People are more likely to stop checking when an ex seems worse off

November 9, 2026

An ex's apparent success can make a breakup harder to leave behind online. New ClarityCheck research reveals a striking difference in how people respond to signs that a former partner's life has improved or deteriorated.

A breakup can end a relationship while leaving much of the other person's life accessible. Someone who no longer speaks to a former partner can still follow their career progress or encounter photographs suggesting a happier social life. These public glimpses offer little insight into how someone actually feels, yet they provide material for comparing lives after a separation. As personal information becomes easier to revisit, the question of how an ex is doing can remain open long after direct contact has ended.

A ClarityCheck survey of 8,485 adults across the United States, United Kingdom, European Union and Latin America who had ended a romantic relationship within the previous three years found that **66%** had looked up an ex online at least once after the breakup. Those searches included social media, search results, professional profiles and other publicly available information.

The most revealing difference appeared in what happened after people found something. Among respondents who believed an ex was doing worse than before, **62%** said they subsequently checked less often or stopped altogether. Among those who believed their ex was doing better, only **28%** reported the same. The **34-percentage-point gap** suggests that perceived improvement in a former partner's life is associated with a greater likelihood of continued checking.

The emotional responses help explain why that distinction deserves attention. When asked which discovery would be hardest to encounter, **48%** selected evidence that an ex appeared happier overall than during the relationship. Among respondents who had found signs that an ex was struggling, **41%** said the information made them feel better about how the breakup had turned out.

The contrast raises the possibility that people judge their own experience of a breakup partly through what happens to the other person afterward. Signs of difficulty may support an existing understanding of why the relationship ended. Apparent happiness can be harder to reconcile with that understanding, particularly when it suggests that the former partner has moved into a more satisfying life. These are possible explanations for the pattern, rather than motivations established by the survey.

For some respondents, signs of improvement led to a wider search. Among those who found evidence that an ex was doing better, **43%** said they had consulted another public source for more context. Yet information from multiple profiles can still reflect the same limited public version of someone's life. A professional achievement may be genuine without revealing whether the person is happier, leaving the central comparison unresolved.

Continued checking also did not necessarily indicate romantic interest. Among respondents who kept looking up an ex, only **19%** identified reconciliation as one of their reasons. The finding leaves considerable room for motivations connected to the breakup itself, including curiosity about whether the other person's circumstances have changed. The survey does not establish how much each possible motivation contributes to continued searching.

There is an important limit to what these online discoveries can reveal. The research measures respondents' perceptions of how their former partners were doing, rather than independently establishing whether those lives had improved. Someone's apparent success can therefore influence the observer even when the underlying comparison is uncertain.

That distinction gives the findings their wider significance. Publicly accessible information allows people to keep evaluating a relationship after it has ended, while offering no dependable measure of either person's happiness. The strongest association in the survey concerns the information people found hardest to accept: when an ex appeared to be thriving, respondents were considerably less likely to report leaving the search behind.

About ClarityCheck

ClarityCheck is an all-in-one background verification tool for phone numbers, emails, and images. Designed for everyday digital safety, ClarityCheck helps users instantly identify unknown contacts, trace suspicious profiles, and check for potential fraud across phone, email, and photo input. By combining reverse lookup and OSINT technologies, it offers a streamlined way to verify identities and protect yourself online.

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