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Who Lives a Good Single Life? From Basic Need Satisfaction to Attachment, Sociosexuality, and Reasons for Being Single

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ABSTRACT

We examined whether individual differences related to a sense of choice in being single—ranging from broad psychological needs to contextualized relationship motivations—explain variability in single people's well-being. In a sample of 445 single adults (*M*age = 52.91, *Msinglehood* = 20.43 years) recruited from Qualtrics, we tested whether basic need satisfaction, attachment orientation, sociosexuality, and reasons for being single (low capacity for courtship, freedom, previous constraints, and personal constraints) were associated with well-being. Results for need satisfaction and attachment replicated in a pooled sample, including 545 younger singles (*M*age = 18.87, *Msinglehood* = 7.87 years) from a university subject pool. Satisfying basic needs was consistently linked to greater life satisfaction, singlehood satisfaction, and fewer depressive symptoms; attachment anxiety predicted more depressive symptoms and lower singlehood satisfaction (the latter in the pooled sample). Sociosexuality did not predict outcomes beyond basic need satisfaction and attachment. Valuing personal freedom predicted higher satisfaction, whereas perceiving constraints from previous relationships predicted greater depressive symptoms. These findings demonstrate that individual differences related to choice at different levels of specificity provide incremental validity: one who generally feels autonomous may still benefit from secure attachment and valuing their singlehood. Findings underscore integrating general and contextualized predictors to understand single people's well-being.

Given the increase in the number of singles and the time spent in singlehood (even for people who later start a relationship), it is important to understand people's experiences with their singlehood and predictors of a good single life. Although everyone experiences singlehood, single people and their experiences of singlehood have not been as thoroughly examined as partnered people and their experiences of romantic relationships have been. However, the growing proportion of single people (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau 2020) makes it particularly timely to understand people's experiences with their singlehood and predictors of a satisfying single life, just as researchers study the predictors of a satisfying coupled life (e.g., Cobb et al. 2001).

This paper examines how individual differences help explain the diversity in singlehood. Specifically, we focus on psychological characteristics that range from broad, universal needs to more relationship- and singlehood-specific factors. This allows us to explore whether different levels of individual differences offer complementary or overlapping insights into what makes a good single life. First, we consider satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Deci and Ryan 2000), which are universal characteristics foundational to people's well-being that may also shape singlehood-specific well-being outcomes. Next, we consider attachment orientation (Bowlby 1969/1982), a more relationship-specific construct that reflects how people have learned to relate to close others and has implications for general well-being and a range of relationship outcomes. Then, we discuss sociosexuality (Penke and Asendorpf 2008) or openness to uncommitted sexual experiences, which may be particularly relevant for singles navigating or opting out of

romantic relationships. Finally, we discuss reasons for being single, the most singlehood-specific individual difference that reflects how people interpret and make meaning of their single status.

These individual differences are important because they conceptually relate to a sense of choice in being single, a central characteristic for understanding within-group variability in singles' experiences. One of the longest and most extensively studied individual differences among singles is the degree to which their singlehood is a result of a voluntary decision or circumstances that hinder relationship formation (Adamczyk 2017; Austrom and Hanel 1985; Prabhakar 2011; Stein 1979; Van Gasse and Mortelmans 2025). However, this sense of choice is multifaceted and dynamic: Someone who wants to be in a relationship may feel involuntarily single overall, but in choosing not to partner with certain individuals may feel their singlehood is also voluntary (Stein 1979; Van Gasse and Mortelmans 2025).

Thus, rather than treating this dichotomously, we examine multiple individual differences that relate to this sense of choice at different levels of specificity. Autonomy needs to capture a general sense of choice and control over one's life. Attachment orientations shape how people approach close relationships, influencing whether singlehood feels chosen. Unrestricted sociosexual orientation likely makes singlehood feel more voluntary. Finally, reasons for being single explicitly capture whether people perceive their singlehood as stemming from their values or experiencing barriers. These individual differences have been linked with single people's well-being, but their incremental validity is unclear. Simultaneously examining these individual differences from broad psychological needs to relational/sexual orientations to specific reasons for being single can provide nuanced insight into what factors matter for understanding variability in how singles experience their lives and relationship status.

1 | Basic Need Satisfaction

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan 2000) suggests that satisfying three basic psychological needs fosters growth and thriving. The needs are autonomy (the need for control), competence (the need to feel capable), and relatedness (the need for connection). Although few studies have directly examined these needs in the context of within-group variability in singles' well-being, there is emerging and related evidence. For instance, fulfilling a broader set of needs, including SDT's three basic needs as well as physical intimacy, security, caregiving, and self-expansion, predicted greater well-being among singles (Beauparlant and Machia 2024). Similarly, single people who reported higher autonomous motivation for being single were happier (Baltes 2024). Autonomy is conceptually linked to the distinction between voluntary and involuntary singlehood—the degree to which people perceive their singlehood is a result of choice vs. circumstances (Austrom and Hanel 1985; Prabhakar 2011). A sense of agency, feeling that they have relative autonomy over their life decisions and relationship status, likely contributes to meeting autonomy needs, which in turn promote well-being. In line with this, voluntarily single people tend to report greater well-being (Apostolou et al. 2019).

The needs for competence and relatedness may be fulfilled in overlapping ways, particularly through engaging in meaningful activities. Single people who invest in their career, hobbies, and volunteer work may experience a greater sense of competence as they develop skills, achieve goals, and feel purposeful (Brown et al. 2012; Forest et al. 2011; Kara and Sarol 2021). These activities often foster or are facilitated by social connections, providing opportunities to also satisfy relatedness needs. For instance, leisure activities such as volunteering are associated with more frequent social interactions and greater social integration, and friends can facilitate engagement in leisure (Toepoel 2013). Further, social interactions are generally positively associated with happiness, and the association is stronger for single people (Kislev 2020). Consistent with this, single people who report higher satisfaction with friends report higher well-being (Hu et al. 2025). When ranking priorities for a satisfying life, single people—after accounting for the necessities (such as health and good family relationships)—tend to put good friends, work, and leisure over romantic/sexual relationships (Park and MacDonald 2022). These patterns suggest that satisfying basic psychological needs, especially through non-romantic sources of connection and achievement, can contribute to singles' well-being.

2 | Attachment Orientation

Whereas the need for relatedness reflects a general desire for connection, Attachment Theory offers a more nuanced lens on how people seek, experience, and regulate intimacy in close relationships. Attachment orientations—how people tend to view and approach close relationships—are important for singlehood as they are closely related to various intra- and inter-individual outcomes (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991; Bowlby 1980). There are two dimensions: attachment anxiety, characterized by a strong desire for intimacy and fear of rejection, and attachment avoidance, characterized by a discomfort with intimacy and dependence. Secure attachment reflects low levels on both dimensions, while other subgroups emerge based on different combinations of high/low levels of the two (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991). Adult Attachment Theory, particularly its integration with singlehood research using person-centered approaches, identifies subgroups (or profiles) among singles that share distinct experiences (Pepping et al. 2025, 2018).

Attachment insecurity is often associated with poor psychosocial adjustment among singles. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals tend to invest a lot of effort into finding relationship partners; maladaptive cognitions and behaviors associated with attachment anxiety may lead to unwanted results, whether people are single or partnered (Hazan and Shaver 1987). For instance, highly anxious people may feel more fearful of being single (Spielmann et al. 2013) and more dissatisfied with their single status, which in turn is associated with lower overall well-being (Lehmann et al. 2015; MacDonald and Park 2022).

In contrast, single people who are securely attached tend to report higher well-being (Pepping et al. 2025, 2018). A more complex picture is introduced when considering attachment avoidance. Attachment Theory would predict lower general well-being due to maladaptive cognitions and behaviors

associated with attachment avoidance. However, given their general discomfort with emotional and physical intimacy (Brennan et al. 1998), avoidant individuals may report being relatively satisfied with their single status as they view it as a choice (Pepping et al. 2025). Yet if their attachment needs are not fully met, they might still be dissatisfied with their lives in general. In line with this, avoidant attachment was associated with lower life satisfaction but not associated with singlehood satisfaction when controlling for life satisfaction (MacDonald and Park 2022). In sum, these individual differences related to close relationships may help explain within-group variability in single people's well-being over and above more basic needs.

3 | Sociosexuality

Sociosexual orientation refers to individual differences in people's willingness to engage in sexual activity outside of committed relationships (Simpson and Gangestad 1991). People with unrestricted sociosexual orientation prefer more casual relationships, whereas people with a restricted orientation prefer monogamous relationships. Sociosexual orientation was associated with greater odds of being voluntarily single (vs. involuntarily single or partnered), suggesting that unrestricted sociosexual orientation may motivate people to stay single (Apostolou and Patsiarika 2022). For single people, how well their current relationship status aligns with their sociosexual desire, attitudes, and behaviors may shape how satisfied they are with their singlehood. People who desire a lot of uncommitted sexual activity might experience higher well-being when they are single (assuming their desires are fulfilled, that is, behavior is associated with well-being) and thus choose to be single to continue that lifestyle (Blasco-Belled et al. 2022; Edelstein et al. 2011; Vrangalova and Ong 2014). Thus, sociosexuality offers a narrower lens into how sexual values and behaviors can influence how singlehood is experienced.

4 | Perceived Reasons for Being Single

People vary in how they explain or make sense of their singlehood—that is, their reasons for being single. These reasons range from personal preferences to situational constraints to perceptions of self and have implications for their well-being (Austrom and Hanel 1985; Prabhakar 2011). For example, (Apostolou et al. 2020; Apostolou 2021) developed a scale to assess a wide range of self-reported reasons for being single, including constraints from previous relationships and preference for independence. Although people seem to have specific and idiosyncratic reasons for being single, the original authors were able to categorize them into broader categories and theorize their links with well-being. For instance, when people are single because constraints hinder getting into a relationship, they would be less satisfied. Although the original authors used an evolutionary framework, the reasons people share can also be interpreted more proximally, reflecting their preferences and values, situational and self-perceived barriers, and even how others might perceive them (Beauparlant and Machia 2024).

These reasons for being single can be categorized as based on constraints (from previous relationship and the self), values (e.g., prioritizing independence and friendships), and deficits (e.g., difficulty courting), and can be associated with different experiences of singlehood. Constraint-based and deficit-based reasons reflect more involuntary singlehood, whereas value-based reasons tend to be linked to voluntary singlehood, which has negative and positive links with well-being, respectively (Apostolou 2021; Apostolou et al. 2019). Another study similarly found that self-defeating reasons (e.g., feeling like people don't want to date them, fear of relationships), which overlap with constraints and deficits, were negatively associated with well-being (Beckmeyer and Jamison 2024). Ultimately, how people make meaning of and explain their single status can provide additional insight into their subjective experiences of singlehood. These singlehood-specific individual differences reflect not only external conditions but also internalized values, goals, and perceived barriers that may shape how people interpret their singlehood.

5 | Present Study

In this study, we tested whether individual differences related to a sense of choice in being single explain variability in single people's well-being. By simultaneously assessing individual differences ranging from satisfying broad psychological needs to more contextualized singlehood-specific motivations, we aim to offer a multifaceted lens on singles' well-being and address a key gap in the literature: Do relationship- and singlehood-specific factors (like attachment and reasons for being single) explain variance beyond satisfying broad psychological needs? Or does satisfying universal needs like autonomy largely account for well-being regardless of these more specific characteristics? Examining these individual differences together can clarify which dimensions matter for well-being.

We also aim to take a more holistic approach to understanding people's diverse singlehood experiences by examining multiple psychological outcomes that also range from more general (i.e., life satisfaction and depressive symptoms) to singlehood-specific (i.e., satisfaction with singlehood) outcomes. Although theorizing around these individual differences speaks to predictors of general well-being, it has not always distinguished between *which* types of psychological outcomes would be more or less affected (e.g., singlehood satisfaction vs. depressive symptoms or other well-being outcomes). Thus, we conduct this descriptive study to explore whether individual differences have distinct associations with well-being outcomes.

6 | Method

6.1 | Participants and Procedure

Both samples were recruited from the United States. First, we recruited 445 long-term single participants through Qualtrics Panels. Data were collected from October to November of 2021, and the study received exempt status by Michigan State University's IRB. We invited people who were 30+ years old and had been single for at least 5 years to participate, to ensure that people have been single long enough to have experienced life events as a single person. This resulted in a sample of

participants who were on average 52.91 years old (SD = 14.70; range: 30–92) and had been single for an average of 20.43 years (SD = 17.31; range: 5–70). 59.33% of the sample were never-married ($n = 264$), 28.09% divorced ($n = 125$), 1.57% separated ($n = 7$), and 11.01% widowed ($n = 49$). On average, participants had previously been in 3.27 relationships (10.65% of the sample had none). The sample was 63.82% women, 35.96% men, and 0.22% non-binary/other. 77.08% of the participants were White, 13.48% Black or African American, 4.04% Hispanic or Latinx, and 5.39% Asian or Asian American/American Indian/Alaska Native/Multiracial/other. On average, participants had 13.62 years of education (SD = 4.99). Sample size was determined by funding availability. A sensitivity analysis using G*Power suggested that given $N = 445$, at $\alpha = 0.001$, we had 80% power to detect an overall effect of $f^2 = 0.08$ in a multiple regression with 15 variables (i.e., the full model with all predictors; Faul et al. 2009).

Second, to partly replicate analyses, we used data from another study on singlehood and relationships that recruited college students from the psychology subject pool at a private university in the northeastern United States. Data were collected from March 2023 to April 2024, and the study received exempt status by Syracuse University's IRB. Since participants reported on the same well-being outcomes and their needs and attachment styles, we assessed whether those analyses conducted with the Qualtrics sample replicated on a sample of undergraduate students. After excluding people in relationships, the sample consisted of 545 young single people. Participants were on average 18.87 years old (SD = 1.04; range: 18–24), had been single for an average of 7.87 years, and had previously been in 1.21 relationships (35% of the sample had none). The sample was 59.82% women, 39.63% men, and 0.55% non-binary/other. The sample was 61.10% White, 19.27% Asian or Asian American, 6.42% Hispanic or Latinx, 6.06% Black or African American, 4.22% multiracial, and 2.94% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander/other.

6.2 | Measures

6.2.1 | Individual Differences

6.2.1.1 | Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction. The 24-item Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS; Chen et al. 2015) assessed how well SDT's three needs are currently being met. Four items measure satisfaction and four items measure frustration with each need: Autonomy (e.g., "I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake," "Most of the things I do feel like I have to"), relatedness (e.g., "I feel that the people I care about also care about me," "I feel excluded from the group I want to belong to"), competence (e.g., "I feel confident that I can do things well," "I have serious doubts about whether I can do things well"). Although previous factor analyses suggested a six-factor solution, where satisfaction and frustration of each need showed discriminant validity (Chen et al. 2015), in this dataset, we found support for a one-factor solution. Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*completely untrue*) to 5 (*completely true*). Items were averaged across the full scale after reverse-coding the frustration items ($\alpha s > 0.91$). Supplementary analyses provide subscale analyses and details of factor analyses.

6.2.1.2 | Attachment. We used the Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures questionnaire to measure attachment toward close relationships in general, which is associated with attachment toward specific people (i.e., convergent validity, $rs \geq 0.28$; Fraley et al. 2011). Six items measure avoidance (e.g., "I prefer not to show close others how I feel deep down;" $\alpha s \geq 0.70$). Three items measure anxiety (e.g., "I often worry that close others don't really care about me" $\alpha s \geq 0.86$). Participants rated each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Items were averaged for each subscale.

6.2.1.3 | Sociosexuality. The revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Penke and Asendorpf 2008) assessed sociosexual orientation, which reflects evolutionary perspectives on romantic relationships (i.e., the pursuit of uncommitted sexual activity at the expense of longer-term, committed relationships), across three subscales. The desire subscale reflects an individual's interest in uncommitted sex (e.g., "How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship?" $\alpha = 0.89$; response options ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*nearly every day*)). The sociosexual behavior subscale reflects an individual's past uncommitted sexual activity (e.g., "With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse on one and only one occasion?" $\alpha = 0.72$, five response options ranging from 0, 1, 2–3, 4–7, to 8 or more). The sociosexual attitudes subscale reflects a person's beliefs about uncommitted sexual activity (e.g., "Sex without love is OK;" $\alpha = 0.68$, response options ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*)). The subscales show convergent and predictive validity—for example, desire is associated with short-term mating interest ($r = 0.52$) and behavior at Time 1 predicted the number of sexual partners at Time 2 ($rs \geq 0.45$; Penke and Asendorpf 2008). Items were averaged for each subscale. Higher numbers indicated a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation (e.g., more frequently experiencing sexual arousal outside of a committed relationship, a greater number of casual sexual partners).

6.2.1.4 | Reasons for Being Single. A previous study identified 92 reasons for people's singlehood that fit under 18 factors, which then fell under four domains: low capacity for courtship, freedom, constraints from previous relationships, and personal constraints (Apostolou et al. 2020).[1] To reduce participant burden, we asked participants to rate their agreement on 18 face-valid items based on the factors. Participants used a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Then, we averaged items to calculate four domain scores: low capacity for courtship (e.g., "I am not good at flirting"; $\alpha = 0.69$), freedom (e.g., "I want to be free to do whatever I want"; $\alpha = 0.74$), previous constraints (e.g., "I want to devote my attention to my children"; $\alpha = 0.56$), and personal constraints (e.g., "I move often"; $\alpha = 0.67$). A confirmatory factor analysis suggested that this four-factor solution fit reasonably well (e.g., CFI = 0.81, SRMR = 0.07, RMSEA = 0.08), and standardized item loadings ranged from 0.29 to 0.72 (the two lowest factor loadings were for children-related items (0.29 and 0.39), which would apply to only a subset of singles; see Supplement for complete

factor loadings). Given the low reliability of some subscales, results should be interpreted with caution.

6.2.2 | Well-Being Outcomes

6.2.2.1 | Life Satisfaction. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985) measured life satisfaction using five items (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to ideal;" $\alpha s \geq 0.83$). Participants rated their agreement with each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). All items were averaged to calculate a mean score.

6.2.2.2 | Depressive Symptoms. The 10-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD; Zhang et al. 2012) measured depressive symptoms using 10 items (e.g., "I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me;" $\alpha s \geq 0.81$), which are highly correlated with the longer original scale ($r = 0.97$). Participants rated each item from the following four response options: Rarely or none of the time (less than a day), Some or a little of the time (1–2 days), Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3–4 days), and Most or all of the time (5–7 days). All items were averaged to calculate a mean score.

6.2.2.3 | Satisfaction With Singlehood. Singlehood satisfaction was measured with the five-item Satisfaction with Relationship Status Scale (ReSta; Lehmann et al. 2015). One sample item is "In general, how satisfied are you with your current status?" ($\alpha s \geq 0.83$). Participants rated items on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*to a great extent*).[2]

6.3 | Analytic Strategy

To assess the relative contributions of each level of individual differences, we conducted a series of hierarchical regressions for each outcome.[3] In the first step, we entered demographic characteristics (age, gender, financial difficulty, length of singlehood, and number of previous relationships) as control variables given previous research that suggests links between these variables, individual differences, and well-being (e.g., Apostolou et al. 2020; Chopik et al. 2013; Ochnik 2023; Ochnik and Slonim 2020; Oh et al. 2022; Park et al. 2022; Timonen and Doyle 2014; Van IJzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg 2010).[4] Next, we entered basic needs (Step 2), followed by attachment orientations (Step 3), sociosexuality (Step 4), and reasons for singlehood (Step 5) as predictors. This order reflects a progression from broad, foundational psychological needs to more specific, relationship- and singlehood-relevant characteristics and was also informed by data availability across samples. This approach allowed us to assess the incremental explanatory power of each set of variables ("sociosexuality" instead of just sociosexual behaviors) in predicting single people's well-being. Because the overall pattern of results was consistent across steps (i.e., once a predictor was significant, it remained significant in future steps and vice versa), we report the final model and the change in R^2 at each step in the main text. We tested these hierarchical models in the Qualtrics sample. Since the student sample had overlapping measures except for sociosexuality and reasons for being single, we conducted analyses up to Step 3 to see whether these results replicated. We also ran pooled analyses, controlling for data source, to examine whether results differed by sample beyond differences based on singlehood length and age.

Given the large number of tests for this study, we adopted a stricter threshold of ≤ 0.001 to reduce the False Discovery Rate (Vidgen and Yasseri 2016) rather than applying highly conservative corrections that could lead to increasing false negatives.[5] This study was not pre-registered. The code and data for the study are available at https://osf.io/bxskr/?view_only=4fdc1b34327a4a119eb436e0475a401f.

7 | Results

Table 1 presents correlations and descriptive statistics across the full sample. Satisfaction with basic needs was correlated with well-being outcomes in expected directions (i.e., greater singlehood/life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms; $rs \geq |0.31|$). Attachment avoidance was correlated with general well-being outcomes (lower life satisfaction and depressive symptoms; $rs \geq |0.13|$) but not with singlehood-specific satisfaction ($rs < |0.03|$). Attachment anxiety was correlated with lower well-being in all four outcomes ($rs \geq |0.30|$).

Desiring uncommitted sex was correlated with lower well-being on all outcomes ($rs \geq |0.17|$), but life satisfaction ($r = -0.02$). Partaking in uncommitted sexual activity (i.e., behavior) and attitudes around uncommitted sexual activity were not significantly correlated with any well-being outcomes ($rs \leq |0.07|$). Reporting low capacity for courtship, constraints from previous relationships, and personal constraints as reasons for singlehood were all positively correlated with depressive symptoms ($rs \geq |0.25|$), but were not correlated with singlehood satisfaction and life satisfaction ($rs \leq |0.09|$). Being single to be free was positively correlated with well-being on all outcomes ($rs \geq |0.22|$), but depressive symptoms ($r = -0.04$).

Individual differences were generally intercorrelated.[6] In general, satisfied needs were associated with greater attachment security, lower sociosexual desire, endorsing freedom as a reason for being single, and lower endorsement of constraints and difficulty courting as reasons for being single. Attachment avoidance was positively associated with attachment anxiety. Attachment anxiety was associated with greater sociosexual desire, endorsing difficulties with courtship and more constraints. Sociosexual behaviors, attitudes, and desires were positively intercorrelated. Sociosexual behaviors were associated with freedom and personal constraints. Sociosexual attitudes were positively associated with freedom. Sociosexual desire was positively associated with personal constraints. All reasons were positively intercorrelated, suggesting people endorse both "*positive*" and "*negative*" reasons for singlehood.

Older singles were more satisfied with their singlehood and less depressed. Financial difficulty was associated with lower life satisfaction and higher depressive symptoms. People who had been single for longer tended to be more satisfied with their singlehood and less depressed. Recruitment method was strongly associated with age. Participants recruited through Qualtrics were more satisfied with their singlehood and lives in general and reported fewer depressive symptoms.

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Basic need satisfaction	3.53	0.64							
2. Attachment avoidance	3.90	1.20	−0.33***						
3. Attachment anxiety	3.97	1.80	−0.52***	0.12***					
4. Sociosexual behavior	1.97	0.93	−0.13	0.01	0.15				
5. Sociosexual attitude	2.69	1.17	−0.11	0.11	0.02	0.53***			
6. Sociosexual desire	2.21	1.14	−0.21***	−0.01	0.28***	0.50***	0.50***		
7. Courtship	2.57	0.98	−0.32***	0.15	0.30***	0.07	0.06	0.07	
8. Freedom	2.80	0.97	0.08	−0.09	0	0.19***	0.19***	0.15	0.33***
9. Previous constraint	2.81	0.98	−0.29***	0.05	0.40***	0.03	−0.08	0.06	0.41***
10. Personal constraint	1.78	0.90	−0.30***	0.03	0.25***	0.20***	0.15	0.27***	0.42***
11. Relationship status satisfaction	2.77	0.77	0.36***	−0.03	−0.32***	−0.04	−0.03	−0.19***	−0.05
12. Singlehood satisfaction (single item)	6.95	2.77	0.31***	−0.01	−0.30***	−0.05	−0.04	−0.17***	−0.02
13. Life satisfaction	4.35	1.42	0.51***	−0.27***	−0.30***	−0.02	0	−0.02	−0.16
14. Depressive symptoms	2.45	0.57	−0.53***	0.13***	0.48***	0.07	0.02	0.19***	0.32***
15. Age	34.1	19.6	0.07	0.11***	−0.16***	−0.20***	−0.12	−0.27***	0.05
16. Gender	−0.2	0.97	−0.05	0.06*	−0.13***	0.21***	0.21***	0.41***	0
17. Financial difficulty	3.72	1.78	−0.19***	0.20***	0.14***	−0.03	−0.03	−0.07	0.16***
18. Number of relationships	2.13	3.04	−0.10	0.04	0.05	0.24***	0.20***	0.20***	0.01
19. Length of singlehood	14.6	14.9	0.01	0.08	−0.05	−0.1	−0.11	−0.08	0.13
20. Data source			−0.05	0.13***	−0.05	NA	NA	NA	NA

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
0.16***											
0.34***	0.40***										
0.35***	−0.15	−0.15									
0.30***	−0.12	−0.11	0.75***								
0.22***	−0.11	−0.01	0.43***	0.38***							
−0.04	0.43***	0.25***	−0.39***	−0.37***	−0.43***						
−0.05	−0.15	−0.18***	0.20***	0.36***	−0.09	−0.21***					
0.05	−0.23***	0.08	−0.04	−0.07	−0.04	−0.09	−0.03				
−0.1	0.1	−0.07	0	0.04	−0.41***	0.19***	0.31***	−0.07			
0.02	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.08	−0.07	0	0.29***	0.11***	0.14***		
0.11	−0.14	0.05	0.16***	0.21***	0.01	−0.14***	0.47***	0	0.08	−0.06	
NA	NA	NA	0.20***	0.35***	−0.15***	−0.11***	0.86***	−0.04	0.38***	0.34***	0.39***

Note: Gender (1 = *men*, −1 = *women*). Data source (1 = *Qualtrics*, −1 = *students*) Combined $N = 990$. ***$p < 0.001$. NA individual differences variables were not measured in the student sample. Correlations for those variables were based on $n = 445$.

7.1 | What Are the Individual Difference Correlates of Single People's Well-Being?

Next, we formally tested whether individual differences explained variability in well-being, starting with broader psychological outcomes and singlehood-specific outcomes. Results involving reasons for being single should be interpreted with caution, given measurement limitations. First, demographic

covariates explained 22% of the variance in life satisfaction. Adding satisfaction of basic needs explained significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$). Adding attachment, sociosexuality, and reasons for being single in the next three steps did not explain significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.002$, $p = 0.587$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.197$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p = 0.003$, respectively). In the final model, financial difficulties predicted lower life satisfaction, whereas satisfying needs and endorsing freedom as a reason for singlehood predicted higher life satisfaction (left panel of Table 2).

Second, covariates explained 16% of the variance in depressive symptoms. Adding basic needs and attachment in the next two steps explained significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$, and $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). Although adding sociosexuality did not explain significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.091$), adding reasons for being single in the final step explained significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.04$, $p < 0.001$). In the final model, financial difficulties, attachment anxiety, and constraints from previous relationships predicted higher depressive symptoms, whereas satisfying needs predicted fewer depressive symptoms (left panel of Table 3).

Finally, covariates explained 4.5% of the variance in singlehood satisfaction. Patterns for changes in variance in explained mirrored those for life satisfaction: adding satisfaction of basic needs explained significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$), adding attachment variables and sociosexuality in the next two steps did not explain significantly more variance ($\Delta R = 0.01$, $p = 0.063$ and $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p = 0.044$, respectively), and adding in reasons for being single in the final step explained significantly more variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$). Altogether, satisfying needs and endorsing freedom as a reason for singlehood predicted higher satisfaction with singlehood (left panel of Table 4).

Results for basic need satisfaction and attachment replicated in the student sample, except that attachment anxiety additionally predicted lower singlehood satisfaction. We also pooled the samples and additionally controlled for data source to see if there are differences between samples collected from Qualtrics and the university subject pool beyond age and length of singlehood that play a role in well-being (right panels of Tables 2–4). Results replicated the findings, but attachment anxiety continued to predict lower singlehood satisfaction even after controlling for demographic covariates, basic need satisfaction, and data source. Although the associations between attachment anxiety and both measures of singlehood satisfaction were not statistically significant in the Qualtrics sample alone, the direction and magnitude of the effect ($\beta s = -0.09$) closely mirrored the significant effect in the pooled sample ($\beta s \leq -0.17$), suggesting the difference in significance may reflect reduced statistical power rather than detecting a smaller effect. The bivariate correlations were also consistent across samples.

8 | Discussion

Whether singlehood is voluntary has been central to singlehood research, but people's sense of choice is complex and multifaceted. We examined individual differences related to this sense of choice at different levels of specificity—ranging from satisfying basic psychological needs to singlehood-specific motivations—to identify their incremental contributions to well-being. By examining both general (life satisfaction and depressive symptoms) and singlehood-specific (satisfaction with singlehood) outcomes, we also aimed to take a more holistic approach to understanding variability in singlehood experiences.

Overall, there was a consistent association between basic need satisfaction and all outcomes of well-being. Attachment anxiety was associated with both depressive symptoms and singlehood satisfaction, but the latter association only emerged when also considering the student sample. Although sociosexual desire showed bivariate associations with well-being, it was not a significant predictor after accounting for need satisfaction and attachment. Regarding reasons for singlehood, value-based reasons (i.e., wanting to spend time with friends) predicted life satisfaction and relationship status satisfaction, whereas constraint-based reasons (e.g., grief and fear of getting hurt) predicted depressive symptoms over and above satisfying basic needs and people's relationship orientations. Altogether, our results suggest the value in integrating both general and contextualized individual differences to better understand single people's experiences with their lives and relationship status. Freedom and autonomy—whether captured through need satisfaction or value-based reasons for singlehood—seem to be particularly important for well-being, suggesting that singlehood may be more fulfilling when it aligns with internal values and is not constrained by unmet relational goals.

8.1 | Individual Differences and Well-Being

Satisfying basic psychological needs was a consistent predictor across all well-being outcomes, supporting previous research that suggests autonomy, relatedness, and competence are fundamental for people to thrive (Baltes 2024; Deci and Ryan 2000; Sarkisian and Gerstel 2016; Timonen and Doyle 2014). Interestingly, our factor analyses suggested a general factor of need satisfaction predicted satisfying all types of needs. In other words, people who felt autonomous also tended to feel competent and related, possibly because needs can be fulfilled in overlapping ways (Kara and Sarol 2021). For instance, pursuing social hobbies may meet relatedness needs through interacting with people, competence through developing skills in the hobby, and autonomy through a sense of control that they can choose where to spend their time and resources. Altogether, satisfying these needs may be a core part of living a good single life, not only in terms of feeling satisfied with one's life in general and experiencing fewer symptoms of depression but also specifically in terms of being satisfied with one's single status.

We also examined how single people's tendency to view and approach close relationships explained well-being beyond satisfying basic needs, including having a sense of choice and control over one's life. Generally consistent with prior research, we found bivariate correlations between attachment and well-being outcomes: anxiety was associated with worse outcomes across all outcomes, whereas avoidance was associated with worse general outcomes but not associated with singlehood-specific outcomes (MacDonald and Park 2022; Pepping and MacDonald 2019; Pepping et al. 2018). Importantly, anxious

TABLE 2 | Linear regression predicting satisfaction with life.

	Qualtrics sample							Pooled sample						
	b	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***	***b***	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Intercept	4.07	3.94	4.21		0.07	61.04	< 0.001	4.35	4.27	4.43		0.04	106.43	< 0.001
Age	−0.01	−0.02	0.01	−0.04	0.01	−0.95	0.341	−0.01	−0.02	0.00	−0.10	0.00	−1.82	0.068
Gender	−0.17	−0.33	−0.02	−0.10	0.08	−2.21	0.028	−0.08	−0.16	0.01	−0.05	0.04	−1.80	0.073
Financial Difficulty	**−0.28**	**−0.35**	**−0.20**	**−0.31**	**0.04**	**−7.59**	**< 0.001**	**−0.25**	**−0.30**	**−0.20**	**−0.31**	**0.02**	**−10.32**	**< 0.001**
Relationship Number	0.01	−0.02	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.57	0.568	0.02	−0.01	0.05	0.04	0.01	1.45	0.149
Singlehood Length	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.09	0.00	2.03	0.043	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.00	1.92	0.055
Basic Need Satisfaction	**0.98**	**0.74**	**1.22**	**0.42**	**0.12**	**8.02**	**< 0.001**	**0.94**	**0.79**	**1.09**	**0.42**	**0.08**	**12.32**	**< 0.001**
Attachment Avoidance	−0.05	−0.17	0.06	−0.04	0.06	−0.87	0.385	−0.07	−0.13	0.00	−0.05	0.04	−1.85	0.064
Attachment Anxiety	−0.01	−0.10	0.08	−0.02	0.05	−0.30	0.765	−0.04	−0.09	0.01	−0.05	0.03	−1.43	0.153
Sociosexuality Behavior	−0.06	−0.23	0.10	−0.04	0.09	−0.75	0.454							
Sociosexuality Attitude	0.06	−0.08	0.20	0.04	0.07	0.85	0.395							
Sociosexuality Desire	0.07	−0.09	0.22	0.05	0.08	0.84	0.401							
Courtship	−0.07	−0.23	0.10	−0.04	0.08	−0.81	0.419							
Freedom	**0.25**	**0.10**	**0.41**	**0.15**	**0.08**	**3.31**	**0.001**							
Previous Constraint	0.04	−0.12	0.21	0.03	0.08	0.53	0.599							
Personal Constraint	0.08	−0.09	0.26	0.04	0.09	0.91	0.361							
Data Source								0.06	−0.09	0.22	0.05	0.08	0.81	0.418

Note: Gender: 1 = *men*, −1 = *women*. Data: 1 = *Qualtrics*, −1 = *students*. $p \leq 0.001$ are bolded.
Abbreviations: LB, lower bound of 95% CI; UB, upper bound of 95% CI.

TABLE 3 | Linear regression predicting depressive symptoms.

	Qualtrics sample							Pooled sample						
	b	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***	***b***	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Intercept	2.37	2.32	2.42		0.03	90.90	< 0.001	2.44	2.41	2.47		0.02	149.59	< 0.001
Age	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.05	0.00	−1.06	0.288	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.12	0.00	−2.08	0.038
Gender	−0.01	−0.07	0.05	−0.02	0.03	−0.45	0.654	−0.05	−0.08	−0.01	−0.08	0.02	−2.79	0.005
Financial Difficulty	**0.06**	**0.03**	**0.08**	**0.15**	**0.01**	**3.96**	**< 0.001**	**0.05**	**0.03**	**0.07**	**0.14**	**0.01**	**4.81**	**< 0.001**
Relationship Num	−0.01	−0.02	0.00	−0.06	0.01	−1.54	0.124	−0.01	−0.02	0.00	−0.04	0.01	−1.24	0.217
Singlehood Length	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.07	0.00	−1.65	0.100	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.07	0.00	−2.36	0.019
Basic Need Satisfaction	**−0.35**	**−0.44**	**−0.26**	**−0.36**	**0.05**	**−7.32**	**< 0.001**	**−0.35**	**−0.41**	**−0.29**	**−0.39**	**0.03**	**−11.55**	**< 0.001**
Attachment Avoidance	0.00	−0.04	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.19	0.849	−0.01	−0.04	0.02	−0.02	0.01	−0.77	0.44
Attachment **Anxiety**	**0.06**	**0.02**	**0.09**	**0.16**	**0.02**	**3.24**	**0.001**	**0.07**	**0.05**	**0.09**	**0.23**	**0.01**	**6.98**	**< 0.001**
Sociosexuality Behavior	−0.03	−0.10	0.03	−0.04	0.03	−0.96	0.335							
Sociosexuality Attitude	−0.01	−0.07	0.04	−0.02	0.03	−0.47	0.638							
Sociosexuality Desire	0.06	0.00	0.12	0.10	0.03	2.00	0.047							
Courtship	0.07	0.01	0.13	0.10	0.03	2.13	0.033							
Freedom	−0.03	−0.09	0.03	−0.04	0.03	−1.03	0.305							
Previous Constraint	**0.14**	**0.08**	**0.20**	**0.20**	**0.03**	**4.24**	**< 0.001**							
Personal Constraint	0.00	−0.07	0.07	0.00	0.04	−0.05	0.958							
Data Source								−0.02	−0.08	0.04	−0.04	0.03	−0.68	0.496

Note: Gender: 1 = *men*, −1 = *women*. Data: 1 = *Qualtrics*, −1 = *students*. $p \leq 0.001$ are bolded.
Abbreviations: LB, lower bound of 95% CI; UB, upper bound of 95% CI.

TABLE 4 | Linear regression predicting satisfaction with singlehood (ReSta).

	Qualtrics sample							Pooled sample						
	b	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***	***b***	**LB**	**UB**	***β***	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Intercept	2.93	2.86	3.00		0.04	80.84	< 0.001	2.79	2.74	2.83		0.03	110.87	< 0.001
Age	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.12	0.00	−2.52	0.012	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.14	0.00	−2.20	0.028
Gender	−0.06	−0.14	0.02	−0.07	0.04	−1.43	0.154	−0.04	−0.09	0.01	−0.05	0.03	−1.69	0.092
Financial Difficulty	−0.01	−0.05	0.03	−0.02	0.02	−0.40	0.690	0.00	−0.03	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.17	0.867
Relationship Num	0.01	−0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.74	0.460	0.01	−0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.72	0.475
Singlehood Length	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.08	0.00	1.82	0.069	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.11	0.00	2.92	0.004
Basic Need Satisfaction	**0.42**	**0.29**	**0.55**	**0.35**	**0.07**	**6.42**	**< 0.001**	**0.39**	**0.30**	**0.48**	**0.32**	**0.05**	**8.31**	**< 0.001**
Avoidance	0.05	−0.01	0.12	0.07	0.03	1.67	0.095	0.05	0.01	0.09	0.07	0.02	2.22	0.027
Anxiety	−0.02	−0.07	0.02	−0.05	0.03	−0.98	0.329	**−0.07**	**−0.11**	**−0.04**	**−0.17**	**0.02**	**−4.53**	**< 0.001**
Sociosexuality Behavior	0.01	−0.08	0.10	0.01	0.05	0.17	0.864							
Sociosexuality Attitude	0.01	−0.07	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.28	0.778							
Sociosexuality Desire	−0.11	−0.20	−0.03	−0.15	0.04	−2.66	0.008							
Courtship	0.03	−0.06	0.12	0.04	0.05	0.71	0.476							
Freedom	**0.36**	**0.28**	**0.44**	**0.40**	**0.04**	**8.59**	**< 0.001**							
Previous Constraint	−0.05	−0.14	0.04	−0.06	0.05	−1.06	0.290							
Personal Constraint	−0.14	−0.24	−0.05	−0.15	0.05	−2.98	0.003							
Data Source								**0.21**	**0.11**	**0.30**	**0.26**	**0.05**	**4.20**	**< 0.001**

Note: Gender: 1 = *men*, −1 = *women*. Data: 1 = *Qualtrics*, −1 = *students*. $p \leq 0.001$ are bolded.
Abbreviations: LB, lower bound of 95% CI; UB, upper bound of 95% CI.

attachment remained a significant predictor of depression and singlehood satisfaction (but not of life satisfaction) even when controlling for basic need satisfaction, demonstrating its unique contribution to understanding singles' well-being.

Notably, associations with singlehood satisfaction were only significant in the pooled sample that included the student sample. Given that the student sample was younger, had fewer past relationships and shorter singlehood duration, reported lower financial difficulty, and largely desired future partnership (92.66% of the sample said they moderately or strongly agreed with "I would like to be partnered someday."), we examined whether some of these characteristics moderated the link between anxious attachment and singlehood satisfaction. In a series of follow-up moderation analyses, we found no evidence for the link between anxious attachment and singlehood satisfaction being moderated by age, the number of past relationships, length of singlehood, financial difficulty, or data source in either the pooled sample or in each sample ($bs < |0.006|$, $ps \geq 0.488$). These null effects suggest that the role of anxious attachment is relatively consistent across demographic characteristics. Further, regarding attachment orientations more broadly, recent person-centered research identified four profiles of single people and distinct experiences of people high on both dimensions (Pepping et al. 2025). It is possible that those who are high in both dimensions—attachment anxiety and avoidance—report lower singlehood satisfaction, whereas avoidance alone may not be associated with singlehood satisfaction. However, we also found no evidence for an interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance in the pooled and separate samples ($ps \geq 0.234$). Taken together, these results highlight that anxious attachment predicts singles' depressive symptoms, beyond satisfying broad needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Evidence for associations with singlehood satisfaction emerged in the pooled sample with greater variability in sample characteristics, though this finding requires replication.

We tested whether sociosexuality was relevant for well-being (Blasco-Belled et al. 2022) over and above attachment for singles. However, we did not find evidence that it predicted well-being after accounting for satisfying basic needs and attachment. While sociosexual desire showed bivariate links with well-being, it did not offer incremental predictive value, suggesting that the mere desire for casual sex may not be central to how single people evaluate their lives and relationship status. Alternatively, sociosexuality might not have been as indicative of well-being relevant to people who have been single for 20 years (i.e., Qualtrics sample) or emerging adults navigating and exploring relationships and sexuality (though we did not measure sociosexuality in the student sample). Uncommitted sexual activity may be particularly desirable when people feel restricted in their relationships, and in line with this, sociosexuality is associated with singlehood due to marital dissolutions as well as voluntary singlehood (Apostolou and Patsiarika 2022; French et al. 2019). Indeed, we found that on average, the older Qualtrics sample did not have strong attitudes and desires ($Ms \leq 2.69$ on a scale of 1 to 5) for unrestricted casual sex and acted on it even less ($M = 1.97$ on a scale of 1 to 5). Our expectation that sociosexuality might be associated with higher satisfaction hinges on the assumption that those desires are met. Behaviors were positively associated with attitude and desire, suggesting this assumption is not unreasonable ($rs \leq 0.54$), but it is likely that people vary in feeling their desires are fulfilled. Future research can assess the interaction between attitudes, desires, and behaviors in a more representative sample, and examine whether sociosexuality explains unique variance in well-being above and beyond more general sexuality constructs such as sexual satisfaction and sexual activity (Park et al. 2021; Træen and Kvalem 2022).

Finally, singlehood-specific reasons for being single explained additional variance in outcomes beyond basic need satisfaction, attachment styles, and sociosexuality. Value-based reasons (i.e., being single to exercise more freedom) explained positive outcomes, whereas constraint-based reasons (being single due to constraints from previous relationships) explained depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with previous research that singles who choose to be single to prioritize other areas of their lives likely thrive in their singlehood (Kislev 2020). Indeed, the ability to have more time for oneself and focus on one's goals has been identified as reasons that make singlehood particularly appealing (Apostolou and Christoforou 2022). Although other studies suggest that people are also less satisfied when constraints hinder people from getting into a relationship (Apostolou et al. 2020; Beckmeyer and Jamison 2024), we found these links only with depressive symptoms. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of meaning-making in singlehood: when single people perceive their singlehood as aligned with their values and priorities in life, they may be more likely to thrive. Given measurement concerns with the reasons for singlehood scale, future research with more refined measurements is needed to replicate these patterns.

8.2 | Limitations and Future Directions

First, our participants were largely white, straight women in the U.S. and/or students at a private university. Singlehood experiences depend on various identities and characteristics such as religion, personality traits, race, gender, marital status, sexuality, and culture (Darrington et al. 2005; Hoan and MacDonald 2024; Kislev and Marsh 2023; Ochnik and Slonim 2020; Pudrovska et al. 2006; Sim 2022; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001; Træen and Kvalem 2022), suggesting limits to the generalizability of our findings. Replication in more diverse samples is needed.

Related, we found a difference in the two samples used in the study. Participants recruited through Qualtrics were not only older than our student sample ($r = 0.86$), but also reported better psychological well-being ($rs \geq |0.11|$), particularly in terms of their satisfaction with their singlehood ($r = 0.35$), despite voicing more financial difficulties. Future studies should consider how recruitment method and sample context may inform and interact with the constructs of interest.

Next, the reasons for being single measure was not ideal, showing suboptimal model fit (e.g., CFI = 0.81), low internal consistency for some subscales ($\alpha s = 0.56–0.74$), and some weak item loadings (range: 0.29–0.72). These concerns partly reflect the original hierarchical structure: each subscale comprises items representing distinct factors from the original 18-factor structure

that together characterize four broader domains (Apostolou et al. 2020). Thus, low inter-item correlations are expected as items represent different factors that fall under the same broader domain (rather than technically being multiple indicators of a single factor). For example, the previous constraints subscale includes distinct reasons that may independently contribute to constraints without necessarily co-occurring (devotion to children, grief, fear of being hurt, and pickiness). Although this multidimensional structure explains lower inter-item correlations, it nonetheless represents a measurement challenge. We selected the 18 items that represented the factors to minimize participant burden, but future research would benefit from refined measures with multiple items per factor to allow explicit modeling of the hierarchical structure. Notably, despite these limitations, we found patterns consistent with prior research.

Further, our study selected basic need satisfaction, attachment, sociosexuality, and reasons for being single to understand within-group variability in well-being among single people. Although our study was not intended to be a comprehensive study of *all* individual differences relevant to a sense of choice among single people, there are other constructs that would have been good to consider, in hindsight. For instance, extraversion is a robust predictor of positive affect and life satisfaction and is associated with a stronger need for affiliation (Lucas et al. 2000). Emerging studies suggest that also examining other dimensions in the Big Five can help understand the heterogeneity among singles (Gonzalez Avilés et al. 2024; Hoan and MacDonald 2024; Stern et al. 2024). How these decontextualized traits, including but not exclusive to the Big Five (John and Srivastava 1999), interact with broader needs and contextualized (relationship- or singlehood-specific) individual differences would be an important direction for future research.

Last, both individual differences and well-being develop over time (Oh et al. 2022; Park et al. 2022), and we may see different long-term associations. For instance, although attachment avoidance is unassociated with singlehood satisfaction concurrently, perhaps it is positively associated in the short term because people are happy to avoid discomfort at the moment, but negatively associated in the long term without reaping the benefits of close relationships or through lower life satisfaction. This time lag might have changed the strength and type of perceptions. Prospective longitudinal studies are needed to assess these possibilities, including the causes and consequences of these perceptions and their changes.

9 | Conclusion

People's unique individual differences shape how they view their life and their current well-being. Our findings suggested that single people satisfying their basic needs consistently reported better well-being across broad and singlehood-specific outcomes. Yet more specific and contextualized individual differences also explained unique variance in outcomes. That is, these individual differences related to a sense of choice at different levels of specificity provide incremental validity beyond satisfying basic needs alone: a single person who generally feels autonomous about their life may still benefit from additionally being securely attached and valuing their singlehood. Altogether, a full appreciation of a range of individual differences, particularly those capturing choice, will be influential in developing a comprehensive framework and description of the singlehood experience.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at https://osf.io/bxskr/?view_only=4fdc1b34327a4a119eb436e0475a401f.

Endnotes

[1] Participants in the initial study were from Cyprus. A cross-cultural analysis across eight other countries (excluding the U.S.) suggested that 12 factors across three domains fit better (Apostolou 2021).

[2] Singlehood satisfaction was also assessed with a single item: "How satisfied are you with your situation as a single?" using a 0 (*very dissatisfied*) to 10 (*very satisfied*) scale (Brüderl et al. 2020). We initially explored both measures, suspecting they might capture distinct aspects. For instance, someone might be currently satisfied with being single because it affords them greater flexibility, but because they want a partner in the long term, they might be dissatisfied with their single status, or vice versa. However, the measures were strongly correlated ($r = 0.75$) and yielded consistent results. We focus on ReSta in the main text, given its previous validation work. We provide descriptive statistics of the single-item measure in the main text and provide full results with the single-item measure in the Supplement for interested readers, as this item is used in panel studies (e.g., LISS panel, PAIRFAM).

[3] Originally, we conducted a series of separate linear regressions to test whether satisfying basic needs, attachment, sociosexuality, and reasons for being single separately predicted various components of well-being and discussed their adjusted R^2 across models. In other words, we ran separate regressions for each individual set and outcome combination (e.g., attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance predicting life satisfaction), controlling for age, gender, financial difficulty, length of singlehood, and number of previous relationships in each sample. We skip these results based on some overlapping information with the reported bivariate correlations and regressions, but share code to replicate these analyses for interested readers.

[4] A reviewer suggested running a model without these covariates. We found that the results were consistent.

[5] During the review process, we applied the Benjamini-Hochberg correction (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995) to control the False Discovery Rate (FDR = 0.05) separately for the pooled sample and the Qualtrics sample. All findings that were significant at our original threshold ($p < 0.001$) remained significant after the correction. Additionally, a few estimates with p-values between 0.001 and 0.05 also achieved significance after the correction (e.g., sociosexual desire, $\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.008$, adjusted $p = 0.037$), suggesting our original threshold may have been more conservative.

[6] A reviewer suggested exploratory factor analyses (EFA) given the conceptual and empirical overlap across some of the constructs and

measures. In an EFA with all items, it was difficult to clearly interpret the factors given significant cross-loadings across factors or some factors missing significant indicators (even in a good-fitting solution). Nevertheless, more interpretable patterns emerged in an EFA with composites. In a four-factor solution (RMSEA = 0.03, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.01), despite significant cross-loadings, need satisfaction loaded on a factor along with attachment avoidance and anxiety, and freedom. Attachment avoidance and anxiety also loaded on a second factor, along with previous constraints. Previous constraints also loaded on a second factor along with the other reasons for being single (freedom, personal constraints, and difficulty courting). Sociosexual desires, attitudes, and behaviors loaded onto their own factor.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Data S1:** Supporting Information.