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# Blind Justice? Attractive Get Breaks with Juries

## Unattractive Defendants 22 Percent More Likely to Be Convicted, Study Finds



(AP)

(CBS) Justice may not be blind after all.

According to a Cornell University study, unattractive defendants are 22 percent more likely to be convicted than good-looking ones. And the unattractive also get slapped with harsher sentences - an average of 22 months longer in prison.

The study, "When Emotionality Trumps Reason," was authored by Cornell graduate Justin Gunnell and Stephen Ceci, a professor of developmental

psychology. It examines how some jurors make decisions rationally, based on facts and logic, while others reason emotionally, taking into consideration factors unrelated to the case - attractiveness being one of them.

The study consisted of 169 Cornell psychology undergraduates, who were classified as either rational or emotional decision-makers through an online survey. They were then given case studies of defendants, complete with a photograph and profile, were read jury instructions and listened to the cases' closing arguments.

In serious cases with strong evidence, there was little difference in the conviction rate between attractive and unattractive defendants. But in more minor cases, with ambiguous evidence, jurors were more biased toward the good-looking.

Gunnell, who works as a litigator in New York City, said the findings could impact how attorneys select juries.

"Every person is capable of reasoning via either system and likely uses each system to some degree depending on context," Gunnell said. "The degree to which one system predominates the other is a factor that varies, depending on the individual's natural preference and style."

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