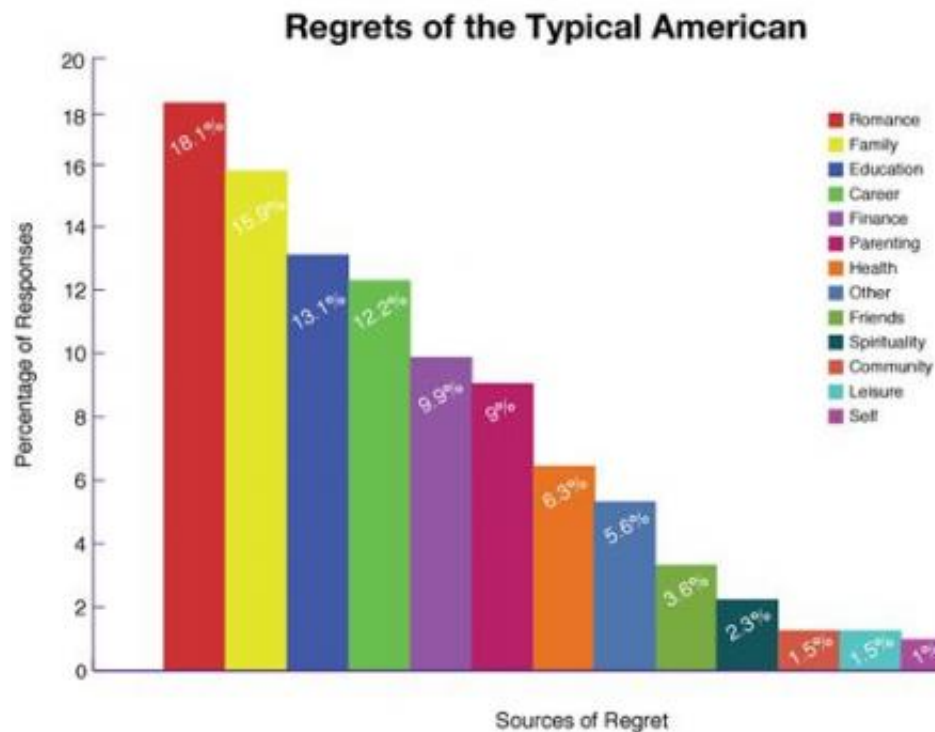


# Love remains a main source of regret for typical American, study finds

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(PhysOrg.com) -- When it comes to romantic relationships, have you ever made a decision that you regretted?

You're not alone. A new study by Neal Roese, Kellogg professor of marketing, finds that romance is the most common source of regret

among Americans. Other common sources of regret include family interactions, education, career, finances and parenting.

For the study, Roese and Mike Morrison of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign analyzed data from a telephone survey of 370 adult Americans. Subjects were asked to describe one regret in detail, including the time in which the regret happened and whether the regret was based on an action or inaction.

“We found that one’s life circumstances, such as accomplishments or shortcomings, inject considerable fuel into the fires of regret,” Roese said. “Although regret is painful, it is an essential component of the human experience.”

Key findings from the study include:

- About 44 percent of women reported romance regrets versus 19 percent of men. Women also had more family regrets than men. About 34 percent of men reported having work-oriented regrets versus 27 percent of women reporting similar regrets. Men also had more education regrets than women.
- Individuals who were not currently in a relationship were most likely to have romance regrets.
- People were evenly divided on regrets of situations that they acted on versus those that they did not act on. People who regretted events that they did not act on tended to hold on longer to that regret over time.
- Individuals with low levels of education were likely to regret their lack of education. Americans with high levels of [education](#) had the most career-related regrets.

“Past research on regrets focused on samples of college students, which made it difficult to glean insights into the wider population,” Roese said. “This research, however, offers a unique and more thorough look into

the psychology of regret to further understand how regret connects to life circumstances and its impact on decision making.”

The study, “Regrets of the Typical American: Findings from a Nationally Representative Sample,” will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Provided by Northwestern University

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