



GOOD IN BED SURVEYS

Report #6

Attitudes Toward Monogamy

KEY FINDINGS

- Women have significantly more positive attitudes toward monogamy than men
- Participants who were seriously dating more than one person at the time of data collection had significantly more negative attitudes toward monogamy than any other relationship status
- 71.2% of participants either very much or a little bit believe in the concept of there being one person for each person (i.e., soulmates)
- 94.1% of participants believe that monogamy is a choice
- 17.4% of the sample have tried an open relationship before, but 40% of the sample is open to trying an open relationship
- The most common barrier to monogamy is curiosity, with lack of sexual novelty and boredom as close second and third

BACKGROUND

Monogamy, considered within its etymology, can be defined as mono(one) + gamy(love). Monogamy can be defined as a relationship in which two partners are romantically and sexually exclusive. Forming exclusive, permanent love relationships has been an emphasized component of mature development in the broader American culture. Importance is placed on emotional and sexual fidelity when living up to the expectations of being in a relationship. However, in recent years, we've seen greater acceptance and acknowledgement of alternative romantic relationship types, including swinging, polyamory, and open relationships. Most of the scientific literature in the area of attitudes toward monogamy has focused on adolescents and emerging adults. Additionally, sample sizes have been relatively small in the quantitative surveys conducted to date. Therefore, the purpose of this survey was to understand attitudes toward monogamy and related constructs in a larger sample with a more diverse age range.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through an online survey. Participants were recruited through various online forums (e.g., email listservs, online articles, social media websites) and directed to the study website. Potential participants were informed that a small incentive would be offered for involvement in the study (a code to redeem a free e-book from goodinbed.com, worth \$5.95). Once all missing cases ($n = 255$) were removed the final sample consisted of 2,321 participants: 1,394 men (60.1%), 921 women (39.7%), and 6 individuals identified as other (.3%; specified as FtM trans ($n = 3$) and gender queer ($n = 3$)). For sample characteristics broken down by gender, see Table 1.

Upon accessing the survey, participants were presented with a number of questions that assessed various demographic variables and current relationship dynamics followed by a number of questions on attitudes toward monogamy and current relationship intimacy of those currently in relationships.

This study used a web-based data collection method. Internet surveys provide a more comfortable environment to collect data on sensitive issues such as sexuality, and therefore individuals were more likely to submit accurate sexual and relationship information online. All responses were completely anonymous and we did not collect any identifying information from participants.

To assess attitudes toward monogamy, the *Monogamy Views Scale* (Schmookler & Bursik, 2007) was used. This is a 16-item scale that assesses an individual's attitude toward monogamy, with higher scores indicative of greater support for monogamy. Questions are scored on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample questions included "monogamy builds intimacy between two people" or "monogamy blocks natural drives", where some items are reverse-coded. Final scale scores range from 1 to 7 once all items are added and divided by the number of questions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 2613 men (54%)
- 2223 women (46%)
- 6 other (.3%)

- 90.3% heterosexual, 1.9% gay or lesbian, 5.6% bisexual, 1.3% uncertain or questioning, 0.9% other

- 6.9% single (not dating anyone)
- 6.2% casually dating one or more people
- 1.6% seriously dating one or more people
- 19.1% seriously dating one person
- 4.7% engaged
- 56.3% married

- 1.3% separated
- 1.7% divorced
- 0.3% widowed

- 3.7% have been in their relationship for 6 months or less
- 4.5% have been in their relationship one year or less
- 11.5% have been in their relationship between 1 and 3 years
- 13.2% have been in their relationship between 3 and 7 years
- 20.3% have been in their relationship between 7 and 15 years
- 28.8% have been in their relationship for more than 15 years
- 18.0% are not currently in a relationship

- 67.0% are currently living with their partner

- 64.0% have children – of those, 13.7% have 1 child, 25.4% have 2 children, 14.0% have 3 children, 6.5% have 4 children, 4.9% have 5 or more children
- 34.3% don't have children

Table 1. Demographic variables by gender

	Men n (%)	Women n (%)	Total
Gender			
Male	1394	--	60.1%
Female	--	921	39.7%
Other	--	--	0.3%
Age			
18-24	94 (6.7)	238 (25.8)	14.4%
25-29	121 (8.7)	145 (15.7)	11.5%
30-34	150 (10.8)	131 (14.2)	12.1%
35-39	164 (11.8)	113 (12.3)	12.0%
40-44	218 (15.6)	103 (11.2)	13.8%
45-49	206 (14.8)	77 (8.4)	12.2%
50-54	161 (11.5)	64 (6.9)	9.7%
55-59	140 (10.0)	30 (3.3)	7.3%
60-64	76 (5.5)	10 (1.1)	3.7%
65-69	41 (2.9)	9 (1.0)	2.2%
70 or older	23 (1.6)	1 (.1)	1.0%
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	1313 (94.2)	783 (85.0)	90.3%
Gay or Lesbian	26 (1.9)	18 (2.0)	1.9%
Bisexual	36 (2.6)	92 (10.0)	5.6%
Uncertain/Questioning	16 (1.1)	13 (1.4)	1.3%
Relationship Status			
Single	66 (4.7)	91 (9.9)	6.9%
Casually dating 1+ people	66 (4.7)	77 (8.4)	6.2%
Seriously dating 1+ people	16 (1.1)	20 (2.2)	1.6%

Relationship Status			
Single	66 (4.7)	91 (9.9)	6.9%
Casually dating 1+ people	66 (4.7)	77 (8.4)	6.2%
Seriously dating 1+ people	16 (1.1)	20 (2.2)	1.6%
Seriously dating 1 person	152 (10.9)	289 (31.4)	19.1%
Engaged	64 (4.6)	45 (4.9)	4.7%
Married	966 (69.3)	340 (36.9)	56.3%
Separated	18 (1.3)	12 (1.3)	1.3%
Divorced	21 (1.5)	18 (2.0)	1.7%
Widowed	4 (.3)	3 (.3)	.3%
Other	21 (1.5)	26 (2.8)	2.1%
Relationship Length			
6 months or less	30 (2.2)	56 (6.1)	3.7%
1 year or less	37 (2.7)	66 (7.2)	4.5%
1 to 3 years	117 (8.4)	150 (16.3)	11.5%
3 to 7 years	157 (11.3)	149 (16.2)	13.2%
7 to 15 years	309 (22.2)	161 (17.5)	20.3%
15 years +	552 (39.6)	117 (12.7)	28.8%
Not in relationship	192 (13.8)	222 (24.1)	18.0%
Children			
No Children	344 (24.7)	446 (48.4)	34.3%
1 Child	202 (14.5)	116 (12.6)	13.7%

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS SUMMARY

Monogamy

The majority of the sample (84%) believed they had been with a partner who was their partner for life, of which 73.8% were currently with that partner and more than a quarter (26.2%) were not currently with that partner. A minority of the sample (16%) had never been with a partner they believed was their partner for life.

On the *Monogamy Views Scale*, the median score was 5.31 ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.22$). There was a significant difference between men and women, $F(3) = 23.09$, $p < .001$, such that men ($M = 5.01$) endorsed significantly less support for monogamy than women ($M = 5.42$), $p < .001$.

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
• Male	5.01	1.21	1394
• Female	5.42	1.18	921
• FtM	4.48	1.54	3
• Gender Queer	3.77	1.46	3

Note: There was not a large enough cell size to statistically compare monogamy views between those who identified as “other” for gender (in this sample, FtM trans and gender queer, $n = 6$).

Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference in scores on the *Monogamy Views Scale* based on relationship status, $F(9) = 10.47$, $p < .001$. Based on post-hoc tests, participants in the category “seriously dating one or more people” ($M = 4.05$) have significantly more negative attitudes toward monogamy than all other categories. Additionally, married participants ($M = 5.16$) have significantly more negative attitudes toward monogamy than participants who are seriously dating one person ($M = 5.43$), all significance levels are based on a p -value of .05 or less.

Soulmates

When asked to what extent participants believed there is one person for each person (i.e., soulmates), the responses were fairly split:

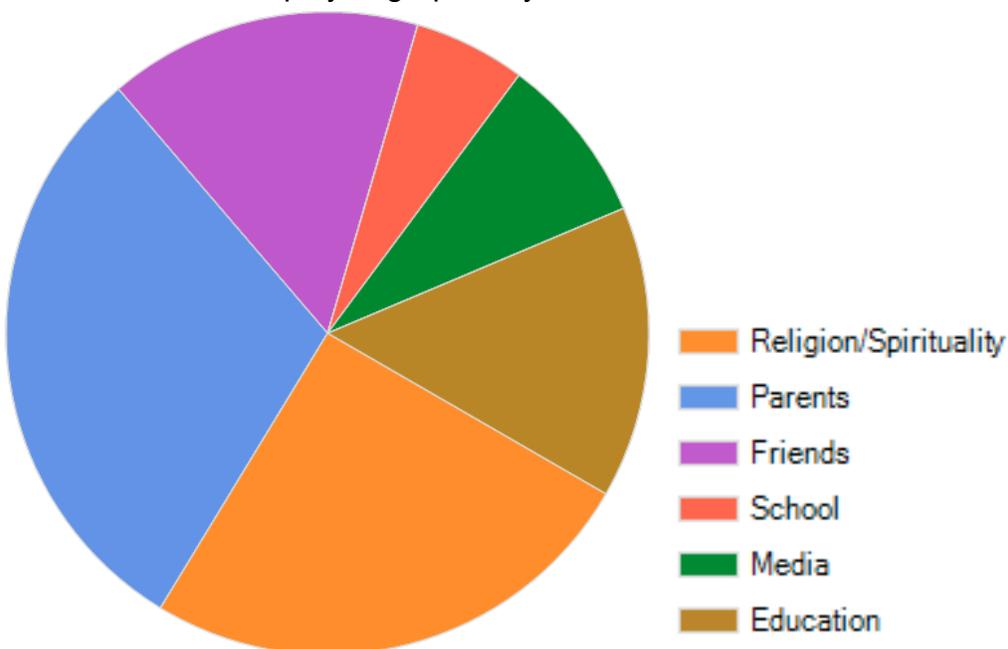
- Very much: 32.9%
- A little bit: 38.3%
- Not really: 20.9%
- Not at all: 8.0%

Source of Views on Monogamy

Participants were asked where they believed their views regarding monogamy came from, and most people indicated religion/spirituality or parents with friends and education as the next most influential:

- Parents – 68.4%
- Religion/Spirituality – 57.8%
- Friends – 36.0%
- Education – 33.4%
- Media – 19.3%
- School – 12.8%

These results are displayed graphically below:



Assuming vs. Negotiating Monogamy

A little more than half of the participants (56.1%) assume monogamy with a partner, whereas 30.5% have both assumed and explicitly negotiated monogamy (depending on the relationship), and 12.4% always explicitly negotiate monogamy with a partner.

When asked about sharing views on monogamy with their partner (or most recent partner), most participants (70.5%) very much believed they shared view with their partner. Only 11.5% felt their views were not much or not at all shared with their partner, and 17.5% felt their views were a little bit shared with their partner on monogamy.

Monogamy as a Choice

The overwhelming majority of the sample believed that monogamy was very much (79.2%) or a little bit (14.9%) of a choice, with 5.9% indicating that it was not much or not at all a choice.

Open Relationships

For the purposes of this survey, we defined open relationships as “a monogamous relationship that is not sexually exclusive”

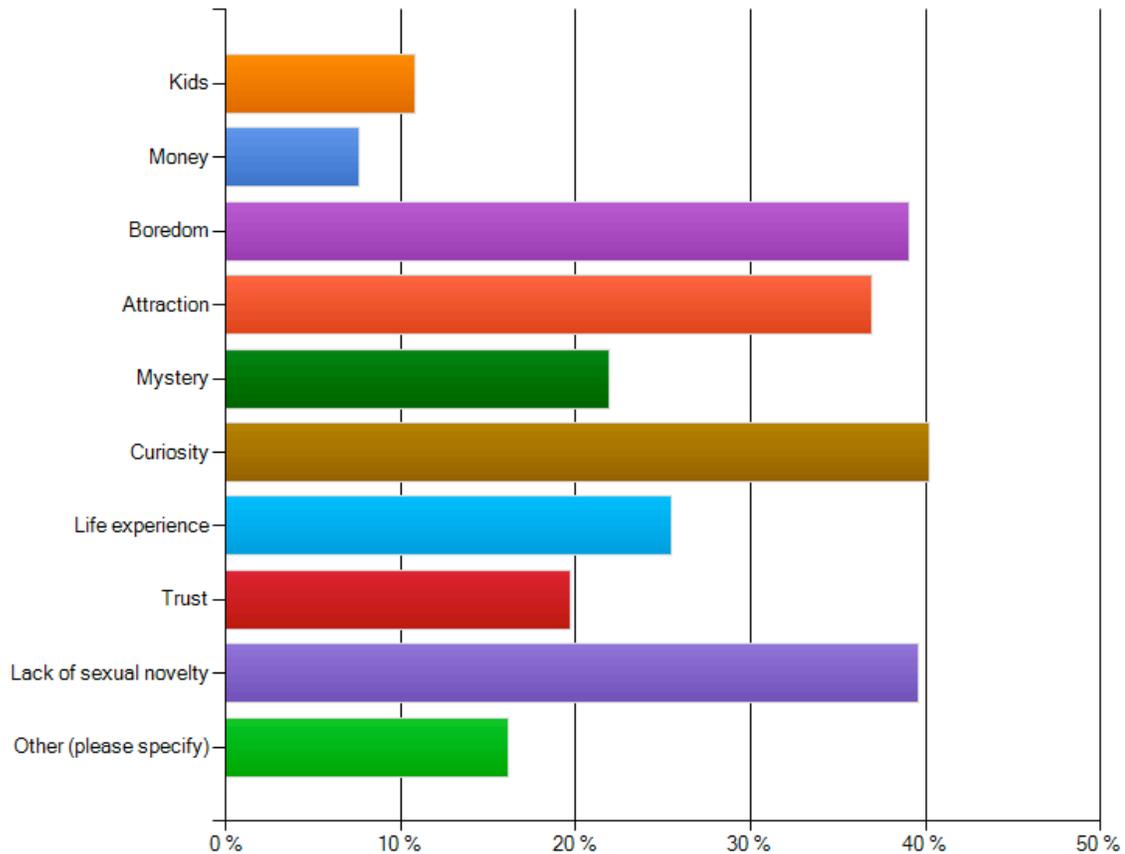
- 17.4% of the sample **has** been in an open relationship
- 83.6% of the sample **has never** been in an open relationship

- 40.0% of the sample would consider being in an open relationship
- 60.0% would not consider being in an open relationship

Barriers to Monogamy

The most commonly cited barrier to being monogamous with a partner was curiosity (39.6%), followed closely by lack of sexual novelty (39.0%) and boredom (38.4%).

These results are displayed graphically below:



Of those 15.9% of participants who answered “other”, the majority (94.2%) indicated they did not believe there were any barriers to monogamy, with 4.9% noting lack of sex as a barrier.

The Context of Monogamy

In terms of how monogamy has changed in the past decade, these were the responses:

- People have generally become **much more** monogamous 2.6%
- People have generally become **a little more** monogamous 5.9%
- People have generally become **neither** more or less monogamous 22.6%
- People have generally become **a little less** monogamous 38.9%
- People have generally become **much less** monogamous 28.5%

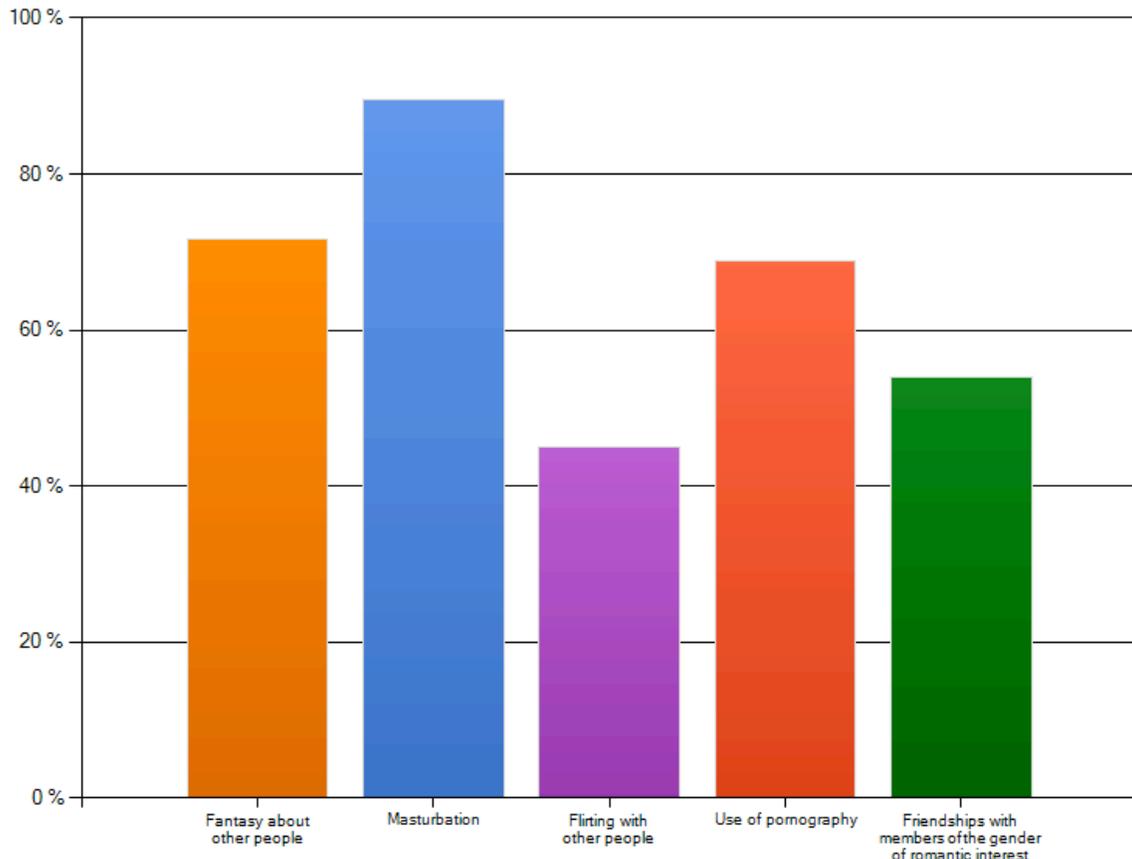
There was no significant difference between participants of different ages in terms of how they believed monogamy has changed in the past decade, $F(10) = 1.01, p = .44$.

The following were considered acceptable behavior in the context of a monogamous relationship:

- Masturbation was acceptable behavior to 88.1% of participants
- Fantasy about other people was acceptable to 70.4% of participants

- Use of pornography was acceptable to 67.8% of participants
- Friendships with members of the gender of romantic interest was acceptable to 53.0% of participants
- Flirting with other people was acceptable behavior to 44.3% of participants

Results are displayed graphically below:



Infidelity

We asked participants whether infidelity has been a part of their relationship on either side of the equation. Infidelity was defined by having “engaged in sexual or emotional interactions with someone other than you/your partner that could jeopardize or hurt your relationship”

- 48.9% has been cheated on
 - 47.7% stayed in the relationship after
 - 52.3% left the relationship after
- 39.4% has never been cheated on
- 11.6% isn't sure if they've ever been cheated on
- 41.5% has cheated on a partner
 - 70.9% stayed in the relationship after
 - 29.1% left the relationship after

- 58.2% has never cheated on a partner

Of those who had engaged in infidelity on a partner, 54.1% never told their partner and their partner never found out, 20.5% never told their partner but their partner did find out, and 25.4% told their partner about the act of infidelity.

Satisfaction

Relationship Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied were participants with their current relationship:

- Very much satisfied 33.5%
- Satisfied 31.1%
- A little bit satisfied 9.6%
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 3.6%
- A little bit dissatisfied 7.7%
- Dissatisfied 4.2%
- Very much dissatisfied 2.8%
- Not currently in a relationship 7.5%

Sexual Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied were participants with their current sex life:

- Very much satisfied 14.9%
- Satisfied 25.3%
- A little bit satisfied 18.0%
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4.4%
- A little bit dissatisfied 10.5%
- Dissatisfied 11.2%
- Very much dissatisfied 8.0%
- Not currently in a relationship 7.7%

There was a significant gender different in level of relationship satisfaction ($F(3) = 4.02$, $p < .01$) and sexual satisfaction ($F(3) = 4.39$, $p < .01$), such that women ($M = 3.01$) were significantly more relationally satisfied than men ($M = 2.70$) and men ($M = 3.86$) were significantly more sexually satisfied than women ($M = 3.56$).

CONCLUSION

The current survey provided us with detailed information about attitudes toward monogamy and related constructs in a sample of 2,321 participants. Perceptions of change in rates of monogamy over the past decade were documented in addition to openness to alternative relationship states, and reactions to infidelity. Barriers and influences of beliefs of monogamy were also examined.

Please visit <http://www.GoodinBed.com/Surveys> for more information on this study and our Survey Director, Kristen Mark.