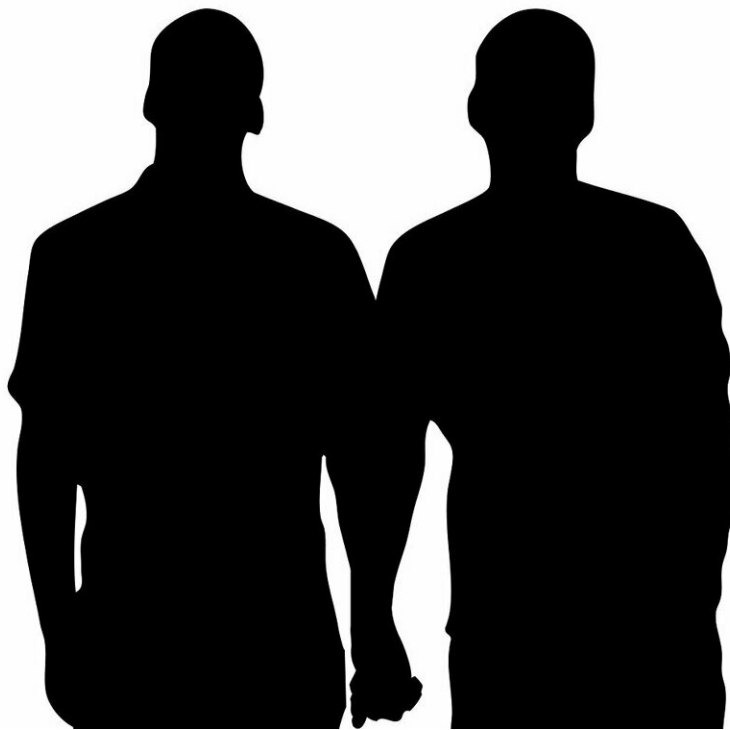


Same-sex married couples handle stress better than different-sex couples, study finds

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Stress is common in all marriages, but same-sex married couples cope with that stress more positively and collaboratively than different-sex couples, according to a new study from researchers at The University of Texas at Austin. The study also found that women married to men report more negative support—meaning that their spouses react ambivalently or

even hostilely in response to stress—than women married to women.

The research, published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, examined how the gender and gender composition of a couple affect their dyadic coping, or how they manage stress together. It also looked into how dyadic coping affected couples' marital quality.

Yiwen Wang, a Ph.D. candidate in UT Austin's Department of Sociology and a graduate research trainee at the university's Population Research Center, and Debra Umberson, a professor of sociology at UT Austin, analyzed survey responses of 419 couples in both same- and different-sex marriages.

They found that both men and women in same-sex marriages are more likely to cope with stress collaboratively than those in different-sex marriages, but that dyadic coping was equally important for men's and women's marital quality in both same- and different-sex marriages.

"This research shows that while there are some [gender differences](#) in dyadic coping efforts, the effects of supportive and collaborative dyadic coping as well as of negative dyadic coping on marital quality are the same for all couples," Wang said.

"Our findings also emphasize the importance of coping as a couple for marital quality across different relationship contexts, which can be an avenue through which couples work together to strengthen relationship well-being."

Although patterns of stress, dyadic coping and marital quality are well-examined in heterosexual marriages, the same is not true of same-sex marriages. By including [same-sex couples](#) in their study, the researchers sought to correct that imbalance and demonstrate the importance of considering gender composition in marriages when studying marital

dynamics.

The study indicated that both men and women in same-sex married couples are more likely to work together to cope with stress, possibly because they share similar gender-related experiences and responses to stress.

"Including same-sex spouses and looking at how they work with each other to manage stress as compared to different-sex spouses can help us better understand the ways in which gender dynamics unfold in marriages," Umberson said.

"Same-sex couples face unique stressors related to discrimination and stigma. Coping as a couple may be especially important for them as they do not receive as much support from extended family, friends or institutions as different-sex couples do."

The researchers also say that it's important to consider the perspectives and experiences of both partners in a marriage when studying marital dynamics, including the ability to cope with [stress](#). By analyzing individual responses from more than 800 people who make up the 419 couples studied, their research is helping to fill a gap in understanding and could improve intervention or [prevention programs](#) that address marital functioning.

"It is imperative that we advance our understanding of how spouses influence each other's well-being for same-sex as well as different-sex married couples and that we consider both spouses' perspectives within [couples](#)," Umberson said. "Research should identify areas of risk and resilience for men and women in gay, lesbian and heterosexual [marriage](#) to ground the most effective strategies for policy and practice."

More information: Yiwen Wang et al, Dyadic coping and marital

quality in same-sex and different-sex marriages, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/02654075221123096](https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221123096)

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