



Factum

State of the Union: From Polyamorous to Monogamous, Marriage to Divorce, an Ipsos / Global News Survey Examines Relationships in Canada

Four in Ten (37%) Canadians Say Open or Polyamorous Partnerships/Marriages are Acceptable, Support Decriminalization of Polygamy (36%)

Toronto, Ontario, July 31, 2018 — A new Ipsos poll conducted exclusively for Global News has examined the state of the union in Canada – that is, the nature of relationships between two (or more!) people. The poll covers topics such as strength of relationships, marriage and what that looks like (arranged marriages, second marriages, different types of relationships affairs, etc), monogamy, and even marriages where couples live apart or have no sex.

The Look of Love

The survey identified roughly half (53%) of Canadians as presently married or living common law, three in ten (29%) are single, 9% are divorced or separated (and not presently in a relationship), 6% are dating or in a relationship, 4% are widows/widowers, while a small proportion (<1%) describe their status as something other than these more classical definitions.

Relationships are complex and unique. Many Canadians are living in relationships that are a little different than what some might consider to be a traditional marriage or relationship. Here are some examples:

- Two in ten (19%) Canadians say that **they and their partner rarely, if ever, have sex** together. This is significantly higher in Alberta (27%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (25%) than it is in Ontario (20%), British Columbia (19%), Atlantic Canada (14%) or Quebec (10%). Men (22%) are more likely to say this is the case than women (16%), as are those aged 55+ (22%) compared to those aged 35-54 (19%) and 18-34 (12%).
- Two in ten (17%) say that they are **on their second (or more) marriage** or common-law relationship. This incidence is highest in British Columbia (27%) than it is elsewhere, and is, predictable, higher among those aged 55+ (25%) than those aged 35-54 (14%) or 18-34 (3%).
- Six percent (6%) say they and their partner **occupy separate primary residences** (live apart), although this breaks down to 50% of those dating/in a relationship, and just 2% of those who are married/living common law. One in five (20%) 18-34 year olds say they and their partner occupy separate residences. This is also more common in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (12%) and Quebec (12%).
- One in twenty (5%) say that **their partner has had an affair**. Atlantic Canadians (11%) and Quebecers (8%) are significantly more likely than those living elsewhere to say this is the case.
- One in twenty (5%) admit that **they have had an affair**. Men (8%) are more likely to confess this than women (3%), as are Millennials (11%) when compared to Gen X (3%) or Boomers (4%).

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Press Release – continued –

- One in fifty (2%) say that they are in a **mixed-orientation relationship** (e.g. one partner is straight while the other is gay, bisexual, transgender, etc.), rising to 9% among those aged 18-34.
- One in fifty (2%) say that they are in an **arranged marriage**. This increases to 5% among those aged 18-34.

With the exception of having an affair or a lack of sex between partners, most people who are in these types of relationships say that their bond is stronger as a result. The chart below demonstrates those proportions.

<i>Do you believe that the following circumstances make your partnership...</i>	% stronger	% no impact	% weaker
That your marriage was arranged	53%	40%	7%
That you live apart	40%	44%	16%
That you're in a mixed-orientation partnership	20%	64%	16%
That you and your partner rarely, if ever, have sex together	9%	50%	41%
That you've had an affair	29%	29%	41%
That your partner has had an affair	29%	30%	41%
That you're on your second (or more) marriage or common-law relationship	56%	43%	1%

A few items of particular note:

- Among those whose relationship has experienced an affair, three in ten (29%) say it has made their relationship stronger; however, on balance, more say it has made their relationship weaker as a result.
- A majority (53%) of those in an arranged marriage say that their union is stronger as a result.
- As the song goes, “*love is better, the second time around*” – a majority (56%) of those on their second (or more) marriage/common-law relationship say that their union is stronger for it.

Canadians are largely supportive of relationships and situations of different stripes and colours. The chart below shows the percentage of Canadians who believe that each type of relationship or scenario is acceptable or not acceptable to them. A majority supports nearly every type of relationship or circumstance tested, with the exception of arranged marriages and open marriages.

<i>Types relationships or circumstances</i>	% acceptable (very/somewhat)	% not acceptable (not at all/not very)
Getting married for a 2 nd time	91% (57%/34%)	9% (4%/5%)
Monogamous or exclusive partnerships/marriages	89% (73%/16%)	11% (4%/7%)
Partners living together before marriage	88% (63%/26%)	12% (5%/7%)
Same-sex relationships (but not marriage)	73% (46%/27%)	27% (12%/15%)
Same-sex marriage	72% (48%/24%)	28% (11%/17%)
Relationships which stay together after one partner has an affair	66% (22%/44%)	34% (11%/23%)
Partnerships where there is no sex	64% (28%/36%)	36% (13%/23%)
Mixed-orientation partnerships	57% (28%/29%)	43% (22%/21%)
Marriages where the partners live apart	53% (20%/33%)	47% (16%/31%)
Open or poly-amorous partnerships/marriages	37% (15%/23%)	63% (33%/30%)
Arranged marriages	27% (8%/19%)	73% (41%/32%)

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Press Release – continued –

Most Canadians Say Their Relationship is Strong, But Some See Room for Improvement

Among those Canadians who are in a relationship (either married, living common law or dating, a majority (60%) **describe the relationship they have with their partner** as being “very strong”, while another 36% say it is “fairly good” – still acknowledging there is some room for improvement. Some Canadians, though, say their relationship status is “not good” (3%) or “in serious trouble” (1%).

Interestingly, those who are married or living common law are less likely (3%) than those who are dating/in a relationship (8%) to say their relationship is on the rocks. Moreover, those who say they and their partner occupy separate residences (16%) and those who say their partner has had an affair (20%) are most likely to say that their relationship is not good or in serious trouble.

Nine in ten (94%) would **describe themselves as happy in their relationship**, with 52% saying they are “very happy” and 42% saying that they are “fairly happy”, once again acknowledging that there could be some improvement. Others (6%) say they are not very happy – led by those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (10%) and Atlantic Canada (8%), followed by those in BC (6%), Ontario (6%), Quebec (5%) and Alberta (1%). Those on their 2nd (or more) marriage/common-law union are more likely to describe themselves as very happy (59%) than those on their first marriage/common-law union (50%).

Thinking about their partner’s happiness, most (94%) believe that they are happy (50% very happy/44% fairly happy), while 6% think they are either not very happy (5%) or not at all happy (1%). Among those who admit to having an affair, 23% think their partner is unhappy, while 20% of those whose partner has had an affair believe they are unhappy.

Growing Up around Divorce

There appears to be a link between growing up either in a divorced family or around divorced people, and then getting divorced oneself later in life. First, the data reveal:

- One in ten (9%) Canadians say they are divorced or separated and not in another relationship, led by 15% of those aged 55+.
- Two in three (66%) Canadians grew up in a household where the parents remained married or common law throughout their life.
- One in ten (12%) say their parents were never married/common-law.
- Two in ten (22%) say that their parents are divorced, of those...
 - 9% say the divorce occurred before they were 10 years old
 - 8% say the divorce occurred between the ages of 10 and 19 years old
 - 5% say the divorce occurred when they were age 20 or older
- When they were a child...
 - 77% say most of the adults they knew were mostly married/common law while few were divorced/separated
 - 16% say there was an even mix – some married/common law, some divorced/single
 - 7% say they were mostly divorced/separated – few were married/common law
- Now that they’re an adult...
 - Only 27% say most of the adults they know are mostly married/common law, few are divorced/separated
 - 48% say there’s an even mix -- some married/common law, some divorced/single

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- 25% say most are divorced/separated – very few are still married/common law

While 9% of Canadians are divorced and are not again in a relationship, this rises to 16% among those whose parents were divorced. Further, 17% of Canadians in a relationship say it's their second (or more marriage) and among those whose parents are divorced, 23% are on their second (or more) marriage, while only 16% of those whose parents remain married are now on a second (or more) marriage.

Among those who say that when they were a child most of the people they knew were divorced, 49% say they are single compared to 33% who are married or living common law.

And while 53% of Canadians, overall, describe themselves as being married or living common law, this jumps to 64% among those whose parents remained married/common law throughout their life. Among those who say their parents were never married, 80% say that they are presently single.

As such, the data suggests that those who grew up around divorce are more likely to be divorced or single themselves; conversely, those who grew up a household *without* divorce are more likely to be married/common law presently. Those whose parents were never married/common-law appear to remain single.

Lots of Love to Go Around

One in twenty-five Canadians (4%) in a relationship describe it as being polyamorous or open, saying that one or both partners is free to explore sexual relationships with other people. Conversely, most (96%) Canadians describe their relationship as being monogamous or exclusive – neither of them is involved or allowed to have a sexual relationship with another person.

One in ten (10%) individuals who are dating or in a relationship (but not married or common law) say that their relationship is open or polyamorous, as are 14% of those who describe the strength of their relationship as being not good or in serious trouble -- people in monogamous relationships are more likely to describe their relationship strength as strong (97%) compared to those in polyamorous relationships (86%).

Others who are more likely to say they are in a polyamorous relationship include those who are in an arranged marriage (27%), those in a mixed-orientation relationship (23%), those who say their partner has had an affair (20%), those who occupy separate residences (13%), those who say that they and their partner rarely if ever have sex (7%).

Four in ten (36%) Canadians say they 'support' (19% strongly/16% somewhat) the **decriminalization of polygamy** (the act of marrying more than one person) in Canada, while a majority (64%) of Canadians oppose (48% strongly/17% somewhat) it. Those most supportive of the decriminalization of polygamy include those aged 18-34 (50%), those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (43%), Atlantic Canada (42%) and Quebec (41%), those who are dating/in a relationship (53%) or single (46%), those whose parents were never married (49%) or were around mostly divorced adults when growing up (45%), those who are in a polyamorous or open marriage/relationship (75%), those in an arranged marriage (56%), those who occupy separate residences from their partner (60%), and those in a mixed-orientation relationship (67%).

When it comes to the **legalization of polygamy**, support drops to 25% (12% strongly/13% somewhat), while opposition rises to 75% (58% strongly/17% somewhat).

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between July 13 and 16, 2018, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,501 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources. Quota sampling and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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