

Open relationships just as satisfying as monogamous ones, study reveals

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Jessica Wood. Credit: (University of Guelph)

A new University of Guelph study has revealed that people in open

relationships are as happy as their coupled-up counterparts

"We found people in consensual, non-monogamous relationships experience the same levels of relationship [satisfaction](#), psychological well-being and sexual satisfaction as those in monogamous relationships," said Jessica Wood, a Ph.D. student in applied social psychology and lead author of the study. "This debunks societal views of monogamy as being the ideal relationship structure."

In consensual, non-monogamous relationships, all partners agree to engage in multiple sexual or romantic relationships.

Between three and seven per cent of people in North America are currently in a consensual, non-monogamous relationship.

"It's more common than most people think," said Wood. "We are at a point in social history where we are expecting a lot from our partners. We want to have sexual fulfillment and excitement but also emotional and financial support. Trying to fulfill all these needs can put pressure on relationships. To deal with this pressure, we are seeing some people look to consensually non-monogamous relationships."

However, consensually non-monogamous relationships still attract stigma, she added.

"They are perceived as immoral and less satisfying. It's assumed that people in these types of relationships are having sex with everyone all the time. They are villainized and viewed as bad people in bad relationships, but that's not the case."

Published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, the study surveyed more than 140 people in non-monogamous relationships and more than 200 in monogamous ones and compared them to each other.

Participants were asked about their satisfaction with their current relationships. For non-monogamous situations, the questions pertained to the respondent's main partner. Among the questions, the researchers asked how often respondents considered separating, whether they confided in their partner and what was their general level of happiness.

The researchers found people in non-monogamous relationships were just as satisfied with the relationship they had with their main partner as those in monogamous ones.

Wood's analysis found that one important predictor of [relationship satisfaction](#) is not relationship structure but rather sexual motivation.

"In both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships, [people](#) who engage in sex to be close to a [partner](#) and to fulfill their sexual needs have a more satisfying relationship than those who have sex for less intrinsic reasons, such as to avoid conflict," she said.

Ultimately if you are fulfilling your psychological needs and are satisfied sexually, you are more likely to be happy in your partnership no matter the relationship structure, she added.

"This research shows us that our choice of [relationship structure](#) is not an indicator of how happy or satisfied we are in our primary relationships."

More information: Jessica Wood et al, Reasons for sex and relational outcomes in consensually nonmonogamous and monogamous relationships, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0265407517743082](https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517743082)

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