

A Sign Of Dangerous Sexual Attitudes In Men (M)



This subtle social behaviour might be a warning sign.

Men who gaze at women's bodies too much are more likely to have harmful attitudes towards sexual assault, a study finds.

While men usually gaze more at women's bodies than women do at men's bodies, excessive gazing at the body could be a red flag for men.

Dr Ross Hollett, the study's first author, said:

"Gazing at someone's body instead of their face is one form of sexual objectification, or valuing people for their bodies over their minds or personality."

This sexually objectifying gaze behaviour can lead to more harmful attitudes and behaviours.”

For the study, over 1,000 heterosexual men and women were asked about their sexual attitudes and how they looked at other people.

Eye tracking technology was also used on 167 people to see what they actually do, not just what they say they do.

A large difference emerged between men and women, explained Dr Hollett:

“Using eye tracking, we found male participants showed strong preferences for gazing at the bodies of partially and fully dressed women instead of their faces.

By contrast, women did not show body gaze preferences for any of the male or female imagery.

In fact, they largely showed balanced gaze profiles (similar gaze towards both the head and body), with the exception of a preference to gaze at the heads of fully clothed men.

Men were also more likely to self-report gazing at women’s bodies more than women self-reported gazing at men’s bodies.”

When the researchers married up the eye gaze data with sexual attitudes, they found a clear link, said Dr Hollett:

“Specifically, men who tended to gaze at women’s bodies were more likely to assume that women invite or tolerate rough sexual conduct.

That is, they were more likely to agree with statements like ‘women find forced sex a turn on’ and ‘women secretly desire to be raped’.”

Social red flag

Looking at the body too much may be a social red flag, said Dr Hollett:

“When we observe someone engaging in excessive body gaze, we can assume they are more likely to agree with certain sexual assault beliefs which might put them at higher risk of being a perpetrator.

This study has shown that similar patterns of behaviour emerge when measuring gaze using self-report and eye tracking technology which suggests heterosexuals are largely aware of their gaze habits and possibly use them to communicate sexual interest and intentions to the opposite sex.”