

Love, Actually:
A National Survey of Adults 18+ on Love,
Relationships, and Romance

Conducted for *AARP The Magazine*

November 2009

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Love, Actually:

A National Survey of Adults 18+ on Love, Relationships, and Romance

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Survey conducted by
GfK Roper Custom Research North America

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Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather information on people's thoughts about romance, being in love, and finding true love. This information was gathered to help inform an article in the January/February issue of *AARP The Magazine*.

This study was conducted via internet by GfK Roper Custom Research North America, an independent research company. Questions were included on an omnibus survey from August 28 – September 2, 2009. The GfK OmniWeb survey is a weekly national web survey of U.S. households. Interviews were conducted from among a nationally representative sample of 2,009 adults age 18 or older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-1.5%. Throughout the report, when differences are mentioned between subgroups, they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Executive Summary

This study surveyed American adults in order to better understand people's thoughts around love: being in love, finding love, and the sacrifices people make for love. The web survey was conducted August 28 – September 2, 2009 by GfK among a nationally representative sample of 2,009 adults age 18 or older.

- When asked whether they are currently in love, 73% of respondents 18 and over say that they are at least somewhat in love and nearly a third (31%) say that they are passionately in love. Over two-thirds of adults age 50-64 (68%) say they are at least somewhat in love.
- When those who say they are in love are asked about their relationship to this other person, two-thirds of these respondents (66%) say they are married to the person with whom they are in love. Another 25% are dating the person with whom they are in love, while another 5% say they are no longer involved with the person with whom they are love.
- Three quarters of respondents also believe they have encountered the love of their life (75%). Moreover, men are more likely than women to say that they've encountered the love of their life *several* times (26% vs. 17%). Only 3% of respondents say that they don't believe in true love.
- When asked about the types of sacrifices people would be willing to make for love, generally only a small proportion say they would be very or somewhat likely to change their lifestyle. The sacrifice respondents are most willing to make is to leave their profession: 43% say they would be very or somewhat likely to make that sacrifice. Another 39% say that they would be willing to move out of the country for love, while a quarter of respondents (25%) say they would be willing to convert to another religion.
- Over three quarters of respondents strongly or somewhat agree with the statement "true love can exist without a radiant/active sex life" (76%). Women are significantly more likely to agree with this statement than men (80% vs. 71%). Nonetheless, a majority say that romance is important to a relationship. Over 4 in 10 (42%) say that it is essential, and another 34% say that it grows even more important as a relationship goes on.
- When asked about the acceptable age range of a potential partner, over forty percent (41%) say that they would consider dating someone older than them only if that person were 5 years older or less. One in eight (12%) say they would not consider dating someone older at all. Another 35% say that 5 to 10 years older is their upper limit for a partner, while only 13% say they would consider someone 11 or more years older. Men are significantly more likely than women to say that they would not date an older partner (18% vs. 6%); also, women are more likely to say they would date someone 5 years older or more (56% vs. 39%).
- Finally, one in five respondents (21%) believes that it is *not* possible to be in love with one person and have a crush on someone else. Even so, 43% admit to having experienced this situation in the past and another 6% say they are experiencing this situation right now.

Detailed Findings

Being in Love

Despite the stereotype that being in love is for the young, a majority of respondents across all ages say that they are currently at least somewhat in love. Overall, 73% of adults age 18 and over say that they are at least somewhat in love, and nearly a third (31%) say that they are passionately in love. In fact, those who are 25-34 years old (79%) or 35-49 years old (78%) are more likely to say they are in love than those age 18-24 (62%) or those 65 and over (63%).

Table 1: At this moment, are you in love?

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
Yes (Net)	73%	72	74	62	79	78	70	63
Yes, passionately	31%	31	31	32	40	35	22	13
Yes, very much	29%	28	30	16	30	30	33	34
Yes, somewhat	13%	13	13	14	9	13	15	16
No, not at all	27%	28	26	39	21	22	30	37

When asked about whether they have already encountered the love of their life, three quarters of Americans (75%) say that they have, with over one in five claiming that they have encountered the love of their life several times.

Table 2: Do you believe you have already encountered the love of your life?

	Total
	(n=2000)
Yes (Net)	75%
Yes, several times	22%
Yes, one time	53%
No, but I believe he/she is out there	15%
No, and I don't believe I will	7%
I don't believe in the idea of a true love	3%

By age, there is a steady increase in the percentage who say they have found their true love only once (from a low of 41% in 18-24 year olds to a high of 71% in those 65 and over). There are no gender differences when aggregated; however, men are significantly more likely than women to say that they have encountered the love of their life several times (26% vs. 17%).

Table 3: Do you believe you have already encountered the love of your life?

	Gender		Age				
	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
Yes (Net)	75%	75	58	79	77	75	90
Yes, several times	26%	17	17	30	22	18	19
Yes, one time	49%	57	41	49	55	57	71
No, but I believe he/she is out there	17%	14	35	19	14	12	1
No, and I don't believe I will	5%	9	5	6	6	10	6
I don't believe in the idea of a true love	3%	3	3	3	3	3	3

When asked about whether they feel they could fall head over heels in love at this time, four in ten (40%) of respondents say they could, while another third (33%) say they are already in love.

Interestingly, men are significantly more likely than women to say they could fall in love (45% vs. 35%), while women are more likely to say they are already in love (37% of women vs. 28% of men). Older adults are less receptive to love than their younger counterparts. While only about a quarter of those under 50 say they could *not* fall in love, this number climbs to a third (34%) for those 50-64 and over two-fifths (45%) for those 65 and over.

Table 4: At this time, do you feel you could fall head over heels in love?

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
Yes	40%	45	35	52	53	39	30	16
No	28%	27	28	25	20	25	34	45
I already am head over heels in love	33%	28	37	24	27	37	36	39

Sacrifices for Love

Respondents who say they believe in true love were asked a series of questions around their willingness to make a variety of sacrifices for love. In general, only a small proportion say they would be very or somewhat likely to change their lifestyle.

The sacrifice respondents are most willing to make is to leave their profession: 43% say they would be very or somewhat likely to make that sacrifice. Another 39% say that they would be willing to move out of the country for love, while a quarter of respondents (25%) say they would be willing to convert to another religion.

Table 5: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?

	Very/Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely/Not At All Likely
Leave your profession	43	57
Move out of the country	39	61
Convert to another religion	25	75
Alienate your family or friends	21	79
Leave your spouse	17	84
Leave your children	12	88

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

Nearly one in four (39%) say they would be very or somewhat likely to move out of the country for love. Younger adults are more likely to say they would relocate (18% for 18-24 and 24% for those 25-34) than older adults are (12% for 50-64 and 8% for those 65+).

Table 5a: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Move out of the country

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	<i>(n=1937)</i>	<i>(n=930)</i>	<i>(n=1007)</i>	<i>(n=297)</i>	<i>(n=410)</i>	<i>(n=605)</i>	<i>(n=482)</i>	<i>(n=145)</i>
Very Likely	18%	20	17	18	24	21	12	8
Somewhat Likely	21%	22	21	24	29	20	16	14
Somewhat Unlikely	17%	17	17	21	16	16	15	18
Not at all Likely	44%	42	46	37	31	40	56	60

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

A majority of adults ages 25-34 say they would be willing to leave their profession for love (54% very/somewhat likely), significantly more than any other age group. Conversely, older adults (those 50+) are the least willing to leave their profession for love. Only a little over a third of those 50-64 say they would be likely to leave their profession (37%), while only a quarter (27%) of those 65+ say they would be likely.

Table 5b: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Leave your profession

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1937)	(n=930)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Very Likely	21%	20	21	14	24	23	21	18
Somewhat Likely	23%	23	22	28	30	24	17	9
Somewhat Unlikely	17%	15	18	23	14	17	15	14
Not at all Likely	40%	41	39	36	32	37	48	59

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

Only 21% of respondents say they would be willing to alienate their friends and family for love. By gender, men are significantly more likely to say they would be willing to do this than women (28% vs. 15%). Over two-thirds of older adults say they would be not at all likely to consider this sacrifice; 67% of those 50-64 and 67% of those 65+ say it is not an option.

Table 5c: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Alienate your family or friends

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1937)	(n=930)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Very Likely	8%	12	5	6	11	9	7	7
Somewhat Likely	13%	16	10	11	22	14	9	6
Somewhat Unlikely	18%	21	16	20	19	19	16	20
Not at all Likely	60%	51	68	63	49	58	69	67

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

Most respondents say they are not likely to leave their spouse for love (only 17% say they are very or somewhat likely). Men, again, are somewhat more likely than women to say they would leave their spouse (20% vs. 13%). Likewise, younger adults are more likely than older adults to say they would leave their spouse.

Table 5d: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Leave your spouse

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1937)	(n=930)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Very Likely	7%	10	5	6	12	9	4	1
Somewhat Likely	9%	11	8	6	16	10	6	1
Somewhat Unlikely	12%	13	11	16	15	12	9	8
Not at all Likely	71%	66	76	72	57	69	81	89

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

A quarter of respondents (25%) say they would be willing to convert to a new religion for love. Those age 25-34 (34%) and those age 35-49 (28%) are the mostly likely to consider this option. There are no significant differences by gender.

Table 5e: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Convert to another religion

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1937)	(n=930)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Very Likely	10%	12	8	9	15	11	6	5
Somewhat Likely	15%	15	16	14	20	17	13	6
Somewhat Unlikely	18%	17	18	17	17	18	18	19
Not at all Likely	57%	56	59	60	49	54	63	70

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

Finally, very few respondents say they would be willing to leave their children for love. Men are more likely to consider it than women, however. Nearly one in six (16%) males say they would be very or somewhat likely to leave their children for love, while only 8% of women say the same.

Table 5f: What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love?
Leave your children

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1937)	(n=930)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Very Likely	5%	8	3	3	9	6	3	1
Somewhat Likely	7%	8	6	3	13	7	5	3
Somewhat Unlikely	7%	9	5	6	8	6	8	9
Not at all Likely	81%	75	87	88	70	81	85	86

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

Love In Relationships

Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to love in the context of romantic relationships. Over three quarters of Americans strongly or somewhat agree with the statement "true love can exist without a radiant/active sex life" (76%). Women are significantly more likely to agree to this statement than men (80% vs. 71%).

Table 6: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. True love can exist without a radiant/active sex life.

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1936)	(n=929)	(n=1007)	(n=297)	(n=410)	(n=605)	(n=482)	(n=145)
Strongly agree	34%	33	39	40	34	31	39	46
Somewhat agree	40%	38	41	41	41	40	38	38
Somewhat disagree	15%	17	13	13	15	17	14	10
Strongly disagree	10%	12	7	6	10	12	9	7

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

When asked about the importance of romance in a relationship, a majority of respondents say that romance is indeed important. Over four in ten (42%) say that it is essential, and another 34% say that it grows even more important as a relationship goes on. A quarter (19%) believe it is important only in the beginning of a relationship, while only 5% say it is not important at all.

Table 7: How important to you is romance in a relationship?

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
It is essential; I could not feel love without it	42%	42	42	48	41	43	40	33
It is important at the beginning of a relationship, but not after the relationship is established	19%	20	18	13	27	19	17	17
It grows more important as the relationship goes on	34%	32	35	34	38	34	34	44
It is only useful for getting what you want from the other person	10%	7	1	0	1	1	2	0
It is not important	5%	5	4	5	3	4	7	6

One in five respondents (21%) believes that it is *not* possible to be in love with one person and have a crush on someone else. Nonetheless, 43% admit to having experienced this situation in the past and another 6% say they are experiencing this situation right now.

Men are more likely than women to say they are experiencing a crush right now (9% vs. 4%), and older adults are more likely to say that they have been in this situation in the past.

Table 8: Can you be in love with one person and have a crush on (or fantasize about) someone else?

	Total	Gender	
		Men	Women
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)
No	21%	20	22
Yes, but I have not experienced that	30%	30	30
Yes, and I have experienced that in the past	43%	42	44
Yes, and I am experiencing that now	6%	9	4

When asked about the age range of a potential partner, over forty percent (41%) say that they would consider dating someone older than them only if that person were 5 years older or less. One in eight (12%) say they would not consider dating someone older at all.

Men are significantly more likely than women to say that they would not date an older partner (18% vs. 6%); also, women are more likely to say they would date someone 5 years older or more (56% vs. 39%). Unsurprisingly, older adults are less likely to say they would date older partners.

Table 9: People sometimes date partners whose age is different from theirs. If you were to consider dating an older partner, how much older could that person be and still be appealing to you?

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
I wouldn't date anyone older than me	12%	18	6	9	7	10	17	24
Up to five years older than me	41%	43	38	48	41	37	41	39
Five to 10 years older than me	35%	27	42	27	38	41	31	30
11 to 20 years older than me	10%	8	11	14	10	10	9	5
More than 20 years older than me	3%	3	3	3	5	3	2	3

Base: Those who say they believe in true love

For a large majority of respondents (80%), the feeling of being in love can last a lifetime. A small proportion, however, believe that the feeling of love is finite: they say it can only last for 2-5 years (11%) or less than two years (3%).

Women are more likely than men to believe it lasts a lifetime (86% vs. 73%). In addition, nearly all of respondents over sixty-five believe love lasts a lifetime (94%), versus 78% of those age 18-24 and only 65% of those age 25-34.

Table 10: In a relationship, how long do you think the feeling of being in love can last?

	Total	Gender		Age				
		Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=2000)	(n=960)	(n=1040)	(n=304)	(n=424)	(n=626)	(n=497)	(n=149)
Less than two years	3%	4	2	3	5	2	4	1
2 to 5 years	11%	14	8	14	20	10	3	3
6 to 10 years	5%	7	2	3	7	6	2	1
11 to 20 years	2%	2	2	2	3	3	2	1
A lifetime	80%	73	86	78	65	79	90	94

Finally, respondents who say they are currently in love are asked what their relationship is to the one they love. Two-thirds of these respondents (66%) are married to or have a domestic partnership with the person with whom they are in love. Another 25% are dating the person with whom they are in love, while another 5% say they are no longer involved with the person with whom they are in love. Predictably, the number of people who say they are married to the one they love increases with age.

Table 11: What is your relationship to the person with whom you are in love?

	Total	Age				
		18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	(n=1454)	(n=187)	(n=336)	(n=489)	(n=348)	(n=94)
We are married or have a domestic partnership	66%	24	57	72	83	89
We are dating and we live together	14%	24	25	13	3	1
We are dating but we do not live together	12%	33	13	9	6	5
I am no longer involved with the person with whom I am in love	5%	12	4	3	5	1
I have never been involved with the person with whom I am in love	3%	5	2	3	3	1
He/she is no longer living	1%	2	0	0	1	2

Base: Those who say they are currently in love

Appendix A

Annotated Questionnaire

Please note, all data are given in percentages. Not all percentages will add up to 100 due to rounding. Base sizes in parentheses are unweighted. Proportions after responses are weighted.

1. At this moment, are you in love? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

Yes, passionately	30.7 %
Yes, very much	29.0
Yes, somewhat	13.0
No, not at all.....	27.3

2. Do you believe you have already encountered the love of your life? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

Yes, several times	21.5 %
Yes, one time	53.3
No, but I believe he/she is out there.....	15.0
No, and I don't believe I will.....	7.0
I don't believe in the idea of a true love	3.2

3. At this time, do you feel you could fall head over heels in love? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

Yes	39.8 %
No	27.5
I already am head over heels in love.....	32.7

IF DON'T BELIEVE IN IDEA OF TRUE LOVE (Q2=5), SKIP TO Q6.
IF Q2=1,2,3,4 ASK Q4 AND Q5.

4. What sacrifices would you be willing to make for your love? For each option below, please indicate how likely you are to make the following sacrifices. (SELECT ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.)

(n=1950)

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Not At All Likely
Move out of the country	18.1 %	21.1	16.7	44.1
Leave your profession	20.8 %	22.6	16.6	40.0
Alienate your family or friends	8.2 %	13.2	18.4	60.2
Leave your spouse	7.3 %	9.2	12.2	71.4
Convert to another religion	9.7 %	15.4	17.5	57.4
Leave your children	5.2 %	6.9	7.0	80.9

5. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

True love can exist without a radiant/active sex life.

(n=1950)

Strongly agree	36.3 %
Somewhat agree	39.6
Somewhat disagree	14.5
Strongly disagree	9.6

6. How important to you is romance in a relationship? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

It is essential; I could not feel love without it	41.9 %
It is important at the beginning of a relationship, but not after the relationship is established	19.1
It grows more important as the relationship goes on	33.5
It is only useful for getting what you want from the other person	0.9
It is not important	4.6

7. Can you be in love with one person and have a crush on (or fantasize about) someone else? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

No	20.6 %
Yes, but I have not experienced that	30.2
Yes, and I have experienced that in the past	43.1
Yes, and I am experiencing that now	6.2

8. People sometimes date partners whose age is different from theirs. If you were to consider dating an older partner, how much older could that person be and still be appealing to you? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

I wouldn't date anyone older than me	11.8 %
Up to five years older than me	40.5
Five to 10 years older than me	34.8
11 to 20 years older than me	9.8
More than 20 years older than me	3.1

IF NO, NOT AT ALL (Q1=4), SKIP TO Q10.
IF Q1=1,2,3 ASK Q9

9. What is your relationship to the person with whom you are in love? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=1530)

We are married or have a domestic partnership	65.9 %
We are dating and we live together	13.9
We are dating but we do not live together	11.9
I am no longer involved with the person with whom I am in love	4.8
I have never been involved with the person with whom I am in love	2.7
He/she is no longer living	0.8

10. In a relationship, how long do you think the feeling of being in love can last? (SELECT ONE RESPONSE.)

(n=2009)

Less than two years	3.1 %
2 to 5 years	10.6
6 to 10 years	4.5
11 to 20 years	2.3
A lifetime	79.6

Appendix B

Demographics

	Total (n=2,009)
Age	Percentage
18-24	15.2
25-34	21.2
35-49	31.3
50-64	24.9
65+	7.5
Sex	
Male	48.0
Female	52.0
Region	
North East	19.5
Mid West	23.1
South	33.8
West	23.6
Education	
Less than High School	2.6
High School	20.6
Some College/Associates/Trade	42.0
College Graduate (4 Year)	22.9
Post Graduate	11.9
Income	
< \$20,000	15.9
\$20,000-30,000	11.1
\$30,000-50,000	21.5
\$50,000-75,000	19.9
\$75,000-100,000	13.3
\$100,000+	12.6
Refused	5.6

	Total (n=2,009)
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White, Non-Hispanic	75.0
Black, Non-Hispanic	9.8
Asian, Non-Hispanic	3.2
Hispanic (any race)	9.0
Other	1.1
Refused	1.9
Employment Status	
Full-Time	46.7
Part-Time	14.2
Not Employed	39.1
On average, how often do you look at or use the internet in a typical month?	
More than once a day	69.8
Daily	26.5
3-6 times per week	3.2
1-2 times per week	0.3
Less than once per week	0.3