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## RELATING

# STATE OF YOUR (DATING) NATION

*In Flare.com's national survey on dating and relationships, you told us about the importance of love in your life*  
BY JULIA LECONTE

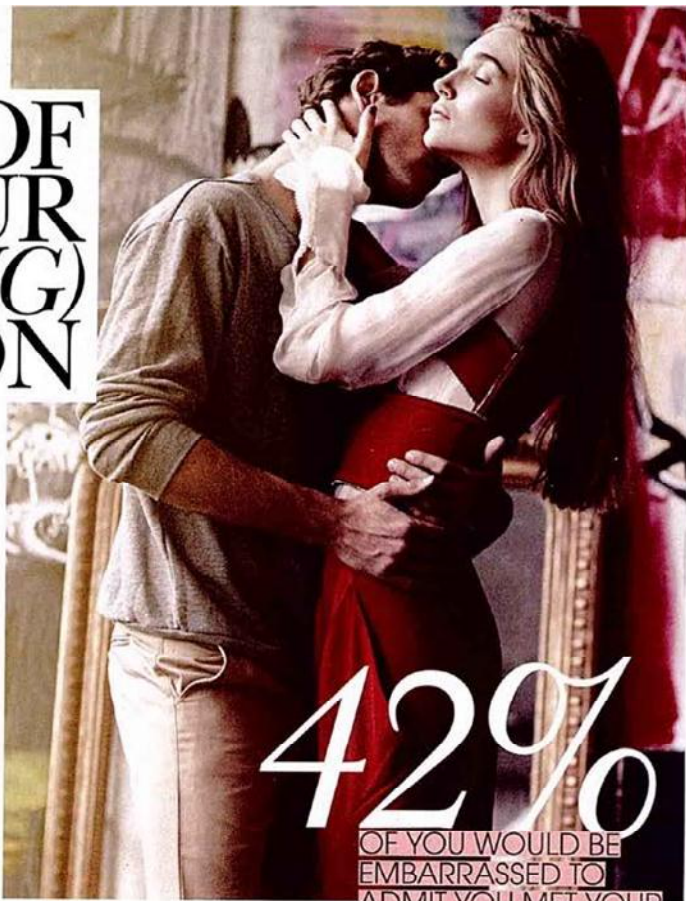
NO ONE EVER said finding love was easy. For centuries, writers and pop stars—from Shakespeare to Adele—have documented the heart-wrenching journey toward finding “The One.” Artists have made millions from the subject of love (true, unrequited, eternal and otherwise), but finding—and keeping—it still eludes many of us. And though we’ve reached a hyper-connected age, where romance blossoms on Twitter and relationship statuses are updated by the minute on Facebook, we still struggle to make lasting, meaningful connections.

In fact, in Flare.com's national dating and relationships survey—where we quizzed you on everything from online dating and social media to how important it is to find a partner—over half of survey respondents, the majority of whom are between the ages of 20 and 40, told us they are not in a committed relationship.

**SINGLE LIFE** When asked what the biggest challenge of dating today

is, 28 percent of you said that nobody wants to settle down. A glance at popular culture confirms that this is the case, especially for men. Have shows such as *Mad Men*, *Two and a Half Men* and *How I Met Your Mother* (all of which glorify bachelordom or portray men “trapped” in unfulfilling marriages) skewed our collective vision? Marni Kinrys, a Los Angeles-based Canadian who makes a living bringing men and women together as founder and CEO of The Wing Girl Method (a coaching service for men who have trouble successfully approaching women), thinks so. Men do want to settle down, she says, but they don’t get ahead of themselves. “I think men have a better evaluation

**62%** OF YOU GOOGLE OR FACEBOOK SOMEONE BEFORE A FIRST DATE. **59%** OF YOU KEEP TABS ON YOUR EXES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA. **16%** OF YOU HAVE GONE OUT WITH SOMEONE YOU HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY MET AS A RESULT OF A FACEBOOK OR TWITTER ENCOUNTER.



# 42%

OF YOU WOULD BE EMBARRASSED TO ADMIT YOU MET YOUR PARTNER THROUGH A SERVICE SUCH AS SPEED-DATING, MATCHMAKING OR AN ONLINE DATING SITE

process than women and don't jump the gun on deciding they want to settle down." Those wild bachelors, it seems, are over-represented on television. "[Men] want to treat a woman right, make her happy and ultimately be happy themselves," says Kinrys. "There are way more of these guys than the jerks, dogs and bad boys."

Kinrys does suggest that finding a mate is more complicated than ever, but blames different styles of communication for the missed connections. "Men and women are actually from exactly the same planet: Earth," she says. "They are just speaking very different languages." While men, according to Kinrys, utilize thinking and logic, women lead with their feelings and emotions. "We all want the same thing: love and respect from a great person who also loves >

## RELATING

and respects themselves, but because of this miscommunication, we get frustration, suppression, insecurity and heartache." Indeed, 19 percent of you agree with Kinrys, citing a lack of communication between men and women as your No. 1 dating hurdle.

With so many signals crossing, it makes sense that we're trying more modern approaches to meeting people. The vast majority of you (88 percent) think that online dating, for example, is either great, or at least an acceptable means of courtship. While at work and at play, we're left wondering not only if the person we're attracted to is attracted to us, but whether or not they're even looking for a relationship. Online, however, it's a safe assumption that who you're looking at is—at least—looking too. Maybe that's why so many of you (46 percent) have tried online dating. "If you're single these days, you really should be dating online," says Kimberly Moffit, a Toronto psychotherapist and relationship expert. "The success rates are so high... Online you have an infinite number of possibilities of people you could be attracted to [and] all of these people are in the market."

Josy Vogels, a Bancroft, Ont., sex and relationships columnist who has written five books on the subjects, thinks that online dating meets the needs of our ever-busier society. "People find it really difficult to find the time or they're just not meeting a variety of people. Once you've met everyone who's in your world, it can be tough to cast the net wider," says Vogels. "It adds another outlet to the possibilities."

According to your responses, we're willing to extend that net further still. While 48 percent of you said you'd be willing to give online dating a shot, 47 percent and 36 percent of you said you'd try matchmaking and speed-dating respectively. And yet, even though "alternative" forms of dating are becoming more popular—more of you (13 percent) met your current

partner online than through friends or family (11 percent)—a whopping 68 percent of respondents said that they still believe there are negative connotations attached to online dating, matchmaking and speed-dating. "There is still a bit of a stigma but certainly not to the extent that there once was," says Vogels about online dating. "[People] don't want to admit that they're serious about it... Even though there is a real curiosity about it and a need for it."

Moffit believes those negative feelings are just plain out of date. "There's no reason to be embarrassed about it... I have so many clients that are meeting their mates online," she says.

**TECH LOVE** Technology and social media have, undoubtedly, made our lives more convenient in myriad ways. But only 17 percent of you believe they've made your dating life easier and 26 percent say that the proliferation of technology has made dating more stressful. "It depends on your relationship with the technologies," says Vogels. At the very least, it's added a variety of options, which can confuse an already delicate situation. It's no wonder that in 2009's *He's Just Not That Into You*, Drew Barrymore laments that in the modern dating era, we risk being "rejected by seven different technologies."

Still, Moffit says technology can actually help the dating process. Before text messaging and Facebook, a lot of pressure was placed on the telephone. "You'd be really nervous for that phone call, you would have to play it really well and then you wouldn't talk again until the date," she says. Now, we can develop a certain rapport or comfort level over Facebook or BBM, taking some of the nerves out of the all-important first date. In essence, we can remove some pre-date anxiety and focus more on the task at hand: whether this person makes us want to shout from the rooftops, or make a mad dash for the exit.

**HOW HAVE TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTED THE WAY YOU DATE?** **48%** Haven't changed the way I date **26%** Made dating much more stressful **17%** Made dating much easier **9%** Never dated before these technologies

## HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR CURRENT PARTNER?

**50%** Not currently in a relationship  
**13%** Online dating site  
**11%** Friends or family  
**8%** At work  
**5%** At a bar  
**2%** Facebook  
**11%** Other

**WAITING GAME** Strip away the stress of following, unfollowing, friending and defriending, and perhaps dating is essentially the same as it's always been. Only our grandparents' grandparents certainly weren't waiting around to get hitched, whereas 59 percent of you think that between the ages of 26 and 35 is the ideal time to settle down. Twenty-nine percent of respondents said that finding a partner isn't even a priority. So what's changed?

In her practice, Moffit sees a lot of singles and couples putting love on the back burner. "I see the same number of people getting married, it's just happening later in life," she says. "Men and women don't want to settle down too early because they might feel like they have to choose between a potential boyfriend or girlfriend and their career. It is still a priority, but what's happening is that it's *one* of the priorities."

While society's changed and evolved, the agonies and ecstasies of love have stayed the same. When we are (finally!) ready to settle down—regardless of how we find one another—we'll face the same hurdles of generations past. "Ultimately you're going to have to make that connection in person at some point," says Vogels. "And then it's just the navigation of getting to know someone, when to say 'I love you...'" So, in 2012, when should we say "I love you?" Statistics and expertise won't help us here. Love remains a personal and individual matter—undoubtedly the subject of love songs for generations to come. □