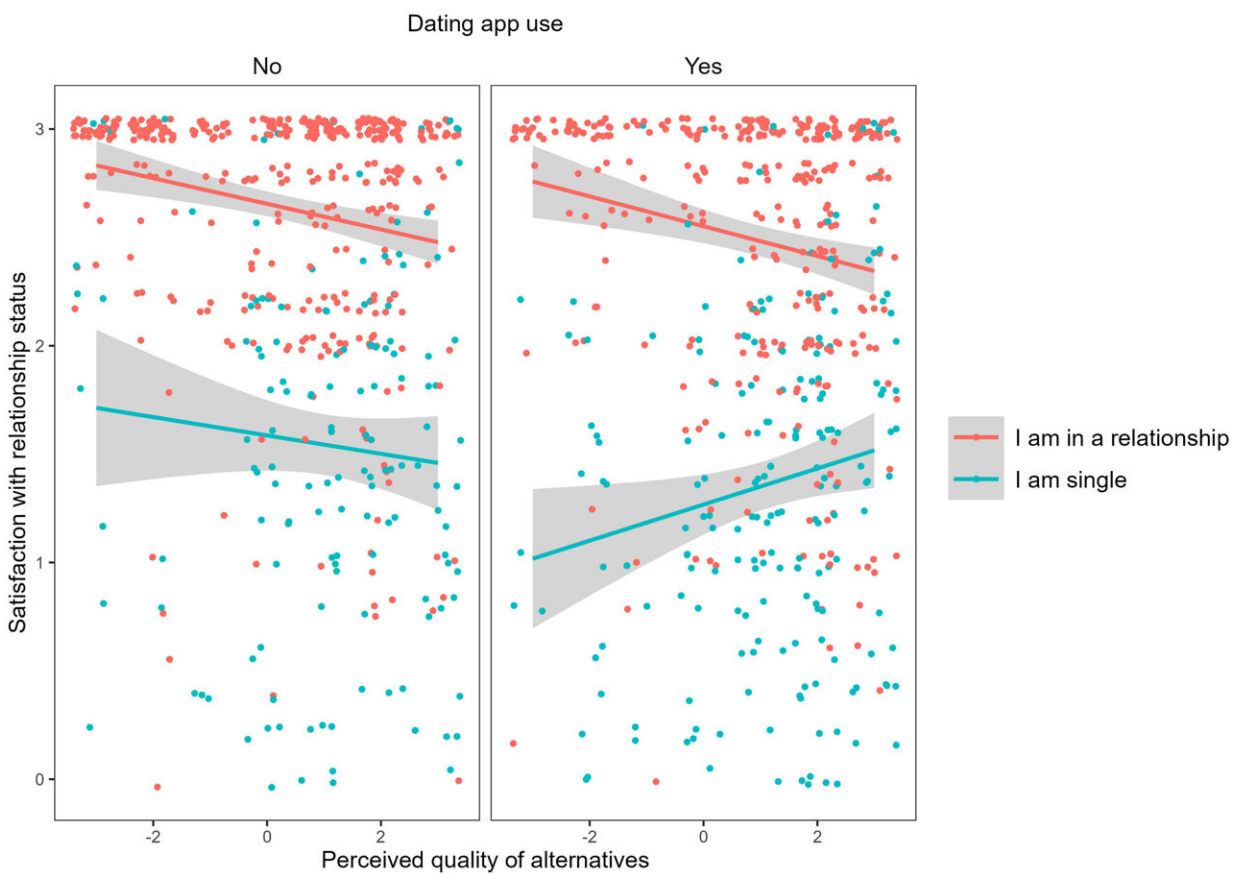


Dating app users less satisfied with relationship status than non-users, finds study

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Relationship status satisfaction by perceived quality of alternatives, dating app use, and current relationship status. Credit: *Mobile Media & Communication* (2023). DOI: 10.1177/20501579231221069

Mobile dating apps are a popular way to meet people. They promise a fun partner and a happy love life. However, a new study by Radboud University researchers shows that people who use dating apps actually tend to be overall less satisfied with their relationship status than those who don't.

Connecting with others through mobile [dating apps](#) has become one of the most popular ways of meeting someone. The most popular mobile dating app worldwide, Tinder, has tens of millions of active users. Mobile dating apps promise a great love life at your fingertips, as well as increased well-being.

"But there is no convincing evidence for this," says communication scientist Aart van Stekelenburg. "There are studies on the potential adverse effects of using mobile dating apps. For example, it can negatively impact people's self-esteem or make them feel more anxious about being single."

To better understand how the use of mobile dating apps relates to [relationship status](#) satisfaction, Van Stekelenburg and his colleagues Daniëlle Bleize and Sanne Tamboer conducted a survey among more than 1,000 American and British people aged 18 to 34.

Half of the participants had never used a mobile dating app before, while the other half were using a dating app at the time of the study, or had done so in the past. Both groups included singles, as well as people in relationships. In the survey, participants indicated how satisfied they were with their relationship status at the time of the [survey](#). The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Mobile Media & Communication*.

The results showed that users of mobile dating apps scored lower on satisfaction with their relationship status than non-users. However, it is difficult to separate the effects of mobile dating app use from the effects

of a person's relationship status, Van Stekelenburg acknowledges. "It could be that mobile dating apps are causing people to be less happy with their relationship status.

"The apps are always available, and the pool of potential partners is huge, so people may feel more pressure to find someone. This could make them less happy with their relationship status. But it could also be that people who are already not particularly happy with being [single use](#) mobile dating apps more often than people who are perfectly OK with it."

Women users especially were found to be significantly less satisfied with their love life than those who did not use mobile dating apps. "There is research showing that [women](#) are slightly more likely to be looking for a steady relationship than men," says Van Stekelenburg. "Compared to women, men are more likely to use dating apps for 'entertainment,' including casual sex. This could mean that some of the women who used these apps did not find what they were looking for."

According to Van Stekelenburg, the study shows the importance of doing more research on mobile dating apps. "We know so little about it that it is not yet possible to accurately determine the [potential benefits](#) and risks. We have now found that people who use apps are generally less satisfied with their relationship status. At the same time, millions of people use those apps. One might wonder if that is a good development for everyone.

"It is definitely worth checking who benefits from using dating apps and who doesn't. This is interesting from a scientific perspective, but it's also interesting for dating platforms, so they can better target certain groups and their needs."

More information: Daniëlle N. M. Bleize et al, The association

between mobile dating app use and relationship status satisfaction: A survey study, *Mobile Media & Communication* (2023). DOI: [10.1177/20501579231221069](https://doi.org/10.1177/20501579231221069)

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