Lonely hearts
By Carl Franklin

Anyone who reads lonely hearts ads knows that women have a penchant for tall, solvent men with a GSOH. But an American researcher has found regional differences in what women really want. According to Kevin McGraw, of Cornell University in New York, it seems that women who live in cities are more materialistic than their country cousins.

Looking at the lonely-hearts columns of 23 regional newspapers across America, McGraw wanted to find out what women wanted from potential dates. Overall, he discovered that advertisers placed more importance on physical and emotional traits than on resources, but the women of large metropolitan cities had a distinct preference for more affluent males than did women in smaller regional centres. Women had much the same physical tastes across the US and very few advertisers were keen to find a guy with similar interests and hobbies.

McGraw, who normally studies how the plumage of birds affects their mating behaviour, says that in densely-populated areas where resources are scarce and the cost of living is higher, women will naturally tend to go for the better providers, rather than the caring, sensitive types. This may be because they, themselves, are more successful and have higher expectations of their partners, or because cities naturally attract women who are more expensive to run.

McGraw says nice guys who are still on the shelf should think about moving to the sticks, where resources are less important and the women aren’t so money-grabbing.