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## GOOD IN BED SURVEYS

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### Report #6

### The Valentine's Day Survey

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Over 65% of respondents plan to show affection on Valentine's Day, defined as sex, kissing, making out, and acting sensual with one another.
- Nearly 85% of respondents believe that having sex is an important part of Valentine's Day.
- Over 60% of respondents will be disappointed if they don't have sex on Valentine's Day.
- While flowers, chocolate, and lingerie still top the list in gift-giving, 30% of people plan on a more specifically sex-oriented gift.
- Over 55% of the participants indicated they were willing to try something new sexually because it's Valentine's Day, and this wasn't significantly different for men and women.
- Nearly 40% of participants would hook up sexually with someone because it's Valentine's Day.
- Over 40% think it's important not to be alone on Valentine's Day.
- More than 50% of the sample plan to use texting to express their feelings to their partner on Valentine's Day.

#### OTHER FINDINGS

- Half of the women (48.8%) and over half of the men (61.7%) indicated that they were planning to celebrate Valentine's Day this year.
- Valentine's Day is looked at as a special day for 51.1% of men and 41.5% of women.
- The majority of participants (75.5%) believe Valentine's Day is about showing caring/affection to a romantic partner.
- The most frequently cited emotion associated with Valentine's Day for these participants was happiness, with 41.4% of participants endorsing this emotion.

## **BACKGROUND**

Valentine's Day, although typically a working day, is a holiday that is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is second to New Year's Eve in the most celebrated holidays worldwide. It is a holiday that revolves around the celebration of love. Despite the popularity of this holiday worldwide, a small amount of scientific literature has been dedicated to the attitudes, perceptions, and participation in Valentine's Day celebrations. Research conducted two decades ago found that men have different attitudes toward the holiday and gift-giving on Valentine's Day than women and that men have mixed feelings about gift exchange around Valentine's Day.<sup>1</sup> Research has also found that Valentine's Day can have a negative impact on relationships, and couples are more likely to break up around Valentine's Day than during the rest of the year.<sup>2</sup> Other research has examined the consumer perspective of Valentine's Day and found a love-hate relationship with Valentine's Day, with some people reporting it as a consumerism- and commercialism-driven holiday.<sup>3,4</sup> Additionally, some research has used behavioral intention models to predict Valentine's Day gift-giving.<sup>5</sup> We based our survey methodology on the findings of the limited previous research that examined the function of Valentine's Day.

## **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 ( $n = 143$ ) were removed, the final sample consisted of 2,093 participants: 1,241 men (59.3%) and 852 women (40.7%). 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 plans, attitudes, and perceptions related to Valentine's Day.

This study used a web-based data collection method. Participants provided electronic consent prior to beginning the survey. Internet surveys provide a more comfortable environment to collect data on sensitive issues such as sexuality, and therefore individuals are 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.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 1241 men (59.3%)
- 852 women (40.7%)
- 91.5% heterosexual, 1.2% gay or lesbian, 5.4% bisexual, .8% uncertain or questioning, 1% other
- 8.6% single (not dating anyone)
- 6.1% casually dating
- 18.8% seriously dating
- 4.2% engaged
- 57.9% married
- 1.7% separated
- 2.3% divorced
- 0.4% widowed
- 3.6% have been in their relationship < 3 months
- 3.3% have been in their relationship 3 to < 6 months
- 15.3% have been in their relationship 6 months to < 3 years
- 8.2% have been in their relationship 3 years to < 5 years
- 6.7% have been in their relationship 5 years to < 7 years
- 8.0% have been in their relationship 7 years to < 10 years
- 11.5% have been in their relationship 10 years to < 15 years
- 10.1% have been in their relationship 15 years to < 20 years
- 12.2% have been in their relationship 20 years to < 30 years
- 9.6% have been in their relationship 30 years or more
- 11.3% are not currently in a relationship

**Table 1.** Demographic variables by gender

	<b>Men</b> n (%)	<b>Women</b> n (%)	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	1241	--	59.3%
Female	--	852	40.7%
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	55 (4.4)	136 (16.0)	9.1%
25-29	82 (6.6)	159 (18.7)	11.5%
30-34	126 (10.2)	137 (16.1)	12.6%
35-39	149 (12.0)	116 (13.6)	12.7%
40-44	199 (16.0)	96 (11.3)	14.1%
45-49	140 (11.3)	82 (9.6)	10.6%
50-54	167 (13.5)	69 (8.1)	11.3%
55-59	149 (12.0)	36 (4.2)	8.8%
60-64	80 (6.4)	15 (1.8)	4.5%

65-69	57 (4.6)	15 (1.8)	3.0%
70 or older	37 (3.0)	6 (.7)	1.8%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			
Heterosexual	1175 (94.7)	740 (86.9)	91.5%
Gay or Lesbian	18 (1.5)	8 (.9)	1.2%
Bisexual	34 (2.7)	80 (9.4)	5.4%
Uncertain/Questioning	7 (.6)	10 (1.2)	.8%
<b>Relationship Status</b>			
Single	77 (6.2)	103 (12.1)	8.6%
Casually dating	49 (3.9)	78 (9.2)	6.1%
Seriously dating	141 (11.4)	253 (29.7)	18.8%
Engaged	47 (3.8)	41 (4.8)	4.2%
Married	876 (70.6)	336 (39.4)	57.9%
Separated	19 (1.5)	16 (1.9)	1.7%
Divorced	27 (2.2)	22 (2.6)	2.3%
Widowed	5 (.4)	3 (.4)	.4%

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS SUMMARY

### Plans for this Valentine's Day

When asked about whether participants planned to celebrate Valentine's Day this February, half of the women (48.8%) and over half of the men (61.7%) indicated that they were planning to celebrate this year.

- 23.5% of women and 18.5% of men were not planning to celebrate Valentine's Day this February
- 27.7% of the women and 19.8% of the men were uncertain about whether they were planning to celebrate Valentine's Day this February

Participants who engaged were the most likely group to report celebrating Valentine's Day this year, with 71.6% indicating plans to celebrate. This was followed by 63.5% of those seriously dating and 62.9% of those married indicating plans to celebrate.

The percentages of those *not* planning to celebrate Valentine's Day this February are as follows:

- 52.2% of singles
- 50.0% of those widowed
- 40.0% of those separated
- 32.7% of those divorced
- 24.4% of those casually dating
- 18.2% of those engaged
- 17.0% of those married
- 12.2% of those seriously dating

Valentine's Day is looked at as a special day for 51.1% of men and 41.5% of women. Interestingly, it is looked at as a special day for many participants, somewhat unrelated to their relationship status. More than half of engaged participants (60.2%) and widowed participants (62.5%) see Valentine's Day as a special day. About half of those married (50.1%) and seriously dating (50.0%) see it as a special day, 45.7% of separated, 44.9% of divorced, 30.7% of casually dating, and a little over a quarter of singles (27.2%) see Valentine's Day as a special day.

### **Anticipation for Valentine's Day**

Most of the participants indicated that their anticipation for Valentine's Day varies based on whether they are in a relationship, with 58.5% of women reporting this and 65.1% of men reporting this. This was also expressed when the results are analyzed based on relationship status. Regardless of current relationship status, the overwhelming majority of participants indicated their anticipation for Valentine's Day varies based on their relationship status. Participant's answers to this ranged from 77.6% of divorced participants to 58.7% of married participants indicating their relationship status as a predictor of whether or not they anticipate Valentine's Day.

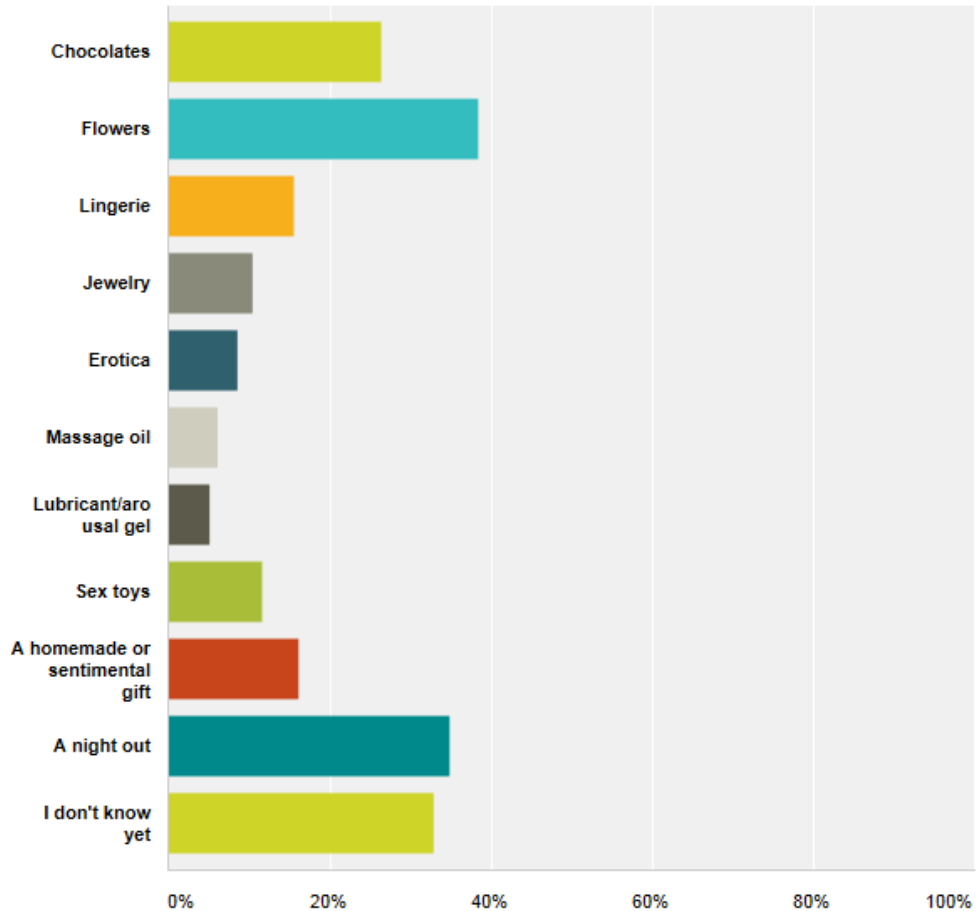
There was a significant difference in the extent to which one looks forward to Valentine's Day based on relationship status,  $F(7) = 11.58, p < .001$ . Single and casually dating participants looked less forward to Valentine's Day than seriously dating, engaged, or married participants. There were no other significant between-group differences.

### **Gift-Giving this Valentine's Day**

Overall, participants planned to give gifts to their partner more often than they thought they'd receive gifts from their partners. This was regardless of gender.

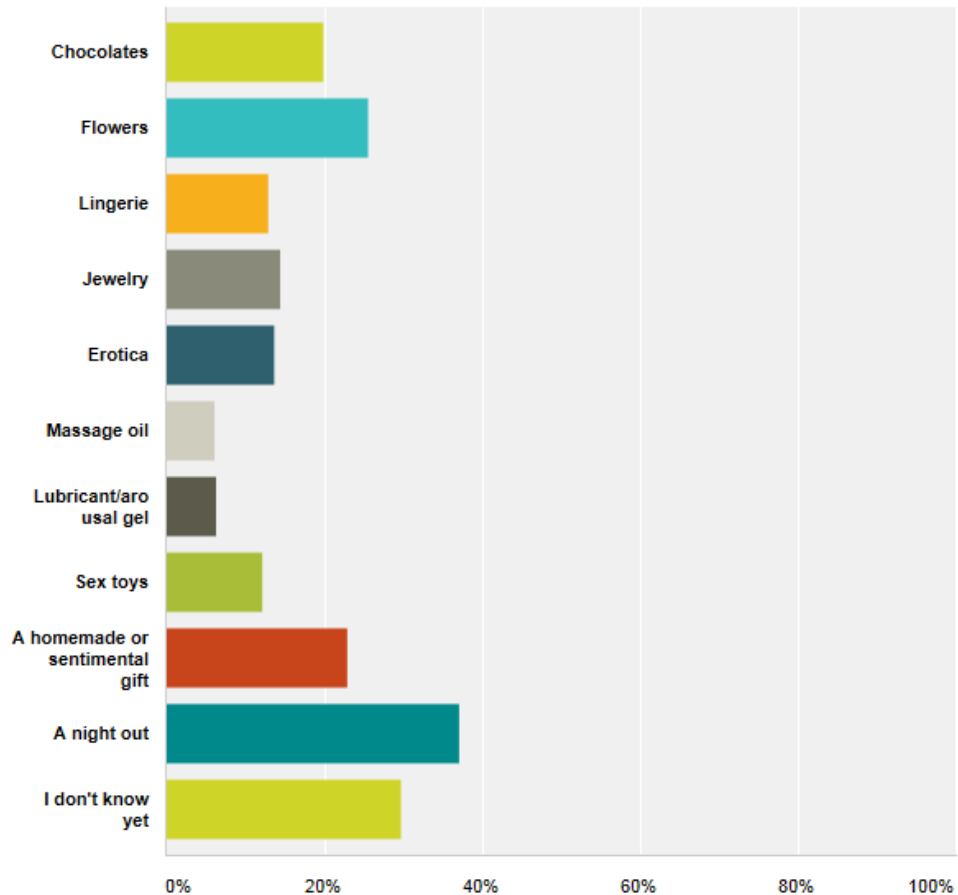
- 61.1% of serious dating participants plan to give a gift to their partner
- 58.0% of engaged participants plan to give a gift to their partner
- 56.1% of married participants plan to give a gift to their partner
- 23.0% of casually dating participants plan to give a gift to their partner

Participants who planned to give a gift to their partner indicated that they were most likely to give their partner flowers (38.4%), a night out (34.9%), or they weren't sure yet (32.9%). The rest of the responses are depicted graphically below:



- 38.2% of serious dating participants plan to receive a gift from their partner
- 33.0% of engaged participants plan to receive a gift from their partner
- 28.5% of married participants plan to receive a gift from their partner
- 12.9% of casually dating participants plan to receive a gift from their partner

Participants who planned to receive a gift from their partner indicated that they were most likely to receive a night out (37.1%), they weren't sure yet (29.7%), or flowers (25.5%). The rest of the responses are depicted graphically below:

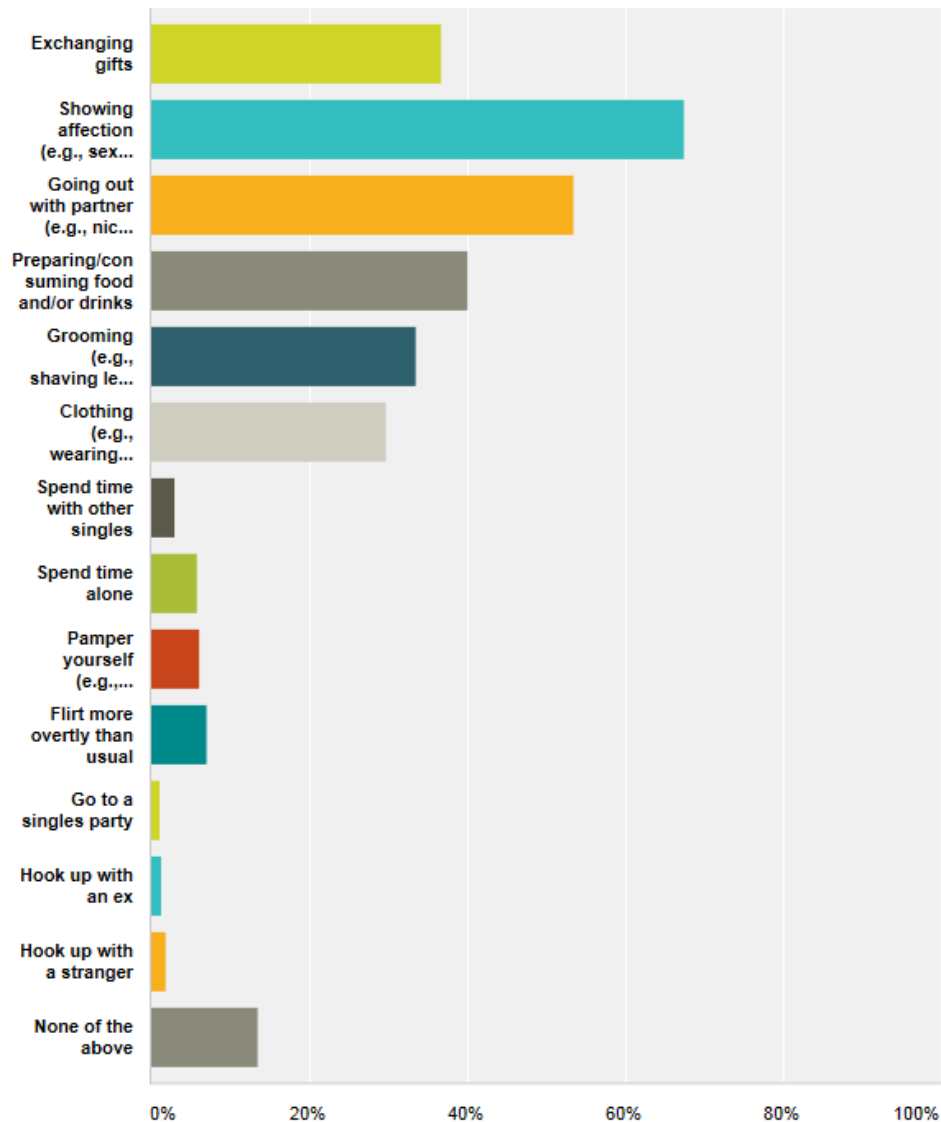


## What Valentine's Day is About

The overwhelming majority of participants indicated that Valentine's Day was about showing caring and affection to a romantic partner. The results for this question are shown below:

- 75.5% To show caring/affection to a romantic partner
- 29.8% A response to a commercial holiday
- 24.9% To show caring/affection to friends/family members
- 15.3% To meet partner expectations
- 14.1% To give gifts

Most participants (67.4%) indicated that they plan to engage in showing affection (e.g., sex, kissing, making out, acting sensual, etc.) this Valentine's Day. This was followed closely by 53.5% of participants planning to go out with their partner (e.g., nice restaurant, movies, spa, etc.) and 40.0% planning to prepare or consume food and/or drinks. The rest of the options that participants chose are depicted in the graph below:



## Pressure to Celebrate Valentine's Day

Interestingly, the majority of the women (70.3%) feel very little or no pressure to celebrate Valentine's Day. However, a smaller percentage of men (54.2%) feel very little or no pressure to celebrate Valentine's Day. This didn't differ based on relationship status.

In the context of those who were in a relationship, most men and women felt that they cared about Valentine's Day an equal amount to their partner. Broken down by relationship status:

### Seriously dating

- 23.0% think their partner cares more than them
- 28.9% think they care more than their partner



- 48.1% think they both care an equal amount

#### Engaged

- 23.5% think their partner cares more than them
- 20.0% think they care more than their partner
- 55.3% think they both care an equal amount

#### Married

- 26.6% think their partner cares more than them
- 23.9% think they care more than their partner
- 49.0% think they both care an equal amount

The most frequently cited emotion associated with Valentine's Day for these participants was **happiness**, with 41.4% of participants endorsing this emotion. This is followed closely by **excitement**, with 35.0% of participants endorsing this emotion, and **anticipation**, with 33.3% of participants endorsing this emotion.

Some participants did cite a negative emotion when asked to cite the emotions they feel around Valentine's Day, with 21.5% citing **pressure**, 18.2% of participants citing **anxiety**, and 14.8% citing **annoyance**. Indifference toward Valentine's Day was cited by 23.0% of the participants.

When asked how participants viewed getting engaged to be married on Valentine's Day, most participants (46.5%) believed it was overplayed. This was followed by a positive reaction (40.8%) an expectation (34.2%), a welcomed gesture (30.3%), and a neutral reaction (30.2%).

### The Role of Sex on Valentine's Day

Having sex was very, moderately, or somewhat important to 69% of women and 79% of men as a part of celebrating Valentine's Day. A minority of men (12.8%) and about one-fifth of women (20.2%) indicated that having sex was not at all important to the celebration of Valentine's Day. The importance of sex on Valentine's Day did not differ significantly based on relationship status.

- Men were significantly more likely than women to indicate sex as an important part of Valentine's Day celebrations,  $t(1998) = 5.85, p < .001$

Despite the emphasis on having sex to celebrate Valentine's Day, 38.8% of women and 42.0% of men indicated that they did not feel any pressure to have sex on Valentine's Day. Additionally, only 23.6% of men and 35.9% of women indicated that they wouldn't feel any disappointment at all if they didn't have sex on Valentine's Day.

Interestingly, participants reported that Valentine's Day influenced 54.7% of women and 57% of men's willingness to try something new sexually, indicating that sexual adventurousness may be higher around the cupid's holiday.

- Men and women were equally likely to be willing to try something new sexually because of Valentine's Day,  $t(1998) = 1.75, p = .08$

However, most of the participants reported that Valentine's Day wouldn't have an influence on them hooking up sexually with someone. Once this is broken down by relationship status, the single folks (50.3%) and those who reported casually dating (53.3%) were the most likely to report an interest in hooking up sexually with someone because it is Valentine's Day.

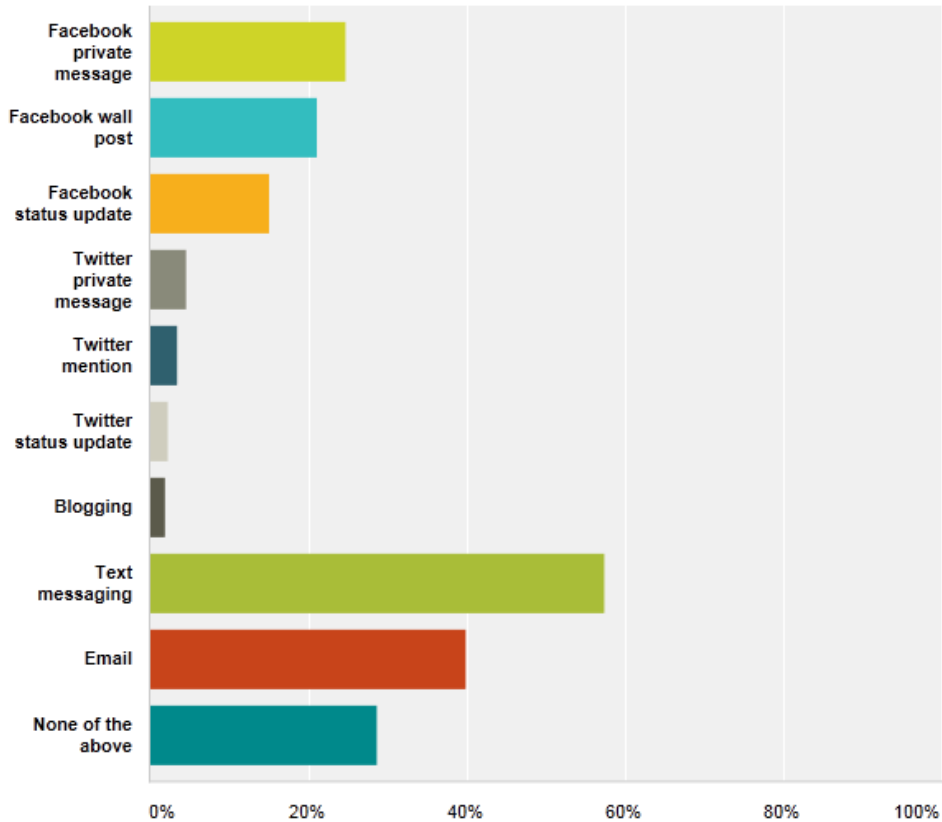
### **The Role of Relationships on Valentine's Day**

Almost one-quarter of men (23.7%) and one-fifth of women (21.1%) would absolutely avoid breaking up with someone because it is Valentine's Day. However, more men (40.6%) and women (37.9%) wouldn't allow Valentine's Day to impact whether or not they broke up with someone.

Overall, men and women believed that it was not at all important to be surrounded by people on Valentine's Day as a single person. However, when this was broken down by relationship status, 60.8% of the single participants, 55.9% of the casually dating participants, 62.9% of the seriously dating participants, 55.6% of the engaged participants, 54.3% of the married participants, 70.6% of the separated participants, 50.0% of the divorced participants, and 57.1% of the widowed participants reported it was not at all important to *not* be alone on Valentine's Day. There was no significant difference between men and women on their responses to this question.

Social media has changed the way we engage in our romantic relationships over the past decade. Because of this shift, we were interested to know which social media activities participants were open to using to express their feelings to a partner on Valentine's Day.

The most endorsed mode of communication was a text message, with 57.4% of participants endorsing this. This was followed by an email (39.9%), Facebook private message (24.7%), and Facebook wall post (21.0%). A minority of participants indicated that they would use Twitter or blogging as a form of communication during this holiday, and many of the participants (28.6%) indicated none of those listed. This data is depicted graphically below:



The participants who provided an alternative indicated the following text that has been analyzed in this word cloud (larger text was mentioned more frequently than smaller text):

Card Conversation E-card Face to Face  
 Feelings Gift Hand Written Note Instagram Letter  
 Mail Partner Phone Call Send Skype Social  
 Media Talking Telephone Text Valentines Day  
 Verbal Video Call Write

## CONCLUSION

The current survey provided us with detailed information about plans, attitudes, and perceptions related to Valentine’s Day in an online sample of 2,093 participants. Approximately half of the participants viewed Valentine’s Day as a special holiday and a little less than half of the women (48.8%) and over half of the men (61.7%) indicated that they were planning to celebrate Valentine’s Day this year. This survey provided insights into specific plans and behavioral expectations around this holiday.

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

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Otnes, C., Ruth, J. A., & Milbourne, C. C. (1994). The pleasure and pain of being close: Men's mixed feelings about participation in Valentine's Day gift exchange. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *21*, 159-164.
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