



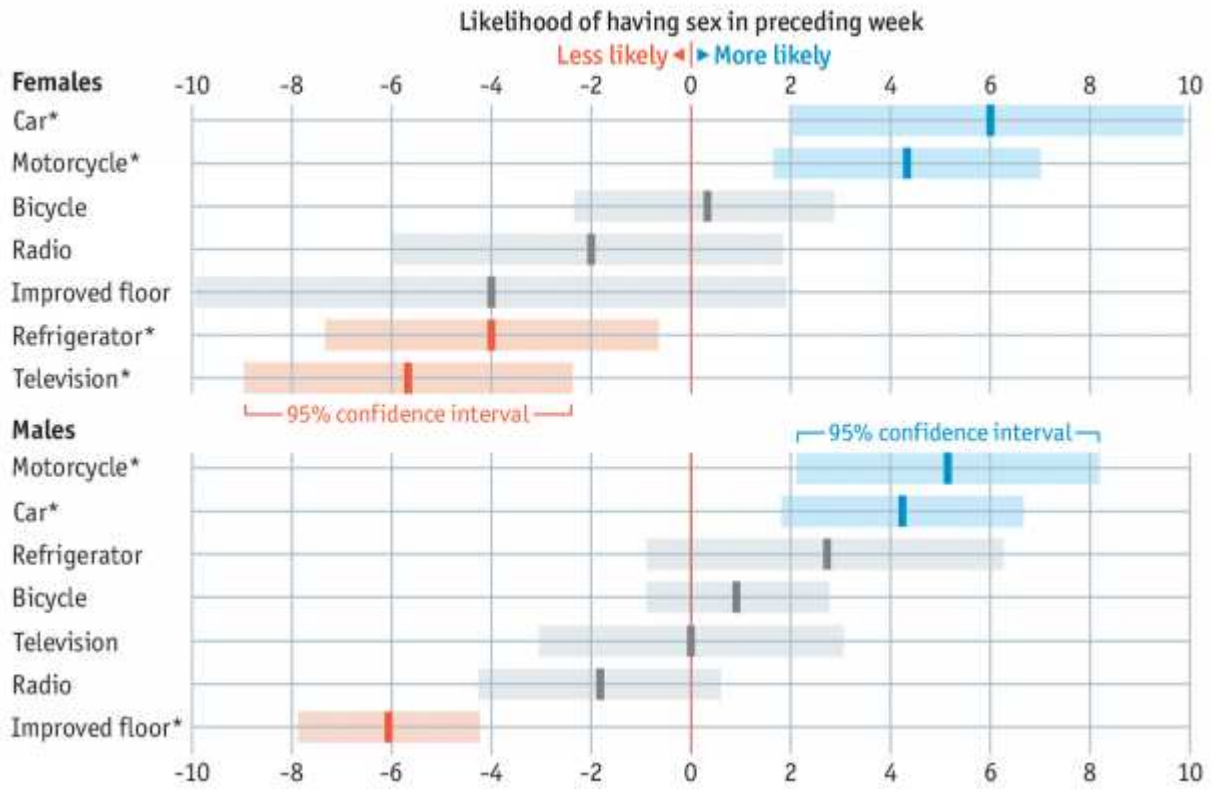
Daily chart

# In developing countries car-owners have more sex; TV-owners have less

*Perhaps vehicles make it easier to find lovers, whereas television lets you ignore them*

## Sex drive

Change in probability of having sex in preceding week, for owners of consumer goods, among 3.2m women and 640,000 men in 80 developing countries, 1986-2016, %



Source: "Does Television Kill Your Sex Life?" (Aug 2018) by Adrienne Lucas and Nicholas Wilson \*Statistically significant

The Economist

Graphic detail

Aug 22nd 2018 | by THE DATA TEAM

"MY car's out back if you're ready to take that long walk, from your front porch to my front seat: the door's open but the ride ain't free." Anyone acquainted with the

songs of Bruce Springsteen will be familiar with the idea that driving around a lot is associated with an active sex life. A new [paper \(http://www.nber.org/papers/w24882\)](http://www.nber.org/papers/w24882) by Adrienne Lucas and Nicholas Wilson, two economists at the University of Delaware and Reed College, provides empirical evidence for such a link.

Using household-fertility surveys of 3.2m women and 640,000 men in 80 developing countries, they were able to examine which durable consumer goods were linked with a higher propensity to get it on. Because the data were collected over a wide geographical range between 1986 and 2016, the authors had to control for where and when the surveys had been conducted. They also accounted for age, education, population density, marital status, knowledge about sexual health and the total number of durable goods owned (as a proxy for wealth).

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After holding all of those factors constant, the 9% of respondents who owned a car and 15% that had a motorcycle stood out as an unusually lustful bunch. Men and women who go racing in the streets were about 5% more likely to have got lucky in the preceding week than were people of the same demographic profile who lacked chrome wheels and fuel injectors.

Why? Cars and motorcycles are expensive items, so the correlation between owning them and having sex could simply show that the wealthiest people also have the strongest libidos. However, refrigerators, televisions and “improved” floors (which means those made from something other than dirt) are not cheap either, and were generally linked with having less sex.

Although the sizes of the effects found in the study are quite small, its sample size is so large that the negative values for refrigerators and televisions among women and for improved floors among men are highly statistically significant, and therefore unlikely to be a random quirk in the data. The same is true of the positive values among both sexes for purring engines.

Ms Lucas suggests hypotheses that might account for each of these relationships.

Vehicles could make it easier to find lovers on different edges of town, or to get home on time. Women who save up for fridges and men who do so for renovated floors might be better at delaying their gratification (or have their hands already full during leisure time). And television's chastening effect on women could be due to changing their attitudes about sex, as other studies in developing countries have suggested. Or perhaps they have merely found something more entertaining to do.

