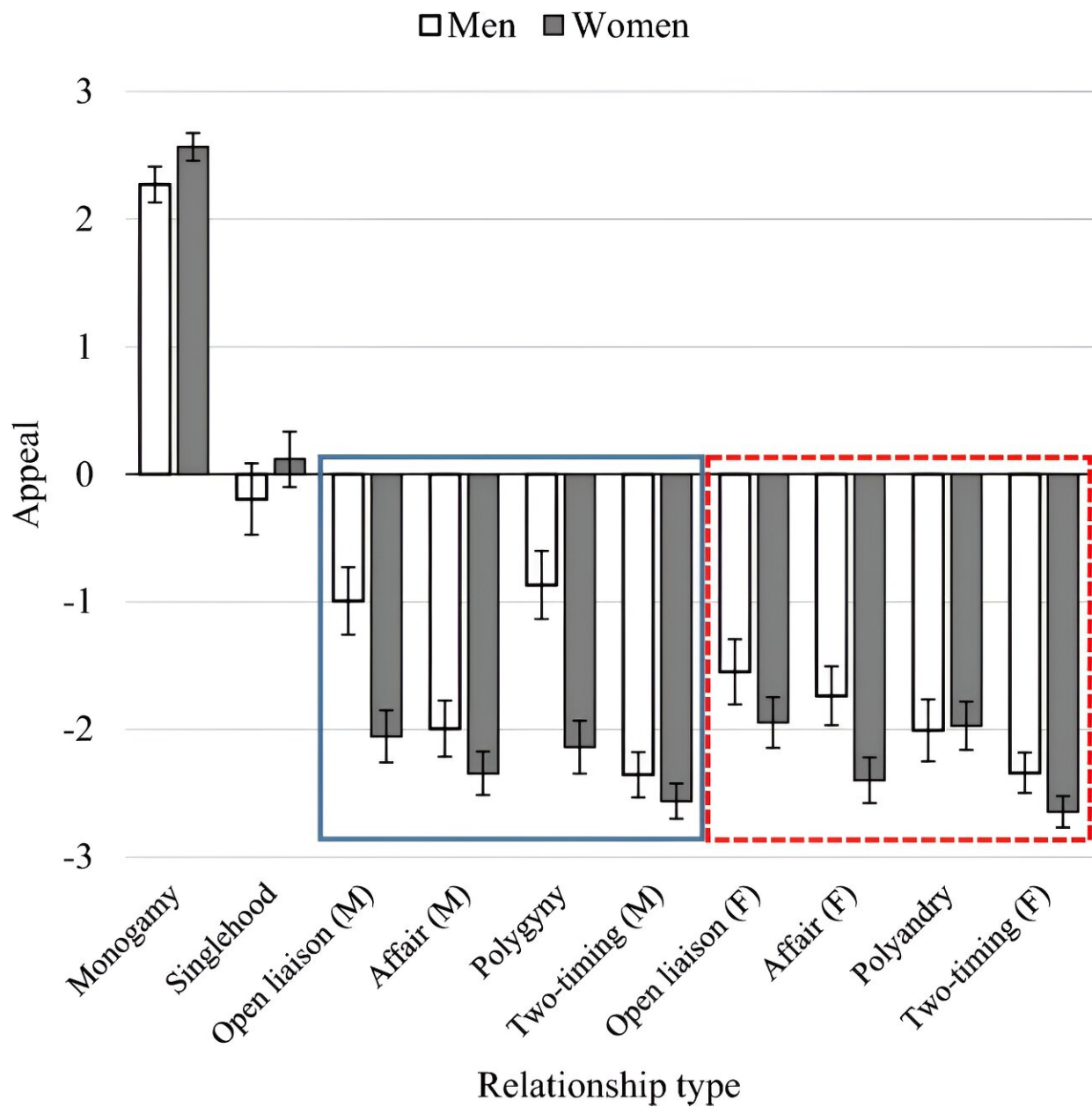


# One in three UK men open to having more than one partner, study shows

December 12 2023



Appeal of different types of relationships split by sex. Relationships within the blue (solid) box are those where men have access to more than one woman, while those in the red box (dashed) are where women have access to more than one man. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. M = Male-led, F = Female-led. Credit: *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2023). DOI: 10.1007/s10508-023-02749-6

A third of UK men are open to the idea of having more than one wife or long-term girlfriend, according to a new Swansea University study.

In contrast, only 11 percent of women surveyed would be open to the idea of a polygamous marriage if it were legal and consensual.

Researchers asked 393 [heterosexual men](#) and women in the UK how they felt about a committed partnership in which they shared their other half with someone else or shared themselves.

The study asked participants about a [relationship](#) resembling polygyny—where a man marries more than one woman—and polyandry—where a woman marries more than one man.

Men were first asked if they would be willing to be shared with more than one [wife](#) and were then asked if they would be willing to share a partner with another man.

The study, [published in the \*Archives of Sexual Behavior\*](#), showed that nine percent of men said they would share a partner, whereas just five percent of women were interested in such an arrangement.

Dr. Andrew Thomas, lead author of the study, said, "Comparing

polygyny and polyandry directly, men were three-and-a-half times more likely to say 'yes' to the former than the latter, while women were twice as likely to say 'yes' to having more than one partner, compared to the idea of sharing their partner with someone else."

Polygyny and polyandry are alternative forms of marriage that involve multiple spouses, and their acceptance varies across cultures. In the United Kingdom, these practices are not legally recognized or widely embraced within the mainstream culture, as the [legal framework](#) is based on monogamy.

In contrast, certain cultures around the world historically and presently practice polygyny, where a man can have multiple wives, and polyandry, where a woman can have multiple husbands. These arrangements are often rooted in cultural, religious, or historical contexts. For example, some societies in Africa and the Middle East have long-standing traditions of polygyny, while certain communities in Tibet and Nepal have practiced polyandry.

Dr. Thomas added, "Committed non-monogamy has received a lot of attention recently. It's a hot trend, with more and more couples talking about opening up their relationships to include other people. However, these types of relationships are far from new."

"While most seek monogamous relationships, a small proportion of humans have engaged in multi-partner relationships throughout [human history](#), especially polygynous marriage where one husband is shared by several co-wives."

"This study shows that a sizable minority of people are open to such relationships, even in the UK where such marriages are prohibited. Interestingly, many more men are open to the idea than women—though there is still interest on both sides."

**More information:** Andrew G. Thomas et al, Polygamous Interest in a Mononormative Nation: The Roles of Sex and Sociosexuality in Polygamous Interest in a Heterosexual Sample from the UK, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s10508-023-02749-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02749-6)

Provided by Swansea University

Citation: One in three UK men open to having more than one partner, study shows (2023, December 12) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-12-uk-men-partner.html>

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