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RELATIONSHIPS
counselling, mediation
& family support across **SCOTLAND**



The Way We Are Now

Executive Summary

The State of the UK's Relationships 2014

In spring 2014, Relate and Relationships Scotland commissioned a representative survey of over 5,000 people across the UK to profile the nation's relationships. This wide-ranging survey (one of the largest of its kind) offers a rich insight into the home lives, working lives and sex lives of people in the UK. Following on from a report that Relate published in 2010, the study gives a unique perspective on our relationships with partners, families, friends and colleagues to better understand the connections and inter-dependencies between them.

The Way We Are Now report offers plenty to celebrate – the vast majority of people enjoy good quality relationships at home, work and play. We find that four in five people (85%) enjoy a good relationship with their partner, 81% of women and 73% of men describe their friendships as good or very good, and three-fifths of people (59%) have a good relationship with their boss.

On the flip side, we also see some concerning results. A quarter of people (24%) are dissatisfied with their sex lives, and one in five people (19%) never or rarely felt loved in the two weeks before the survey. The results also show that many employees are struggling to find the right balance between work and family life – more than one in three people (35%) said that their bosses believe the most productive employees put work before family, and over a fifth of people think their employers would like them to be available 24/7.

“Each chapter in the report tells a similar story – those with better quality relationships are more likely to feel better about themselves”



“Relationships act as shock absorbers when times are hard, and can provide the boost that we need to help us in achieving our goals”

Relate and Relationships Scotland commissioned this survey in response to the interactions they have with over a million people each year across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Both organisations have gained a first-hand picture of how people are working hard to keep their families together and their relationships going, through good times and bad. Alongside the findings of the nationwide survey, *The Way We Are Now* includes the results from a poll of 250 Relate and Relationships Scotland counsellors and sex therapists, adding another dimension to this study.

The Way We Are Now reveals the headline stats, from the number of friends we have to how many sexual partners we've had – but goes beyond this to explore the connection between people's relationships and their personal wellbeing, and in particular to find out how people feel about themselves. Each chapter in the report tells a similar story – those with better quality relationships are more likely to feel better about themselves. We also take a closer look at how things like gender, age, income and technology impact on people's relationships.

The Way We Are Now considers relationships in five areas:

Families

We explore how family life is changing in response to economic and broader social trends. Here we find that almost one in four people (23%) have experienced the breakdown of their parents' relationship, and three-fifths (62%) of people think that money worries are one of the biggest strains on a relationship.



Partners

We look at the quality of couple relationships and what puts them under stress. Honesty, commitment and communication are revealed as the top three ingredients of a loving relationship according to our respondents. We also reflect on the relative happiness of the UK's couples – and worryingly, find that over one in ten people currently in relationships didn't feel loved in their day-to-day lives in the two weeks before the survey.



Sex

We look beyond who's doing what and how many times a week, to consider how people feel about their sex lives. The survey finds that nearly half of respondents are fairly or very satisfied with their sex lives, and also reveals that a quarter (24%) of people report having had an affair. Interestingly, the vast majority (94%) of the counsellors and sex therapists in the parallel survey of practitioners think that a relationship can survive an affair – but only a third of our public respondents agree.



Work

We explore relationships in the workplace and the balance that many working people are trying to achieve between work and family life. The survey finds that three out of five people may feel dissatisfied or ambivalent about the support they receive from their employers in striking a work-life balance. Looking at friendships in the workplace, the survey finds that over two-fifths of respondents (42%) who are in work didn't count any colleagues as a close friend, although the majority (58%) had at least one close friend at work.



Friends

Finally, we look at relationships between friends and discover that the UK's friendships are in good health, with more than 90% of people saying that they have at least one good friend (though sadly, one in ten people don't). The survey also contains some interesting findings about how men's friendships differ from women's, how people's friendships change with age, and the impact of couple relationships on friendships – and vice versa.



“Our loved ones are still the mainstay of our personal lives and the key to our wellbeing”

When it comes to relationships, the survey also reveals that we are a surprisingly *united* kingdom – we found few significant differences in the findings according to where people live. Rather, the results tell us that there is a good deal of consistency in people's relationships, and the quality of these, across the country. Age, gender and income were far more significant in terms of differences observed than where people lived.

Good quality relationships are also good for us, and there's plenty of evidence that shows people live happier, longer and more prosperous lives when they share them with a loved one. Relationships can act as shock absorbers when times are hard, and can provide the boost that we need to help us in achieving our goals. The results of our practitioners' survey show the importance of nurturing and investing in our relationships if we want to enjoy these benefits to the full.



This is a summary of **The Way We Are Now: The State of the UK's Relationships 2014**

To read the full report visit:

www.relate.org.uk/waywearenow

This summary was written by **Chris Sherwood**,
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For more information on the issues raised in this report,
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About Relate

Relate is the UK's leading relationship support organisation, serving more than one million people each year through information, education, support, mediation and counselling. Our vision is a future in which healthy relationships are actively promoted as the basis of a thriving society.

We aim to develop and support healthy relationships by:

- delivering inclusive, high-quality services that are relevant at every stage of life
- helping couples, families and individuals to make relationships work better
- helping both the public and policy makers to improve their understanding of relationships and what makes them flourish.


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About Relationships Scotland

Relationships Scotland's network of 22 affiliated local services provide relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland. Our work supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties. Around 30,000 people have contact with our services each year.

We are a national voice for relationship support services and we influence political and legislative policy development in the area of family life and wellbeing. We support people to live with dignity and safety, and to enjoy healthy and respectful relationships.



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