For the first time in human history, there are more single people (52%) than partnered individuals (48%).

Singles tend to experience lower well-being compared to coupled people, but little is known about why.

In the current research, we assessed whether single peoples’ endorsement of relationship norms – the belief that people need to be in a relationship to be happy – impacts their well-being and thoughts about relationships.

HYPOTHESES

H1: As single peoples’ endorsement of relationship norms increases, their fears of being single will increase, and well-being will decrease (Study 1 and Study 2).

H2: Single participants primed with high endorsement of relationship norms should report lower wellbeing, greater fears of being single, and more desire to enter relationships (Study 3).

METHODS

Study 1 (N = 128) and Study 2 (N = 67)

- Single participants completed a baseline questionnaire that assessed their endorsement of relationship norms and fears of being single.
- Next, participants completed a 14-day daily diary questionnaire that assessed their daily life satisfaction.

Study 3 (N = 170)

- Single participants were primed with either:
  - High endorsement of relationship norms (single people are worse off than coupled individuals, N = 90).
  - Low endorsement of relationship norms (single people are just as happy as coupled individuals, N = 80).
- Post prime, we assessed participants’ endorsement of relationship norms (manipulation check), wellbeing, and desire to enter relationships.

RESULTS

- Studies 1 and 2: As single participants’ adherence to relationship norms increased, so did their fear of being single, which undermined their daily life satisfaction.
- Study 3: Participants exposed to a high endorsement of relationship norms prime reported lower psychological wellbeing and greater desire to enter a committed relationship.

DISCUSSION

- These results provide novel insights about how adherence to societal norms that put relationships on a pedestal experience worse well-being and greater desire to be in a committed relationship.
- Single people who put relationships on a pedestal experience worse well-being and greater desire to be in a committed relationship.