

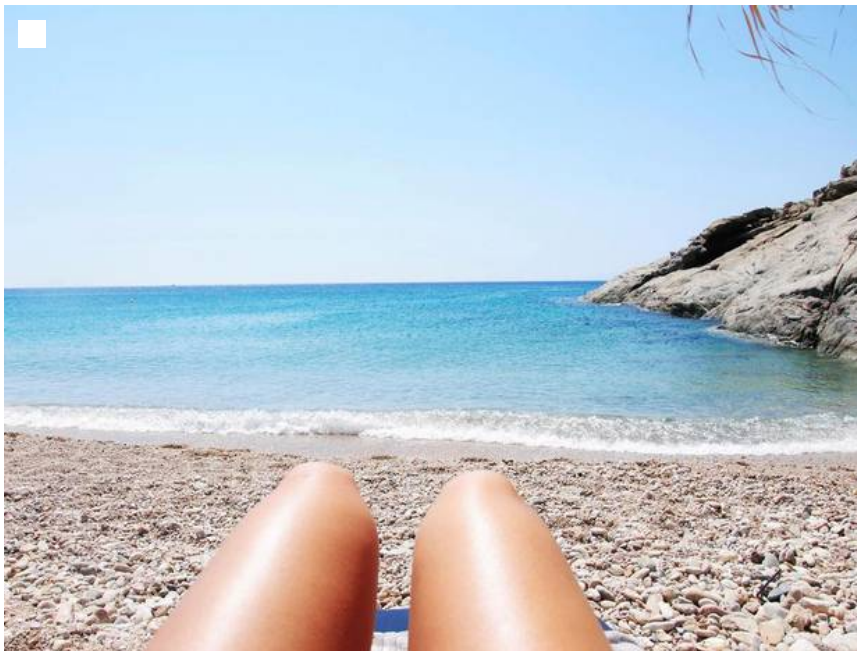


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You're not just insecure: Study reveals how your friends really are richer, happier and more popular than you



Scientists publish first mathematical proof explaining the reason it might always seem like everyone else is doing better than you - because (on average) they are

ADAM WITHNALL Wednesday 15 January 2014

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We all have them. Those friends on Facebook or Instagram who seem to be richer, more popular and more successful than you. Well, it turns out that, on average, they probably are.

According to a new - and pretty depressing - study, researchers have shown for the first time that it's not just our own insecurities and aspirations that make us look longingly at our peers.

Scientists from universities in France and Finland claim that their discovery is based on the "generalised friendship paradox". This



The passage in the Green party's manifesto that sounds like something from a fairy tale

reveals that most people have only a small number of friends. However, a handful of people have a significantly greater number of friends. It is this second category that distorts how you regard your friendship group as a whole.

They say their study doesn't just apply to friendship and can also be related to wealth, the number of sexual partners people have and how successful they are.

It could also help to explain why active social networking service users are less happy.

In other words, there is a genuine logical excuse for anyone who wonders why they don't seem to have as many friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter as everyone else.

"The paradox can be understood as a sampling bias in which individuals having more friends are more likely to be observed by their friends," explained Young-Ho Eom at the University of Toulouse and Hang-Hyun Jo at Aalto University in Finland.

The pair have taken this principle one step further, and established that positive characteristics within networks – such as wealth, apparent success, and even happiness – will on average be experienced more by other people.

Appropriately, the researchers tested their theory by looking at scientists who had co-authored reports with each other – a traceable substitute in the study for "friendship".

They then looked at other positive traits – such as number of publications and citations – and found that these so-called "network characteristics" followed the same mathematical patterns as the network itself.

The maths works in exactly the same way when scaled up to larger networks like friendship groups, the scientists said – in other words, on average your friends will indeed be richer and happier than you.

Eom and Jo call this the "generalized friendship paradox" (GFP). They said: "People's perception of the world and themselves depends on the status of their friends, colleagues and peers.

"When we compare our characteristics like popularity, income, reputation, or happiness to those of our friends, our perception of ourselves might be distorted as expected by the GFP."

They said that while we will naturally be biased towards thinking ourselves "worse" when we compare ourselves to our so-called "better" friends, the same still applies "comparing to the average friend".

Referring to previous studies which showed active Facebook users described themselves as less happy on average than others, Eom and Jo added: "This might be the reason why active online social networking service users are not happy – when it is much easier to compare to other people."

In other words, don't get annoyed the next time your friend posts a picture of an engagement, a new car or a status about a promotion.



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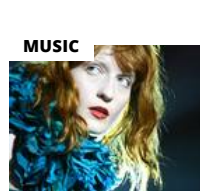
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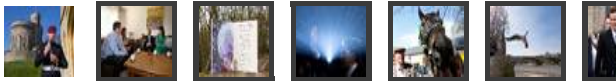


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Statistically speaking, they were always going to be better than you anyway.

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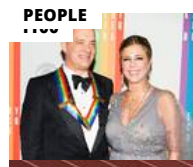
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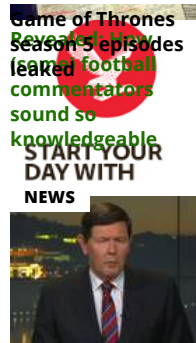
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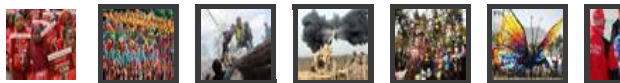
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TOP **NEW** OLD



THEWISEONESPEAKS 454 days ago

I've got loads of enemies. They're all fatter, thicker and poorer than me.

+ | 0 | -



COLEDAVIS 455 days ago

There are two things you can do which will make you very unhappy. One is comparing yourself with others. The other is looking for happiness. Get on with work, help others and improve yourself. Seek love if you can.

+ | 2 | -



JOSQUINE 455 days ago

Couldn't just be that we only post our good news on the social media, and save our moans, groans and cries for sympathy to our real face-to-face friends?

+ | 1 | -



LIAM GORMLEY 455 days ago

Load of crap, I'm way more popular, successful, wealthy, cooler and better looking to boot than any of my facebook friends. Screw you so called scientists!

+ | 0 | -



DOUG CLARK 455 days ago

I just looked at your picture, man you must have some ugly mates :D

+ | 0 | -

OhVinoir **OHVINOIR** 455 days ago

Social media, a platform to boast and gloat.
 More people use it to show off their £12k new handbag or their new mansion rather than productively to educate on welfare or political matters.
 Our generation cares more about TOWIE or Big Brother than it does about biodiversity or poverty. Social media of late is symptomatic of that drift in interest.

+ | 4 | -



LOKI 455 days ago

Instead of being envious, roll up your sleeves, better yourself and work harder!

+ | 2 | -



ANDERS VERKITSO 455 days ago

@ ExPatJoe

I was banned from the Guardian for criticising their editorial policy and other newspapers, like the Telegraph, are vile. If I could find a different, better comments section, I'd go to it.

+ | 0 | -



COLEDAVIS 455 days ago

I think the Indie is quite liberal in this respect. They mainly act against the genuinely abusive and to protect themselves from libel actions, for which I can't blame them.

+ | 0 | -



ERSIE COUREA 455 days ago

Be satisfied with what you've got and Join pinterest. It's more fun. I am furious curious cancer survivor online... I am surviving naturally for five years.

+ | 1 | -



RAPHAEL PULMAN 455 days ago

More friends=higher chance of having more successful ones than you=being jealous more=being miserable more

How the F**K is this news?!?!?
Which morron decided this could be headline news?!?!?

+ | 3 | -

ecocoop1 ECOCOOP1 455 days ago

Don't bother with friends - end of story!

+ | 1 | -

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ANDERS VERKITSO 455 days ago

Print something that is newsworthy.

This is just nonsense.

+ | 5 | -



EXPATIOE 455 days ago

Lighten up. Not everything on this site has to be hard news. If you want that, read the WSJ or the FT.

+ | -3 | -



ANDERS VERKITSO 455 days ago

At the moment, barely 10% of it is news and the news they do upload is allowed to persist for days.

+ | 1 | -



EXPATIOE 455 days ago

So why do you hang around here, if you dislike it so much, Anders? Could it be something to do with paywalls at other sites?

+ | 0 | -



KE55 455 days ago

So narcissists with lots of (pseudo)friends on Facebook, Twitter etc. are unhappy. Perhaps they should give up on inane social media and get out more instead.

+ | 1 | -



TECHVEDIC 455 days ago

It's a human psychology that we are often jealous about their success, who are very close to us. Nevertheless good mathematics. (Editor, Techvedic)

+ | 0 | -



49NINER 455 days ago

I knew there was a good reason not to do social networking.

+ | 1 | -



ITHINKTHAT 455 days ago

Did anyone else understand this?

+ | 2 | -



ALEX LENNON 455 days ago

Amazing, and deeply worrying, that this is the lead article on the front page.

+ | 8 | -



KE35 455 days ago

The Independent really is turning into the broadsheet version of the Daily Mail.

+ | 4 | -



RACHEL BOURNE 455 days ago

The same is often said of the Graun. It's probably the price we pay for not having a paywall.

+ | 0 | -



EXPATJ0E 455 days ago

Don't overly worry, Alex, in a couple of hours a new article will have replaced it.

This is NOT the print edition, it's a database-driven web site of rolling articles. Most start at the top and then gently drift downwards as they are replaced. Therefore, being the "lead" article has no significance.

+ | 1 | -



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