

Romantic Relationship Qualities and Histories: Aggregate Summary

The following information is related to a study that you may have participated in at some point between September and November of 2024. If you participated in this study, you would have completed an online survey about your current romantic relationship. This study was designed to investigate the most common ways people enter romantic relationships (i.e., being friends before dating or not) and whether these pathways are related to the quality of the relationship. If you completed this survey, you were asked to provide information about your current romantic relationship, your personality, your attachment style, your egalitarian beliefs, and other general information.

Key Findings:

What is the most common method for entering a romantic relationship?

The results of this study indicate that the majority of people in this sample say that they were friends before they started dating (*friends-first romantic relationships*). Of those who were not friends before dating (*dating initiation romantic relationships*), the most frequent way people met their current romantic partner was through online interactions, through mutual friends, or through social events.

Are there differences between friends-first romantic relationships and dating-initiation romantic relationships?

Yes, we found that when compared to those who were not friends before dating, those who were friends before dating were more trusting of each other, more satisfied in their relationship, more committed to each other, and felt more understood and valued by their partner. They also reported more equal divisions of power, less uncertainty about how they felt being in the relationship, yet also reported engaging in more jealous behaviours, such as questioning their partner about text messages and past relationships. Although these differences were statistically significant, most participants, regardless of how their relationship started, reported high levels of all of these relationship qualities.

Why are friends-first romantic relationships higher in relationship quality than dating-initiation romantic relationships?

Our preliminary analysis suggests that higher levels of trust in friends-first romantic relationships lead to boosts in the other relationship qualities (e.g., satisfaction). Because being friends prior to romance affords people a chance to get to know each other better and foster trust, they may have an early advantage when their relationship transitions to romance. In future research we will explore whether dating-initiation romantic relationships “catch up” to friends-first relationships over time.

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!