

# Romantic Relationships During COVID-19 in Turkey

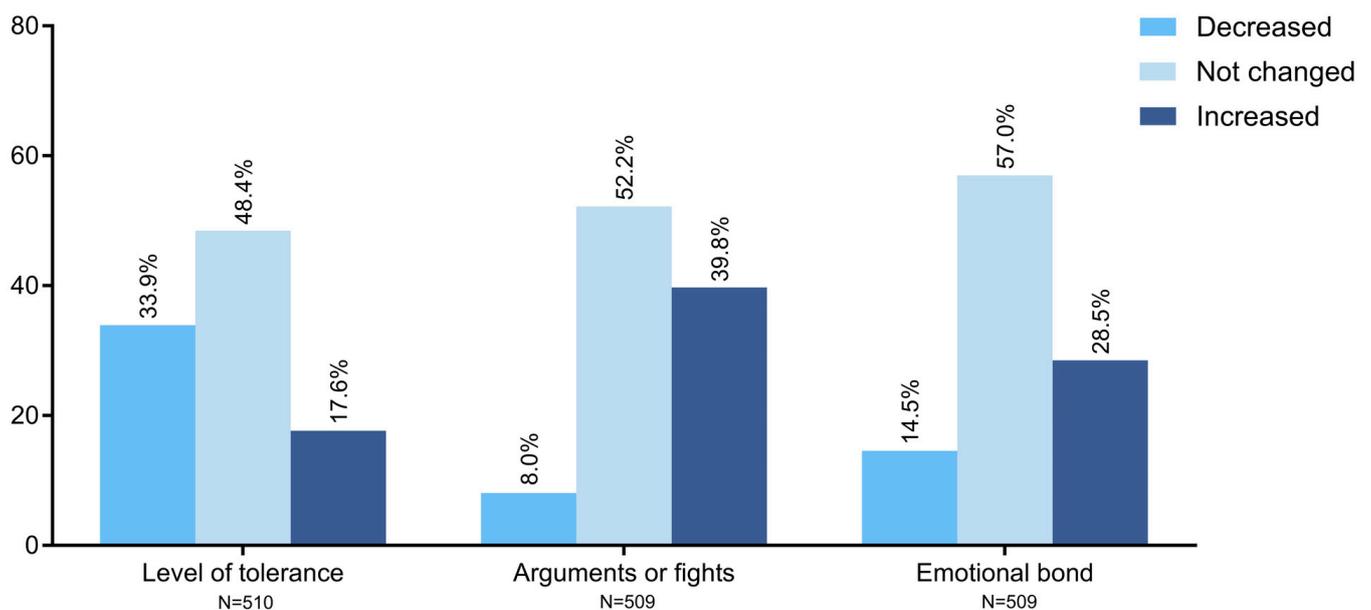
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This report examines the changes in romantic relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey by gender. The data was obtained from the 2022 Turkish COVID-19 Values Study (TCVS), which was conducted face-to-face with 1500 participants. For the purpose of this analysis, we focused on couples who were living together (N=513) during the pandemic regardless of their marital status. Individuals were asked to evaluate changes in key aspects of their relationships, including tolerance levels, frequency of arguments or conflicts, emotional intimacy, sexual activity, and contraceptive practices.

The findings show that although many couples maintained stable relationships during the pandemic, a significant number experienced difficulties, particularly more arguments or fights, while some reported an increase in emotional bonding (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Level of tolerance, frequency of arguments or fights, and emotional bonding during the pandemic Turkey, 2022**

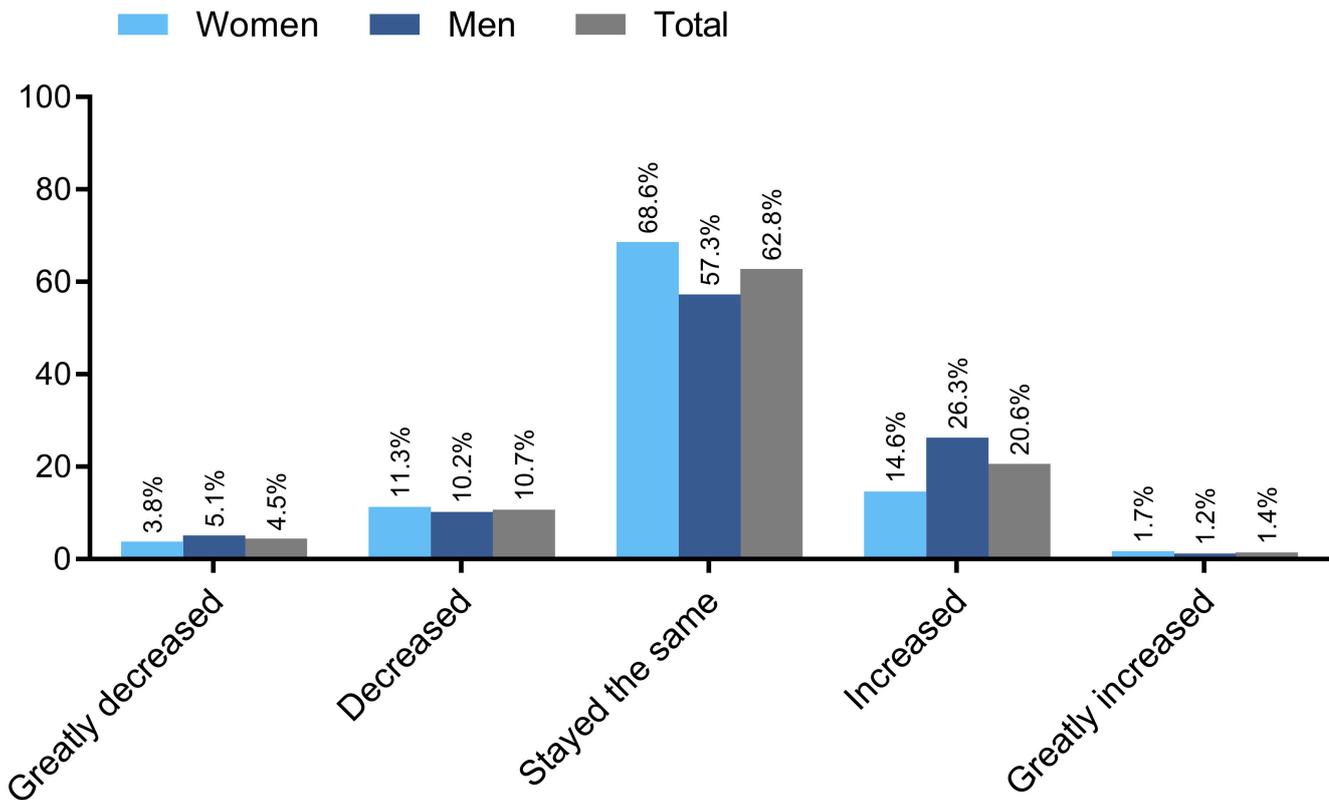


Source: TCVS 2022

Among couples, 33.9% stated that their level of tolerance in their romantic relationships decreased, and 39.8% reported having more arguments and fights. In contrast, only 17.6%

reported a greater level of tolerance, and 8% noted a reduction in arguments and fights. At the same time, 28.5% of respondents reported an increase in emotional bonding with their partner, 57% reported no change, and 14.5% experienced a decrease in emotional bonding. These findings reveal that a significant portion of romantic relationships experienced emotional and behavioral fluctuations during the pandemic.

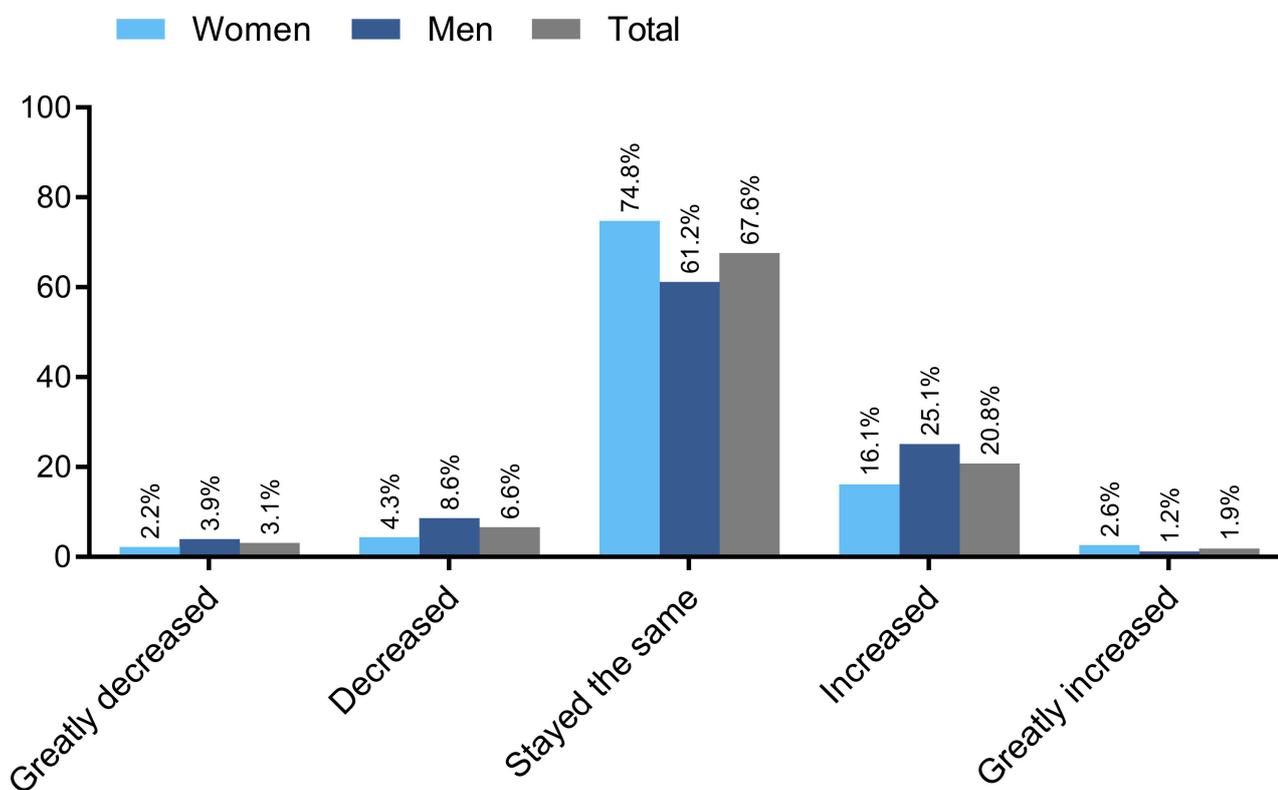
**Figure 2. Change in frequency of sexual activity during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Turkey, 2022 (N=485)**



Source: TCVS 2022

The majority of participants indicated that the frequency of their sexual activity remained the same during the pandemic. Examining gender differences reveals a striking contrast in the frequency of sexual activity between men and women: Only 16.3% of reported an increase in the frequency of their sexual activity compared to 27.5% of men (Figure 2). Similarly, the majority of participants reported no change in their use of contraceptive methods during the pandemic. However, a higher percentage of men (26.3%) reported an increase in contraceptive use compared to women (18.7%) (Figure 3). These findings align with research showing that men tend to overreport their sexual activity while women underreport it, especially in patriarchal contexts like Turkey<sup>1</sup>, highlighting the persistence of gendered sexual norms.

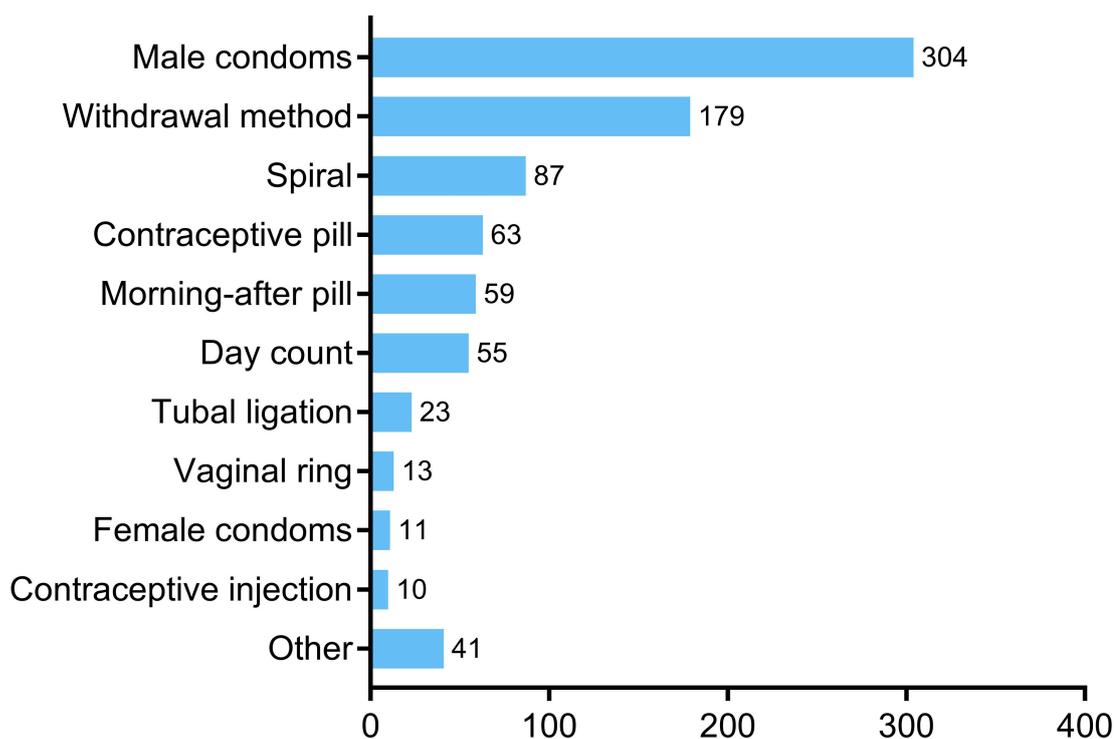
**Figure 3. Change in contraceptive use during the COVID-19 pandemic, Turkey, 2022 (N=494)**



Source: TCVS 2022

**Figure 4. Preferred method of contraception among respondents who use contraception, Turkey, 2022\***

\*Participants can select more than one option.



Source: TCVS 2022

Analyzing the types of contraceptive methods used, the results show that an overwhelming majority of couples in Turkey rely on male condoms and the withdrawal method, followed by spiral and contraceptive pill. On the other hand, the least preferred methods include contraceptive injection, female condoms, and vaginal ring. Traditional methods (withdrawal and day count) still remain prevalent among Turkish couples (Figure 4).

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<sup>1</sup>Pals, Heili, and Ceylan Engin. 2018. "Attachment to Society and Cognitive Deviance: The Case of Turkey." *Deviant Behavior* 39(6):799–815. doi:10.1080/01639625.2017.1411037.