

Preferences for Romantic Relationship Initiation: Aggregate Summary

The following information is related to a study that you may have participated in at some point in January or February of 2024. If you participated in this study, you would have completed an online survey about your current romantic relationship and preferences for romantic relationship initiation. This study was designed to investigate whether preferences for beginning a romantic relationship are related to individual differences such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, personality, and egalitarian beliefs. If you completed this survey, you were asked to provide information about your preferences for various scenarios to start a romantic relationship, your personality, your attachment style, your egalitarian beliefs, and other general information about who you are.

Key Findings:

What is the preferred method for entering a romantic relationship?

The results of this study indicate that the majority of people in this sample prefer to begin a relationship using friends-first initiation (i.e., starting a platonic friendship with someone and afterwards develop a romantic relationship). People preferred friends-first initiation to what we call “dating initiation” where relative strangers begin dating (e.g., going on a date with someone you’ve met recently). Further, most people in this sample said that the best way to meet a potential romantic partner was through mutual friends or through school/university/college.

Do individual differences relate to this preference?

Yes, we found that those who were higher in egalitarian beliefs were more likely to prefer being friends-first. People who endorse egalitarian attitudes believe that each person in a romantic relationship should equally share power (e.g., both individuals in a couple should have an equal say in what they do together). We also found that those higher in extraversion, avoidant attachment style, and belief in love-at-first-sight were less likely to prefer being friends-first. In other words, extraverted people, people who have difficulty trusting others, and those who believe in love-at-first-sight preferred dating initiation.

If you would like further information about research related to the present study, please refer to:

Stinson, D. A., Cameron, J. J., & Hoplock, L. B. (2022). The friends-to-lovers pathway to romance: Prevalent, preferred, and neglected by science. *Social and Personality Psychology Science*, 13(2), 562-571.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211026992>

Fisher, A. N., Stinson, D. A., Wood, J. V., Holmes, J. G., & Cameron, J. J. (2021). Singlehood and psychological attunement to friendships. *Social and Personality Psychology Science*, 12(7), 1326–1334.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620988460>

Podcast with the Toronto Star: <https://www.thestar.com/podcasts/thismatters/2021/07/28/the-science-behind-why-you-should-date-your-friends-no-really.html>

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

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Thank you for your participation!