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## Assessing Sexual Differences with the Decision to Remain a Virgin

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## Abstract

The first sexual experience someone encounters is often memorable. However, variations in how people define *virginity* can result in research that is misleading. In this study, 62.9% of the people questioned thought at one point in their life they would remain a virgin until marriage while 36.9% reported that they did not. Preliminary analysis revealed differences in sexual communication and satisfaction based on the decision of the participants to refrain from sex at one point in their life and their definition of losing one's virginity. The results begins to expand upon the relationship between definition of virginity, decision to delay sexual debut, and its relationship to overall sexual satisfaction and communication. Implications for therapists and researchers are provided.

## Methodology

Data for this study was collected through online advertisements that occurred between 2016-2017 and in 2019. A link was shared with potential participants and the survey was hosted in the software Qualtrics. After the informed consent, demographic questions were shared and included questions on gender, age, current relationship status, religious affiliations, and sexual orientation. The questions then focused on virginity loss. It first asked the participants, "which of the following would you define as losing your virginity?" with potential responses ranging from genital touching, touching breasts, and oral/anal/penile penetration.

The survey then posed questions about their satisfaction in their current relationship and if they felt comfortable communicating with their partner about sexual topics. Both measures were previously used in Davis et al.'s (2006) study on sexual communication and satisfaction. Example questions included, "If I feel something needs to be changed about our sex life, I usually try to talk to my partner about it and try to improve things" with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*. An example question for the sexual satisfaction was "satisfied with the quality of sex in your relationship" and had the same potential responses. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board. A total of 531 participants completed the survey.

## Results

Average responses for sexual communication and satisfaction were reviewed by whether or not the individual decided at some point to be a virgin and the aforementioned demographics. Notable gender differences were found. For example, men who decided not to be a virgin at one point in their life had higher sexual communication when compared to women who had decided not to remain a virgin. However, women who decided to be a virgin at one point had higher sexual satisfaction later on when compared to men and women who did not decide to be a virgin at one point in their lives. In regards to interest in religion, people that stated that religion was unimportant and had not decided to be a virgin had higher sexual satisfaction later on than people who thought religion was important and had decided to be a virgin.

The definition participants assigned to losing one's virginity also showed notable differences. For example, those who saw losing their virginity from penile-vaginal sex and had decided to be a virgin at one point had lower sexual communication than someone who had not decided to be a virgin, but defined losing one's virginity in the same way. People who saw losing their virginity from penile-vaginal sex and had not decided to be a virgin at any point in their life had higher sexual satisfaction later on than someone who decided to be a virgin at one point.

## Limitations

Our demographics do reduce the ability of us to extrapolate our findings. For example, there were 430 people that were female (85.1%) and 73 people were male (14.5%) reducing our ability to connect our results to self-identified males. This impacted our findings for the gender based questions which skewed the results towards the females due to there being a higher number of females. Future researchers could include the sexual satisfaction level of their sexual debut to see how that affected them in the future as well. The study provides a strong link for genders and losing virginity versus delaying virginity, how virginity is defined and how important religion is.

## Conclusion

The loss of virginity can be seen as an important step in personal development. The first sexual experience someone encounters is often memorable with a positive or negative interaction impacting sexual satisfaction and sexual communication in the future. People have different definitions of virginity which can lead to miscommunication in personal relationships, research and/or a therapy setting. Thus the information gained from this study after all the analysis has been conducted can benefit others. It can supplement the knowledge of educators, researchers and therapists of gender differences and religion when it comes to virginity loss and how it might impact the sexual communication/satisfaction in current relationships.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of sexual communication/satisfaction by demographics, definition of sex, and decision to remain a virgin (n = 531).

	Sexual Communication		Sexual Satisfaction	
	Decided to be a virgin	Did not decide to be a virgin	Decided to be a virgin	Did not decide to be a virgin
Gender				
Male	13.94	14.92	19.00	18.87
Female	14.49	14.23	20.28	19.78
Religious Value				
Important	14.62	13.76	20.44	19.03
Neutral	13.95	15.11	19.67	20.32
Unimportant	14.64	15.00	19.80	19.52
Virginity lost: touching breasts				
Yes	14.59	14.46	20.22	19.71
No	13.00	12.67	19.70	11.00
Virginity lost: touching genitalia				
Yes	14.50	14.38	20.10	19.68
No	13.91	15.00	21.05	16.57
Virginity lost: oral sex				
Yes	14.49	14.46	20.28	19.62
No	14.35	14.07	19.82	18.75
Virginity lost: anal sex				
Yes	14.65	14.50	20.16	19.28
No	14.23	14.23	20.19	20.00
Virginity lost: penile-vaginal sex				
Yes	12.31	14.45	17.47	18.30
No	14.59	14.41	20.33	19.61