

## Expanding Relationship Science to Unpartnered Singles: What Predicts Life Satisfaction?

Lisa C. Walsh, Ariana M. Gonzales, Lucy Shen, Anthony Rodriguez, and Victor A. Kaufman

### Abstract

Singles are an understudied yet growing segment of the adult population. The current study aims to expand the lens of relationship science by examining the well-being of unpartnered, single adults not currently in long-term romantic relationships. Singles may have something unique to add to relationship science because they tend to maintain more diverse social networks than partnered people do. We recruited singles ( $N=4,835$ ) closely matched to the U.S. census (ages 18-65; 57.5% female; 71.1% White; 14.5% Black; 13.8% Hispanic) for an exploratory cross-sectional survey. Using five variables that research suggests strongly predict well-being (friendship satisfaction, family satisfaction, self-esteem, neuroticism, and extraversion), we assessed whether associations varied among daters and non-daters. We also used the five variables to identify heterogeneous clusters that differentially predict singles' life satisfaction. We found that most singles (58%) were fairly to very happy. All five variables significantly predicted life satisfaction for the full sample, daters, and non-daters (except extraversion). Daters and non-daters were equally happy. Daters also had higher levels of friendship satisfaction and extraversion than non-daters. Hierarchical K-means cluster analysis yielded 11 clusters that were classified into four groups: *happy*, *average*, *unhappy*, and *very unhappy*. Each cluster had its own unique patterns. For example, one cluster had high friendship satisfaction but low family satisfaction, while another cluster showed the opposite. Within most clusters, self-esteem, friendship satisfaction, and family satisfaction were among the strongest and most consistent predictors of life satisfaction. Overall, we found that single adults who had positive relationships—both with themselves and others—were happiest.

*Keywords:* singles, life satisfaction, well-being, relationships, self-esteem, personality