

Study shows link between partner gender and orgasm expectations for women

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A study published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* investigated the factors influencing orgasm rates for women across sexual orientations. The researchers report that partner gender plays a

significant role in how women approach sex. and their likelihood of reaching orgasm.

Previous research [has established the existence of an "orgasm gap."](#) where cisgender women are less likely to achieve [orgasm](#) during partnered sex compared to cisgender men. This new study delves deeper, investigating how a partner's gender shapes women's expectations and ultimately, their pursuit of orgasm.

The study found in two samples that:

- Women reported significantly higher expectations for clitoral stimulation and orgasm when expecting a female partner compared to a [male partner](#). This suggests that women anticipate different sexual acts based on their partner's gender.
- Partner gender had a significant indirect effect on women's orgasm pursuit. This means that partner gender influenced women's likelihood of pursuing orgasm through the mediating factors of clitoral stimulation and expectations for orgasm. In simpler terms, when women anticipated having sex with a female partner, they reported both higher expectations for clitoral stimulation and orgasm, which made them more likely to actively pursue orgasm themselves.

Implications and next steps

These findings suggest that dominant sexual scripts, which vary based on partner gender, may contribute to the orgasm gap by shaping women's expectations and behaviors during sex.

Lead author Kate Dickman, a recent graduate of Rutgers University, emphasizes, "If women, or men partnered with women, want to increase their own or their partners' orgasm, they should create an environment

that encourages orgasm pursuit through diverse sex acts, particularly those involving clitoral stimulation."

Co-author Grace Wetzel, of Rutgers University, said, "This research contributes to understanding gender disparities and inequities. It also sheds light on why the orgasm gap exists—specifically, how different expectations for sex with men and women can explain these differences."

Beyond the orgasm gap

Wetzel notes that the results could be interpreted to mean that sex with men is intrinsically worse than sex with women, but this is not necessarily the case.

"The problem is not inherent to men or to being heterosexual, but to the dominant sexual scripts associated with heterosexual sex. Sexual scripts are flexible and can be changed," Wetzel explains.

Dickman concludes, "This study is just one piece of a larger conversation about gender disparities. Orgasm is just one aspect of sexual satisfaction, and this research should not be misinterpreted as suggesting that orgasm is the sole measure of a fulfilling sexual experience."

More information: The Role of Partner Gender: How Sexual Expectations Shape the Pursuit of an Orgasm Goal for Heterosexual, Lesbian, and Bisexual Women, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/19485506241235235](https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506241235235)

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