

# Men face 'vicious circle' between satisfaction with their partner and mental health, new study suggests

June 8 2022, by Meg Cox

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A new study investigating if mental health helps shape satisfaction with partners has revealed there are differences between females and

males—with men having the potential to experience a vicious circle.

Led by Loughborough University's Professor Paul Downward, professor of economics in the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, the analysis used data on 42,464 couples gathered through the British Household Panel Survey (1991–2008) to test aspects of the marital adjustment model, which assesses dyadic partner [satisfaction](#).

The findings, which have been published in the journal *BMC Psychology*, suggest for females, relationship satisfaction is more likely to influence [mental health](#).

For [males](#), however, there is a potential "vicious circle of decline" between satisfaction with [partners](#) and mental [health](#).

For example, a male strategy for coping with [depressive symptoms](#) can involve men engaging more in an activity that takes them further from their partners both behaviorally and emotionally.

The paper is part of a broader project that suggests health should be seen as an asset—something that is worth investing in to allow individuals and society to flourish and prosper, rather than viewing health as a remedial intervention.

Investment in mental health support would therefore benefit the well-being of individuals and their partners.

Of the importance of the study, Professor Downward said: "This paper highlights support for current U.K. health policy that increasingly seeks to identify health as an asset, playing a role in an integrated care system seeking to promote a more inclusive and productive society, with a focus on the general flourishing of individuals. The results, which have consistency with the literature, suggest that satisfaction with partners is a

key conduit with which mental health states can become shared by couples. The topic is important because satisfaction with partners is an important feature of the overall quality of life and the well-being of individuals."

Professor Downward is hoping to build on this research and further explore how health inequalities become shared across peer groups.

The paper, titled "Mental health and satisfaction with partners: a longitudinal analysis in the UK," is published in *BMC Psychology*.

**More information:** Paul Downward et al, Mental health and satisfaction with partners: a longitudinal analysis in the UK, *BMC Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1186/s40359-022-00723-w](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00723-w)

Provided by Loughborough University

Citation: Men face 'vicious circle' between satisfaction with their partner and mental health, new study suggests (2022, June 8) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-men-vicious-circle-satisfaction-partner.html>

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