

Tinder-style apps score as online dating grows

February 11 2016, by Rob Lever



Employees of the mobile dating application Hinge work at their office in Washington DC, February 11, 2014

The age-old quest for love is moving inexorably online for young and old Americans alike—whether this means swiping on their phone for a hot date, or using matchmaking sites to find the perfect mate.

The 18 to 24 crowd has warmed to smartphone apps like Tinder that

help them spot a match among a crowd of strangers. And the over-55 age group is growing more comfortable about meeting new love interests via dating sites.

A survey released Thursday by Pew Research Center found that 15 percent of [people](#) now take part in some form of [online dating](#), up from 11 percent in a 2013 survey.

The biggest growth has come at the younger and older ends of the romantic spectrum, among groups that traditionally steered clear of online dating, Pew researchers said.

Some 27 percent of Americans ages 18 to 24 reported using online dating, up from just 10 percent in 2013, Pew found. Much of that growth comes from the use of mobile applications like Tinder, which has gained a reputation as a "hookup" app.

Pew researcher Aaron Smith smartphone dating apps—in the vein of Tinder which lets users see in real time who is available, and "swipe" if they wish to meet someone—have a particular appeal for younger adults.

"These dating apps hit young people in the way they live," Smith said.



Emily Helfgot and her husband Robert Weinstein, who met each other through an online dating website, pose in their apartment in Brooklyn, New York, on July 17, 2015

"They speak to way [young people](#) are engaging in content," he added. "They are location-focused, they are real-time, they include social networking and game play, so it's a natural fit for them."

At the other end of the age spectrum Pew found that 12 percent of 55 to 64-year-olds reported going online to find a partner, double the number in 2013.

Most in this age category visit dating websites like eHarmony or Match.com rather than use smartphone apps.

The growth "speaks to the growing cultural acceptance of online dating,"

Smith said.

"Five years ago, many of these people who have viewed online dating as weird or desperate. But now a lot of people know someone who has met someone online."

Better pool, more dangerous

Those who have tried online dating offer a generally positive view of the experience, but also recognize that dangers exist, the survey found.

According to the Pew survey, 80 percent of Americans who have tried online dating agree it is a good way to meet people, and 62 percent said it helps to find a better match by exposing people to a large variety of potential partners.

But 45 percent of online daters also said it was more dangerous than other ways of meeting people, and 31 percent believed it keeps people from settling down, because it offers more options to meet new people.

Women appeared more concerned about safety: 53 percent of female online daters said it was more dangerous than other ways of meeting a new partner, compared with 38 percent of males.

Online dating in the US appears to draw fewer people than some other countries, according to other studies which showed participation rates of 39 to 51 percent in some European countries.

But despite the safety concerns it looks like a growing part of the American romantic landscape.

Some 41 percent of adults surveyed said they know someone who uses online [dating](#) and 29 percent indicated they know someone who has

married or entered into a long-term partnership with a person they met online.

The report is based on a survey of 2,001 American adults between June 10 and July 12, 2015. The margin of error for the full sample was estimated at 2.5 percentage points.

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