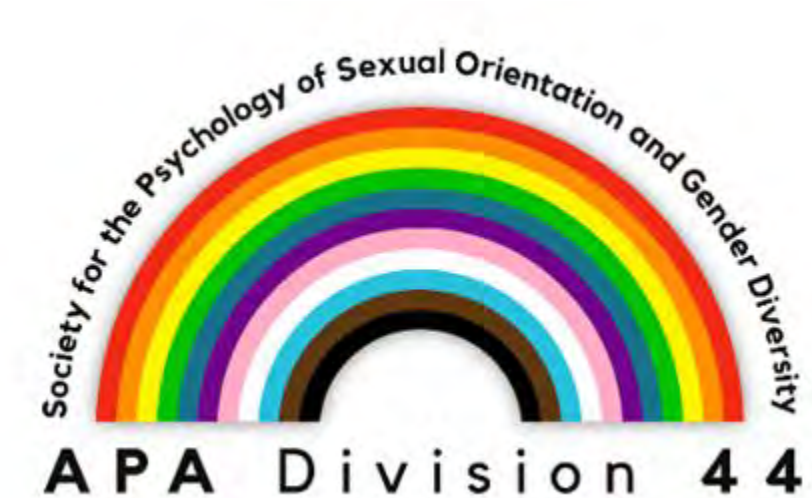


Division 44 Public Policy Committee

The Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (APA
Division 44)



Policy Statement on Nondiscrimination Protections for Consensually Non-Monogamous Adults

Research has documented widespread diversity across family and relationship structures throughout history, including consensual non-monogamy (CNM). CNM is a relationship structure in which individuals mutually agree that partners may maintain multiple romantic, sexual, and/or intimate relationships, such as polyamory, open relationships, or swinging (Balzarini & Muise, 2020). Individuals practicing CNM often build diverse family structures, such as multiple-parent families (Chen & Mulligan, 2025; Gupta et al., 2023; Sheff, 2011). Recent estimates suggest that CNM is prevalent across the United States; more than 20% of adults report engaging in some form of CNM during their lifetime (Haupt et al., 2017), with an estimated 5% of adults - nearly 13.5 million - currently engaged in CNM relationships (Scoats & Campbell, 2022). Importantly, CNM is not limited to any particular demographic; research indicates that CNM engagement occurs among both heterosexual and sexual minority populations and across age, gender, religion, racial identity, geographic region, political affiliation, education, and income (Haupt et al., 2017; Morar-Bolba et al., 2025).

Individuals in CNM relationships face substantial stigma, discrimination, and harassment across multiple domains of life. Stigmatizing attitudes toward CNM people and relationships are well-documented (e.g., Moors et al., 2013; Rodrigues et al., 2024). Discrimination has been reported

at interpersonal and institutional levels, including social rejection, relationship invalidation, pressure to conceal relationship structure, and anticipated discrimination or differential treatment in employment and healthcare settings (Stults et al., 2023). A recent community survey conducted by the Organization for Polyamory and Ethical Non-Monogamy (OPEN, 2025) found that over 60% of participants reported experiencing stigma or discrimination based on their CNM identity and practice across their lifetime; notably, 9.3% reported housing discrimination, 8.5% reported discrimination in federal services, and 6.7% reported employment discrimination. While community-based sampling limits generalizability, these findings point to a broader pattern of institutional marginalization. Such stigma has been associated with tangible harms, including job loss, social exclusion, barriers to healthcare access, and elevated risk for mental health concerns such as depression and generalized anxiety disorder (Borgogna et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2024; Moors, 2023; Sheff, 2017; Stein, 2020; Witherspoon & Theodore, 2021).

Despite the prevalence of stigma against CNM identities and relationships, CNM identity/relationship structures are not considered a protected class at the federal or state level, leaving individuals legally vulnerable to discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations (“Three’s Company, Too,” 2022; Tweedy, 2024). Nondiscrimination ordinances (NDOs) are established policy tools that protect marginalized populations by ensuring equal access to employment, housing, and public accommodations (Fields & Wotipka, 2022; Gates, 2011; Truszczynski et al., 2022). Evidence from identity-based NDOs enacted to protect LGBTQ+ populations suggests that such protections can meaningfully reduce discrimination while improving psychological well-being, economic stability, and access to healthcare (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014; Riggle et al., 2017). Given the documented stigma and institutional discrimination facing CNM individuals and their families, NDOs for this population warrant policy consideration.

Several municipalities have already begun addressing this critical gap. Municipalities in Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington, and California have enacted NDOs explicitly extending housing, employment, and public accommodations protections to CNM individuals and people in CNM relationships (*Harvard Law School LGBTQ+ Advocacy Clinic*, 2026; OPEN, 2025; Sanford, 2026; “Three’s Company, Too,” 2022). Building on the evidence that NDO protections reduce discrimination and improve psychological well-being among other stigmatized populations, such as LGBTQ+ populations, CNM-inclusive NDOs represent a crucial step toward ensuring that CNM individuals and people in CNM relationships are not excluded from legal protections afforded to other family and relationship structures.

APA Division 44 (Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity) calls upon municipalities and policymakers to adopt NDOs that explicitly include CNM and relationship structure diversity as protected categories. Extending nondiscrimination protections would help CNM individuals and people in CNM relationships access equal employment, housing, and public services without fear of discrimination based on their relationship structure.

Although CNM is not currently recognized as a protected category under most civil rights statutes or regulations, relationship structure discrimination raises important equity, psychological well-being, and public health concerns, particularly given the well-documented links between structural stigma and adverse mental health outcomes.

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