

Adolescents today are more satisfied with being single

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Young people aged 14 to 20 years are more satisfied nowadays with being single than their counterparts ten years ago. This is the conclusion of a study undertaken by the Institute of Psychology at Johannes

Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU).

"It seems that today's adolescents are less inclined to pursue a [romantic relationship](#). This could well be the reason for the increased singlehood satisfaction," said psychologist Dr. Tita Gonzalez Avilés, lead author of the recent study. The paper is [published](#) in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

Growing numbers of people are living as singles; in other words, they are not in a [committed relationship](#). It has been unclear to date whether this trend towards increased singlehood has also been accompanied by a higher level of satisfaction with this status.

Comparison between singles today and singles ten years ago

Throughout the world, marriage rates have been declining over the past decades, while divorce rates and the proportions of single-person households have been on the rise.

"It is notable that particularly in Western industrialized countries, singlehood is no longer unconventional and now considered more socially acceptable than in the past," stated Dr. Gonzalez Avilés, from the JGU Institute of Psychology. She analyzed data from the representative longitudinal Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam), which has been surveying the nature of romantic relationships and family dynamics in Germany since 2008.

The most recent study is based on the information provided by 2,936 participants in different birth cohorts. The gathered material related to two separate time periods, namely 2008 to 2011 and 2018 to 2021. This allowed the researchers to differentiate between the satisfaction of

earlier-born and later-born singles during adolescence (14-20 years), emerging adulthood (24-30 years), and established adulthood (34-40 years).

"Although we know that singlehood is gaining ground, we have not yet determined whether individuals are now more satisfied with this way of life," added Dr. Gonzalez Avilés, explaining the purpose of the study. Their findings indicate that [adolescent](#) singles born in 2001 to 2003 were more often single and more satisfied with singlehood than the birth cohort born ten years earlier. Furthermore, there were no cohort-related differences between emerging adults aged 24 to 30 years and established adults aged 34 to 40.

Multiple factors explain the higher satisfaction among adolescents

Although the difference in [satisfaction](#) between today and ten years ago is not very large, even among adolescents, it stands out from the historical developments among adults. Dr. Gonzalez Avilés and her co-authors postulate that this may be due to the fact that living as a single has become increasingly normative over time, especially among the younger generation. Furthermore, their attitudes towards romantic conventions have changed and they are more open to diverse relationship types.

"We assume that adolescents nowadays may postpone entering into a stable relationship because they value their personal autonomy and individual fulfillment over a romantic partnership. However, these explanations are—for the time being—speculative and require further investigation," concluded Dr. Gonzalez Avilés.

More information: Tita Gonzalez Avilés et al, Today's Adolescents

Are More Satisfied With Being Single: Findings From a German Cohort-Sequential Study Among 14- to 40-Year-Olds, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/01461672241257139](https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672241257139)

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