”Sleeping with the enemy”: The politics of online dating

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Abstract

How do politics affect non-political decisions? A key aspect of this question concerns the extent to which partisan biases stem from out-group animus or assumptions about associated traits. To address this question, we focus on online dating to identify factors that mitigate these biases. Through a conjoint experiment with 3,000 UK participants, we disentangle the influence of partisanship from political and non-political confounding factors. We show that partisanship and physical appearance equally influence dating decisions. At the same time, political tolerance has a significantly stronger effect. Our results also indicate important asymmetries in preferences among partisans. While both exhibit an in-party bias, Labour supporters were roughly twice as likely to choose co-partisan dates compared to Conservatives. Counter-stereotypic traits mitigate partisan biases among Conservatives but exacerbate them among Labour supporters. The overarching theme discerned is clear: while partisanship undoubtedly holds sway in the dating realm, other factors — many previously overlooked or under-emphasized — can meaningfully mediate its influence.
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1 Introduction

In recent decades, western societies have experienced a rapid increase in polarization, leading to heightened intergroup hostility among partisans (Iyengar et al., 2019; Druckman. et al., 2013). In this climate of intensified polarization, it's not just political decisions that are being affected; even choices in seemingly unrelated areas of life are coming under its influence. A substantial body of research spanning political science, psychology, and economics has illuminated how partisan biases permeate and influence non-political decisions (e.g. Engelhardt and Utych, 2020; Gift and Gift, 2015; Huber and Malhotra, 2017; Ladd, 2018).Such biases are largely driven by out-group animosity, yet there remains a gap in understanding the full spectrum of its implications. While some may avoid out-partisans due to their political views, the party tag can also be perceived as a cue for other distinguishing factors (Shafranek, 2021). Studies that manipulate party identity without accounting for possible confounders might inflate the perceived role of partisanship in such decisions.

To address this gap, we test the *relative* influence of partisanship in online dating decisions using a conjoint experiment with 3,000 respondents in the UK. Unlike conventional studies that merely manipulate party identity (e.g Easton and Holbein, 2021; Nicholson et al., 2016), we use a realistic experimental design that mirrors the actual experience of online dating platforms. Recognizing the predominantly visual nature of these platforms, where users' first impressions are often determined by profile images, our conjoint profiles incorporate profile pictures representing facial attractiveness and race. Additionally, we factor in both non-political and politically-correlated attributes that often influence dating decisions. This approach enhances the external validity of our experiment, making it more attuned to real-world user behavior on dating platforms (Vecchiato and Munger, 2021).

Our results show that politics matters in online dating, but, on average, political tolerance matters more. This hints at an aversion to dating out-partisans, shaped more by inferred adverse attributes than by mere political labels. Nonetheless, partisanship still exerts a relatively strong influence on dating decisions, even in the presence of other central traits – participants care about partisanship as much as they do about physical appearance, and twice as much as they care about education.

At the same time, our study contributes to a growing debate on which side of the political spectrum exhibits higher partisan biases (e.g. Morisi et al., 2019; Klein Teeselink and Melios, 2023). Our results, uniquely demonstrate that Labour party supporters exhibit stronger political biases in their dating choices. In particular, the preference for co-partisan dates is approximately twice as strong among Labour supporters compared to Conservatives. We also observe marked asymmetries in how partisans respond to counter-stereotypic profiles. While Conservatives appeared more accommodating of atypical out-partisan profiles, Labour supporters exhibited a disinclination towards them. This finding diverges from recent US research, which posits that stereotype inconsistencies consistently diminish partisan social divides (e.g. Ahler and Sood, 2018; Shafranek, 2021).

This study makes two key contributions to the existing body of literature on the interplay between politics and non-political decisions. First, while prior research has documented the influence of politics on relationship building, our study uniquely identifies the relative importance of partisanship vis-à-vis other central attributes and social cleavages. This allows us to identify factors that motivate people to look past political differences when forming bonds. Central to our approach is the use of a realistic visual design that mirrors genuine online dating experiences, enhancing the external validity of our findings and ensuring they align closely with the intricacies of contemporary dating platforms. Furthermore, while ample evidence exists on the intrusion of political biases into non-political spheres in the US, our research extends this line of inquiry to the European context, specifically the UK. This is vital given the recent surge in political polarization in the UK accompanying the EU referendum

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(Duffy et al., 2019). As such, our study not only expands the contextual scope of this domain but also offers a timely perspective, reflecting sentiments in a period marked by intensified political division.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 presents the key literature on partisan bias in non-political contexts, with an emphasis on its impact on relationship building. In Section 3, we outline our theoretical framework and research hypotheses. Section 4 details our experimental design and empirical methodology. Our findings are presented in Section 5 and the robustness of our results is examined in Section 6. We conclude with a discussion in Section 7.

2 Partisan bias in relationship building

A growing body of literature shows that political preferences permeate non-political decisions (e.g. Fowler and Kam, 2007; Gift and Gift, 2015; Gimpel and Hui, 2015; Gordon, 2009; Shafranek, 2021). Individuals consistently favor co-partisans in areas like employment (Gift and Gift, 2015) and residential decisions (Gimpel and Hui, 2015). In the realm of romantic relationships, the findings are mixed. Some experiments point to subtle effects (Huber and Malhotra, 2017), others to more pronounced biases (Nicholson et al., 2016), and yet others suggest a middle ground (Easton and Holbein, 2021). Such inconsistencies raise questions about the true depth of political influence in personal choices and necessitate further work using alternative methodological approaches.

We argue that the existing body of literature exhibits a shared limitation: a failure to disentangle inherently political attributes from non-political, and politically-correlated, attributes. Experiments that manipulate party identity on dating profiles without accounting for other potentially influential attributes may cause respondents to make choices based on inferred characteristics that can muddle the primary causal effect (Dafoe et al., 2016). This leaves us questioning whether the aversion towards out-partisans arises from their overt political affiliations or from other associated traits. Both scholarly work and personal experience underscore that mate selection is predicated on a complex mix of factors beyond partisanship (Egebark et al., 2021; Hitsch et al., 2010; Neyt et al., 2019). In today's politically polarized world, has partisanship surpassed conventional compatibility criteria such as beauty, brains, and shared values?

In this study, we integrate theories from social and political psychology to identify key determinants of online dating preferences, categorizing attributes into three primary groups: political, politically correlated, and non-political. The rationale behind this approach is rooted in our key research objective: to discern the extent to which partisanship is used as a social heuristic in online dating. If the introduction of alternative attributes moderates the impact of political homophily, it could signify that individuals leverage partisanship as a quick gauge for compatibility, rather than a strict criterion. In economic terms, this would point to "statistical" discrimination, where group membership informs assumptions about other traits. In contrast, if political homophily remains dominant despite other attributes, it implies "taste-based" discrimination, driven by out-group animus (Guryan and Charles, 2013).

3 Theory and hypotheses

We identify eight political, non-political, and politically-correlated attributes that are deemed important in online dating, and we derive 17 pre-registered hypotheses [1]. First, we predict one main effect

[1] The pre-analysis plan for this study can be found here

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for each attribute value. Given that all attributes are dichotomous, this presents us with an initial set of eight hypotheses. Second, we develop hypotheses for the interaction effects of all attributes with partisanship, which yields seven additional hypotheses. Third, acknowledging the documented gender gaps in preferences for height and education, we propose hypotheses for heterogeneous effects based on the respondent's gender, contributing two additional hypotheses to the analysis.

3.1 Political attributes

Individuals exhibit a proclivity to associate and interact with others who resemble them, a behavioral inclination known as social homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). Social homophily arises for both fixed and flexible attributes such as race (e.g. Fu and Heaton, 2008), education (Zeng and Xie, 2008), income (Sweeney and Cancian, 2004), and religiosity (Vargas and Loveland, 2011). It also extends to various levels of relationships, such as marital unions (e.g. Kalmijn and Flap, 2001; Mare, 1991), cohabitation (Blackwell and Lichter, 2004), friendships (Quillian and Campbell, 2003), and casual liaisons (McClintock, 2010).

Naturally, homophily extends into the realm of politics, where it manifests as a propensity for individuals to foster connections with those who echo their political values while avoiding those who do not (e.g. Gift and Gift, 2015; Huber and Malhotra, 2017; Iyengar et al., 2012; Nicholson et al., 2016). Out-partisans are also viewed as less attractive and less worthy of matchmaking efforts (Easton and Holbein, 2021; Nicholson et al., 2016). This may stem from the fear that choosing a partner with different political views will lead to disagreements on core values (Graham et al., 2009; Gerber et al., 2012), which could influence important life decisions such as residential location (Pickard et al., 2022; Tam Cho et al., 2013), lifestyle choices (DellaPosta et al., 2015), or child-rearing (Lindke and Oppenheimer, 2022; Center, 2014).

In light of this, our study introduces an attribute for partisanship, divided into two categories: Labour and Tory.[2] Drawing from the existing literature, our expectation is that individuals will show a marked preference for dates with the same political identity.

- H1a: Participants are more likely to select in-party rather than out-party dates.

While it is plausible to expect that partisanship influences date selection, the extent of its influence compared to other factors remains unclear. Typically, people are drawn toward partners who resemble them. This sorting process makes political homophily more likely, but it is not conclusively the only, or the most significant, determinant of partner selection. Evidence from a recent roommate-choice conjoint analysis in the US shows that partisanship outweighs all other considerations (Shafranek, 2021). Nonetheless, roommate selection involves a largely different set of considerations and it is unclear whether these findings would translate seamlessly to the dynamics of romantic partner selection. In addition, given the unique nature of the US political landscape, characterized by a dramatic rise in affective polarization over the past few decades (Boxell et al., 2022), we must be cautious in extending these findings to less polarized and structurally different political climates. Therefore, given the

[2]We have chosen to focus on these two major parties because of their longstanding dominance in UK politics. Both parties consistently attract a large portion of the electorate and have often been at the forefront of political competition. Furthermore, the ideological differences between Labour and Tory supporters are more pronounced, leading to clearer distinctions in terms of political beliefs. Other parties, while significant, do not command the same level of support or present the same level of political divisiveness. This makes the Labour and Conservative parties ideal for studying the intersection of partisanship and relationship dynamics.

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paucity of research in this area, we pose the following question: *RQ: What is the relative influence of party identity on partner selection?*

Other studies suggest that imperfect information might attest to the dislike of out-groups. For instance, some measures of affective polarization can potentially confound negative attitudes towards out-partisans with a broader distaste for partisanship, political discussion, and politics as a whole (Klar et al., 2018; Shafranek, 2021). People may also avoid out-partisans due to the perception that they harbor negative attitudes or emotions towards them. This may contribute to affective polarization and reduce opportunities for cross-party cooperation (Druckman and Levendusky, 2019; Druckman et al., 2022). Huddy and Yair (2021) show that positive inter-group interactions can mitigate this tendency and reduce partisan animosity. This implies that the roots of affective polarization might not be a genuine aversion to out-partisans but rather misinterpretations of their attitudes. Given these findings, we anticipate that participants will prefer potential dates who display tolerance or openness in their political views, as these traits imply a readiness for positive interactions across party lines.

For our study, we include 'political tolerance' as a primary attribute. We operationalize political tolerance as an individual's openness (or lack thereof) to forming relationships with members of the political out-group. Profiles describe candidates as having either a low tolerance for out-party members ("No Tories/Labour!") or displaying high tolerance ("Open to match with anyone"). To minimize ambiguity and enhance the accuracy of participant judgments, both the partisanship and tolerance attribute are presented side-by-side in the candidate's profile. For instance, a Tory with high out-party tolerance is described as: "Tory, but open to match with anyone". This attribute frames tolerance in a tangible, real-world dating context rather than in more abstract expressions of political attitudes.

- H1b: Participants are more likely to select politically tolerant, rather than intolerant, dates.
- H1c: Political tolerance will interact with partisanship to significantly influence date selection. Specifically, participants will demonstrate a stronger preference for tolerance when evaluating out-partisan profiles compared to co-partisan profiles.

3.2 Politically-correlated attributes

Partisanship is associated with various stereotypes (Rothschild et al., 2019; Shafranek, 2021). How might challenging these stereotypes influence partner selection? Specifically, if a conservative encounters a liberal who defies the typical stereotype, will they be more open to selecting them as a potential date compared to a typical liberal (and vice versa)? Exposure to counter-stereotypic information can redirect people from heuristic thinking, diminishing the role of stereotypes in evaluating out-groups (Hutter and Crisp, 2005; Prati et al., 2015, 2018; Vasiljevic and Crisp, 2013). To test the effect of counter-stereotypic traits on partner selection, we incorporate politically-correlated attributes in the conjoint profiles.

We identify ideology (traditional and progressive), race (White and Black), education (degree and no degree), and diet (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) as factors that are both highly aligned with partisanship in the UK and important in the formation of romantic relationships. Conventional wisdom posits a robust relationship between ideology and partisanship within Western democracies as voters commonly associate with parties that echo their ideological views.[3] Racial background also has a

[3]While the clear-cut alignment might make ideology seem redundant in the conjoint task, the UK political context presents a more intricate picture compared to the likes of the US. Notably, in the UK, specific issues don't consistently

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marked influence on political preferences. While racial and ethnic minorities predominantly align with the Labour Party (Anwar, 2013; Back and Solomos, 2002; Heath et al., 2013; Saggar and Heath, 1999), the Conservative Party tends to resonate more with the majority (White) demographic (Henderson et al., 2017). To avoid ambiguities in participants' perceptions, our study simplifies race as "White" and "Black". Education, too, wields significant influence over political affiliations. Contemporary voting patterns in the UK indicate a stronger connection to education levels, with degree-holders leaning more towards progressive or liberal stances (Hobolt, 2016; Kirkup, 2021). Additionally, dietary choices, particularly veganism and vegetarianism, often align with liberal-left views due to the associated political priorities, like animal rights and environmental concerns (Emel and Neo, 2015; Hodson and Earle, 2018).

As with partisanship, evidence on political homophily holds for measures of political ideology. Individuals tend to prefer romantic partners who share their ideological beliefs and are less inclined to date someone with opposing views (e.g. Huber and Malhotra, 2017). This effect also holds for race and diet. Members of one's own racial group are often perceived as more physically attractive and familiar than those from different racial backgrounds (McClintock, 2010; McPherson et al., 2001). Much of this tendency is explained by shared social groups, interests, beliefs, and geography and it leads internet daters to filter potential matches by race (Lin and Lundquist, 2013). While there is not much evidence on mixed-diet attraction and relationships, differences in health philosophies and food choices have been linked to increased relationship conflict, particularly when individuals feel criticized for their food choices (Bove et al., 2003; Burke et al., 2012). Given these trends, it is anticipated that respondents will predominantly opt for dates with shared ideology, race, or diet.

- H2: Participants are more likely to select dates who share their (a) ideology, (b) race, or (c) dietary habits.

While it is also common for individuals to seek partners with similar levels of education (Skopek et al., 2011), numerous studies have shown that education enhances desirability across the board. This is evidenced in self-reports, census data, speed dating, and online dating and is attributed to its association with prospective income (Egebark et al., 2021; Hopcroft, 2021; Kurzban and Weeden, 2005; Lin and Lundquist, 2013; Pawlowski and Koziel, 2002; Prokosch et al., 2009). However, drawing on research highlighting differential preferences for educational attainment across genders, both in marital and online dating contexts (Egebark et al., 2021; Fisman et al., 2006; Skopek et al., 2011), we posit that women are more inclined to select male partners with a higher educational level than their own. Conversely, men will favor female partners with educational levels that are lower than their own[4].

- H2d: Participants are more likely to select dates with a degree compared to those without one.
- H2e: There are significant gender differences in preferences for education. Female participants are more likely to select male profiles with higher educational attainment than themselves, whereas male participants are more likely to select female profiles with lower educational attainment than their own.

map onto the traditional left-right spectrum as they might in the US – a phenomenon starkly highlighted by the Brexit vote, which cut across party lines (Hobolt et al., 2021).

[4]It is important to note that these arguments and the subsequent analysis are anchored in insights pertaining to heterosexual couples. The evidential bases for these claims primarily draw from studies focusing on hetero-normative dynamics and the associated power structures.

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We also predict significant interactions between levels of these attributes and partisanship. In particular, both Labour and Conservative party supporters will evaluate counter-stereotypical out-partisans more favorably than typical out-partisans. We define a counter-stereotypical profile as any profile where party identity does not align with the ideology, race, education, and/or dietary habits of the typical partisan. To verify respondent perceptions of these attributes and whether the included traits are indeed linked to partisanship, we incorporate a section at the end of the survey where respondents are prompted to identify whether each attribute level corresponds more with supporters of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, or neither.

- H2: Respondents are more likely to select out-partisans with counter-stereotypic (f) ideology, (g) race, (h) educational attainment, and (i) dietary habits.

3.3 Non-political attributes

Social scientists have identified a range of non-political attributes that influence partner choice (Belot and Francesconi, 2013; Egebark et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2015; Walster et al., 1966). We focus on physical appearance, as measured by facial attractiveness (high and low) and height (tall and short). These traits were chosen because they are stable, immediately observable upon entering the online dating scene, and exhibit marked correlations between partners. We detail how these attributes are constructed in Section 4.

People often link higher attractiveness to positive qualities such as warmth, intelligence, and trustworthiness. This effect is called the "what is beautiful is good" bias (Langlois et al., 2000) and it maintains that physical attractiveness positively influences mate choice. Alternatively, one could argue that the fear of rejection may deter individuals from pursuing those they find attractive but unattainable. This would imply that people's realized matches do not accurately reflect their true preferences (Gul, 1991; Loomes and Sugden, 1986). We contend that the conjoint experiment is uniquely situated to mitigate this fear by introducing a hypothetical dating context, thereby enabling us to capture genuine stated preferences. As such, we expect that the positive effect of physical attractiveness on partner selection will hold regardless of an individual's own level of attractiveness; that is, all individuals will uniformly prioritize a physically attractive, over a physically unattractive date, holding all else constant.

- H3a: Participants are more likely to select physically attractive, over physically unattractive, dates.

Height is also linked to a range of positive traits and outcomes such as cognitive abilities, health, education, and social status (Case and Paxson, 2008; Case et al., 2009; Herpin, 2005; Persico et al., 2004; Lundborg et al., 2009). In online dating, where profiles often have limited physical information, height plays a significant role; potential matches screen based on it, and some individuals exaggerate their height for broader appeal (Hancock et al., 2007; Toma and Hancock, 2010). While taller people are generally viewed more favorably, preferences for height are strongly influenced by gender in heterosexual relationships. Both men and women prefer relationships where the woman is shorter than the man (Belot and Fidrmuc, 2010; Hitsch et al., 2010; Salska et al., 2008; Stulp et al., 2013), yet this norm is more strongly enforced by women (Salska et al., 2008). Such preferences are often rooted in cultural and societal expectations regarding gender roles and power dynamics (e.g. Boyson et al., 1999). Given these factors, we anticipate the following:

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- H3b: Participants are more likely to select tall, over short, dates.
- H3c: There are significant gender differences in preferences for height. Female participants are more likely to select taller male profiles, whereas male participants are more likely to select shorter female profiles.

Although physical attractiveness and height may be important individually, there may also be potential for interaction effects. In particular, given individuals' aversion to dating out-partisans, the extent to which a potential date is depicted as physically attractive and tall may have more importance when the candidate's loyalties lie with the other party. We, therefore, expect the following:

- H3: Physical attractiveness (d) and height (e) will interact with partisanship to significantly influence date selection. Specifically, participants will demonstrate a stronger preference for profiles characterized as physically attractive and tall when evaluating out-partisan profiles compared to co-partisan profiles.

4 Research design

We recruited a gender-balanced sample of 3,000 Prolific respondents to participate in the study between July 1 and July 6, 2023. The survey was administered in three consecutive rounds to enable continuous data verification. The sample consisted of non-married UK residents between the ages of 18 and 40, which roughly matches the age range of individuals depicted in our conjoint profile images[5]. The average time taken to complete the survey was 5 minutes. A pre-test ($n = 500$) conducted on May 10 allowed us to select the most suitable images for inclusion, and a pilot test ($n = 200$) was carried out on June 18 to refine the study design and ensure the clarity of the questionnaire. Table 1 presents summary statistics from our sample. We provide further details on sample selection and power analysis in Online Appendix (OA) E.

Participants first completed a set of preliminary screening questions. They were then instructed to complete the male or female conjoint tasks based on their specified sexual orientation. Those who did not express a particular sexual preference were guided to a random task set. Ultimately, 48.4 percent of participants completed the male sets and 51.6 percent completed the female sets. Participants who failed two attention checks were excluded from the analysis. The full survey instrument is provided in OA C.

We chose to include only dichotomous attributes in the conjoint experiment to simplify the choice task for respondents and reduce respondent fatigue (Bansak et al., 2021). Binary attributes also simplify the design space considerably, making it easier to achieve an optimal or near-optimal design. The attribute levels for height were based on the average national height among men and women in the UK: 5'8" and 5'4" for tall and short women respectively and 6' and 5'8" for tall and short men respectively. Table 2 shows the attributes and levels included in the conjoint task.

To make our experiment more realistic and representative of an online dating platform, we use profile pictures to represent facial attractiveness and race. In a standard conjoint analysis, participants often encounter profiles that simply list attributes such as age, race, or political affiliation, from

[5]There were two deviations from our pre-analysis plan in this study. First, while the original plan encompassed participants regardless of their marital status, we opted to include only non-married individuals in our final sample. Second, our pre-analysis plan indicated a sample age range of 18-35 years. We have expanded the age criteria to include respondents up to 40 years old.

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Variable	Total Observations	Count	Min	Max	Proportion	Std. Deviation
Male	3000	1487	0	1	0.497	0.500
Female	3000	1454	0	1	0.486	0.500
Non-Binary	3000	51	0	1	0.017	0.129
Age	3000	n/a	18	40	29.277	5.655
With degree	3000	2077	0	1	0.696	0.460
Without degree	3000	907	0	1	0.304	0.460
White	3000	2488	0	1	0.836	0.371
Black	3000	123	0	1	0.041	0.199
Asian	3000	234	0	1	0.079	0.269
Mixed	3000	107	0	1	0.036	0.186
Other	3000	25	0	1	0.008	0.091
Standard diet	3000	2390	0	1	0.854	0.353
Plant-based diet	3000	407	0	1	0.146	0.353
Labour	3000	2071	0	1	0.693	0.461
Tory	3000	439	0	1	0.147	0.354
Neither	3000	480	0	1	0.161	0.367
Right-wing	3000	531	0	1	0.178	0.382
Left-wing	3000	1958	0	1	0.655	0.475
Center	3000	501	0	1	0.168	0.374

Notes: Respondents are initially classified as Labour or Tory based on their 2019 general election vote. For those who abstained or cast their vote outside of these parties, classifications are based on which party they rated higher using the feeling thermometer scale. All other respondents are classified as "Neither".

Table 1: Summary statistics

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Table 2: Conjoint design: attributes and levels

Attribute	**Levels**
Political	
Party	Labour
	Tory
Political Tolerance	Open to match with anyone
	No Tories/Lefties!
Politically-correlated	
Ideology	Traditional
	Progressive
Race	White
	Black
Education	Degree
	No degree
Diet	Vegetarian, trying to be vegan
	No dietary limitations
Non-political	
Physical attractiveness	High
	Low
Height	Tall
	Short

Notes: The 'No Tories/Lefties' notation in political tolerance is contingent upon the party identified in the profile. For instance, a Labour profile would indicate 'No Tories' and vice versa. Height is indicated as 5'8" and 5'4" for tall and short women respectively and 6' and 5'8" for tall and short men respectively.

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which they indicate or rank their preferences. However, when trying to emulate the experience of online dating platforms, a list of attributes falls short. These platforms are predominantly visual, with users forming impressions based on profile images before diving into textual details. As such, the inclusion of profile pictures not only adds a layer of realism but enhances the ecological validity of our experiment (Vecchiato and Munger, 2021). We sourced objective attractiveness evaluations from a gender-balanced group of 500 participants on Prolific. For a detailed explanation of the photo selection and editing process, see OA B. Figure D1 in OA B provides a sample choice set.

To construct the choice tasks, we employ a d-optimal fractional design which maximizes the statistical information from experimental data by minimizing the variance of the parameter estimates. This methodology is commonly used in design construction because it results in more precise estimates of the attribute effects (Hall et al., 2001). One significant benefit of using a fractional design is its ability to reduce the total number of tasks while still maintaining high precision in the estimated effects, making it particularly advantageous for our study where we include unique photos for each choice task.

Estimating the main effects of eight binary attributes requires at least 9 degrees of freedom. For a model with interaction effects of all attributes with partisanship, we require at least 15 degrees of freedom. We choose to include 16 choice sets to marginally increase statistical power without compromising survey quality or inducing respondent fatigue and we randomize the order of choice sets to minimize order effects (Bansak et al., 2021). The R package `skpr` is used for the conjoint design (Morgan-Wall and Khoury, 2021). We observe a D-efficiency value of 99 percent, indicating a high level of efficiency in capturing maximum information with the minimum number of choice sets. This suggests that we can confidently estimate the effects of each attribute with a high degree of precision.

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5 Results

5.1 Main effects

In this section, we begin by presenting the main Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) in Figure 1 and Table A1 in OA A. The figure provides estimates derived from a simple model that does not include any interaction terms. All variables represent the attribute levels featured in the task profiles, with the exception of party affiliation. Partisanship is recoded in relation to respondents' own traits to indicate whether they belong to the in-party or out-party relative to the hypothetical profile. Respondents who are not aligned with any of the two political parties are excluded from this analysis. The AMCEs can be interpreted as the change in the probability of a profile being chosen when the attribute value is present, compared to when it is not, averaged across the other attributes (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The coefficients plot visually depicts these AMCEs, showing the influence of each attribute level on the selection of dating profiles. Error bars are included to indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals.

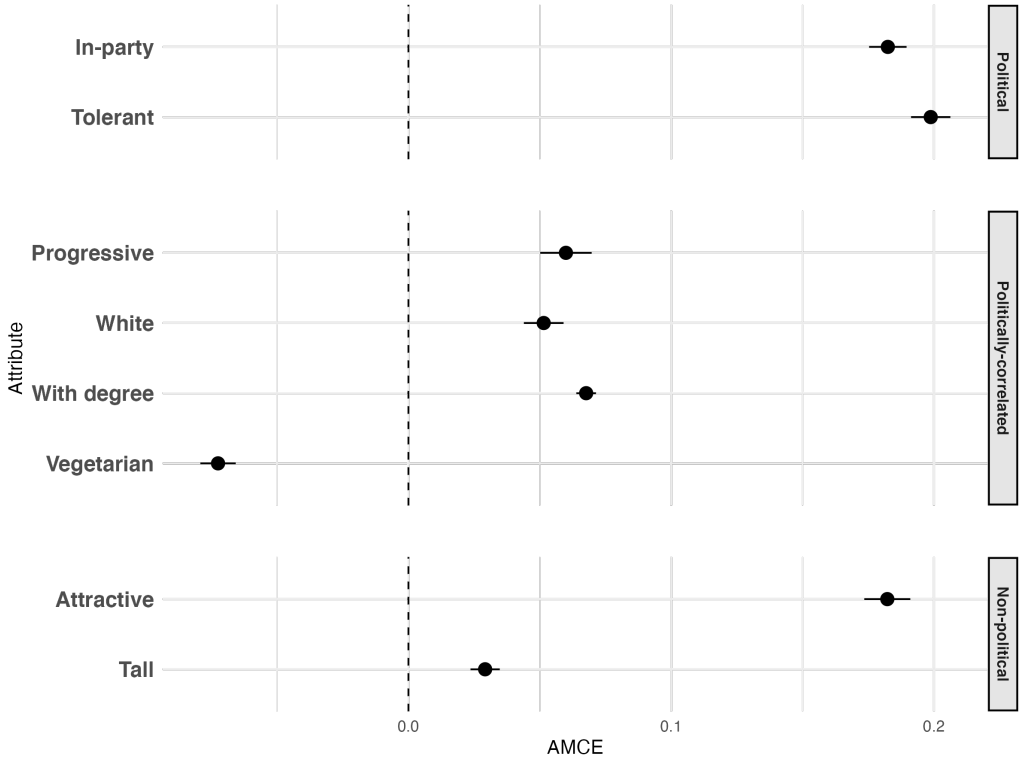

Figure 1: The effect of partisanship on dating preferences

Notes: This plot shows estimates of the effects of the profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represent the AMCEs derived from an OLS model with clustered standard errors. Bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. Reference categories for all attributes are, respectively, as follows: Out-party, intolerant, traditional, black, no degree, no particular diet, unattractive, and short. Refer to Table A1 of OA A for the regression results.

The figure clearly illustrates the substantial influence of political considerations on dating preferences, notwithstanding the presence of other distinguishing attributes. It is evident that politics serves as more than a mere indicator of lifestyle preferences or associated traits. Instead, individuals display strong dating preferences that specifically revolve around party affiliation: on average, profiles

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of co-partisans enjoy an 18.2 percentage point (pp) advantage over out-partisan ones. However, we observe that political preferences extend beyond mere partisanship. Political tolerance exerts a greater influence on the selection process (0.199) and holds the greatest sway within the conjoint model. To contextualize, participants were as likely to favor a politically-tolerant date as they were to opt for an attractive profile (0.182). This effect is more than twice the size of the coefficient for education (0.068), and the same holds true for partisanship.

A natural question emerges from these findings: Are participants drawn to profiles expressing political tolerance, or are they merely repelled by those expressing intolerance? It is conceivable that a significant portion of the effect we observe is a result of participants steering clear of profiles that openly reject their political group. For instance, a Tory participant confronted with a "No Tories!" declaration might naturally be disinclined to select that profile. However, subsequent analyses hint at a more profound preference for tolerance (see Section 5.4). We observe that even within their own partisan group, participants value tolerance. In other words, if a participant identifies as a Tory, they appear more inclined towards another Tory who is "Open to out-partisans" over one who asserts "No Labour." This indicates that the preference for tolerance is not a simple rejection of potential negative bias against oneself, but a genuine appreciation for open-mindedness in potential partners.

These results collectively lend support to H1a-b, suggesting that both partisanship and out-party tolerance are significant positive factors in shaping dating preferences. The findings also corroborate H2d and H3a-b pertaining to the positive influence of education, physical attractiveness, and height. Additionally, in addressing RQ, the findings propose that while political homophily is a dominant factor in date selection, its impact is on par with physical attractiveness and is marginally outweighed by political tolerance.

5.2 Matched attributes

Analyzing individual attribute levels may obscure crucial differences driven by heterogeneous preferences. Some segments of the sample could favor specific characteristics in their dates, while others might prefer the absence of those traits, resulting in a dilution of their influence when considered collectively. An alternative approach to assess how profile characteristics influence respondents' dating preferences involves testing the effects of matched characteristics between the profile attributes and participants' characteristics, rather than focusing on individual attribute levels.

To achieve this, we construct matching indicators for all conjoint attributes, paralleling profile attributes with respondent traits at each level. A detailed description of these variables is presented in Table A2 of OA A [6]. For matching partisanship and ideology, independents and moderates are excluded, as in the previous analysis. Table A3 in OA A presents the AMCEs for when attributes correspond versus when they don't (i.e. match vs. no match). For a more granular view, Figure 2 breaks down coefficients across the two different categories for each attribute.

[6]Take, for example, the 'matched education' indicator: it is assigned a value of 1 if both the respondent and the hypothetical profile have (or both do not have) a university degree. Physical attractiveness is assessed by contrasting the respondent's self-rated attractiveness score with the median score of 6 in the sample. If the self-rated score exceeds 6, the respondent is categorized as "attractive"; otherwise, they are deemed "unattractive". Consequently, the 'matched attractiveness' variable is set to 1 if both the respondent and the profile share the same attractiveness categorization.

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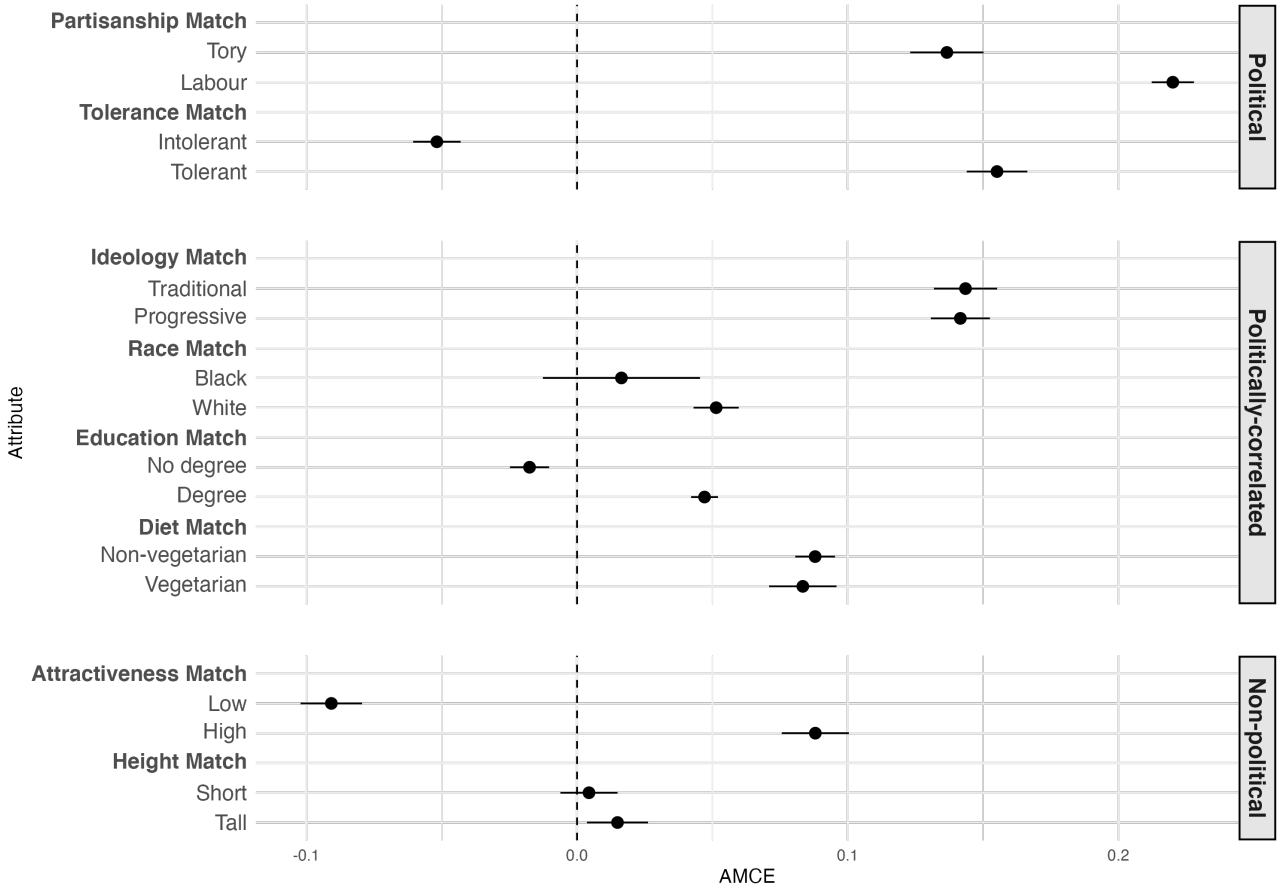

Figure 2: Attribute correspondence and dating preferences

Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of the matched profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date, relative to the baseline of 'no match'. The coefficients represent the AMCEs derived from an OLS model with clustered standard errors. Bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. Refer to Table A2 of OA A for the attribute matching criteria and to Table A4 for the regression results.

At the outset, the findings show that partisanship retains a significant influence among matched attributes, reinforcing its importance beyond being an indicator of other sociopolitical preferences. Nonetheless, Labour supporters demonstrate a stronger preference for co-partisan dates compared to Tories. On average, the probability of choosing a date among Labour respondents increases by about 19.3 pp if the date is also a Labour supporter, compared to an increase of about 11.04 pp among Tory respondents when the date is also a Tory. This suggests that Labour supporters value political alignment in their potential partners more highly than do Tories. With regards to political tolerance, individuals who align in intolerance are less likely to pair (-0.052), compared to those aligning in tolerance (0.155). Evidently, this pattern stems from an aversion towards intolerant out-partisans. In contrast, there is still a pairing tendency among intolerant co-partisans (see Table A5 in OA A).

The influence of matched attributes also extends to politically-correlated traits, reinforcing the principle of social and political homophily in partner selection, as outlined in H2a-c. This is evidenced by the significant influence of matched race (0.126), diet (0.122), and ideology (0.109) as seen in Table A3. In disaggregating these matches, we observe that dietary and ideological similarities hold roughly equal weight for the different sub-samples. Racial matching reveals a higher likelihood for White matches compared to Black matches. This might be attributed to a multitude of factors, ranging from

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demographic distributions and societal norms to racial biases. Our findings could also be influenced by the smaller sample size of Black matches, reducing the statistical power to detect differences. Higher educational attainment is preferred by both degree and non-degree holders, in line with H2d.

Physical attractiveness exhibits a considerable shift in direction. Initially holding a positive and significant AMCE of 0.183, it declines to -0.057 when viewed as a matched attribute. In other words, respondents are less likely to choose profiles that match their self-rated attractiveness, holding all else constant. This effect is driven by the tendency of (self-rated) unattractive respondents to avoid unattractive profiles (-0.1396). Simultaneously, attractiveness remains desirable among attractive respondents (0.1090), in line with H3a. Matched height holds less importance when compared to other attributes. We observe a preference for matched height among tall individuals (0.015), and no significant effect among short individuals. We expect that the influence of height is amplified when we look at gender differences as mentioned in the conceptual framework, and we turn to this next.

5.3 Preferences by gender

To identify gender differences in dating preferences, we re-estimate the benchmark model separately for men and women. In Figure 4, the AMCEs for both male and female respondents are presented. For the clarity and precision of this analysis, we specifically excluded data from respondents who assessed profiles of the same gender, aligning with our theoretical focus on opposite-sex relationship dynamics.

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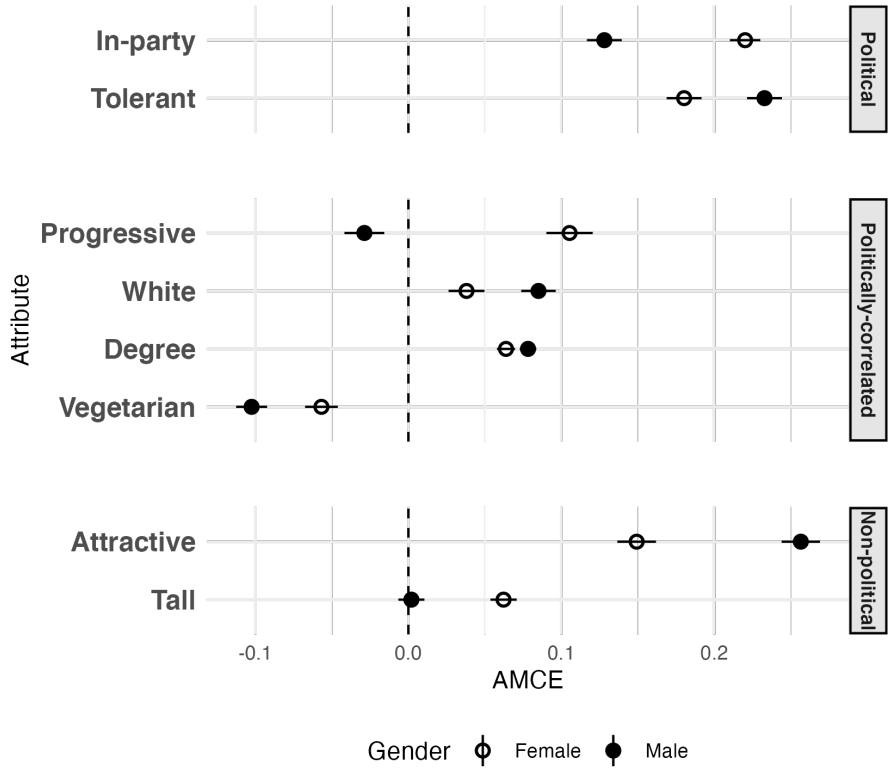

Figure 3: Gender differences in dating preferences

Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of the profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date by gender. The coefficients represent the AMCEs, derived from separate OLS models by gender with clustered standard errors. Bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. Refer to Table A6 of OA A for the regression results.

The most salient gender differences emerge in ideology, partisanship, and physical attractiveness, respectively. First, on average, men exhibit a bias against progressive ideologies (-0.029), whereas women favor them (0.105). This represents the most salient disparity between the two genders. Second, men place a considerably higher emphasis on attractiveness (0.257) compared to women (0.149). Third, while both genders lean towards co-partisans, this tendency is 9.2 pp higher among women. Partisan alignment slightly supersedes the preference for tolerance among female respondents, a trend not evident among men. These findings echo prior observations that female partisans, on average, exhibit a stronger preference for in-groups compared to men (Nicholson et al., 2016). To further untangle the gender difference in partisan preferences, we estimate the gender model separately for the Labour and Tory sub-samples and present the results in Figure 4 below.

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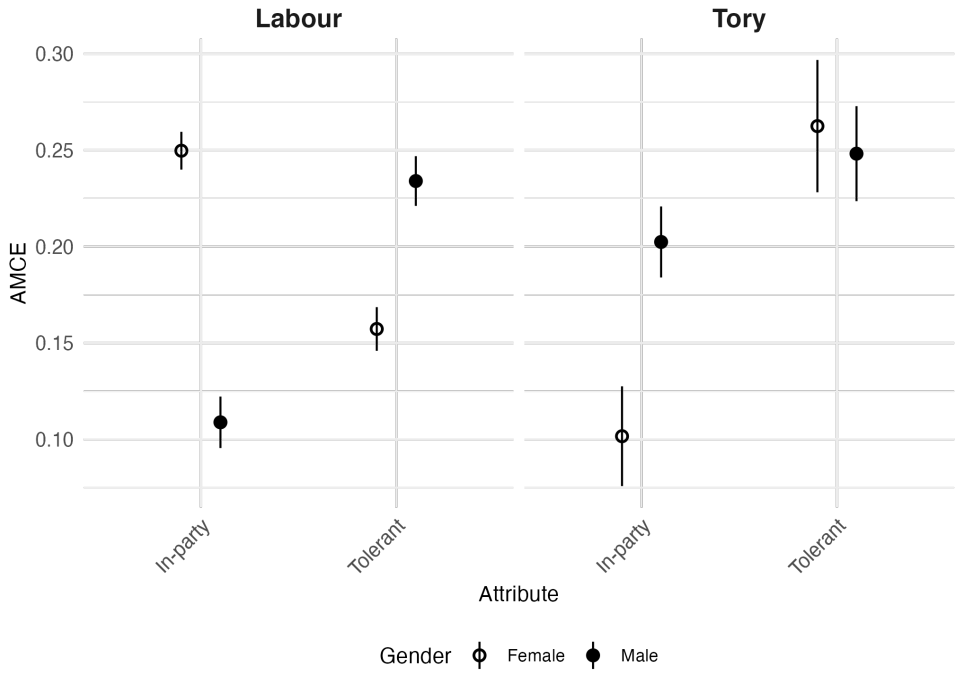

Figure 4: Gender and party-based differences in preferences for political attributes
Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of matched partisanship and political tolerance on the probability of being selected for a date by gender and the respondent's party identity. The coefficients represent the AMCEs derived from OLS models by gender and partisanship with clustered standard errors. Bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. The models control for all other conjoint attributes. Refer to Table A8 of OA A for the regression results.

We observe that within the Labour cohort, women exhibit a co-partisanship preference that is 14.1 pp higher than their male counterparts'. Conversely, the preference for tolerant dates among men exceeds that of women by 7.7 pp. Among Tories, the gendered distinction reverses: men's preference for co-partisans exceeds women's by 10 pp. Nevertheless, the preference for political tolerance remains comparably high for both men and women with insignificant differences between them. From this examination, it becomes clear that the gendered disparity in co-partisanship over tolerance is predominantly influenced by female Labour respondents.

Turning to our initial expectations with regard to gender differences, we observe that height preferences, while negligible for men (0.002), carry greater weight in the dating decisions of women (0.062). This partly supports H3c: while it confirms that female participants prefer taller men, the data shows no significant height preference among male participants. Concerning education, both men (0.078) and women (0.064) favor partners with a degree, and there are no significant gender differences in preferences for education. We, therefore, reject H2e. The results are similar in Table A7 of OA A, where height and education are recoded to reflect the respondent's level of education (more or less educated) and height (taller or shorter) relative to the profile.

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5.4 Moderators of political homophily

In this section, we test for potential moderators of political homophily. First, we examine whether out-group tolerance mitigates the influence of partisanship on date selection. Second, we test the influence of non-political attributes, namely physical attractiveness and height, in modulating political homophily. It is plausible that the salience of political alignment diminishes when other compelling attributes, such as physical attractiveness or a desirable height, are at play. To probe interaction effects, we fit an OLS regression against our data, introducing an interaction term between shared partisanship and the relevant attributes in separate regressions. Finally, we examine whether participants are more likely to select out-partisans with counter-stereotypic traits. We run separate regressions for Tory and Labour respondents, where each group evaluates out-partisan profiles. Figure 5 shows the predictive margins of tolerance, separated by in-party and out-party affiliations.

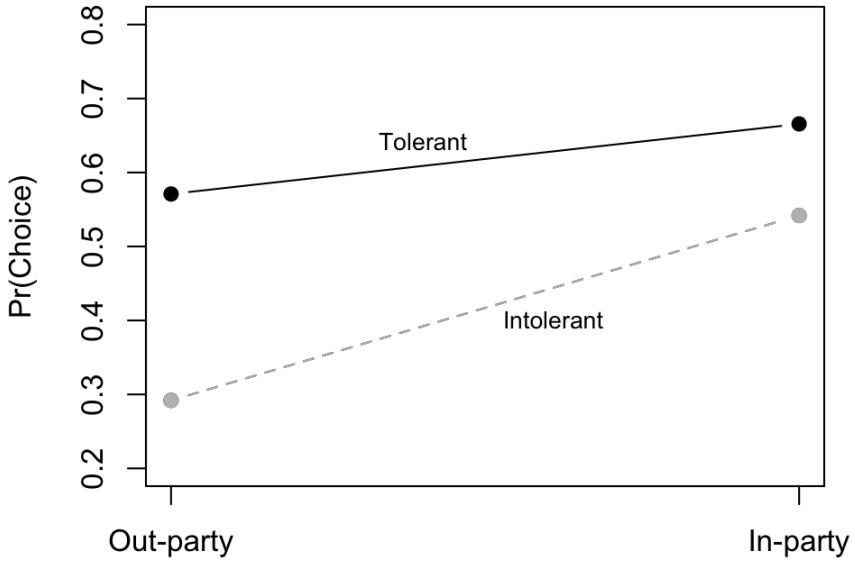

Figure 5: Interaction of political tolerance and partisanship in date selection

Note: This plot shows the predicted probabilities derived from an OLS regression analyzing the interaction between tolerance and matched partisanship on dating choices. The model controls for all other conjoint attributes. The plot specifically presents the estimated effects of tolerance at the two distinct levels of matched partisanship. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level.

We find a significant and negative interaction between partisanship and political tolerance ($\beta = -0.162$, $p < 0.000$). The value placed on tolerance is reduced by over half when the profile is that of a co-partisan. In evaluating out-partisan profiles, participants are 27.9 pp more likely to select a tolerant over an intolerant date. In contrast, with a co-partisan profile, the preference for tolerance (over intolerance) decreases to a 12.38 pp difference. Overall, out-group tolerance clearly moderates the effect of political homophily in partner selection. Although profiles characterized by high tolerance

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are generally preferred, this preference diminishes when the potential date shares the respondent's own partisan identity, supporting H1c.

Turning to non-political attributes, we plot the predictive margins of beauty and height, separated by in-party and out-party affiliations. We are interested in whether these two traits can moderate political homophily in date selection; that is, whether being attractive or tall can make people more likely to choose a date from a different political party. The results are provided in Figure 6.

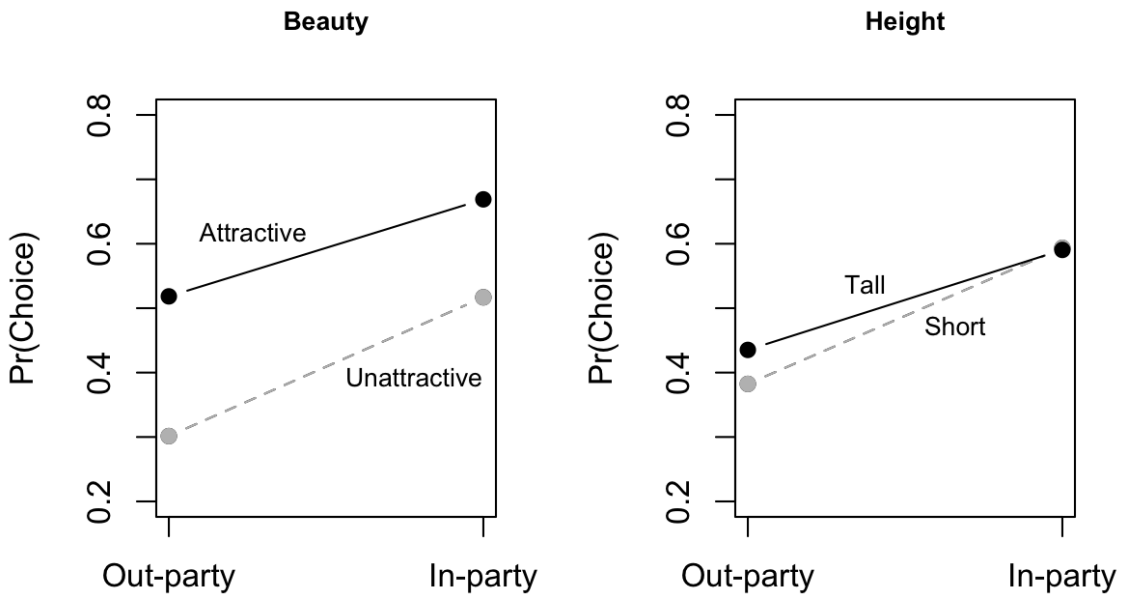

Figure 6: Interaction of non-political attributes and partisanship in date selection

Note: This plot shows the predicted probabilities derived from an OLS regression analyzing the interaction between beauty and matched partisanship (left-hand side) and height and matched partisanship (right-hand side). The models controls for all other conjoint attributes. The plots specifically present the estimated effects of beauty and height at the two distinct levels of matched partisanship. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level.

The interaction between attractiveness and partisanship is significant and negative ($\beta = -0.071$, $p < 0.000$), suggesting that being attractive decreases partisan preferences in date selection. Specifically, attractiveness increases the probability of being selected for a date by 15.2 pp within the same party and by 22.69 pp across different parties. This denotes a 6.49 pp decline in the attractiveness premium when evaluating co-partisans. Framed differently, participants are nearly as inclined to choose an attractive out-partisan as they are to opt for an unattractive co-partisan. These results are in line with H3d.

Similar results are observed for height ($\beta = -0.063$, $p < 0.000$). For out-partisan profiles, being tall increases the probability of being chosen for a date by 5.28 pp compared to being short. However, for co-partisan profiles, this height premium practically disappears, with tall individuals being only 0.31 pp more likely to be selected compared to their shorter counterparts. This suggests a reduction of 4.97 pp in the height premium when evaluating co-partisans. These results are in line with H3e.

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5.4.1 Counter-stereotypical profiles

Next, we turn to the influence of counter-stereotypic attributes on date selection. Our analysis incorporates four key politically-correlated attributes: ideology, race, education, and diet. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked about the degree to which they associate each attribute with supporters of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, or neither. Responses to this question are presented in Figure 7. In line with the literature discussed in Section 3, we observe that Black individuals are predominantly linked with the Labour Party, whereas White individuals are more strongly associated with the Conservative Party. Ideologically, those with progressive beliefs are predominantly linked with Labour, with an approximate 63.36 pp higher likelihood, whereas traditionalists are overwhelmingly linked with the Conservative Party by a notable margin of 67.01 pp. For dietary preferences, vegans and vegetarians are respectively 48.85 pp and 46.70 pp more likely to be linked with Labour over Conservatives Party supporters. Contrary to our initial discussion, we find that degree holders are somewhat more associated with the Conservative Party, while non-degree holders are somewhat more linked to Labour. However, a majority, 55.04 percent, do not link degree holders with either party, suggesting that they are not distinctly stereotyped towards one party over the other.

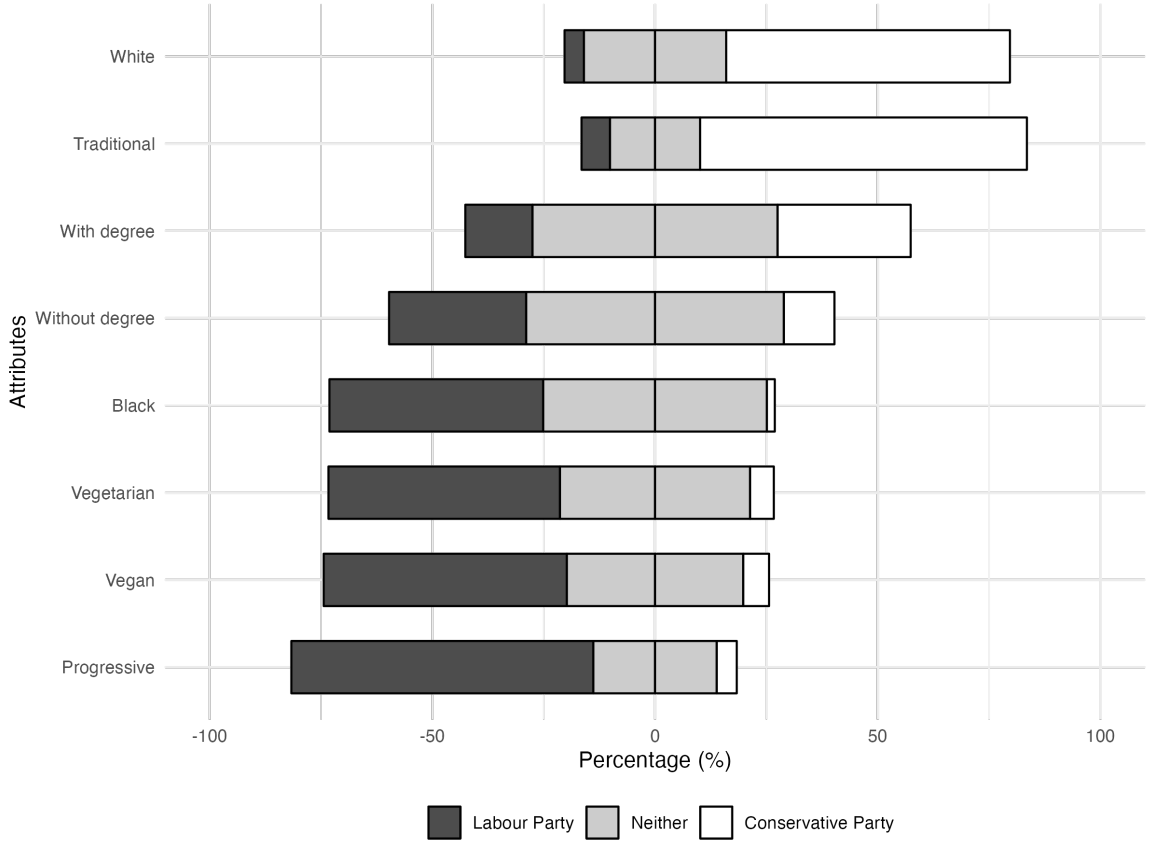

Figure 7: Partisan associations with attribute levels

H2f-i predicts that respondents would show a preference for out-partisans who display counter-stereotypical attributes. This means that if Tory and Labour participants adhered to this expectation, both would be more open to selecting a potential date from the opposing party if that individual displayed traits that defied the typical partisan stereotypes. Figure 8 presents the AMCEs of politically-

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correlated attributes for Tory and Labour respondents separately. For each sample, we restrict the analysis to the corresponding out-partisan profiles. In other words, we examine the responses of the Tory (Labour) sample when exposed to Labour (Tory) profiles. As in previous figures, the coefficients can be interpreted as the change in the probability of a profile being chosen when the attribute value is present, compared to when it is not, averaged across the other attributes.

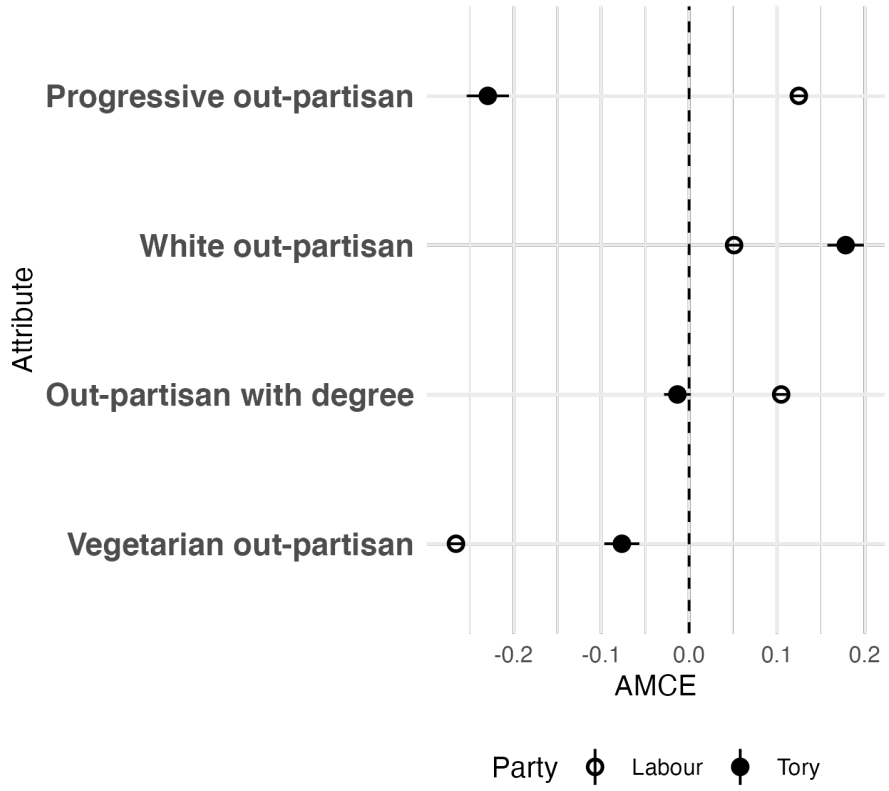

Figure 8: Preferences for counter-stereotypical traits

Note: This plot shows estimates of the effects of out-partisan profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date by Tory and Labour respondents. The coefficients represent the AMCEs, derived from separate OLS models by party with clustered standard errors. Bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. Refer to Table A9 of OA A for the regression results.

The data suggests that Tory respondents favor counter-stereotypic Labour profiles: they demonstrate a positive and significant preference for White (0.178), non-vegetarian (0.077), and traditional Labour profiles (0.229), compared to the corresponding baseline values. In contrast, Labour respondents, when evaluating Tory profiles, tend to favor more stereotypic traits. They are less likely to select a Tory profile when the photo depicts a Black individual compared to a White one (-0.051). Similarly, when presented with a Tory profile described as vegetarian, they show a pronounced preference for the alternative (-0.265). The sole deviation from this trend is ideology. Labour respondents are more likely to select a Tory profile labeled as progressive over traditional (0.125).

The observed asymmetry contrasts with the existing literature on inter-party relations and stereotype consistency (e.g. Ahler and Sood, 2018; Shafranek, 2021). While our study is not designed to empirically identify the causes of this variance, we offer two plausible explanations. First, despite our intent to study the effects of partisan norm violations in isolation, the specific attributes used —

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namely Black and vegetarian traits — might have inadvertently invoked other negative stereotypes towards these groups. This could partly explain the reluctance amongst Labour respondents to select out-partisans with these counter-stereotypic attributes. The social psychology literature on the backlash against expectancy-violating behavior provides an additional layer of understanding (Bettencourt et al., 1997; Jackson et al., 1993; Mendes et al., 2007). When individuals encounter behaviors or identities that breach societal norms, they may react with discomfort or negativity. For Tory respondents, encountering a White or non-vegetarian Labour supporter does not deviate much from societal norms and such profiles might not provoke any cognitive dissonance. In contrast, a Black or vegetarian Tory may appear as more of an anomaly, which might trigger perceptions of unfamiliarity and threat.

6 Robustness checks

To ensure the validity and reliability of our findings on the influence of partisanship in online dating, we undertook a series of robustness checks. These checks are intended to address potential concerns regarding model specification, measurement, the timing of data collection, and subgroup variations. Refer to OA A for the complete set of regression tables related to our robustness checks. First, we use a conditional logit model, consistent with the random utility model of choice (McFadden et al., 1973), to assess the main results and find that they align closely with the findings from the OLS model. Next, we examine the robustness of our findings on matched attribute preferences by using an alternative measure of "matched tolerance". In our main analysis, the measure of matched tolerance is derived by subtracting two values: the affection respondents reported feeling towards supporters of their own party and the affection they reported feeling towards supporters of the out-party. This approach approximates tolerance toward individual party supporters, capturing the interpersonal sentiment respondents hold towards members of different political affiliations. For our robustness checks, we gauge tolerance at an institutional level by adopting a differential measure using party feeling thermometers. Participants were asked to rate their closeness to the Labour party and the Conservative party on a scale of 0 to 10. This differential measure captures respondents' emotional proximity to each party as a whole rather than their feelings towards individual supporters. The results are provided in Table B2. We find that shared partisanship still outweighs all other considerations in this model. Shared tolerance remains significant with closely aligned magnitudes.

Third, we examine whether responses differ by survey round (Table B3) and survey duration (Table B3). The results remained substantively unchanged across rounds, confirming the stability of our findings. We further examined whether the duration taken by participants to complete the survey affected their responses. Hasty decision-making might yield distinct outcomes compared to more deliberative responses. However, our findings revealed no significant differences attributable to the survey's completion duration.

Third, we explore the potential heterogeneity in our main findings based on respondents' demographic characteristics. The regressions in Table B5 represent the estimated effects of the conjoint attributes on date choice, while accounting for interactions with relationship status (Panel A), age (Panel B), and education (Panel C). The indicator variable for relationship status takes on a value of 1 if the respondent is in a relationship, and 0 otherwise. Age is a continuous variable ranging from 18 to 40, and education takes on a value of 1 if the respondent has a degree, and 0 otherwise. Overall, we find no statistically significant differences in dating preferences by relationship status and age. For education, we observe slight differences in ideology, racial, and diet preferences. Participants with a degree are significantly more likely to select progressive (0.029) and vegetarian (0.026) dates,

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compared to those who are traditional and non-vegetarian. They are also less likely to select White, compared to Black dates (-0.023). Nonetheless, their preference for co-partisans and tolerant dates is, on average, similar to those without a degree.

Finally, we extend the heterogeneity analysis to participants' political characteristics in Table B6. Specifically, we distinguish between independents and partisans and between strong and moderate partisans. We define independents as participants who did not vote in the last general election and expressed equal closeness to both the Labour and Conservative parties on the feeling thermometers. Strong partisans are identified based on their differential feeling thermometer value toward their in-party and the out-party. Participants are classified as strong partisans if the differential value exceeds the median value of 5. Otherwise, they are denoted as moderate partisans. The regressions in Table B6 represent the estimated effects of the conjoint attribute values on date choice, while accounting for interactions with the independents indicator in Panel A and the strong partisans indicator in Panel B. The results indicate that independents place significantly less value on partisanship (-0.16) and ideology (-0.13) compared to partisans, and a slightly higher value on political tolerance (0.034). Notably, independents also value the non-political attributes, height (0.029) and attractiveness (0.021), more than partisans. Strong partisans, on the other hand place a significantly higher value on partisanship (0.119) and ideology (0.146) compared to moderates, and a slightly lower value on tolerance (-0.069). They also value height (0.031) and attractiveness (-0.1) less.

7 Discussion and conclusion

This study sought to identify the relative influence of partisanship on online dating choices within the UK context. We administer a forced-choice conjoint experiment, presenting a sample of 3,000 respondents with two dating profiles side-by-side and asking them to choose a potential date between the two. First, we reaffirm past conclusions that partisanship crucially shapes dating preferences; however, we find that the scale of its influence is comparable to, if not surpassing, traditional dating criteria. Participants valued partisanship as much as they did physical attractiveness, and twice as much as they valued educational considerations. Second, unlike previous work, we identify different factors that cause individuals to look beyond political differences when forming relationships. Notably, political tolerance emerged as a central influence, moderating partisan predilections in dating choices. Physical appearance also proved to be an influential counterweight to partisan preferences. Participants were nearly as inclined to choose an attractive out-partisan as they were to opt for unattractive co-partisans.

Beyond the primary findings, our study identifies pronounced heterogeneities in dating preferences by gender and political alignment. We provide novel evidence that Labour party supporters exhibit stronger political biases in their dating choices. We also observe marked asymmetries in how partisans respond to counter-stereotypic profiles. While Tories displayed a preference for atypical over stereotypic out-partisans, Labour supporters notably leaned towards the latter. This finding diverges from recent US research, which posits that stereotype inconsistencies consistently diminish partisan social divides (e.g. Ahler and Sood, 2018; Shafranek, 2021). Men notably exhibited a bias against progressive ideologies, whereas women leaned favorably towards them. Interestingly, women were more likely than men to select dates from their own party, with female respondents prioritizing partisan alignment even slightly above political tolerance, a tendency less apparent among men. We show that this gendered disparity is largely attributed to female Labour respondents, who exhibited the most pronounced partisan bias across all gender-party combinations.

The overarching theme discerned from our analysis is clear: while partisanship undoubtedly holds

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sway in the dating realm, other factors — many previously overlooked or under-emphasized — can meaningfully mediate its influence. This challenges the long-standing narrative that depicts political divides as almost insurmountable barriers in relationship development. On a broader scale, the observations derived from this study underscore the importance of rectifying misconceptions surrounding out-partisan perceptions. This is in line with previous findings that show partisans are amenable to corrections about out-party demographics and the extent of their disagreement with opposing views (e.g. Druckman et al., 2022; Klar et al., 2018). Hence, fostering a more accurate understanding of out-partisans might be the key to mitigating deep-seated animosities, a step that holds profound implications for enhancing social cohesion and nurturing more informed, empathetic citizens.

In considering our findings, several areas for future research emerge. First, while our study focuses on Labour and Conservative party affiliations, the confines of a two-party focus may not fully capture the nuances of the UK's multi-party system. This suggests potential for future research that considers a broader spectrum of political affiliations, providing a more holistic view of dating preferences in a diverse political landscape. Second, while our analysis identifies asymmetric gender and partisan preferences, the foundational causes behind these patterns are not fully clear. This hints at the need for additional research work, perhaps qualitative in nature, to further explore and understand these findings. Finally, the temporal setting of our analysis, particularly in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, prompts further inquiry. Given the palpable divisions arising from the Leave vs. Remain discourse, a pertinent research question emerges: how do Brexit-related identities influence dating preferences independent of traditional party alignments? This line of inquiry could provide comparative insights into the influence of opinion-based groups, like Brexit factions, versus established party affiliations in shaping interpersonal preferences.

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A Online Appendix

[appendices]

Table of Contents

A Supplementary tables

Table A1: Main conjoint analysis results

Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
In-party	Out-party	0.182	0.004	0.175	0.190
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.199	0.004	0.191	0.206
Progressive	Traditional	0.060	0.005	0.050	0.070
White	Black	0.051	0.004	0.044	0.059
With degree	Without degree	0.068	0.002	0.064	0.071
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.072	0.003	-0.079	-0.066
Attractive	Unattractive	0.182	0.004	0.173	0.191
Tall	Short	0.029	0.003	0.024	0.035

Number of Observations = 80640

Number of Respondents = 2520

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

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Table A2: Summary of attribute matching criteria

	Profile	**Respondent**
Political		
Partisanship	Labour	Labour
	Tory	Tory
Politically-correlated		
Tolerance	Tolerant	In-party−Out-party[a] $\leq$ median of 4
	Intolerant	In-party−Out-party $>$ median of 4
Race	White	White
	Black	Black
Diet	Vegetarian, trying hard to be vegan	Any plant-based diet
	No dietary limitations	Other
Ideology	Progressive	Left[b]
	Traditional	Right
Education	Degree	University graduate
	No degree	Did not go to or finish university
Non-political		
Physical attractiveness	Attractive	Self-rating $>$ median of 6
	Unattractive	Self-rating $\leq$ median of 6
Height	Tall	Height quintile 5 (M) Height quintile 2 (F)
	Short	Height quintile 4 (M) Height quintile 1 (F)

Notes: [a] Respondents were asked to rate separately how much they like supporters of the Labour and Conservative Party on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. The respondent tolerance measure represents the difference between in-party and out-party ratings. The findings are robust to an alternative measure of tolerance. [b] Respondents were asked how progressive they are on a scale of 0 (Conservative) to 10 (Progressive). Left-wing (right-wing) respondents are those with ratings above (below) 5. The notations M and F stand for male and female respectively.

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Attribute	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Partisanship Match	0.215	0.004	0.207	0.223
Tolerance Match	0.041	0.006	0.029	0.052
Ideology Match	0.142	0.005	0.132	0.152
Race Match	0.048	0.004	0.040	0.056
Education Match	0.029	0.003	0.024	0.034
Diet Match	0.087	0.004	0.080	0.094
Attractiveness Match	-0.027	0.006	-0.039	-0.015
Height Match	0.007	0.004	-0.000	0.013

Number of Observations = 63488

Number of Respondents = 1984

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the matched dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. The baseline value for all attributes is 'no match'. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A3: Conjoint analysis results using matched attributes

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Table A4: Conjoint analysis results using matched attributes (disaggregated)

Attribute	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Partisanship Match				
Tory	0.137	0.007	0.123	0.150
Labour	0.220	0.004	0.212	0.228
Tolerance Match				
Intolerant	-0.052	0.004	-0.061	-0.043
Tolerant	0.155	0.006	0.144	0.166
Ideology Match				
Traditional	0.143	0.006	0.132	0.155
Progressive	0.142	0.006	0.131	0.153
Race Match				
Black	0.016	0.015	-0.013	0.045
White	0.051	0.004	0.043	0.060
Education Match				
No degree	-0.018	0.004	-0.025	-0.010
Degree	0.047	0.003	0.042	0.052
Diet Match				
Non-vegetarian	0.088	0.004	0.081	0.095
Vegetarian	0.083	0.006	0.071	0.096
Attractiveness Match				
Low	-0.091	0.006	-0.102	-0.079
High	0.088	0.006	0.076	0.100
Height Match				
Short	0.004	0.005	-0.006	0.015
Tall	0.015	0.006	0.004	0.026

Number of Observations = 63488

Number of Respondents = 1984

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the disaggregated matched dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. The baseline value for all attributes is 'no match'. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

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Attribute	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
In-partisan Profiles				
Intolerant	0.151	0.007	0.138	0.165
Tolerant	0.187	0.006	0.175	0.198
Out-partisan Profiles				
Intolerant	-0.216	0.005	-0.225	-0.207
Tolerant	0.130	0.006	0.118	0.143

Number of Observations = 73248

Number of Respondents = 2289

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of matched tolerance on the probability of being selected for date, separated by in-partisan and out-partisan profiles. "Intolerant" and "Tolerant" are binary variables coded 1 when both the respondent and profile exhibit political intolerance (or tolerance, respectively), and 0 otherwise. Refer to A2 for the matching criteria. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A5: Preference for matched tolerance by partisanship

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Male Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.128	0.006	0.117	0.139
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.233	0.006	0.221	0.244
Progressive	Traditional	-0.029	0.007	-0.042	-0.016
White	Black	0.085	0.006	0.074	0.096
Degree	Without degree	0.078	0.003	0.073	0.084
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.102	0.005	-0.113	-0.092
Attractive	Unattractive	0.257	0.006	0.244	0.269
Tall	Short	0.002	0.004	-0.007	0.010
Number of Observations = 34880					
Number of Respondents = 1090					
Panel B: Female Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.220	0.005	0.210	0.230
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.180	0.006	0.169	0.192
Progressive	Traditional	0.105	0.008	0.090	0.120
White	Black	0.038	0.006	0.026	0.050
Degree	Without degree	0.064	0.003	0.058	0.070
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.057	0.005	-0.068	-0.046
Attractive	Unattractive	0.149	0.006	0.137	0.162
Tall	Short	0.062	0.004	0.054	0.071
Number of Observations = 33120					
Number of Respondents = 1035					

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date by gender. Respondents directed to same-sex profiles are excluded from this analysis. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A6: Conjoint analysis results by gender

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Male Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.143	0.007	0.129	0.158
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.230	0.008	0.215	0.246
Progressive	Traditional	-0.019	0.008	-0.034	-0.004
White	Black	0.100	0.008	0.084	0.116
More educated	Less educated	0.080	0.003	0.073	0.087
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.082	0.007	-0.097	-0.068
Attractive	Unattractive	0.282	0.008	0.265	0.298
Taller	Shorter	-0.017	0.008	-0.033	0.000
Number of Observations = 15772					
Number of Respondents = 1023					
Panel B: Female Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.217	0.006	0.204	0.229
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.204	0.008	0.188	0.220
Progressive	Traditional	0.095	0.009	0.078	0.113
White	Black	0.050	0.008	0.034	0.066
More educated	Less educated	0.065	0.004	0.058	0.072
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.056	0.007	-0.070	-0.043
Attractive	Unattractive	0.163	0.009	0.147	0.180
Taller	Shorter	0.051	0.009	0.034	0.069
Number of Observations = 16296					
Number of Respondents = 1070					

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for date by gender. Respondents directed to same-sex profiles are excluded from this analysis. Values for the attributes 'education' and 'height' were adjusted to denote relative levels in comparison to the respondent. Specifically, 'More educated' signifies that the profile's educational attainment surpasses that of the respondent, while 'Taller' conveys that the profile's height exceeds the respondent's own height. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A7: Conjoint analysis results by gender with relative education and height

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Labour Male Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.109	0.007	0.096	0.122
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.234	0.007	0.221	0.247
Number of Observations = 27360					
Number of Respondents = 855					
Panel B: Labour Female Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.250	0.005	0.240	0.260
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.157	0.006	0.146	0.169
Number of Observations = 27488					
Number of Respondents = 859					
Panel C: Tory Male Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.202	0.009	0.184	0.221
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.248	0.013	0.224	0.273
Number of Observations = 7424					
Number of Respondents = 232					
Panel D: Tory Female Sample					
In-party	Out-party	0.102	0.013	0.076	0.128
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.262	0.017	0.228	0.297
Number of Observations = 5568					
Number of Respondents = 174					

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date by gender and partisanship. Respondents directed to same-sex profiles are excluded from this analysis. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A8: Conjoint analysis results by gender and party

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Attribute	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Tory Sample				
White out-partisan	0.178	0.011	0.157	0.199
Vegetarian out-partisan	-0.077	0.010	-0.097	-0.057
Progressive out-partisan	-0.229	0.012	-0.253	-0.205
Out-partisan with degree	-0.013	0.008	-0.029	0.002
Number of Observations = 7024				
Number of Respondents = 439				
Panel B: Labour Sample				
White out-partisan	0.051	0.005	0.042	0.061
Vegetarian out-partisan	-0.266	0.005	-0.275	-0.256
Progressive out-partisan	0.125	0.005	0.116	0.134
Out-partisan with degree	0.105	0.003	0.098	0.112
Number of Observations = 33136				
Number of Respondents = 2071				

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of out-partisan dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date by Tory (A) and Labour (B) respondents. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table A9: Conjoint analysis results by partisanship

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B Robustness checks

Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
In-party	Out-party	0.798	0.015	0.769	0.828
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.862	0.015	0.832	0.892
Progressive	Traditional	0.272	0.015	0.243	0.301
White	Black	0.215	0.015	0.186	0.244
With degree	Without degree	0.315	0.015	0.286	0.344
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.321	0.015	-0.350	-0.291
Attractive	Unattractive	0.799	0.015	0.770	0.828
Tall	Short	0.109	0.015	0.080	0.138

Number of Observations = 80640

Number of Respondents = 2520

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represent the log odds ratio of being selected for a date when the attribute is present, relative to when it is not present, holding all else constant. Estimates are based on a conditional logit model. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B1: Main conjoint analysis results using a conditional logit model

Attribute	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Partisanship Match	0.214	0.004	0.207	0.222
Tolerance Match	0.013	0.006	0.002	0.025
Ideology Match	0.142	0.005	0.132	0.152
Race Match	0.048	0.004	0.040	0.056
Education Match	0.029	0.003	0.024	0.034
Diet Match	0.087	0.004	0.080	0.094
Beauty Match	-0.027	0.006	-0.039	-0.015
Height Match	0.007	0.004	-0.000	0.014

Number of Observations = 63488

Number of Respondents = 1984

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the matched dating profile attribute values on the probability of being selected for a date. An alternative measure of matched tolerance, based on party feeling thermometers, was used. The coefficients represent the AMCEs. The baseline value for all attributes is 'no match'. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B2: Conjoint analysis results using matched attributes and alternative tolerance measure

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Attribute	Baseline	Round	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
In-party	Out-party	2	0.000	0.009	-0.018	0.019
In-party	Out-party	3	-0.012	0.010	-0.032	0.007
Tolerant	Intolerant	2	-0.015	0.010	-0.034	0.005
Tolerant	Intolerant	3	0.018	0.010	-0.002	0.038
Progressive	Traditional	2	-0.009	0.013	-0.034	0.017
Progressive	Traditional	3	-0.002	0.014	-0.029	0.024
White	Black	2	0.005	0.010	-0.014	0.025
White	Black	3	-0.002	0.010	-0.022	0.018
With degree	Without degree	2	-0.005	0.005	-0.015	0.005
With degree	Without degree	3	0.002	0.005	-0.008	0.012
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	2	0.001	0.009	-0.016	0.019
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	3	-0.009	0.009	-0.028	0.009
Attractive	Unattractive	2	-0.000	0.012	-0.023	0.022
Attractive	Unattractive	3	0.018	0.012	-0.006	0.041
Tall	Short	2	0.004	0.007	-0.010	0.018
Tall	Short	3	-0.005	0.008	-0.021	0.010

Number of Observations = 80640

Number of Respondents = 2520

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values, interacted with the survey round, on the probability of being selected for a date. The baseline level for survey round is round 1. The coefficients represents how the average marginal effect of a profile attribute on the choice probability varies based on the survey round. Main effects are excluded from the table. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B3: Heterogeneity analysis by survey round

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
In-party	Out-party	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
Progressive	Traditional	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
White	Black	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
With degree	Without degree	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
Attractive	Unattractive	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000
Tall	Short	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000

Number of Observations = 80,640

Number of Respondents = 2520

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values, interacted with survey duration, on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represents how the average marginal effect of a profile attribute on the choice probability varies based on survey duration. Main effects are excluded from the table. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B4: Heterogeneity analysis by survey duration

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Single (ref: in a relationship)					
In-party	Out-party	-0.011	0.007	-0.025	0.003
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.013	0.008	-0.002	0.028
Progressive	Traditional	-0.003	0.010	-0.023	0.016
White	Black	0.003	0.008	-0.012	0.018
With degree	Without degree	0.003	0.004	-0.005	0.010
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.007	0.007	-0.020	0.007
Attractive	Unattractive	0.018	0.009	0.000	0.035
Tall	Short	0.004	0.006	-0.007	0.015
Number of Observations = 80352					
Number of Respondents = 2511					
Panel B: Age					
In-party	Out-party	-0.001	0.001	-0.002	0.001
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.001	0.001	-0.000	0.002
Progressive	Traditional	-0.004	0.001	-0.006	-0.003
White	Black	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.005
With degree	Without degree	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.001
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.001	0.001	-0.002	-0.000
Attractive	Unattractive	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.003
Tall	Short	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.001
Number of Observations = 80640					
Number of Respondents = 2520					
Panel C: With a degree (ref: no degree)					
In-party	Out-party	0.013	0.008	-0.003	0.028
Tolerant	Intolerant	-0.009	0.009	-0.026	0.008
Progressive	Traditional	0.029	0.011	0.007	0.051
White	Black	-0.023	0.009	-0.040	-0.006
With degree	Without degree	0.001	0.004	-0.007	0.009
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	0.026	0.008	0.011	0.041
Attractive	Unattractive	-0.009	0.010	-0.028	0.010
Tall	Short	-0.004	0.006	-0.016	0.009
Number of Observations = 80320					
Number of Respondents = 2510					

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values, interacted with demographic characteristics, on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represents how the average marginal effect of a profile attribute on the choice probability varies based on the demographic characteristic. Main effects are excluded from the table. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B5: Heterogeneity analysis by demographic characteristics

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Attribute	Baseline	Est.	SE	LCI	UCI
Panel A: Independents (ref: Partisans)					
Labour	Tory	-0.160	0.009	-0.178	-0.142
Tolerant	Intolerant	0.034	0.011	0.013	0.055
Progressive	Traditional	-0.130	0.010	-0.151	-0.110
White	Black	0.065	0.010	0.046	0.084
With degree	Without degree	-0.003	0.005	-0.012	0.007
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	-0.061	0.010	-0.081	-0.041
Attractive	Unattractive	0.090	0.010	0.070	0.111
Tall	Short	0.021	0.008	0.005	0.037
Number of Observations = 95680					
Number of Respondents = 2990					
Panel B: Extreme Partisans (ref: Moderates)					
In-party	Out-party	0.119	0.007	0.105	0.132
Tolerant	Intolerant	-0.069	0.008	-0.083	-0.054
Progressive	Traditional	0.146	0.010	0.127	0.164
White	Black	-0.075	0.008	-0.090	-0.060
With degree	Without degree	-0.005	0.004	-0.013	0.002
Vegetarian	Non-vegetarian	0.063	0.007	0.050	0.076
Attractive	Unattractive	-0.100	0.009	-0.117	-0.083
Tall	Short	-0.002	0.006	-0.013	0.009
Number of Observations = 80320					
Number of Respondents = 2510					

Notes: This table shows estimates of the effects of the dating profile attribute values, interacted with political characteristics, on the probability of being selected for a date. The coefficients represents how the average marginal effect of a profile attribute on the choice probability varies based on the political characteristic. Main effects are excluded from the table. Estimates are based on an OLS model with clustered standard errors. LCI and UCI represent the lower and upper bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

Table B6: Heterogeneity analysis by political characteristics

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C Selecting profile photos

In an attempt to reduce experimental artificiality, we include profile photos in the conjoint experiment to capture facial attractiveness. The d-optimal design we use ensures that attribute levels are balanced across choice sets. This means that each level is presented in an equal number of choice sets, and no particular combination of levels is over-represented or under-represented. As such, we require for both men and women an equal number of white (16) and black (16) profiles, with 8 'unattractive' profiles and 8 'attractive' profiles per race. We refrain from including photos of individuals from other races to ensure that our respondents can clearly distinguish between the racial categories.

To select profile images, we began by collecting stock photos of 40 males and 40 females (half white and half black) between the ages of 20 and 35 from Adobe Stock Photos, which is a platform where anyone can upload photos for commercial use. Our objective at this stage was to obtain a diverse range of photos that covered various attractiveness levels. To ensure realism and avoid biasing respondents' perceptions of attractiveness as much as possible, we set the following criteria for our photos:

- Size: Photos should be of sufficient size and resolution to be clearly visible and not distorted.
- Realism: Photos should be realistic and not overly stylized or edited. This includes avoiding filters or heavy editing that can distort the individual's appearance.
- Quality: Photos should be of similar quality in terms of lighting, resolution, and clarity, to ensure that they are visually consistent and do not bias respondents' perceptions of attractiveness.
- Background: Photos should have a neutral background, such as a plain wall or background, to avoid distracting respondents' attention from the individual being evaluated.
- Expression: Photos should have a similar facial expression to avoid biasing respondents' perceptions of attractiveness. In online dating, it is common for individuals to include photos of themselves where they are smiling. This is because online dating is primarily a visual medium and a smiling photo can be seen as more inviting and approachable than a neutral or serious expression (Brand et al., 2012). Therefore, to mimic the reality of online dating, we only choose photos where individuals are smiling.
- Clothing: Photos should feature individuals wearing similar types of clothing to avoid biasing respondents' perceptions based on fashion or style. While the images are only meant to show people's faces, some clothing may be visible in the photo, but we photoshop the images to ensure the clothes are neutral in color and unobtrusive.

We recruited 250 male and 250 female respondents via Prolific to obtain objective measures of attractiveness for each photo. Respondents were British nationals within the age range of 18 to 35 (inclusive). Participants were compensated for their participation in the study. Respondents were directed to rate male or female photos depending on their sexual orientation, which we determined by asking them whether they are attracted more to men or women at the beginning of the survey. We block-randomized the photos so that each respondent rates 20, rather than 40 photos using an 11-point Likert scale where 10 corresponds to very attractive and 0 to very unattractive. To prevent bias towards more 'achievable' people, we do not prime the rater to view the individual in the picture

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as a potential romantic partner. On average, each photo was rated by 125 independent raters, and we used the average photo ratings as our measure of attractiveness.

Firstly, we constructed every feasible pairwise combination of the photos. For each such combination, we only considered responses from individuals who had rated both photos in the pair. The subsequent step involved computing the average difference in attractiveness scores, taking the score of Photo A and subtracting the score of Photo B. Our primary objective was to ascertain a consensus regarding attractiveness judgments. In choice sets where both profiles are attractive or unattractive, we sought combinations where the judgments were nearly split — specifically, where approximately 40 to 60 percent of respondents perceived Photo A as more attractive than Photo B. In choice sets where the pair consisted of one attractive and one unattractive photo, we favored combinations where at least 80 percent of respondents concurred that Photo A was either less or more attractive than Photo B. This methodology ensured both variety and consensus in our photo selections for the conjoint profiles. Table x below shows descriptive statistics for a sample of combinations of female photos.

In addition, we set specific criteria for differences across profiles. For mixed-profile combinations, our goal was twofold: to maintain a pronounced disparity in attractiveness within the set, and concurrently, to ensure that this difference remains relatively uniform across different mixed-profile combinations. For instance, if combinations A and B had an attractiveness rating difference of 2 in a mixed choice set, then it was imperative for another mixed-profile combination, say C and D, to exhibit an attractiveness difference in close alignment with that of A and B. For mixed female combinations, the difference in average ratings ranged from 2 to 2.8. For men, it ranged from 2.06 to 2.57. Moreover, for choice sets comprised of photos with similar attractiveness levels (both attractive or both unattractive), it was essential that the difference in average ratings be minimal. Not only should this difference be small within a set, but it should also maintain consistency across multiple similar combinations to preserve uniformity in our methodology. For analogous female combinations, the difference in average ratings ranged from 0.17 to 0.4. For men, it ranged from 0.05 to 0.5. Lastly, a salient criterion was the gender parity in attractiveness disparities. Specifically, the differences in attractiveness ratings between photos in female choice sets had to closely mirror those in male choice sets. This ensured that any difference in attractiveness between genders was negligible, thereby substantiating that the attractiveness level remains analogous across genders. Overall, we ensured a difference-in-differences between male and female profiles that ranged from 0 to 0.4.

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Combination	Type	N	DIF(A-B)	SD	%POS
1	Mixed	62	2.61	1.88	87
2	Same	55	0.25	1.60	45
3	Mixed	60	2.42	1.92	80
4	Same	64	0.38	1.53	41
5	Same	51	0.29	1.24	45
6	Mixed	76	2.29	1.80	88

Notes:
N = number of observations on pair of photos (i.e. both photo A and photo B rated by the same individual).
DIF (A–B) = mean value for photo A minus mean value for photo B (from those individuals who valued both images).
% POS = percentage of all N differences that are positive i.e. where photo A is given a higher value than photo B.
SD = standard deviation of DIF(A–B)

Table C1: Sample descriptive statistics for differences in valuations

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D Survey instrument

What is your Prolific ID? _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. In this study, you are asked to act as if you were swiping through profiles on a dating app. You will be asked to choose between the profiles of potential dates. The study should take around 5 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any stage without explanation.

Do you consent to participate in this study?

- Yes
- No

Screener Questions
What is your gender?

- Man (including Trans Male/Trans Man)
- Woman (including Trans Female/Trans Woman)
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

What is your age? _____

What is your current relationship status?

- Single, never married
- In a relationship
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated/divorced
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

Do you generally prefer to date men or women?
We understand that gender and sexual preferences are diverse and nuanced, and there are more options beyond men and women. However, for the purposes of this study, we ask you to please choose the option that best describes your preferences. We appreciate your understanding.

- Men
- Women

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- I have no preference

Conjoint task
In the following tasks, you will be shown 16 pairs of dating profiles. For each pair, choose the profile you would prefer to go on a date with.

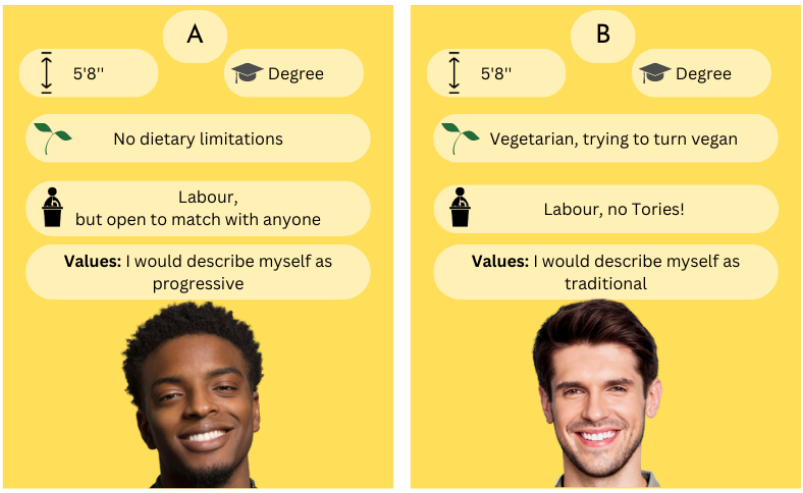

Figure D1: Choice set example

Attention check For this choice set only, please click on profile A.

Demographic questions
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No formal education
- Primary school
- Secondary school up to 16 years
- Higher or secondary or further education (A-levels, BTEC, etc.)
- College or university
- Post-graduate degree
- Prefer not to say

How physically attractive would you say you are on a scale of 0 (very unattractive) to 10 (very attractive)?

What is your height? _____

What is your ethnicity?

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- White
- Black
- Asian
- Mixed ethnicity
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your diet?

- Vegan
- Vegetarian
- Meat-eater (eat meat and poultry)
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say

Political questions
How close do you feel to the following political parties on a scale of 0 (not close at all) to 10 (very close)?

- Labour Party
- Conservative Party

Which party did you vote for in the last general elections (12 December 2019)?

- I did not vote
- I was not eligible to vote
- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Scottish National Party
- Plaid Cymru
- United Kingdom Independence Party
- Green Party
- British National Party

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- Other
- Don't know

Attention check Please select number 10 as your response to this question.

How much do you like Labour party supporters on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much)?

How much do you like Conservative party supporters on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much)?

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being very traditional and 10 being very progressive, how would you describe your values?

Think about each of the following characteristics. Generally speaking, would you say that each is more commonly associated with supporters of the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, or neither?

- Vegan
- Vegetarian
- White
- Black
- Progressive
- Traditional
- Someone with a college degree
- Someone without a college degree

Feedback (timing, content, etc.) _____

E Power analysis

One natural concern about using a fractional factorial design is the potential lack of statistical power when estimating the interaction effects of interest. To address this challenge and ensure that our study is adequately powered, we conduct a power analysis that accounts for the total effects (main and interaction effects) we wish to estimate. The power analysis aims to test the probability that our experiment will successfully reject the respective null hypotheses if they are false. We perform this analysis using the R package `cjpowR` (Freitag and Schuessler, 2020).

In a meta-analysis of 15 published conjoint studies, Schuessler and Freitag (2020) find that the median AMCE value was 0.05, which serves as a good reference point for our analysis. We assume three plausible values for the AMCE: 0.03, 0.04, and 0.05. These values represent conservative, moderate, and optimistic effect size scenarios, respectively. The results of this analysis, depicted in Figure 1, show that this experiment with 3000 respondents is very well-powered to detect the assumed effect sizes. Even for heterogeneous treatment effects by gender ($n \approx 1500$), the experiment is relatively well-powered.

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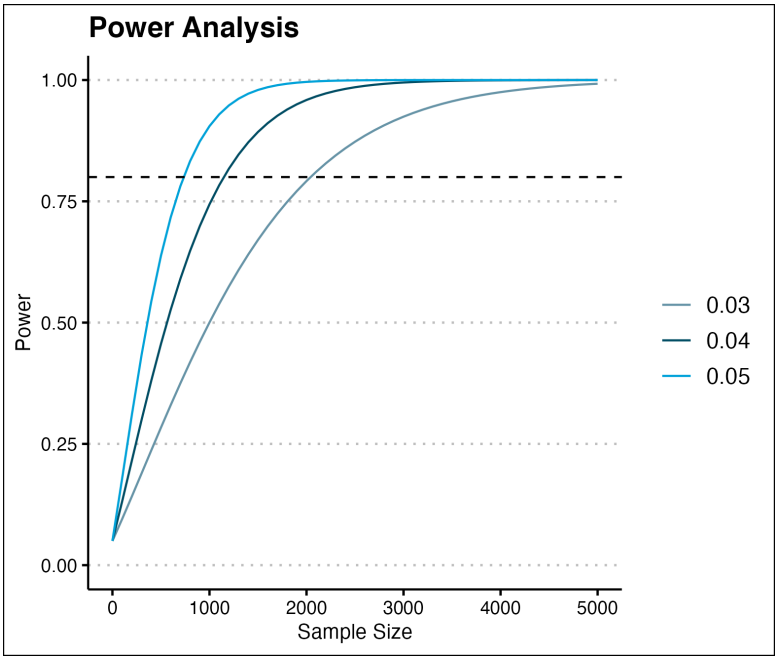

Figure D2: Power Analysis for AMCE of 0.03, 0.04, and 0.05

We recruit a gender-balanced sample of 3,000 respondents from Prolific, a crowd-sourcing platform that has been shown to provide high-quality data (Peer et al., 2017). To incentivize participation, respondents were compensated for their time. To ensure that the respondents are representative of the population of interest, we only recruit unmarried individuals between the ages of 18 and 40, which roughly matches the age range of the individuals depicted in our chosen profile images. Additionally, respondents must be residents of the UK, as our profiles include political attributes relevant to the UK landscape.

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