left-to-right political orientation was significantly and meaningfully related to other measures of political beliefs and values underscoring the validity of the measure (see Table S3 in Supplement F).

Preferred similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity, and religion were measured with one variable each. For preferred political and religious similarity, participants were asked to rate how important similarity was to them. Responses ranged from 0 = *not at all important* to 6 = *very important*. For preferred ethnic similarity, participants were asked whether their partner's ethnicity should be different or the same as their own. This item was assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 = *different from me* to 6 = *same as me*.

For partner preference attributes, participants rated each attribute on importance and preferred level. In the current study, we focused on preferred level ratings as these likely give a better picture of how women imagined their ideal partner to be like. All level items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from, for example, 0 = *not kind* to 6 = *very kind* for kindness. We derived five preference dimensions by averaging two items each: financial security-successfulness (financially secure, successful/ambitious), confidence-assertiveness (confident, assertive), education-intelligence (educated, intelligent), kindness-supportiveness (kind, supportive), and attractiveness (attractive face, attractive body).

For height and age, we asked women to report on both, importance and preferred level. Importance of ideal partner's age and height were measured with one variable each, ranging from 0 = *not at all important* to 6 = *very important*. Ideal partner's age was calculated as relative age discrepancy between ideal partner's age and women's own age (by subtracting women's own age from ideal partner's age). Participants indicated their ideal partner's height choosing between the options: 1 = *much shorter than me*, 2 = *shorter than me*, 3 = *around the same height as me*, 4 = *taller than me*, 5 = *much taller than me*.

Data analyses

The code for data wrangling and all analyses is available on the supportive website (https://laurabotzet.github.io/idealpartnersurvey_polorient/) and within the corresponding OSF project (https://osf.io/mxf9p/).

Statistical models. Hypotheses were tested via multilevel regression modeling, using the statistical software R (Version 4.0.2; R Core Team, 2020). For creating our codebook, we used the package *codebook* (Arslan, 2019). For analyses, we used *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova et al., 2017), *effects* (Fox & Weisberg, 2018), and *effectsize* (Ben-Shachar et al., 2020). We used the bobyga optimizer from the package *minqa* (Bates et al., 2014) for multilevel analyses. *Mvmeta* (Gasparrini et al., 2012) was used for exploratory analysis.

Political orientation was the main predictor of interest in all our models. As random effects, we included a random slope and random intercept for the effect of political

orientation nested within countries in all our analyses. For the quadratic effect of political orientation on preferred political similarity we performed the two-lines approach by Simonsohn, (2018a). We adjusted the code available at https://webstimate.org/twolines/ (Simonsohn, 2018b) to determine a breaking point using the Robin Hood algorithm based on a simple linear regression analysis. We used this breaking point to perform two multilevel regression analyses with political orientation as the main predictor, and a random slope and intercept for the effect of political orientation nested within countries (the two-lines approach was originally designed to perform two simple linear regression analyses).

Inference criteria. In order to control for multiple testing, we divided the frequently used significance threshold of $\alpha = .05$ by the number of the project's hypotheses (17 tested hypotheses; results for four hypotheses on relationship options are reported in Tables S10, S11, and S12 as well as Figures S4, S5, and S6 in Supplement K) leading to a significance threshold of $\alpha = .003$.

The main inference criterion, however, was the standardized beta coefficient. We compared effect sizes to previously reported effect sizes in the literature. Based on previous research (see Supplement C), we concluded that all effect sizes smaller than $|\beta| = .05$ seem negligible and likely have little practical relevance. Consequently, we set our threshold standardized beta coefficients to $|\beta| = .05$. A standardized beta coefficient of ± 0.05 corresponds to a change of ± 0.05 standard deviation in the outcome variable when the predictor variable changes by one standard deviation. All beta coefficients for linear political orientation effects with an absolute value smaller than 0.05 and with a 99.7% confidence interval excluding ± 0.05 were interpreted as negligible. All beta coefficients for linear political orientation effects with an absolute value larger than 0.05 and with a 99.7% confidence interval excluding ± 0.05 were interpreted as substantial. All beta coefficients with a 99.7% confidence interval including ± 0.05 were interpreted as undecidable.

Robustness analyses. We conducted additional robustness checks such that we repeated all analyses with age included as a covariate (see Botzet et al., 2023 for a detailed examination of the relationship between age and partner preferences). Results of all robustness analyses are reported on the supportive website (https://laurabotzet.github.io/idealpartnersurvey_polorient/06_robustness_analyses.html). Where results of robustness analyses differed from the main analyses, we note this throughout the text.

Exploratory analyses. For comparisons of the relationships between political orientation and partner preferences between countries, we decided to include all countries with more than 500 heterosexual, single women who answered the *Ideal Partner Survey* (i.e., seven countries) in an exploratory analysis. Sample sizes of other countries were too small to reach any conclusions (n between 1 and 499; see Table S2 in Supplement E). Based on a comment from a reviewer, we also performed an exploratory analysis investigating the heterogeneity between four different regions, namely Europe ($n = 7{,}417$), Latin and South America ($n = 3{,}325$), North America ($n = 1{,}592$), and South and East Asia ($n = 542$).

Sample sizes for other regions, namely Oceania, Africa, as well as Middle East and Central Asia were too small to reach any conclusions ($n < 500$). For exploratory analyses, simple linear regressions with political orientation as a predictor and all outcomes outlined in the main analyses were performed separately for the seven countries and four regions, respectively.

To pinpoint the heterogeneity of effect sizes between countries for each of our outcomes, we performed a *Cochran Q Test of Heterogeneity* (Cochran, 1954) and additionally reported I^2 (Higgins et al., 2003). To be consistent throughout the manuscript, we decided to adjust our significance threshold to $\alpha = .003$ (as in our main analyses) even though we did not formulate any hypotheses for exploratory analyses. For results pertaining to heterogeneity between countries, please see Figure S2 and Table S8 in Supplement I. For results pertaining to heterogeneity between regions, please see Figure S3 and Table S9 in Supplement J.

Results

Descriptives

The analysis sample included 13,257 heterosexual, single women. Participant age ranged from 18 to 67 years ($M = 23.72$ years, median = 21 years, $SD = 6.90$ years). On average, participants indicated a political orientation of 2.53 ($SD = 1.37$) on a scale ranging from 0 to 6, thus slightly falling below the scale mid-point. Figure 1 displays the distribution of political orientation among our analysis sample. Overall, right-wing political orientation and age were significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.05$ [95% CI: $-.07$, $-.04$])

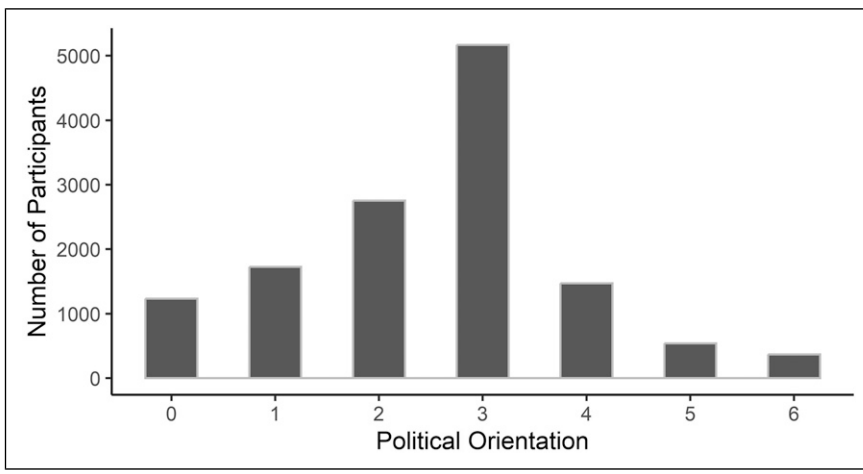

Figure 1. Distribution of political orientation.
Note. Lower values indicate a left-wing political orientation and higher values indicate a right-wing political orientation.

indicating that older participants were slightly more likely to hold more left-leaning political views.

The *Ideal Partner Survey* was answered in the ten available languages in varying quantity: From the 13,257 participants, 3,037 filled out the survey in Spanish (22.91%), 2,849 in English (21.49%), 2,385 in French (17.99%), 2,187 in German (16.50%), 999 in Italian (7.54%), 825 in Portuguese (6.22%), 385 in Danish (2.90%), 287 in Japanese (2.16%), 207 in Russian (1.56%), and 96 in Chinese (0.72%). Our analysis sample included individuals from 144 different countries. Figure 2 visualizes how participants were distributed across these countries (see Table S2 in Supplement E).

Preferences for similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity and religion

For a summary of the main results for standardized and unstandardized effects of political orientation on preference for similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity, and religion see Table S5 in Supplement H. Figure 3 displays effect size estimates and 99.7% confidence intervals for main and robustness analyses.

Based on our inference criteria, we found positive linear effects of political orientation on preferred ethnic similarity ($\beta = 0.13$ [0.07, 0.18]) and preferred religious similarity ($\beta = 0.11$ [0.07, 0.15]), meaning that politically right-leaning women prefer a partner who is

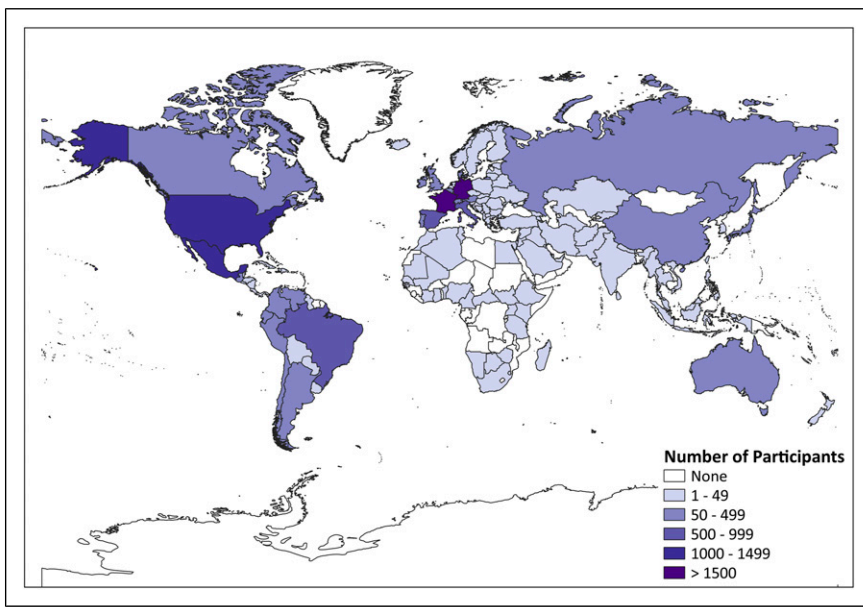

Figure 2. Visualization of country distribution of all participants in the analysis sample (N = 13,257).
Note. The figure displays absolute frequencies of participants in countries. The map was created using the free, open source QGIS Geographic Information System (Version 3.10; QGIS Development Team, 2021).

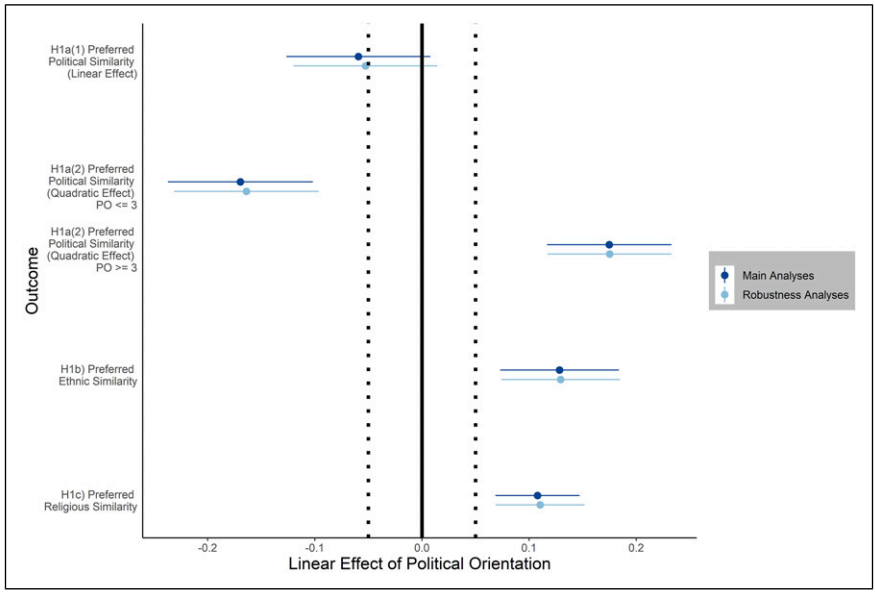

Figure 3. Standardized effect size estimates of effects of political orientation on preference for similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity, and religion for main analyses and robustness analyses.

Note. Preference for similarity in political beliefs and values, ethnicity, and religion included preferred political similarity (H1a(1) & H1a(2)), preferred ethnic similarity (H1b), and preferred religious similarity (H1c). Robustness analyses included age as a covariate in each model. Graphs display standardized linear effects of political orientation; error bars represent 99.7% confidence intervals; PO = political orientation. Note that sample sizes for regression coefficients testing the quadratic effect of political orientation on preferred political similarity (H1a(2)) are smaller than for coefficients of other hypotheses, different in size, and overlapping due to the two-lines analytic approach (*n* (PO<=3) = 10,636; *n* (PO >=3) = 7,357).

ethnically and religiously more similar to themselves. A potentially negative linear effect of political orientation on preferred political similarity ($\beta = -0.06$ [-0.13, 0.01]) was also found (but see the results for the quadratic effect below for more details on the nature of this effect).

For the quadratic effect of political orientation on preferred political similarity, the Robin Hood algorithm revealed a breaking point of 3. Results of the two-lines approach further revealed a negative linear effect of political orientation for values of political orientation <= 3 ($\beta = -0.17$ [-0.24, -0.10]) and a positive linear effect for values of political orientation >= 3 ($\beta = 0.17$ [0.12, 0.23]). This implies that women's preference for a politically similar partner decreases for values smaller than 3 on the political spectrum and increases again for values larger than 3. Consequently, the preference for a politically similar partner is highest in the extremes of the political spectrum. Figure 4 illustrates these results.

Partner preference attributes

For a summary of the main results for standardized and unstandardized effects of political orientation on partner preference attributes see Table S6 in Supplement H. Figure 5 displays effect size estimates and 99.7% confidence intervals for main and robustness analyses.

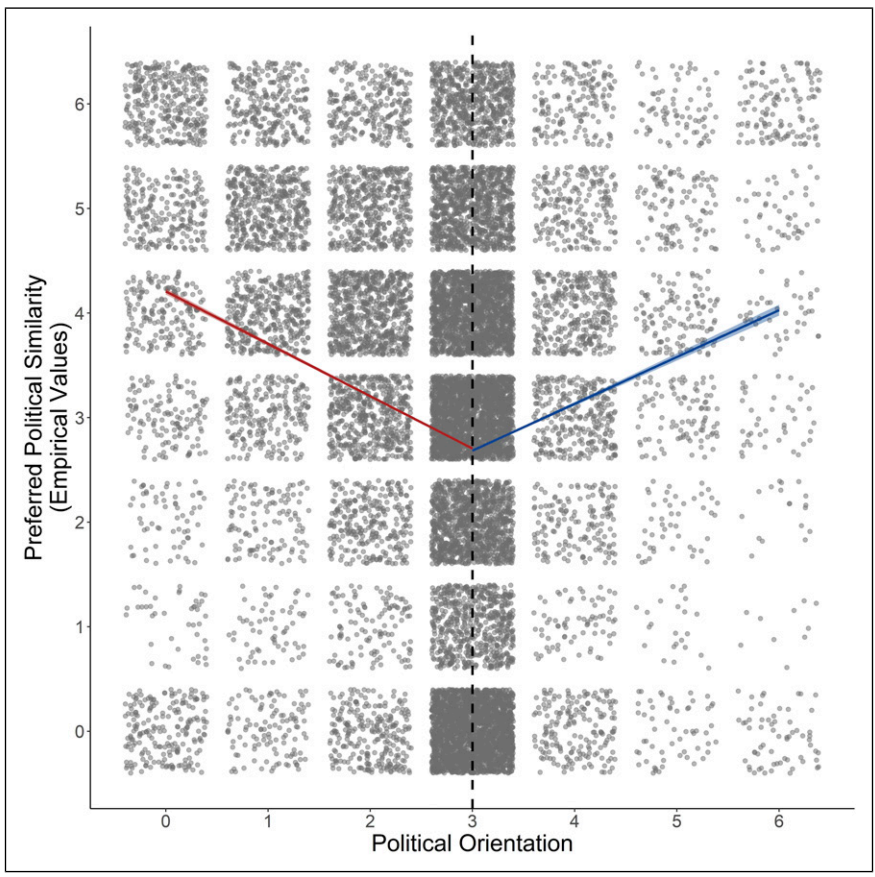

Figure 4. Results from analysis of quadratic effect of political orientation on preference for similarity in political beliefs and values using the two-lines approach with 99.7% CIs and empirical values for main analysis.
Note. Results correspond to Hypothesis H1a(2). Grey dots display empirical values of political orientation and preferred political similarity. Black dashed line corresponds to the breaking point as determined by the Robin Hood algorithm. Red line shows results of the two-lines approach for values of political orientation <= 3; blue line for values >=3, respectively. Light blue and red ribbons represent 99.7% confidence intervals, respectively.

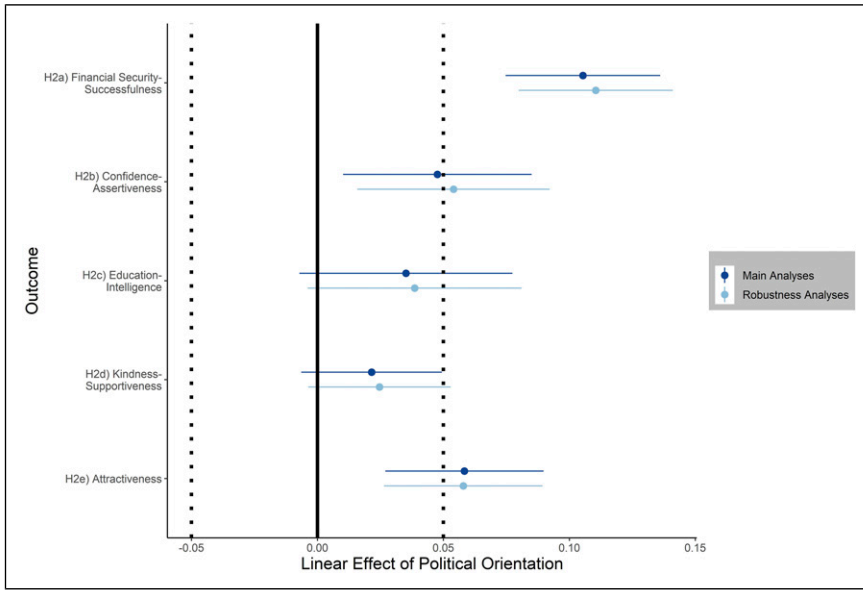

Figure 5. Standardized effect size estimates of linear effects of political orientation on ideal partner preferences for main analyses and robustness analyses.
Note. Partner preference attributes included preferences for financial security-successfulness (H2a), confidence-assertiveness (H2b), education-intelligence (H2c), kindness-supportiveness (H2d), and attractiveness (H2e). Robustness analyses included age as a covariate in each model. Graphs display standardized linear effects of political orientation; error bars represent 99.7% confidence intervals.

There was evidence for a positive linear effect of political orientation on preference for financial security-successfulness (β = 0.11 [0.07, 0.14]) meaning that politically right-leaning women value these characteristics more than politically left-leaning women do. We found no or only a negligible effect of political orientation on preferences for kindness-supportiveness (β = 0.02 [-0.01, 0.05]). We could not decide whether positive linear effects of political orientation on preferences for attractiveness (β = 0.06 [0.03, 0.09]), confidence-assertiveness (β = 0.05 [0.01, 0.09]), and education-intelligence (β = 0.04 [-0.01, 0.08]) indeed exist.

Ideal age and ideal height

For a summary of the main results for standardized and unstandardized effects of political orientation on ideal age and ideal height see Table S7 in Supplement H. Figure 6 displays effect size estimates and 99.7% confidence intervals for main and robustness analyses.

There was evidence for a positive linear effect of political orientation on importance of ideal height (β = 0.11 [0.08, 0.14]), suggesting that politically right-leaning women place higher importance on a partner's height. However, no or only a negligible effect of political

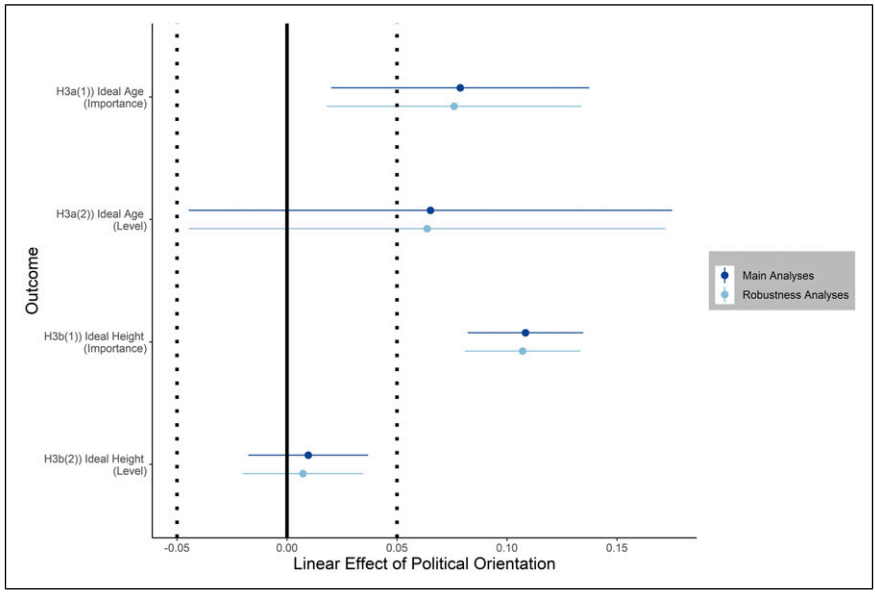

Figure 6. Standardized effect size estimates of linear effects of orientation on ideal age and ideal height for main analyses and robustness analyses.
Note. Ideal age and ideal height included importance of ideal age (H3a(1)), preferred level of ideal age (H3a(2)), importance of ideal height (H3b(1)), and preferred level of ideal height (H3b(2)). Robustness analyses included age as a covariate in each model. Graphs display standardized linear effects of political orientation; error bars represent 99.7% confidence intervals.

orientation on preferred level of ideal height (β = 0.01 [-0.02, 0.04]) was found. Further, we could not decide whether positive linear effects of political orientation on importance of ideal age (β = 0.08 [0.02, 0.14]) and preferred level of ideal age (β = 0.07 [-0.04, 0.18]) indeed exist.

Exploratory analyses

High heterogeneity in effect sizes between countries was found for the linear and quadratic effects of political orientation on preferred political similarity and linear effects of political orientation on preferred ethnic similarity, financial security-successfulness, confidence-assertiveness, education-intelligence, kindness-supportiveness, attractiveness, importance of ideal partner's age, and preferred level of ideal height. For preferred religious similarity, heterogeneity was moderate. For ideal age and the importance of ideal height, heterogeneity was low. Figure S2 and Table S8 in Supplement I display results from our exploratory analysis for countries.

For regions, we found high heterogeneity in effect sizes for the linear and quadratic effects of political orientation on preferred political similarity and for the linear effects of political orientation on preferred ethnic similarity, financial security-successfulness, confidence-assertiveness, education-intelligence, kindness-supportiveness, attractiveness, and preferred

level of ideal height. For preferred religious similarity, heterogeneity was moderate. For the importance and the level of ideal age, heterogeneity was low. Figure S3 and Table S9 in Supplement J display results from our exploratory analysis for regions. Of note, while we were able to estimate effects for Europe, Latin and South America, as well as North America very precisely, the uncertainty of the effects for South and East Asia was relatively high due to the small sample size.

Nevertheless, we observed some notable differences between South and East Asia and the other three regions. For instance, in Europe, Latin and South America as well as North America, right-leaning women tended to prefer a confident-assertive partner. In contrast, this pattern was significantly different in South and East Asia, where the trend even appeared to reverse: Left-leaning women showed a greater preference for confident-assertive partners. Relatedly, in our first exploratory analyses focusing on seven individual countries, we found high heterogeneity in preferences for confidence-assertiveness. In most of the countries, right-leaning women consistently preferred confident-assertive partners; the exception was Spain, where left-leaning women showed a stronger preference for such traits.

Discussion

Employing a large, multinational sample from the *Ideal Partner Survey*, the current study investigated relationships of political orientation with a comprehensive set of partner preferences in heterosexual, single women. Results revealed a positive quadratic relationship between political orientation and preferred political similarity meaning that preference for political similarity in a partner is the highest in both extremes of the political spectrum. Positive linear relationships between political orientation and preferred ethnic and religious similarity, preferred level of financial-security-successfulness, and importance of partner's height were also found. In contrast, preferred levels of kindness-supportiveness and height were unrelated to political orientation. For all other outcomes, results were inconclusive. Table 2 compares expected and empirical effects; decisions about all hypotheses based on our inference criterion are summarized. Exploratory analyses revealed relatively high heterogeneity across countries and regions in the effects of political orientation on most of the outcomes.

Preferences for similarity

In line with our hypothesis and prior research (Furnham & Tsoi, 2012; Hitsch et al., 2010), results demonstrate that the more extreme political views women held, the more important political similarity of a potential long-term partner was to them. The more women are concerned with their political standing, the more they likely define themselves according to their political beliefs and values. By attaching importance to the political standing of a potential romantic partner and choosing partners accordingly, women who hold strong political views may potentially avoid relationship conflict caused by differing political opinions. Indeed, a recent study (Peacock & Pederson, 2022) found that individuals in romantic relationships with a politically similar partner are more satisfied in their

Table 2. Hypotheses for preferred political, ethnic and religious similarity; ideal partner preferences; and ideal age and height.

Hypothesis	Outcome	Effect of political orientation	Expected effect	Empirical effect	Hypothesis confirmed?
H1a(1)	Preferred political similarity	Linear	None/ negligible	Potentially negative	Undecidable
H1a(2)	Preferred political similarity	Quadratic	Positive	Positive	✓
H1b	Preferred ethnic similarity	Linear	Positive	Positive	✓
H1c	Preferred religious similarity	Linear	Positive	Positive	✓
H2a	Financial security-successfulness	Linear	Positive	Positive	✓
H2b	Confidence-assertiveness	Linear	Positive	Potentially positive	Undecidable
H2c	Education-intelligence	Linear	None/ negligible	Potentially positive	Undecidable
H2d	Kindness-supportiveness	Linear	None/ negligible	None/ negligible	✓
H2e	Attractiveness	Linear	None/ negligible	Potentially positive	Undecidable
H3a(1)	Ideal age (importance)	Linear	Positive	Potentially positive	Undecidable
H3a(2)	Ideal age (level)	Linear	Positive	Potentially positive	Undecidable
H3b(1)	Ideal height (importance)	Linear	Positive	Positive	✓
H3b(2)	Ideal height (level)	Linear	Positive	None/ negligible	×

Note. ✓ = hypothesis confirmed; × = hypothesis rejected.

relationship and that this association was mediated by political conflict intensity and discussion expressiveness. In addition, the same study showed that those with a politically similar romantic partner participated more in politics compared to those having a politically dissimilar romantic partner—an association mediated by discussion frequency and expressiveness. These findings suggest that finding a partner who shares one's political beliefs and values can play a pivotal role for both relationship satisfaction and political participation. While exploratory analysis for political similarity in a partner indicated relatively high heterogeneity across countries, a recent trend observed around the world is that political ideology increasingly differs between young women and men: Women hold more liberal and men more conservative political views (Burn-Murdoch, 2024), potentially complicating the quest for a suitable partner or leading to conflict in romantic relationships. Apart from differing political views, conflicts in romantic relationships may

also originate from differing religious or ethnic backgrounds. In line with our hypotheses, women leaning more to the right side of the political spectrum attached more importance to ethnic as well as religious compatibility in a romantic partner compared with politically left-leaning women. These findings are in line with our considerations based on relationships between religiosity and political views as well as political views and personality factors (Fatke, 2016; Furnham & Fenton-O'Creevy, 2018; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012; Krieger et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Sibley et al., 2012). However, future research that takes a more differentiated look at the motivations underlying tendencies for similarity seeking is needed.

Male stereotypes: Right-leaning political views and the male breadwinner

For kindness-supportiveness we found no or at least no meaningful relationship with women's political orientation, implying that a kind and supportive partner is valued by all women regardless of their political views. In contrast and in line with previous research showing a positive relationship between right-leaning political views and preferences for status and resources (Doosje et al., 1999; Furnham & Tsoi, 2012), women with more right-leaning political views preferred a successful partner with good resources who is financially secure. In addition, a potentially positive relationship was found between right-leaning political views and a preference for confidence-assertiveness. This finding is in line with our expectation of politically right-leaning women being more interested in a partner who fulfills stereotypically male characteristics (Abele, 2003) and to whom, in turn, ascending social or occupational hierarchies might come more naturally.

We had also hypothesized a more right-leaning political stance to be positively linked to importance as well as preferred levels of ideal partner's age and height. These hypotheses, however, were not fully supported by the results of the current study. For both importance and level ratings of ideal partner's age, the results revealed only potentially positive relationships with political orientation. Accordingly, we can neither accept nor reject our Hypotheses H3a(1) and H3a(2).

By contrast, the results confirmed Hypothesis H3b(1), showing a positive linear link between political orientation and importance of ideal partner's height. Hence, women placing themselves on the right side of the political spectrum attached more importance to height in a potential long-term partner than women placing themselves on the left side of the political spectrum. Still, and contradicting our Hypothesis H3b(2), no or only a negligible relationship was revealed between political orientation and preferred level of ideal partner's height. In essence, in our data, the majority of women irrespective of their political standing seemed to prefer a partner as tall as or taller than themselves. Yet, given that tall stature may signal men´s ability to secure resources (Higham & Carment, 1992; Judge & Cable, 2004), our finding that women with a more right-leaning stance place a higher importance on a partner´s height per se is still consistent with the notion that a more right-leaning stance in women could be reflective of a broader preference for men fulfilling the male breadwinner stereotype.

Strengths, limitations and directions for future research

The current study has several strengths. First, in our analyses, we could draw on a large multinational sample of women from a total of 144 different countries. Second, other than previous studies that only looked at a rather limited range of preferences, the current study investigated a comprehensive set of partner preference attributes. Third, we employed sophisticated statistical techniques along with pre-defined inference criteria and a number of robustness checks to test our hypotheses, all of which bolster our confidence in the present results.

Nonetheless, the current study also had some limitations. First, although the sample was a multinational one, a closer look at participants' distribution across countries revealed that the lion's share of women originated from "Western", relatively prosperous countries. Second, it remains uncertain in how far the one-item measure of left-to-right political orientation was interpreted identically by participants from different countries. However, a study including representative samples from 20 countries by Piurko et al. (2011) revealed that universalism and benevolence are values that are related to a left-wing political orientation, whereas conformity and tradition are linked to a right-wing political orientation across both more liberal and more traditional countries. Still, future research could benefit from using more differentiated measures of political orientation, such as *Right-Wing Authoritarianism* (Beierlein et al., 2014), *Social Dominance Orientation* (Pratto et al., 2013), the *Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale* (Morgan, 1996) and the *Schwartz Values Short Scale* (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). While we could not employ such a differentiated assessment in the *Ideal Partner Survey*, our validation study showed that our single-item measure of political orientation meaningfully mapped onto these very aspects of political orientation, hereby underscoring the measure`s validity.

Our findings revealed substantial heterogeneity in the relationship between political orientation and partner preferences across countries and regions, particularly for traits like confidence-assertiveness. For instance, while right-leaning women in Europe, Latin and South America, and North America preferred confident-assertive partners, this pattern was reversed in South and East Asia, where left-leaning women showed a stronger preference for these traits. These results underscore the importance of cultural context and highlight a key limitation: combining data across countries or regions may obscure meaningful variation. Moreover, our exploratory analyses were based on only 7 of 144 countries and 4 of 7 regions, respectively, and relied on heterogeneity estimates that may be biased (e.g., von Hippel, 2015). We therefore encourage future research to further investigate cross-cultural differences in political orientation and partner preferences using more robust methods. It is also important to note that the generalizability of our findings may be limited to the regions from which most of our data were drawn—namely Europe and the Americas. Representation from South and East Asia was limited, and samples from the Middle East and Central Asia, Oceania, as well as Africa were too small to allow for informative analyses. Expanding research beyond Western contexts is essential, however, and initiatives like the Africa Long Life Study (Thalmayer et al., 2024) represent important steps toward a more inclusive and global science of interindividual differences.

Furthermore, while our study proved informative concerning the relationship of women's political orientation with their partner preferences, it cannot speak to these relationships in men. We assume that for the dimensions of political, ethnic, and religious similarity, the patterns for men would look similar to the ones we found for women. However, one could argue that the pattern for financial security-successfulness and confidence-assertiveness preferences should differ between the genders such that men with a more right-leaning, more conservative stance could even prefer a woman who more closely resembles the stereotypical image of femininity or the homemaker. Still, it could also be that men with more right-leaning political views prefer a prosperous lifestyle and consequently seek for a woman who can add to this by having good status and financial resources herself. Future research will have to disentangle these possibilities. In addition, we did not collect data on the following demographic characteristics: city of residence, race or ethnicity, social class (employment or occupational status, income, socio-economic status, and educational attainment), student status, and disability status; therefore, we cannot determine whether our results apply to or generalize across these groups.

Lastly, while our study proved informative regarding women's hypothetical preferences for a potential long-term partner and how they relate to their political standing, the study cannot speak to how these preferences play out in actual partner choices in the real world. For example, Eastwick and Finkel (2008) found gender role conforming preferences in hypothetical partner preferences not translating to actual mate choice in an online dating context. However, a recent field experiment by Hipp and colleagues (2024) demonstrated that profiles of online daters working in gender-atypical occupations received fewer likes from daters of the opposite sex. Future research is needed to unravel how political orientation intersects with gendered partner preferences to affect real world partner choice.

Conclusion

In the current study, we showed that women with a more extreme political orientation preferred partners with similar political views. In addition, a more right-leaning stance was positively related to preferring ethnic and religious similarity in potential long-term partners as well as financial security-successfulness and other attributes that could be summarized as stereotypically male characteristics. Aristoteles may have been right when he claimed that humans are by nature "political animals" (e.g., Nederman, 1994). Concerning the choice of a romantic partner, however, political orientation seems to play a role for some, but not all of our romantic preferences. Future research employing more nuanced measures of political orientation in large multinational samples encompassing both genders will have to determine which patterns obtained in our sample of women may also generalize to men. Future research is needed to see whether our results replicate in more naturalistic dating scenarios.

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Authors' contributions

Conceptualization: Lena Kuschel (LK), Laura J. Botzet (LJB), Tanja M. Gerlach (TMG); Data curation: LJB & TMG; Formal analysis: LK & LJB; Methodology: LK, LJB, & TMG; Project administration: LJB & TMG; Software: LK & LJB; Supervision: LJB & TMG; Visualization: LK & LJB; Writing - original draft: LK; Writing - review & editing: LJB & TMG.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Open research statement

This study is part of a larger project, the *Ideal Partner Survey.* For additional information, please refer to the project page on the Open Science Framework (OSF): https://osf.io/wkzng.

Ethical approval

Data collection for the *Ideal Partner Survey* was performed by Clue Biowink, based in Berlin, Germany. Research that entails only anonymous self-reports does not typically require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval under German regulations.

Informed consent

After being informed about the topic and the expected duration of the survey as well as Clue´s privacy policy, consent to participate was provided online, with participants either clicking on the start button or navigating to the survey version of their respective language of choice.

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Data Availability Statement

The present study was not preregistered in an independent, institutional registry. However, the preregistration for the broader project is available on the Open Science Framework (OSF; https://osf.io/wkzng). The data used in the current study was already analyzed to study the link between age and partner preferences (Botzet et al., 2023). Since we are unable to publicly share the data, we have

provided a synthetic dataset generated using the R-package synthpop (Nowok et al., 2016) on the OSF (https://osf.io/ym4et/). This synthetic dataset replicates key features of the actual data, such as means and bivariate associations. It serves as a resource for others to verify our code and assess their own hypotheses. The code for data wrangling and all analysis is accessible on the supportive website (https://laurabotzet.github.io/idealpartnersurvey_polorient/) and within the corresponding OSF project (https://osf.io/qkx2d/). Additionally, a codebook created with the R-package codebook (Arslan, 2019) is accessible for reference. All relevant materials are available in Table S1 in Supplement B.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Note that we also made predictions concerning relationships between political orientation and preferred relationship options which are not included in the main text but reported in Supplement K.
2. Only 3% of the final *Ideal Partner Survey* sample were men (n = 2,055 of 68,100 participants). Applying our exclusion criteria outlined above would have resulted in a sample size of 346 men from 23 countries, rendering the male sample insufficient to investigate potential small effects of political orientation on partner preferences.
3. Erroneously, the answer to the seriousness question was missing in 796 cases. Due to the random nature of this technical error, we decided to keep these individuals for our analyses.
4. Questions relevant to this study were answered throughout the first three sections of the survey. Therefore, not all variables needed to test specific hypotheses were necessarily answered by each woman in our analysis sample. Consequently, sample sizes might differ between analyses.

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