

Brains or beauty: New study confirms having both leads to higher pay

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People looking for a good job at a good salary could find their intelligence may not be the only trait that puts them at the top of the pay scale, according to researchers. A new study finds attractiveness, along with confidence, may help job-seekers stand out to employers.

"Little is known about why there are income disparities between the good-looking and the not-so-good-looking," said the study's lead author, Timothy Judge, PhD, of the University of Florida. "We've found that, even accounting for intelligence, a person's feeling of self-worth is enhanced by how [attractive](#) they are and this, in turn, results in higher pay."

Judge's team analyzed data from the Harvard Study of Health and Life Quality, a national, longitudinal study. The findings appear in the May issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, which is published by the American Psychological Association.

The study looked at 191 men and women between the ages of 25 and 75 who were interviewed three times six months apart starting in 1995. They answered questions about their household income, education and financial stresses and evaluated how happy or disappointed they were with their achievements up to that point. They completed several intelligence and [cognitive tests](#) and had their pictures taken. Several different people on the research team rated each person's attractiveness relative to their age and gender. The raters were men and women of varying ages. The authors then calculated an average attractiveness score

for each participant based on those ratings.

The researchers found that physical attractiveness had a significant impact on how much people got paid, how educated they were, and how they evaluated themselves. Basically, people who were rated good-looking made more money, were better educated and were more confident. But the effects of a person's intelligence on income were stronger than those of a person's attractiveness.

"We can be somewhat heartened by the fact that the effects of general intelligence on income were stronger than those of facial attractiveness," said Judge. "It turns out that the brainy are not necessarily at a disadvantage to the beautiful, and if one possesses intelligence and good looks, then all the better."

The research did show that good-looking people tend to think more highly of their worth and capabilities which, in turn, led to more money and less financial stress. But, the study's authors note, these findings also should be a warning to employers who may subconsciously favor the more attractive. "It is still worthwhile for employers to make an effort to reduce the effects of bias toward attractive people in the workplace," said Judge. One good means of doing this, according to Judge, is to rely on objective measures such as personality and ability tests.

However, Judge wrote, education and [intelligence](#) still had a greater payoff than good looks when it came to their effect on people's level of income. He concluded that it could be more effective for people to build on important job skills and education before seeking the latest beauty treatments.

More information: "Does It Pay to Be Smart, Attractive, or Confident (or All Three)? Relationships Among General Mental Ability, Physical Attractiveness, Core Self-Evaluations, and Income," Timothy A. Judge,

PhD, Charlice Hurst, PhD, and Lauren S. Simon, PhD, University of Florida; [Journal of Applied Psychology](#), Vol. 94, No. 3.

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