

MEASURE UP IS HEIGHT AN ISSUE OR ARE WE REBELLING AGAINST STEREOTYPES, ASKS LISA SCOTT

Bit of lanky panky

Joerg Estelmann, 40, loves tall women. At 5ft 8in, he is often shorter than some of the women he dates. In fact, Kathy, a good friend he 'loves and cares about a lot', is 6ft 3in.

He has a website dedicated to tall women (www.tallwomen.org) and a chat-up line that he keeps reserved especially for leggy ladies that catch his eye: 'I'll climb on to my beer crate if required. That makes me 6ft 8in and if you want to look up to a man, you can.' Understandably, Joerg is currently single.

Sarah, 29, like Joerg, also has a preference when it comes to a partner's height. She prefers short men to tall men. She is 5ft 4in and her boyfriend, Damien, is 5ft 6in. She says there are many advantages to having a man who is small, just like her. 'We fit in bed together neatly,' she says. 'And I can borrow his jeans.'

Both Joerg and Sarah are rebelling against cultural stereotypes: we expect men to be taller than their female partner and women are meant to enjoy their tall, masculine man.



A love-height thing

Adam Eyre-Walker, working on the Study of Evolution at Brighton's University of Sussex, says we have these height expectations because, as different sexes, we are attracted to factors that differentiate us from the other. And height is one of the most obvious ones. But you can't get away from biology, either.

'Women might find taller men attractive because they think such men are able to look after them better and because they feel taller men are fitter,' Eyre-Walker explains. 'It may also be a trait which has been subject to sexual selection. Taller men may not be inherently better but women, for whatever reason, have started finding taller men attractive.'

Studies have even shown that, as a result, taller men have

The long and short of it: Some men and women enjoy unconventional height situations

more children. The genes that make them taller and the genes that make women find tall men attractive then continue. As a consequence, the trait, height and the female preference for that trait spread through the population.

So what of those who don't share these genes? What if, like Sarah, you prefer short men and what if, like Joerg, you prefer to look up to your woman, not down on her?

Well, you should expect a few laughs if the story of Kate, 32, is anything to go by. At 5ft 9in, she is two inches taller than her husband, Paul, 31. They have been together for three years and, since their first date, she has caught people staring at them. 'When I wear my heels,

I do tend to tower a little above him,' she explains. 'I know that with most couples, it is typical for the guy to be taller than the girl but what was I supposed to do – ignore everything else I liked about him?' And just last week, Kate caught a woman pointing at them in a restaurant – and yes, she was laughing.

Getting funny looks

Kate also spends a lot of her time defending Paul against what is termed Short Man's Syndrome, a slang term that claims men who are below average height feel it necessary to get attention – often through aggression – to make up for their, er, small stature.

'It's absolute rubbish – he has nothing to prove,' she says. And Joerg says he often finds himself defending his

taller female friends because people perceive them as 'amazons' who are 'control freaks' he says. 'My theory is that all the silly comments they got used to hearing while growing up has made them more sensitive. Therefore, they're less likely to come across as rude or arrogant.'

Joerg also has some final words of advice for anyone who is in an unconventional height situation. 'Whenever I am out with Kathy, I simply focus more on my special lady than the people around us. If you love someone, you don't care either way.'




METRO.co.uk
 Lothario or loser?
 Try our 'rate your
 pulling power' quiz
 at www.metro.co.uk