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Engagement in Consensual Non-monogamy and Multi-partner Sex During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Insights From a National Sample of Single Americans



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Introduction

- Lehmiller and colleagues (2021) found that loneliness and stress were correlated with increased new sexual desires during the pandemic.
- In the present study we analyzed data from a national survey of single Americans to understand if engagement in two novel sexual behaviors changed during the pandemic:
 - open relationships (mutually agreed upon multiple romantic and/or sexual partners)
 - multi-partner sexual acts (threesomes or group sex)
- We also examined whether peoples' socializing behaviors, vaccine status, and living arrangement impacted their engagement in open relationships and multi-partner sex.

Methods

- 3,622 single Americans took part in an online survey about their dating and sex lives during June-August 2021 (vaccines widely available in U.S. during this time)
- Data were collected as part of The Kinsey Institute's annual *Singles in America* study
- 60.7% identified as women; 39.3% identified as men
- 88% identified as heterosexual; 12% identified as lesbian/gay/bisexual

Summary

- Engagement in open relationships and multi-partnered sex were relatively common during the pandemic.
- Specifically, men, sexual minorities, and people who socialized frequently were more likely to engage in these novel sexual behavior during the pandemic than their respective peers.
- People's living situations and vaccine status did not predict novel sexual behavior, however vaccine status predicted engagement in multi-partner sex.

During the first 16 months of the COVID-19 pandemic...

1 in 14 people engaged in a threesome or group sex



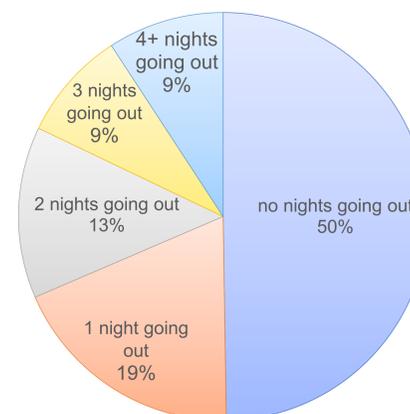
1 in 12 people engaged in an open relationship



We also found that men and sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, and bisexual people) were more likely to have engaged in consensual non-monogamy and multi-partner sex during the pandemic than women and heterosexual people, respectively ($B_{\text{range}}: 0.53-0.89, p_{\text{values}} < 0.01$).

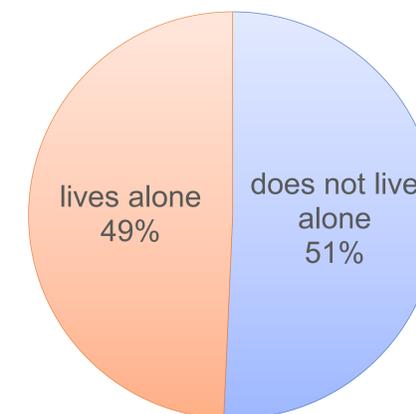
Factors Related to Engagement in Novel Sex Behaviors

Nights Spent Socializing per Week



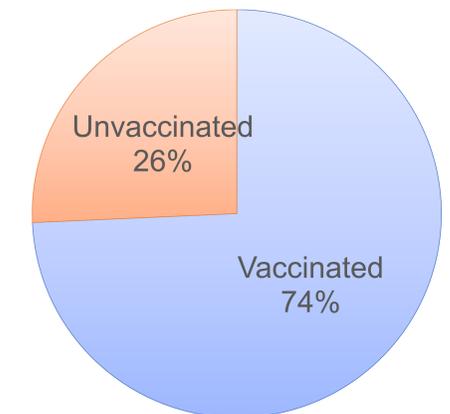
- People who socialized frequently each week were more likely to engage in an open relationship and engage in multi-partner sex during the pandemic ($B = 0.35, p < .001$ and $B = .43, p < .001$).

Living Situation



- People's living arrangement did not predict engagement in an open relationship or engagement in multi-partner sex ($B = -.21, p = .13$ and $B = -.24, p = .11$)

Vaccine Status



- People's vaccine status did not predict engagement in an open relationship ($B = .08, p = .59$). However, people who were vaccinated were more likely to engage in multi-partner sex than unvaccinated people ($B = .41, p = .02$).

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