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15% of American adults have used online dating sites or mobile dating apps

Usage by 18- to 24-year-olds has increased nearly threefold since 2013, while usage by 55- to 64-year-olds has doubled

BY Aaron Smith

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Aaron Smith, Associate Director, Research
Dana Page, Senior Communications Manager

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

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Usage by 18- to 24-year-olds has increased nearly threefold since 2013, while usage among 55- to 64-year-olds has doubled

Throughout human history, people have sought assistance from others in meeting romantic partners – and Americans today are increasingly looking for love online by enlisting the services of online dating sites and a new generation of mobile dating apps. A national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted June 10-July 12, 2015, among 2,001 adults, finds that:

- 12% of American adults have ever used an *online dating site*, up slightly from 9% in early 2013.
- 9% of American adults have ever used a *dating app on their cellphone*. The share of Americans who use dating apps has increased threefold since early 2013 – at that point just 3% of Americans had used these apps.

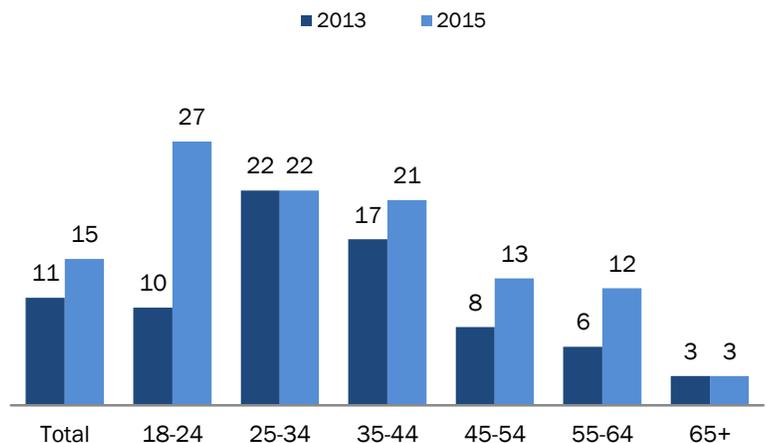
Taken together, a total of 15% of American adults now report that they have used online dating sites and/or mobile dating apps, up from the 11% who [reported doing so](#) in early 2013.¹

This growth has been especially pronounced for two groups who have historically not used online dating at particularly high levels – the youngest adults, as well as those in their late 50s and early 60s.

The share of 18- to 24-year-olds who report having used online dating has nearly tripled in the last two years. Today 27% of these young adults report that they have done so, up from just 10% in early 2013. Meanwhile, the share of 55- to 64-year-olds who

Use of online dating sites or mobile apps by young adults has nearly tripled since 2013

% in each age group who have ever used an online dating site and/or mobile dating app



Source: Survey conducted June 10-July 12, 2015.

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¹ Throughout this report, we refer to this 15% of Americans as “online daters” or refer to them as having “used online dating.”

use online dating has doubled over the same time period (from 6% in 2013 to 12% in 2015).

For young adults in particular, this overall increase in online dating usage has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the use of mobile dating apps. Fully 22% of 18- to 24-year-olds now report using mobile dating apps, a more than fourfold increase from the 5% who reported using dating apps in 2013. These young adults are now more likely than any other age group to use mobile dating apps.

41% of Americans know someone who uses online dating; 29% know someone who has met a spouse or long-term partner via online dating

Although 15% of Americans have used online dating themselves, a larger share report that they are familiar with online dating from the experiences of people they know. Some 41% of American adults say they know someone who uses online dating, while 29% indicate they know someone who has married or entered into a long-term partnership with someone they met via online dating.

As was the case in [previous Pew Research Center surveys of online dating](#), college graduates and the relatively affluent are especially likely to know people who use online dating or to know people who have entered into a relationship that began online. Nearly six-in-ten college graduates (58%) know someone who uses online dating, and nearly half (46%) know someone who has entered into a marriage or long-term partnership with someone they met via online dating. By comparison, just 25% of those with a high school diploma or less know someone who uses online dating – and just 18% know someone who has entered into a long-term relationship with someone they met this way.

College grads and the affluent especially likely to know someone who met a partner via online dating

% within each group who ...

	Know someone who uses online dating	Know someone who has entered a long-term relationship via online dating
All adults	41%	29%
18-24	57	34
25-34	56	33
35-44	45	33
45-54	38	29
55-64	33	28
65+	21	20
High school grad or less	25	18
Some college	46	30
College graduate	58	46
Less than \$30k	30	20
\$30k-\$75k	40	28
\$75k+	58	43

Source: Survey conducted June 10-July 12, 2015.

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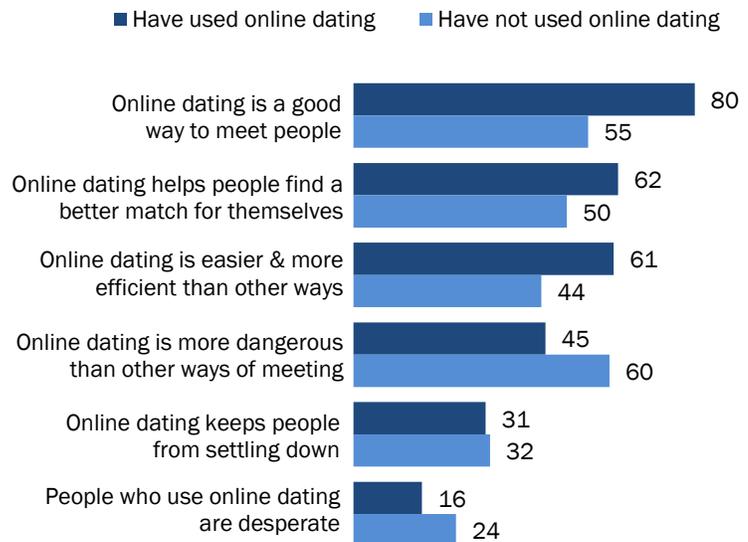
Those who have tried online dating offer mixed opinions about the experience – most have a positive outlook, even as they recognize certain downsides

Users of online dating are generally positive – but far from universally so – about the pros and cons of dating digitally. On one hand, a majority of online dating users agree that dating digitally has distinct advantages over other ways of meeting romantic partners:

- 80% of Americans who have used online dating agree that online dating is a good way to meet people.
- 62% agree that online dating allows people to find a better match, because they can get to know a lot more people.
- 61% agree that online dating is easier and more efficient than other ways of meeting people.

Those with online dating experience are more likely to have positive attitudes towards dating digitally

% in each group who agree that ...



Source: Survey conducted June 10-July 12, 2015.

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On the other hand, a substantial minority of these users agree that meeting people online can have potential negative consequences:

- 45% of online dating users agree that online dating is more dangerous than other ways of meeting people.
- 31% agree that online dating keeps people from settling down, because they always have options for people to date.
- 16% agree with the statement “people who use online dating sites are desperate.”

But despite these reservations, those who have personally used online dating themselves – or know someone who does – tend to have much more positive attitudes compared to those with little direct exposure to online dating or online daters. For instance, just 55% of non-users agree that online dating is a good way to meet people, while six-in-ten agree that online dating is more dangerous than other ways of meeting people.

Overall, men and women who have used online dating tend to have similar views of the pros and cons – with one major exception relating to personal safety. Some 53% of women who have used online dating agree that it is more dangerous than other ways of meeting people, substantially higher than the 38% of male online daters who agree with this statement.

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on a Pew Research Center survey conducted June 10, 2015, through July 12, 2015 among a national sample of 2,001 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Fully 701 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,300 were interviewed on a cellphone, including 749 who had no landline telephone. The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cellphone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who was at home. Interviews in the cellphone sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, visit: <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cellphone samples are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity, and region to parameters from the 2013 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cellphone only or both landline and cellphone), based on extrapolations from the 2014 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cellphones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total Sample	2,001	2.5 percentage points
Have used online dating	272	6.8 percentage points
Have not used online dating	1,729	2.7 percentage points
18-24	194	8.1 percentage points
25-34	274	6.8 percentage points
35-44	235	7.3 percentage points
45-54	330	6.2 percentage points
55-64	411	5.5 percentage points
65+	513	5.0 percentage points
High school grad or less	635	4.5 percentage points
Some college	523	4.9 percentage points
College graduate	823	3.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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Appendix: Demographic tables

Online dating usage by demographic group

% within each group who have ever ...

	Used online dating sites	Used mobile dating apps	Total, online dating user*
All adults	12	9	15
Men	14	10	17
Women	11	8	14
18-24	19	22	27
25-34	17	13	22
35-44	18	11	21
45-54	11	5	13
55-64	10	4	12
65+	3	1	3
High school grad or less	8	7	11
Some college	15	11	18
College graduate	16	9	19
Household income less than \$30k	11	10	15
\$30k-\$75k	16	10	18
\$75k+	15	8	17
White	14	8	16
Black, non-Hispanic	11	10	14
Hispanic	7	10	12
Urban	13	10	17
Suburban	13	9	15
Rural	10	6	12

Source: Survey conducted June 10-July 12, 2015.

*Note: An "online dating user" is defined as someone who has used an online dating website and/or mobile dating app

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Topline Questionnaire

EMINUSE Do you use the internet or email, at least occasionally?

INTMOB Do you access the internet on a cellphone, tablet or other mobile handheld device, at least occasionally?

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Current	87	13
April 2015	85	15
September 2013	86	14
August 2013	80	20
May 2013	85	15
December 2012	81	19
November 2012	85	15
September 2012	81	19
August 2012	85	15
April 2012	82	18
February 2012	80	20
December 2011	82	18
August 2011	78	22
May 2011	78	22
January 2011	79	21

DATE1a Have YOU, personally, ever used an online dating site such as Match.com, eHarmony, or OkCupid?

Based on all internet users

	CURRENT		MAY 2013	SEPT 2005B
%	14	Yes	11	11
	85	No	89	89
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	*	*
	*	(VOL.) Refused	*	--
	[N=1,740]		[N=1,895]	[N=2,252]

DATE2a Have you ever used a dating app on your cellphone?

Based on smartphone owners

	CURRENT		MAY 2013
%	13	Yes	7
	87	No	93
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	*
	0	(VOL.) Refused	0
	[N=1,327]		[N=934]

DATE3 [IF DATE1a=YES OR DATE2a=YES: "Other than yourself,"] Do you personally know anyone who has... [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER]?

	YES	NO	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
a. Used an online dating site or app				
Current	41	58	1	*
May 2013	42	56	1	*
September 2005B	31	69	1	--
b. Been in a long-term relationship with or married someone they met through an online dating site or app				
Current	29	69	1	*
May 2013	29	70	1	*
September 2005B	15	85	1	--

DATE4 Many people have different opinions about online dating. Please tell me if you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements about online dating. [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE; ALWAYS ASK a-b TOGETHER, ALWAYS ASK c-d TOGETHER]. [READ FOR FIRST ITEM, THEN AS NECESSARY: Do you agree or disagree with this statement?]

	AGREE	DISAGREE	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
a. Online dating is a good way to meet people				
Current Total [N=2,001]	59	35	5	1
Current Internet users [N=1,740]	62	32	6	1
May 2013 Total [N=2,252]	56	36	6	2
May 2013 Internet users [N=1,895]	59	34	6	1
September 2005B Internet users [N=2,252]	44	44	11	1
b. Online dating allows people to find a better match for themselves because they can get to know a lot more people				
Current Total	51	41	6	1
Current Internet users	53	40	6	1
May 2013 Total	51	41	7	1
May 2013 Internet users	53	39	6	1
September 2005B Internet users	47	38	15	1

DATE4 continued...

DATE4 continued...

	AGREE	DISAGREE	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
c. People who use online dating sites are desperate				
Current Total	23	71	5	1
Current Internet users	19	74	5	1
May 2013 Total	23	70	6	1
May 2013 Internet users	21	73	4	1
September 2005B Internet users	29	61	9	1
d. Online dating keeps people from settling down because they always have options for people to date				
Current Total	32	59	8	1
Current Internet users	30	61	7	1
May 2013 Total	33	57	9	2
May 2013 Internet users	32	59	8	1
e. Online dating is easier and more efficient than other ways of meeting people				
Current Total	47	45	7	1
Current Internet users	48	44	7	1
September 2005B Internet users	33	53	13	1
f. Online dating is more dangerous than other ways of meeting people				
Current Total	58	36	5	1
Current Internet users	56	38	5	1