To Swipe Or Not To Swipe

Modern dating is changing the way people meet, and with the popularity of dating apps there is concern and hope in the unknown.

Courtesy/Moriah Ziman

Left, Kate Sieler, and, right, Samantha are the founders of the dating app, Left Field.

By: Julia Sequeira

Karley Knox went on her first Hinge date on a Friday night. It was her first time meeting someone through an app, leaving her feeling nervous and incredibly vulnerable. Little did she know that her date, Brad, would become her future husband and the father of her child.

Courtesy/Jodi Laine Thibodeau

Arielle Buch-Frohlich is a clinical psychologist in Ontario and Quebec who specializes in couples and dating.

Like Knox, people use apps to date and connect with new people regardless of intention. However, many different factors go into making dating apps work, including a range of professional perspectives and varying user experiences.

According to a 2024 survey by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS), out of a sample of 2,011 adults in the U.S., 61 per cent believe that relationships that begin online are just as successful as those that begin in person. In a sample of 2,011 people, 41 per cent said they were looking for a serious relationship and 42 per cent said they've had a serious relationship resulting from an app, suggesting they can be quite successful.

So much so that they're getting hitched. A 2024 jewelry and engagement study conducted by The Knot, and which surveyed nearly 8,000 couples across the U.S., found 27 per cent of engaged couples met through dating apps.

However, they may not be a one-size-fits-all solution to singledom. On Valentine's Day in 2024, six people brought a class-action lawsuit against Match Group Inc., the parent corporation of popular dating apps Tinder and Hinge. They accused the company of creating an intentionally limited app design that opposed its marketing, turning users into swiping addicts.

According to the complaint, Match Group profits off of users' addictions by adding artificial barriers in their apps. For example, Hinge only allows eight likes a day, and Tinder uses an algorithm to determine the amount of free likes a user gets. In either case, this limitation can be

Courtesy/Josh Harmer

Saunia Ahmad is a clinical psychologist and the founder of Toronto Psychology Clinic.

Adela Logli

Livia Logli is a dating app user who has decided to take a break from dating apps after mixed experiences.

overcome with a paid subscription, making Match Group's bottom line clear.

Dating with intention

Although companies like Match Group share profit goals, dating apps do have high success rates when used to their maximum potential. For instance, the lawsuit says the company misleads users by marketing Tinder and Hinge as designed to facilitate committed, long-term off-app relationships. But, says clinical psychologist Arielle Buch-Frohlich, this is exactly where most people who use dating apps go wrong.

Although they can seem like they are working against the user, she says the majority of her clients have met on dating apps. This is because she discourages them from spending too long getting to know each other online and, instead, doing that work in person. She notes, too, that "success" isn't only quantified by an engagement.

"In terms of scrolling, swiping and saying next, next, next, if your ultimate goal is having a long-term relationship, then you should be meeting these people in person as soon as you possibly can, in a public space, so that you're quick to say, 'Yes, I can see a relationship with this person. It doesn't mean we're gonna have a five-year relationship, but I can go on a second date, right?'" she says.

Meeting sooner can also help to minimize addictive habits, as swiping and sending likes can feel dehumanizing. Buch-Frohlich explains, "That's also going to eliminate that sense of endless choice, endless possibilities."

She adds that there are usually two ways in which people lose hope with dating apps—by being too picky and/or giving up due to past negative experiences. For the latter folks, she recommends going into dating apps with a general idea of the type of person you're looking for. In other words, it's the user's job to do their due diligence in evaluating whether the people they are swiping on align with their values.

"It comes back to knowing yourself the best and saying, 'What is it that I want? What are my goals? What do I see [for myself] in five years, in 10 years? Who do I see myself with?'" she says. "'I know I need someone with a really good sense of humour because I have a really good sense of humour, and I want life to be lighthearted,' for example. I can then say,'It doesn't matter if there are 20 guys on this app, I know I'm going to zoom in on the one who has a really funny video up.'"

Saunia Ahmad, clinical psychologist and founder of Toronto Psychology Clinic specializes in couple's therapy. She believes dating apps are a great online innovation given how busy daily life can be, particularly with its growing diversity in the user base.

"Dating apps have been an opportunity for people to really meet someone who is compatible with them in a more unique perspective," explains Ahmad. "[They have]

> "It's not dating apps that are the issue. I think it's the way we approach and use dating apps that are the issue."
> - Saunia Ahmad

been criticized for also causing issues with dating fatigue, ghosting, benching. [But] it's not dating apps that are the issue, I think it's the way we approach and use dating apps that are the issue."

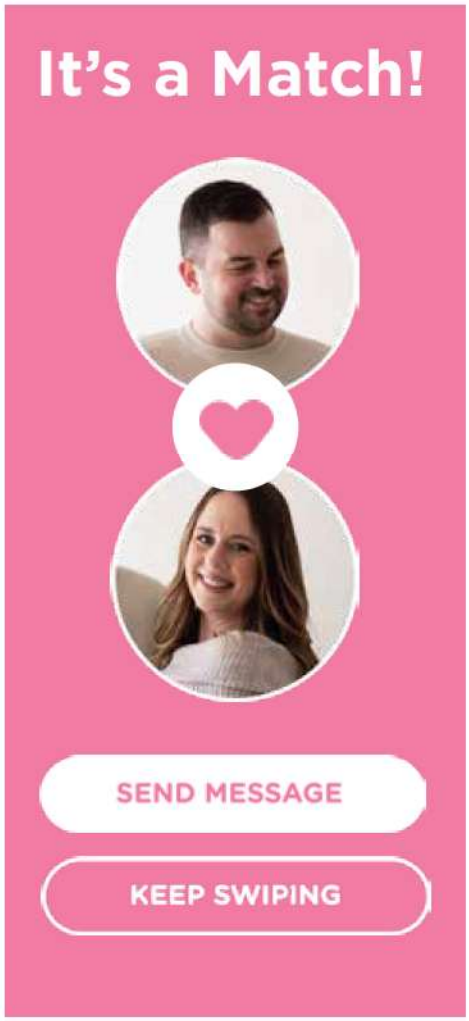
She says that people are more likely to act out of character because there is less fear due to anonymity. Even if your account is verified and your name is on it, there is still the barrier of a screen. For this reason, Ahmad says she likes to call dating apps "connection apps" instead because you can't build a real relationship online.

"Research on relationship intimacy development shows that humans are fundamentally wired to connect in person, and we lost that when it became so convenient to go online and talk to different people," she says. "Well, we haven't lost it, but we are at risk of losing it, especially the newer generation; they are growing up in environments where we interact less in person, so they may not be as intentional about it."

Ahmad says, recently, she has been working with more clients who use dating apps. She says what they find most effective is making it clear early on what they are looking for and, again, meeting in person early. This allows daters to rule out people who aren't their ideal partners.

She says people often make the mistake of trying to replace human interaction with texting, which leads to assumptions about each other, dating fatigue and ghosting. Ghosting stems from anonymity, and people are less likely to be accountable when their identity is masked by the internet.

"More and more what's happening



is people who have difficulty with confrontation may be more likely to think that the easier way out for both parties is to just not say anything," explains Ahmad.

"That's not at all the case. Silence is always worse than saying something, because what happens is, someone who is at the receiving end of ghosting has no closure and is left to fill in the void with some of their existing personal insecurities."

Wasted time and energy

Livia Logli remembers being at a party at a local banquet hall. She was mingling with her friends when she saw an extremely attractive man across the room. He was tall, blonde with green eyes and a strong jaw. She spent the entire night watching him, and he watched her right back. Still, neither of them made a move. Logli says this is hugely due to social anxiety and fear of rejection—the same reasons she turned to dating apps.

Logli has been ghosted and been the ghoster. She has had a love-hate relationship with dating apps like Tinder, Bumble and Hinge, having tried them all. In fact, she says she's never been on a second date with a person she's met on an app.

"It just leaves me wondering, 'What's wrong with me? What is it about me that they didn't like? If you didn't like me, if you're ghosting me, then why did you act like you were interested in me in the first place?'" she says.

Logli is a student at York University. She downloaded dating apps because she was constantly experiencing something called "technoference," which is when the use of electronic devices interferes with face-to-face interactions. When approaching people in school, she would be "phubbed" (ignored or snubbed because someone's attention is on their phone). She ultimately turned to technology to get around other technology.

Again, this is why Buch-Frohlich and Ahmad say success comes when users meet with their matches early, as Logli used to spend a lot of time talking to her matches over text rather than in person. This led to her either getting ghosted or wasting time on an incompatible person.

A desire for organic encounters

This past March, Samantha Martin, Kate Sieler and Sean Miller launched their very own dating app, called Left Field, based on their and their friends' experiences with other dating apps. Their goal was to help destigmatize the apps while helping people feel like their connection is still organic.

"Sam and I met during undergrad," says Sieler. "We both went to Brown University and became good friends there. And then after we moved to New York, [we] started dating, having experiences being young and single and feeling a lot of frustrations with existing dating apps. [There were] things that we wished were better to make it easier for people to be more intentional and not have to spend as much time on the apps."

Sieler and Martin disliked the idea of swiping on dating apps because of the addictive behaviours that they witnessed.

"There's something so special about approaching dating as fun and an opportunity to meet new people. But if you're spending so much time feeling addicted or burnt out just by swiping all the time, that can just take the joy out of it," Sieler says, noting it's no wonder some people often compare swiping to slot machines.

She adds, "So often when you're out with your friends, you'll see someone, [and think], 'They're so cute. I wish I would go up and say hi, but I'm not going to because I'm shy.'"

The pair were fond of the idea of being able to meet someone organically, but without playing the guessing game of whether their interest is single or not.

"We do the looking for you," says Martin. "So, in essence, if you've ever seen someone cute while you're out at a coffee shop but [didn't] dare to say 'hi,' our app gives you a way to see some of the people in your neighbourhood who are single and send them a message." Similarly, in 2022, Bumble launched Bumble IRL, a series of events designed to help people connect in real life without the ambiguity of wondering if someone is single.

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Like Ahmad mentioned, viewing dating apps as connection platforms can place people on more successful paths. Besides, says Sieler, "The meet-cute is dying out these days, which is sad."

Logli prefers the organic "meet-cute" approach now, too. She says building in-person connections is her current preference and so she has decided to take a break from dating apps. She shares, "I think that you just can't find that sort of [natural] chemistry through apps."

A success story

As for Knox, she and her husband hit it off immediately once they met in person. As advised, they'd arranged for a first date soon after matching online and have been together ever since.

"We matched on a Friday," she recalls. "And then we went on our first date the next Friday. I feel like I'm a unique example."

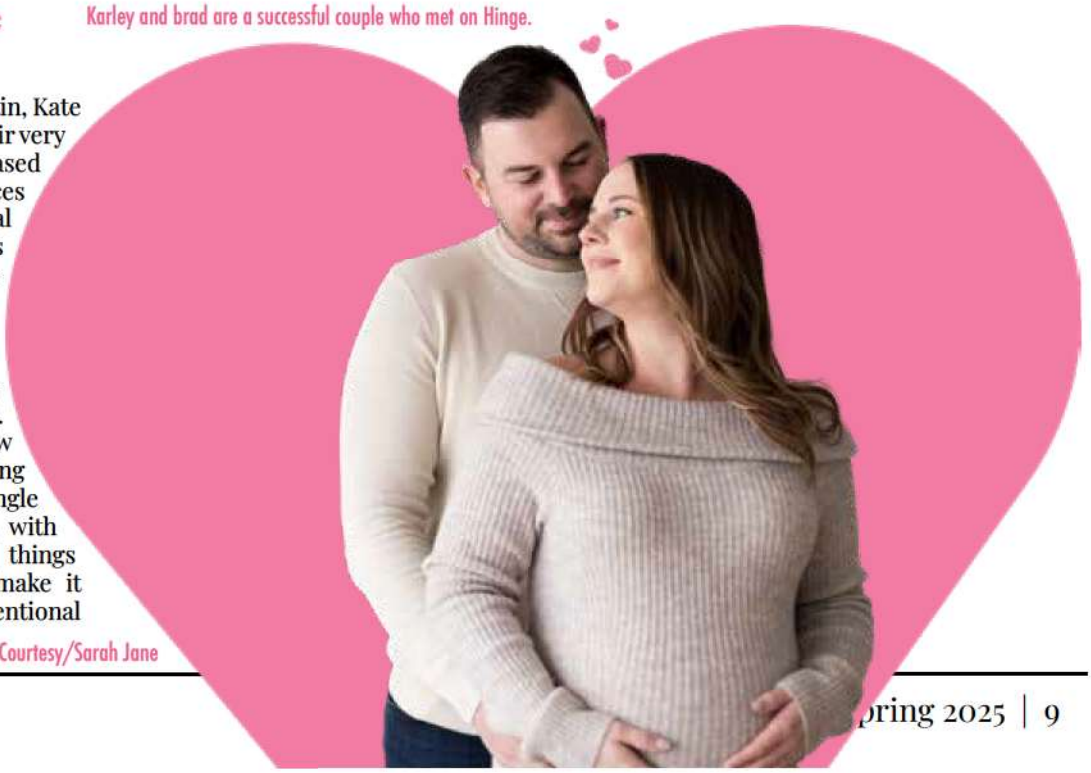
Knox never anticipated actually finding success on an app. She downloaded dating apps to explore her options, but went in with qualities she knew were non-negotiables. She also focused on shared interests. For example, Knox grew up playing hockey and loving the community around it. That's what first drew her to her husband, Brad.

"He had a photo of him and his whole family at the winter classic outdoor game. I remember being like 'Oh, I love this,'" she says. "There are a number of levels here... not only are you at the game, but it's you with your family. We always joke about it."

Now, as a couple, the pair have a joint bucket list of hockey arenas they hope to travel to. In fact, Knox noted she had it listed on her dating profile.

"We've now been to seven or eight arenas together," she says. "It's become a big part of our relationship that will live on forever."

Karley and brad are a successful couple who met on Hinge.



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