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Men quicker to say 'I love you', research shows

Men are quicker to declare their love to their partner than women, according to a survey carried out for The Sunday Telegraph.

By Ben Leach

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It is a cliché of romance – that men find it hardest to blurt out those three crucial words: "I love you".

But while men take an average of seven months to tell a new partner that they love them, women take almost eight months, according to the dating survey conducted for *Stella* magazine.

The study, which exposes several myths surrounding relationships, also found that the over 55s are the most active – and experimental – of all age groups, when it comes to dating.



Studies show that men fall in love more frequently than women Photo: GETTY IMAGES

Stella commissioned YouGov to interview almost 2,000 men and women of all ages and backgrounds who have been on a date in the past year.

Jenni Trent Hughes, a relationship counsellor, said the results contradicted many popular views on dating, as well as some of the stereotypes of the differences between the two sexes.

"Although women do tend to wear their heart on their sleeves more than men do, men are just as emotional and sensitive – sometimes even more so," she added.

Oliver James, the clinical psychologist and author, said the findings supported other studies that showed that men fall in love more frequently than women, and that they are more prone to feelings of being "swept away" by someone.

"This is because women mature sooner than men and develop to be more hard-nosed, realistic and in touch with their emotions," he added.

"So when a man says 'I love you' it might be his way of dealing with a lot of complex, difficult emotions that he doesn't really understand, whereas when a woman says it, it might carry a greater weight. The classic cliché is that men use love to get sex and women use sex to get love."

The survey found that almost two-thirds of men and women over 55 have joined internet dating websites, compared to just over one fifth of 18 to 24-year-olds.

The older age group also met up with more dates they had found online and had more, lasting relationships with partners they had met on the internet than any other age group. The over 55s using internet dating websites had met up with an average of eight people each, and had relationships with an average of two each.

They also met more sexual partners online (an average of 2.4) than any other age group, with the exception of the 45 to 54-year-olds (2.6).

The oldest age group is the also most experimental when it comes to more traditional forms of dating.

One fifth of the over 55s have joined a matchmaking organisation and around one in seven have attended a special singles event.

Almost one quarter have even tried speed dating, more than any other age group except the 35 to 44-year-olds.

Keren Smedley, who runs Experience Matters, a relationship and dating consultancy, said the results dispelled some taboos about the older age groups.

"Many people think that not only do older people not date, they do not know how to use the computer either. But this is simply not true.

"Many older people have embraced the internet and internet dating because it helps them overcome some of the practical difficulties – like not knowing where to go to meet people – that sometimes make dating difficult.

"The advantages for older people are that you can do it in private, and on your own, and that it means you can really get to know someone before you meet them.

"For most people the idea that our parents or grandparents have sex is taboo, but this is nonsense. The survey shows that people can still lead an active dating lifestyle well into their retirement."

The study disputed other widely held views. While men are often considered to value looks more highly than anything else when looking for a partner, the *Stella* research suggests otherwise.

It found that 91 per cent of men would most like their ideal partner to have a sense of humour. In contrast, 85 per cent would most like them to have attractive looks.

But the study did reinforce some stereotypical views. For example, half of men date to have sex, compared to around one fifth of women.

In contrast, almost four fifths of women date to find a long-term relationship, compared to around two-thirds of men.

And one fifth of men would have sex on their first date, compared to only one in seventeen women, with 28 per cent of women waiting until the fifth date, or later.

For men, the preferred age gap for a relationship, is with a partner who is up to five years younger than them. In

contrast, most women would like their partner to be up to five years older.

But both sexes agreed on who should pick up the tab on a date: with men spending an average of £40.50 and women an average of £23.20.

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