



This is not a word for word transcript.

- Neil:** Hello and welcome to Six-Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Neil and with me today is Rosie.
- Rosie:** Hi there.
- Neil:** Well, today we're talking about men.
- Rosie:** That sounds interesting.
- Neil:** It is very interesting especially if you're a man because it seems we've had our existence extended.
- Rosie:** I'm sorry?
- Neil:** Well, some previous scientific research had suggested that the Y **chromosome**, which is responsible for men's sex organs and **hormones**, is rotting away!
- Rosie:** Oh dear. Are you going to make it till the end of the programme, Neil?
- Neil:** Ah yes – even the most **pessimistic** findings suggested that men had 100 thousand years left, so I think 6 minutes is ok! Before we get into this story though, I have a quiz question for you, Rosie. Are you ready?
- Rosie:** Yes, I am.
- Neil:** It's a simple question. What is the **ratio** of men to women in the world? Is it
- a) Equal – so 100 males to every 100 females.
 - b) 101 males to every 100 females.
 - c) 100 males to every 105 females.
- Rosie:** Well, I have absolutely no idea. So, I am going to guess and I am going to say c) 100 males to every 105 females.
- Neil:** OK, we'll find out at the end of the programme.
- Rosie:** So, tell me more about this new research into the possible **extinction** of men.
- Neil:** Well it now seems that men can **breathe a sigh of relief**. Scientists compared the decline in the male human's Y chromosome – remember that's

the thing that's responsible for deciding the sex of a child – with that of the rhesus monkey.

Rosie: OK. That's the monkey that we separated from 25 million years ago.

Neil: That's right. And their conclusion was that the Y chromosome is **depleted** but it's still got all of the vital bits.

Rosie: Lucky you! Here's Jennifer Hughes from the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge Massachusetts. She was in charge of the research:

Jennifer Hughes, Whitehead Institute in Cambridge Massachusetts

I think that the odds of the Y losing any more genes are pretty slim. It appears that it's been stable for 25 million years and that is a good indication that's it going to be stable for many many millions of years to come and the genes that remain on the Y probably have very important functions and therefore natural selection is doing a very good job of preserving those genes.

Rosie: She said the odds of the Y chromosome losing any more **genes** are pretty slim – meaning it's unlikely. Genes are the parts of cells which have the information which passes characteristics from a parent to a child.

Neil: So it sounds like us males are safe for many millions of years to come.

Rosie: She also added that **natural selection** is doing a very good job of preserving the genes.

Neil: Natural selection is the way animals die when they are weak or living in unsuitable surroundings. Meanwhile the stronger ones continue to live. Let's have another listen to that interview with Jennifer Hughes, who's in charge of the research:

Jennifer Hughes, Whitehead Institute in Cambridge Massachusetts

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Neil: Now here's an interesting fact, Rosie. Did you know that men's sex chromosomes are not as sophisticated as female ones?

Rosie: No I didn't know that, but it doesn't come as a surprise to me!

Neil: I thought you might say that. But you know what – I'm happy having less sophisticated chromosomes if it means men continue to live for a little longer. Now there's only one way to end this programme, Rosie, and that is to imagine a world without men.

Rosie: OK, well for a start more would get done.

Neil: Are you suggesting that men are lazy?

Rosie: Well, they can be. My boyfriend, for example, had never used a washing machine until he was 30 years old.

Neil: Right, well we're getting into **stereotypes** here! So how about this one - if there were only women in the world, you'd never get into the bathroom.

Rosie: OK, I'll give you that one. I agree that women do spend longer in the bathroom than men.

Neil: And who's going to catch spiders and mice for you?

Rosie: Ah, now that is absolutely not true! My boyfriend is terrified of mice. In fact he ran away from one in the kitchen just last night.

Neil: Well, to be honest, I don't really like mice either, I must say. But what about lifting heavy things? I am always expected to do heavy lifting, which I hate by the way.

Rosie: Yes I confess that men are useful for that. And also for opening jars with the lids too tightly screwed on. And on a more serious note, I think there would probably be far fewer wars if there were only women. I think women would be more likely to talk problems over than resort to violence.

Neil: Well you might be right there but it's difficult to say because most of the world's leaders are men of course. OK Rosie, this entertaining debate must come to an end. We need an answer to the question. I asked what the ratio is of men to women in the world. Is it

a) Equal – so for every 100 males there are 100 females.
b) 101 males to every 100 females.
c) 100 males to every 105 females.

What did you say?

Rosie: I said c) 100 males to every 105 females

Neil: And you were completely wrong. It's 101 males to every 100 females. Do join us again for more 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. Bye for now!

Rosie: Bye bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

chromosome	a very small structure in animal or plant cells
hormones	chemical substances in the body that influence cell function
pessimistic	expecting bad things to happen
ratio	numerical expression of the relative sizes between two or more values
extinction	a situation in which a life form stops existing
breathe a sigh of relief	feel happy that something unpleasant stops
depleted	reduced by a large amount
genes	units in cells that control qualities passed on through generations
natural selection	a process in nature that determines chances of survival
stereotypes	a fixed idea or image that people have about something

More on John Glenn:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17127617>

Read and listen to the story online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2012/03/120315_6min_english_extinct_men.shtml