

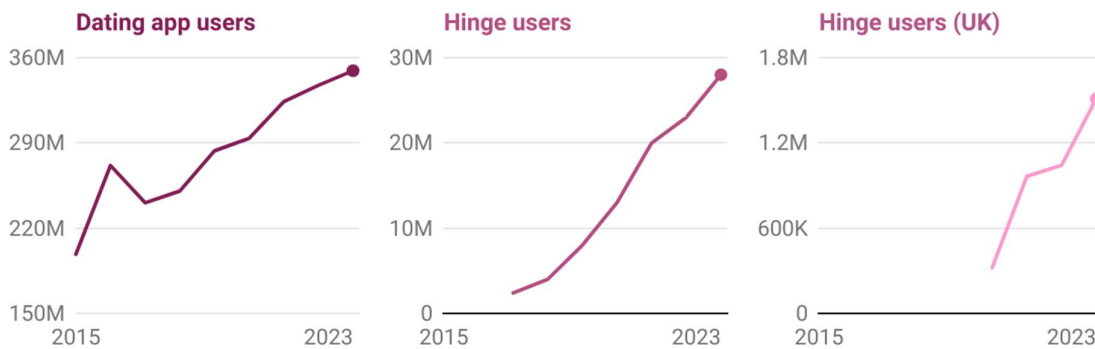
What's the problem with online dating? I analysed my own Hinge data to find out

On my recent Hinge date, I sat across from a perfectly nice man in a pub on the Thames, thinking, "Sure, he's great, but he doesn't like Chinese food – can I really go the rest of my life without chow mein?"

More people are turning to online dating to meet a partner, and 90% of Hinge daters say they want to find love. But still, more of us than ever are single. Dating apps provide endless opportunities to find the *perfect* match, creating a paradox of choice - the more options you have, the harder it is to settle for one.

Looking for love ...

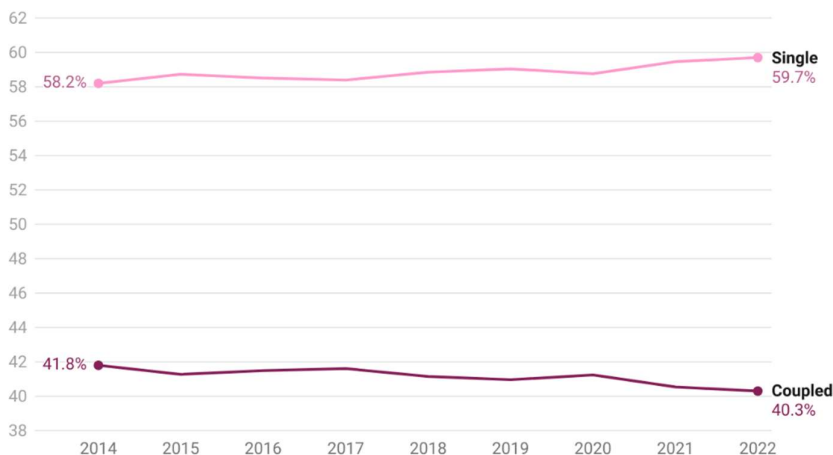
Dating app usage is rising globally, with 350 million people worldwide using dating apps in 2023.



Source: Ofcom Online Nation Report and Business of Apps Dating App Report • Created with Datawrapper

... But not finding it

The percentage of UK adults who are single is increasing.



"Single" includes never married, divorced, or widowed. "Coupled" includes married or civil partnered. Data shows yearly estimations.

Source: ONS • Created with Datawrapper

[Chart 1](#)

[Chart 2](#)

Are dating apps the reason so many of us are still single?

With the help of dating experts, I looked between the (spread) sheets of my own online dating history to find the answer.

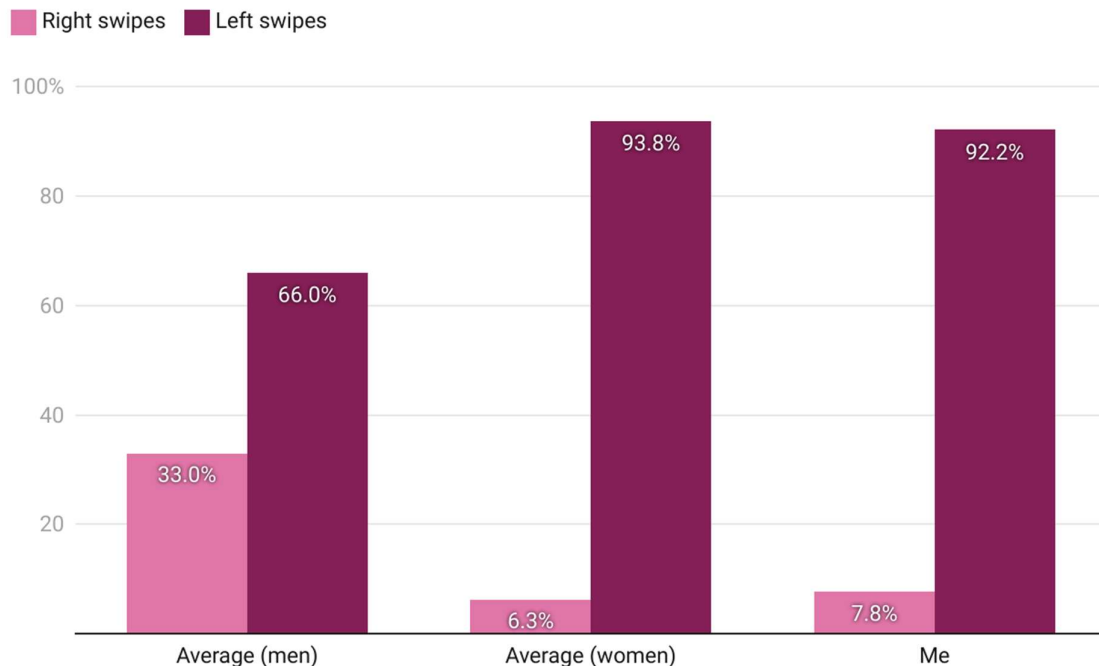
I asked Hinge for my data and received a dossier of my dating life - likes, matches, conversations, rejections, compressed into a 60MB file.

The first thing the data showed is that I, like most other women, only swipe right on a fraction of profiles. Hinge claims to be built on a “Nobel-Prize-winning algorithm,” designed to find the people we’re most compatible with – so the profiles we see should generally be good matches.

However, it’s also true that there are far more men on Hinge than women. Is it possible that the sheer number of options heterosexual women see leads us (me) to be too selective in our swiping?

Are we being too picky?

Women swipe right on about 1 in 16 people, while men swipe right on 1 in 3.



Source: Hinge and Roast Dating • Created with Datawrapper

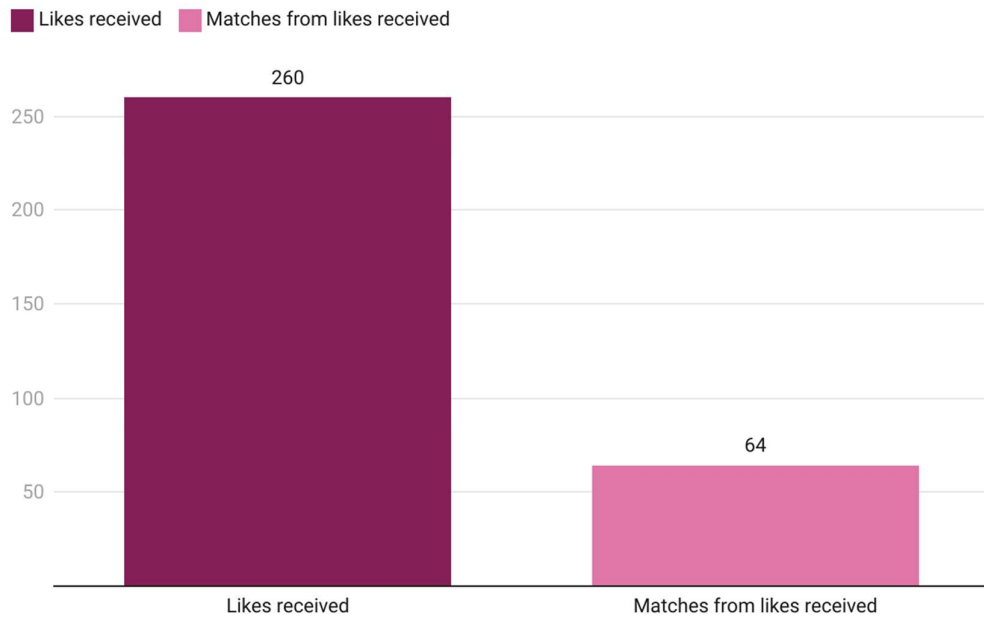
[Chart 3](#)

Dr. Karim Nader, whose research at Massachusetts Institute of Technology includes the technological mediation of sex and love on dating apps, said, “There is data that shows that men are less picky than women when it comes to sending someone a like.”

“There might be a sociological explanation to this rather than a technological one: women tend to be more careful about their safety and who they interact with, especially when those people are practically strangers.”

How often does the algorithm show me to my type?

25% of likes I received in 2024 were from compatible profiles.

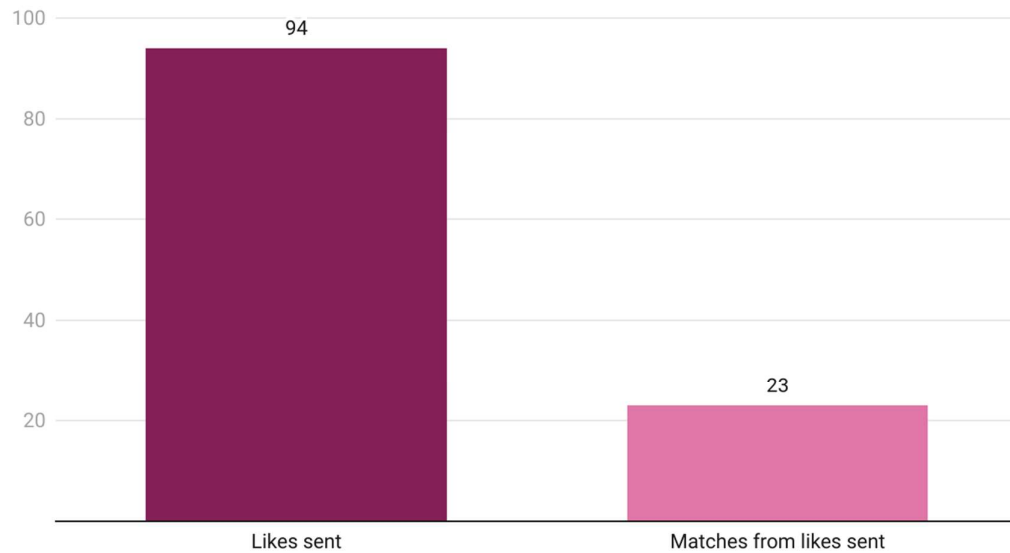


Source: Hinge • Created with Datawrapper

[Chart 4](#)

How often does the algorithm show me good matches?

25% of profiles I liked in 2024, liked me back.



Source: Hinge • Created with Datawrapper

[Chart 5](#)

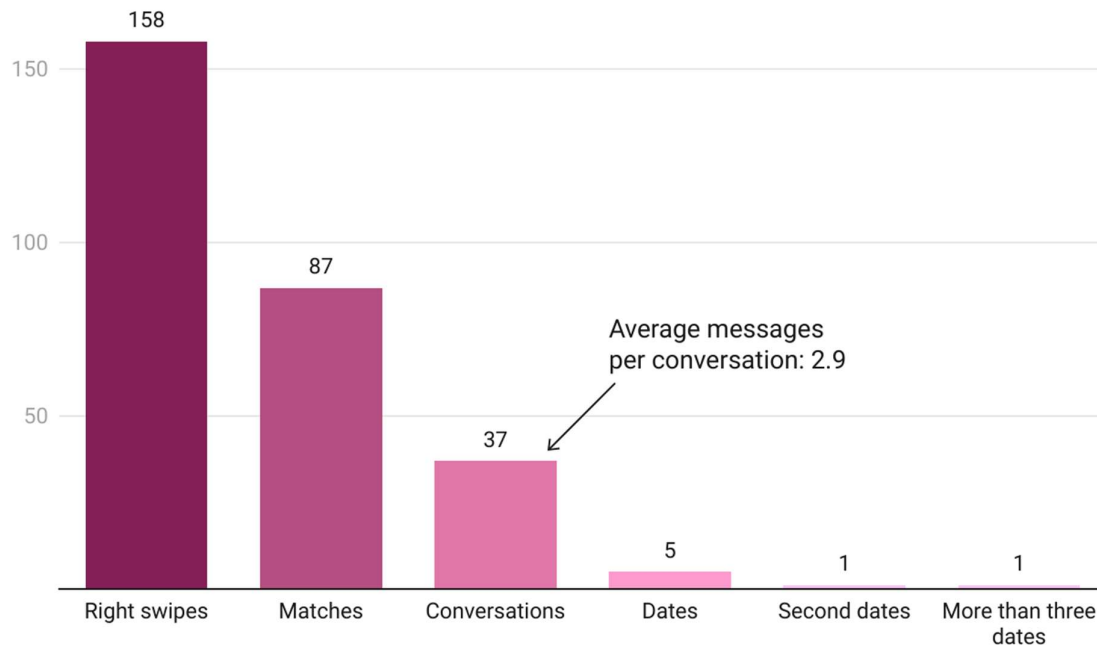
Despite Hinge’s claims to measure compatibility, the data showed that only 25% of likes I sent or received resulted in a match.

“I think we tend to overestimate how good the algorithm is at knowing what "your type" is,” Nader said, “It turns out that we ourselves are also very bad at figuring that out! What is important to remember is that when you choose to like a profile, you are only judging the profile and not the person behind it.”

Data also shows that when I do match someone, it rarely sparks a conversation, and even more rarely does a conversation lead to a date. What about the technology of dating apps encourages us to keep searching for more matches, rather than investing time in the ones we have?

Fizzling out

Only 13% of my Hinge conversations led to first dates.



Data from Jan-Dec 2024. "Right swipes" includes likes sent and matches from likes received. "Matches" includes matches from likes sent and received.

Source: Hinge • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 6

“There are a few design reasons behind this,” Nader said. “When you open the app, the landing page is the "Discover" page, where you see new profiles. Your matches and your chats are the fourth tab on your screen. This sends a message to the user: first swipe, then chat.”

“There are also psychological reasons. When you’re scrolling through Netflix, it’s hard to choose what movie to watch when there are so many options. The same thing is happening on Hinge: you’re drawn to the new options because you think there might be something better in the endless stream of new profiles!”

Only 13% of my conversations led to first dates, while 87% fizzled out. Why is it so hard to move the conversation offline?

Mary Balfour, matchmaking expert and founder of one of the UK's first online dating websites, Loveandfriends.com, asks what kind of people I look for online? I admit that my standards are a lot higher (literally) on dating apps than in real life.

“My husband was five foot eight when I met him, now he's got osteoporosis, so he's shrunk. These things don't actually matter, but it blocks the dating possibilities for so many women. Everybody chooses above their own attractiveness level and wonders why they're not getting responses. I think you need to be aware of that. I would suggest, if this is a real problem for you, psychologically, get some practice meeting nice guys your height, see if you can get used to it. Sort of training, you know.”

Most common words used in messages I send on Hinge



Chart 7

“It’s interesting that many of your messages include the word “think,” she says, “Dating apps are not for people who like to stop and think. They’re supposed to keep you moving onto the next thing, the next person.”

So, my current tactics aren’t working – what will?

“The main thing is to get out there and date,” Mary says, “not to spend ages flirting digitally.”

“Go for volume. Keep all dates short, meet lots of nice people and make lots of friends, because it's one of the friends who will probably end up being your lover and maybe your lifetime partner.”

Although statistics make things look a little bleak, anecdotal evidence suggests all hope is not lost.

Henna, 24, met her partner on Hinge in the spring of 2022. Three years later, they’re engaged.

“I think dating apps have their good and bad,” she said. “There’s a lot of dead-end conversations, and it does take patience. “

“I’m Muslim and I only wanted to date Muslims, and Hinge let me filter for that. I lived in Tottenham when we met and he lived in Edgware, so the probability of us meeting in real life was low, but Hinge made it possible. Now I’m planning a future with this man, and I couldn’t be happier.”