Dating & Mating in the Digital Age:
Relationships and technology in the modern era

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About Pew Internet / Pew Research

- Part of the Pew Research Center, a non-partisan "fact tank" in Washington, DC

- Studies how people use digital technologies

- Does not promote specific technologies or make policy recommendations

- Data for this talk is from nationally representative telephone surveys of U.S. adults

People have long sought assistance in finding a romantic partner

- Family and religious institutions → Matchmaking and arranged marriages

- Newspapers → Printed personal ads

- VCR → Video personals

- Internet era → Online dating sites

  - Personal ads (Match, OKCupid, Plenty of Fish)

  - Algorithmic (eHarmony)

  - Apps (Tinder, Grindr, Coffee meets Bagel)

Long-term changes in the nature of dating and relationships

- Record-low 51% of the public is now married

- Americans are waiting until later in life to get married

- "Non-traditional" living arrangements are increasingly common

- Other factors making dating challenging:

  - Increased mobility/migration, dispersal of social networks

  - Longer commutes

  - Demands of work life

Dating in the digital era

- **Online dating – adoption and shifting attitudes**

- Online dating – user experiences

- Other aspects of digital dating and relationships

11% of Americans have used dating sites or apps

- Among the currently "single and looking," 38% have used online dating

- High usage groups include:

    – Those in their mid-20s to mid-40s

    – College attendees

    – Urban and suburbanites

- Main difference between dating site and dating app users: age

    – Median age of dating <u>site</u> users: 38

    – Median age of dating <u>app</u> users: 29
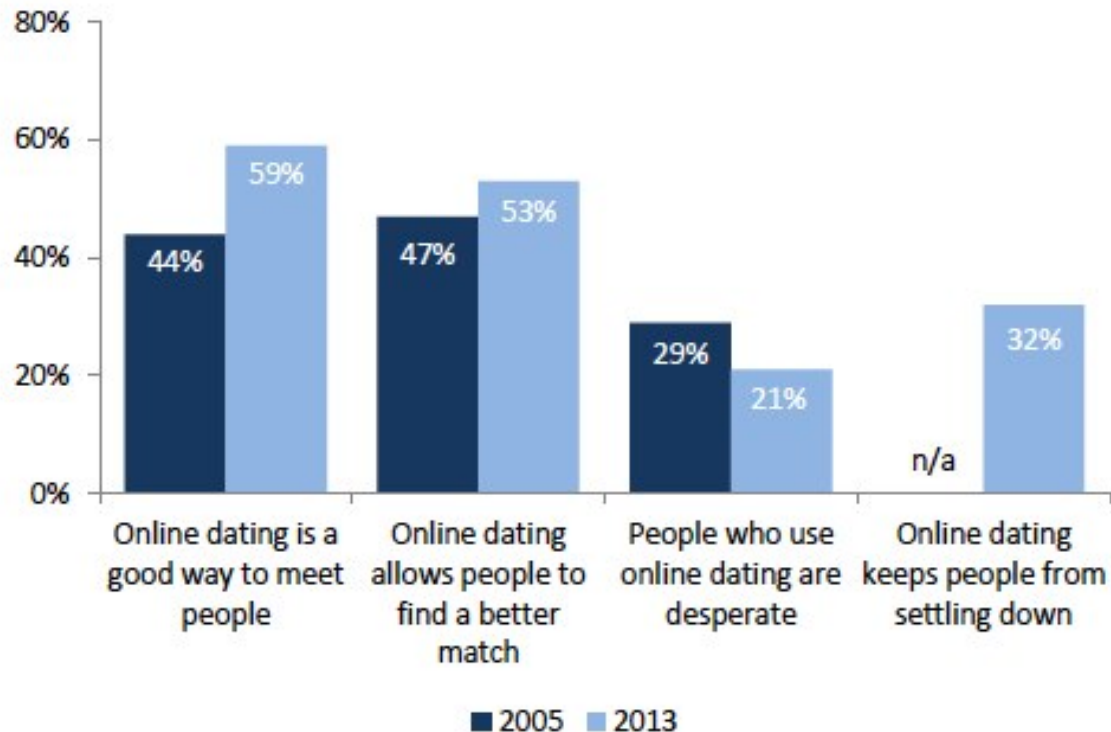
Familiarity with online dating through others, 2005-2013
% of American adults who...

2005 **2013**

Opinions of online dating, 2005-2013
% of internet users who agree with each of the following statements

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=2,252 adults ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. 2005 survey was conducted September 14-December 8, 2005, n=3,215 adults ages 18+.

Dating in the digital era

- Online dating – adoption and shifting attitudes
- **Online dating – user experiences**
- Other aspects of digital dating and relationships

Most common online dating sites, 2005 vs. 2013

% of online dating site users who have used the following sites (only top five responses listed)

2005 (n=204)	2013 (n=198)
Match.com (29%)	Match.com (45%)
Yahoo Personals (21%)	eHarmony (23%)
eHarmony (11%)	Plenty of Fish (17%)
MySpace (7%)	OK Cupid (15%)
Adult Friend Finder (4%)	Christian Mingle (2%), Zoosk (2%)

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=2,252 adults ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. 2005 survey was conducted September 14-December 8, 2005.

Experiences with online dating

- Not everyone "succeeds" at online dating:

  - 66% of online daters have actually gone on a date with someone they met on the sites

  - 23% of online daters have entered into a marriage or long-term relationship with someone they met there

- Most (but not all) online daters enjoy the process

  - 79% agree that online dating is a good way to meet people

  - 70% agree that it helps people find a good romantic match

  - At the same time, 13% agree with the statement that "people who use online dating sites are desperate"

Other experiences

- 54% of online daters say that someone else has *seriously misrepresented themselves* on their profile

- 28% have been contacted in a way that made them feel harassed or uncomfortable

- 40% have used a site designed for people with *shared interests or backgrounds*

- 33% have used a *paid* dating site/app

- 4% have attended a *group outing* or event organized by an online dating site
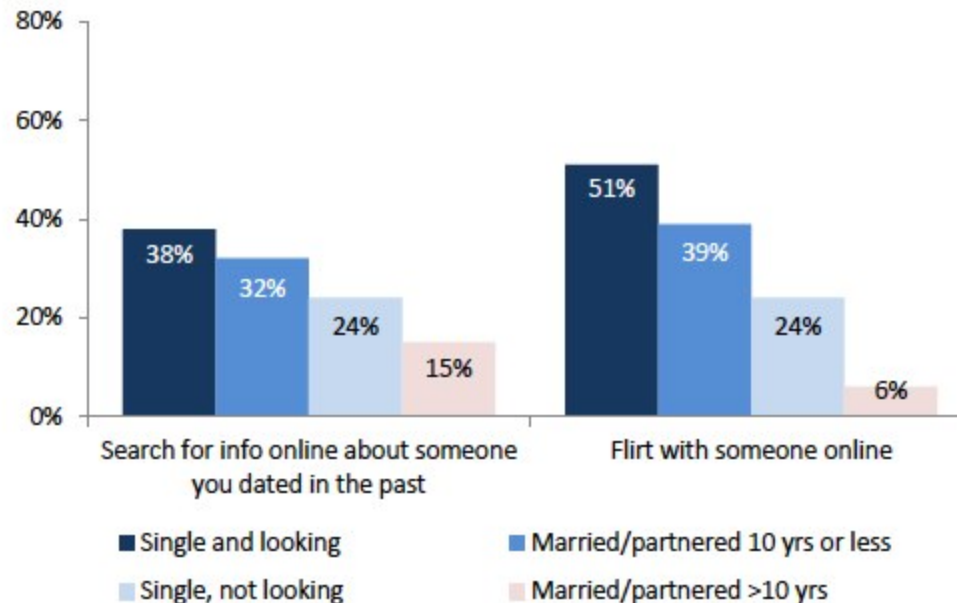
Major reasons for using online dating

- 60% → Meeting people who share similar interests or hobbies

- 52% → Meeting people who share your beliefs or values

- 46% → Finding someone for a long-term relationship or marriage

- 33% → Having a schedule that makes it hard to meet interesting people in other ways

- 25% → Meeting people who just want to have fun without being in a serious relationship

Dating in the digital era

- Online dating – adoption and shifting attitudes

- Online dating – user experiences

- **Other aspects of digital dating and relationships**

Flirting and looking up old flames

- **24% of internet users have searched for information online about someone they dated in the past, up from 11% in 2005**

- **24% of internet users have flirted with someone online, up from 15% in 2005**

■ Single and looking	■ Married/partnered 10 yrs or less
■ Single, not looking	■ Married/partnered >10 yrs

Social networks

- **31% of SNS users have used sites like Facebook to check up on past relationships**

- **17% have posted pictures or details from a date**
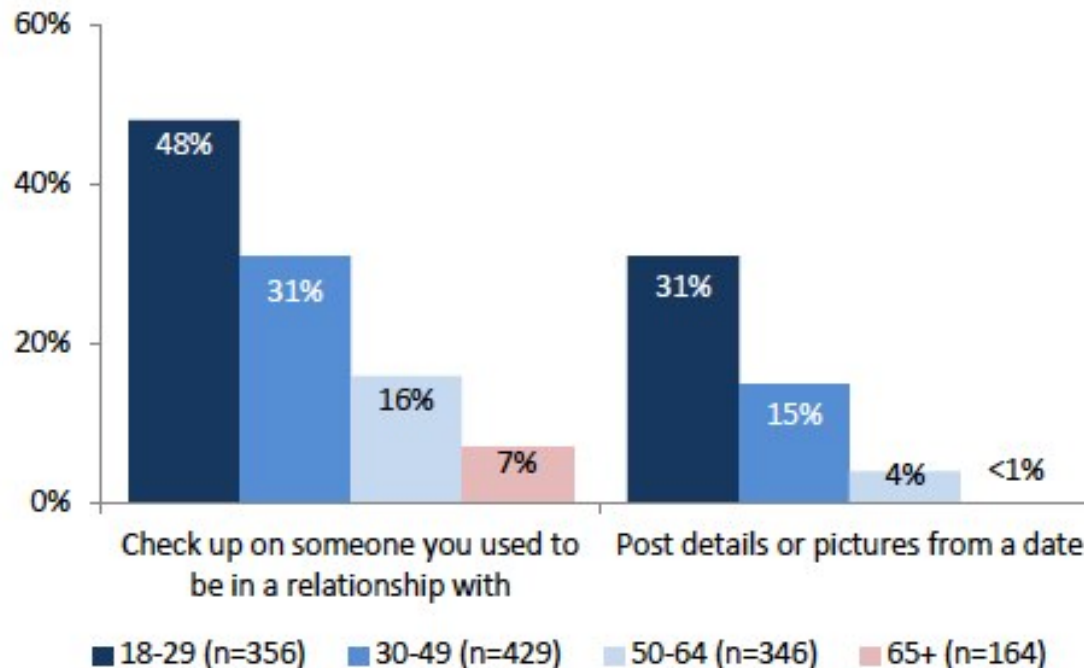
Among SNS users with recent dating experience...

- 30% have used sites like Facebook to get info on someone they were interested in dating

- 15% have used them to ask someone out on a date

- 12% have friended someone because another friend said they might like to date them
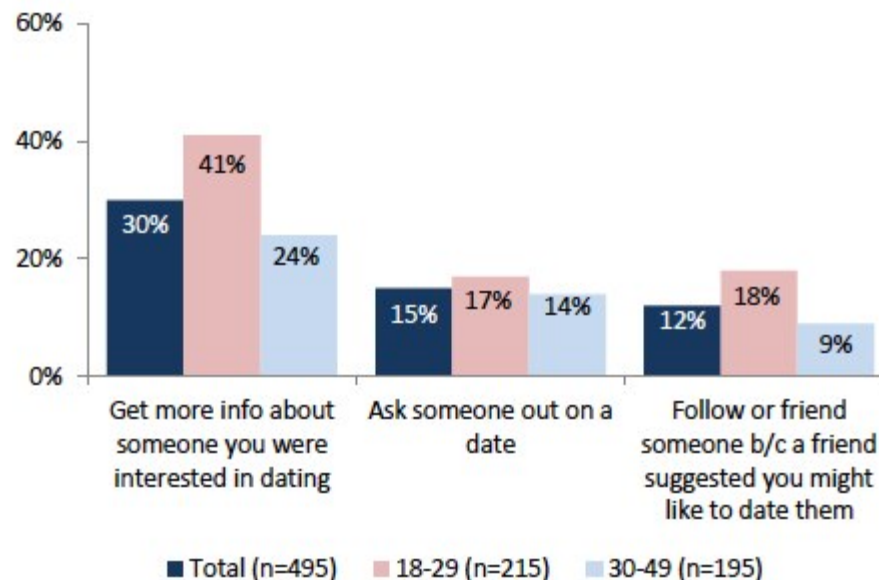
Couples and digital technology

- **Most online adults don't think technology has much of an impact on their relationship – and quarter of adults who do, say it's mostly positive.**

- Young adults much more likely to report that tech is a factor in their relationships – for good and ill.

- Technology can be both a source of tension and intimacy for online couples.

- Sharing of passwords is relatively common, while sharing email, calendars and social media is less so.

What impact does the Internet have on couples?

- 10% of internet users who are married or partnered say that the internet has had a "major impact" on their relationship, and 17% say that it has had a "minor impact."
- 72% of married or committed online adults said the internet has "no real impact at all" on their partnership.
- 74% of the adult internet users who report that the internet had an impact on their marriage or partnership say the impact was positive.
- 20% said the impact was mostly negative
- 4% said it was both good and bad.

Impact of technology on relationships, by cell phone, social media, and online dating status

Among those in committed relationships, the % within each group who say technology has had a major vs. minor impact on their relationship

■ Major impact   ■ Minor impact

Group	Major impact	Minor impact
Smartphone owner	13	19
Cell phone owner	4	10
No cell phone	3	8
Social media user	13	19
Not a social media user	4	11
Online dater	38	26
Not an online dater	7	14

Couples and digital technology

• Most online adults don't think technology has much of an impact on their relationship – and quarter of adults who do, say it's mostly positive.

• **Young adults much more likely to report that tech is a factor in their relationships – for good and ill.**

• Technology can be both a source of tension and intimacy for online couples.

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Impact of technology on relationships, by age and relationship length

Among internet users in committed relationships, the % within each group who say technology has had a major vs. minor impact on their relationship

■ Major impact ■ Minor impact

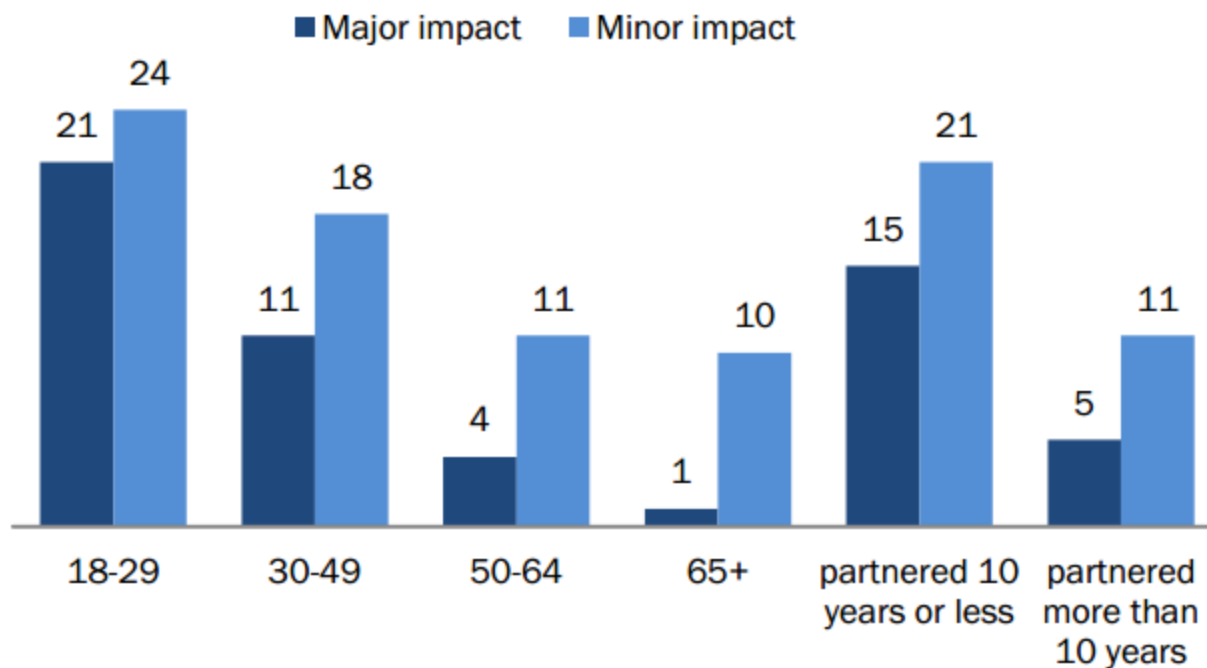| Group	Major impact	Minor impact
18-29	21	24
30-49	11	18
50-64	4	11
65+	1	10
partnered 10 years or less	15	21
partnered more than 10 years	5	11

Couples and digital technology

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Positive technology experiences in relationships

*Among internet users or cell phone owners in a committed relationship, the %
who have experienced the following, by length of relationship*

Legend:
- ■ Total
- ■ Married/partnered 10 years or less
- ■ Married/partnered 10+ years

Category	Total	Married/partnered 10 years or less	Married/partnered 10+ years
Felt closer to partner due to online or text message conversations	21	32	12
Resolved argument with partner online or by texting	9	17	3
Texted partner while at home together *among cell phone owners who text*	25	31	19

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Negative technology experiences in relationships

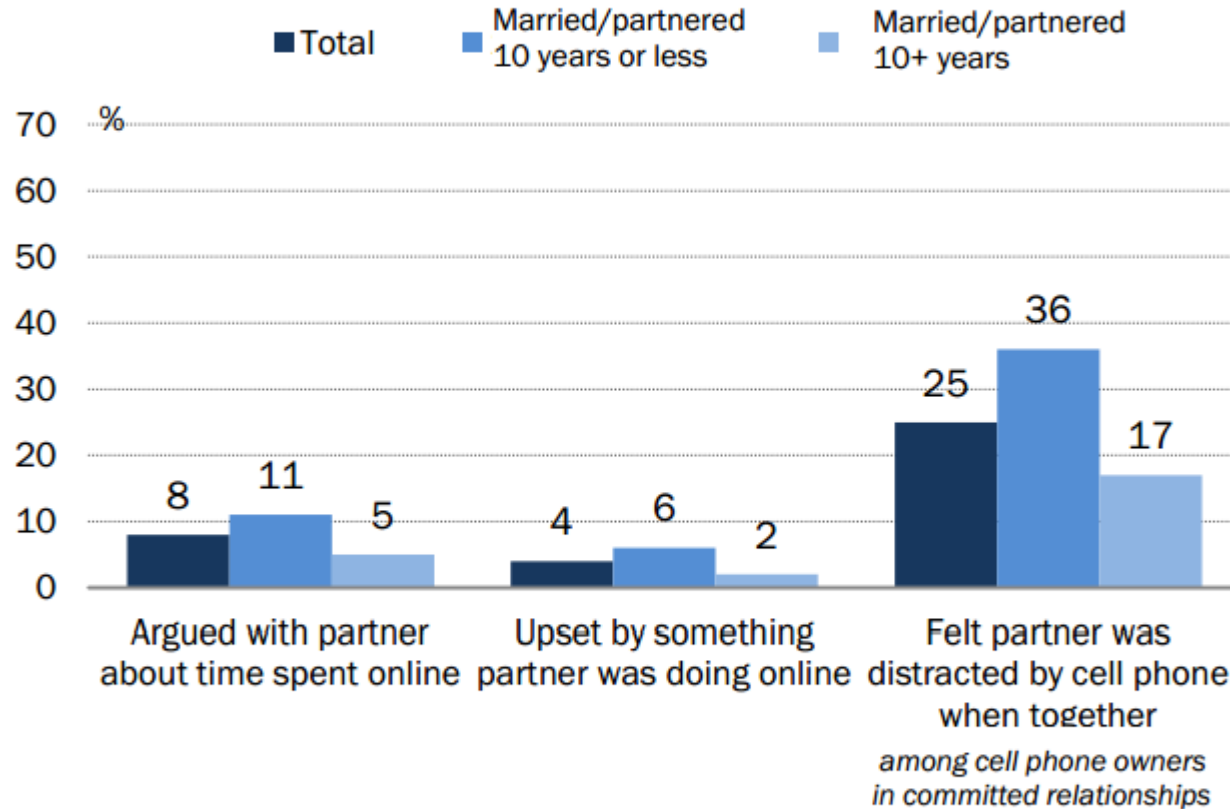*Among internet users in a committed relationship, the % who have experienced the following, by length of relationship*

■ Total   ■ Married/partnered 10 years or less   ■ Married/partnered 10+ years

	Argued with partner about time spent online	Upset by something partner was doing online	Felt partner was distracted by cell phone when together
Total	8	4	25
Married/partnered 10 years or less	11	6	36
Married/partnered 10+ years	5	2	17

among cell phone owners in committed relationships

Sexting by age

Among cell phone owners, the % who use their phones to do the following ...

■ Receive sexts ■ Send sexts ■ Forward sexts

Age	Receive sexts	Send sexts	Forward sexts
18-24	44	15	6
25-34	34	22	5
35-44	22	11	2
45-54	15	5	2
55+	4	<1	<1
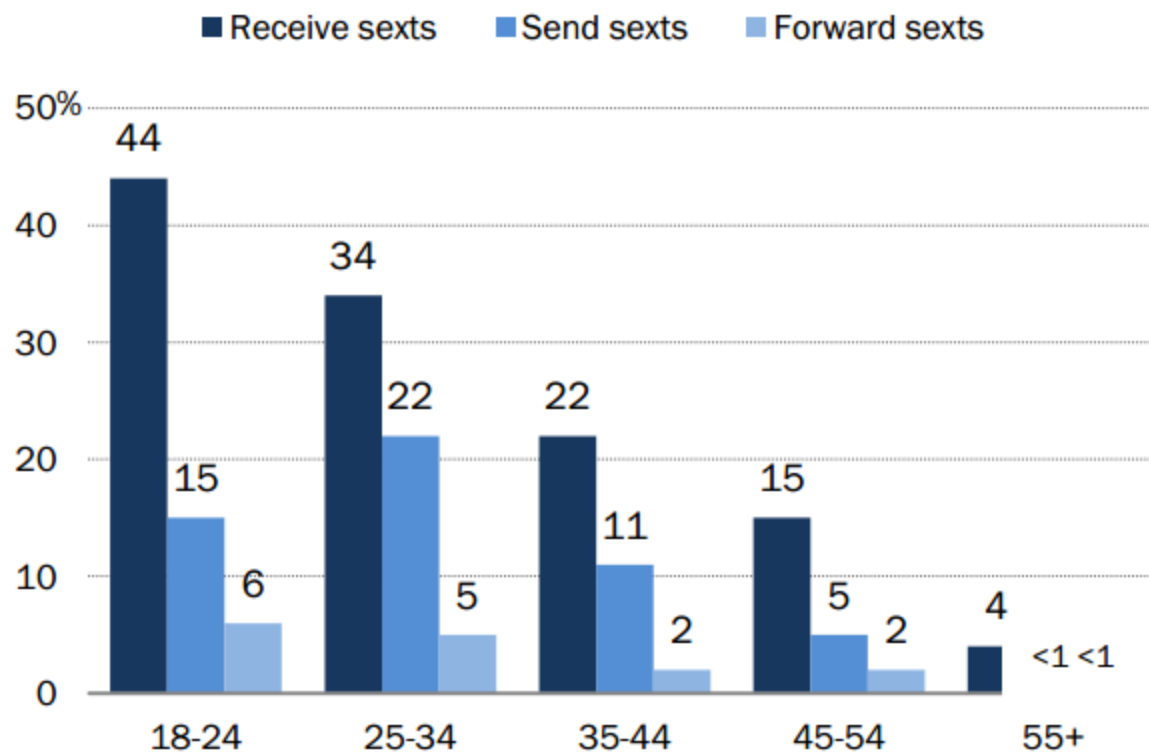
Pew Research Center's Internet Project survey, August 7-September 16, 2013.

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Sexting by relationship status

Among cell phone owners, the % in each relationship group who do the following ...

|	Single status		Online dating status		Relationship status		Length of relationship	
	Single, looking	Single, not looking	Uses online dating	Does not use online dating	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In relationship 10 yrs or less	In relationship more than 10 yrs
Receive sexts	42	21	55	16	18	25	32	6
Send sexts	23	6	31	6	9	10	17	2
Forward sexts	10	2	9	2	2	4	4	1

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Couples and digital technology

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Sharing online accounts with a partner

*Among internet users in committed relationships, the %
who share the following with their partner...*

67%
27%
11%
11%

share
password

share email
account

share online
calendar

share social
media profile
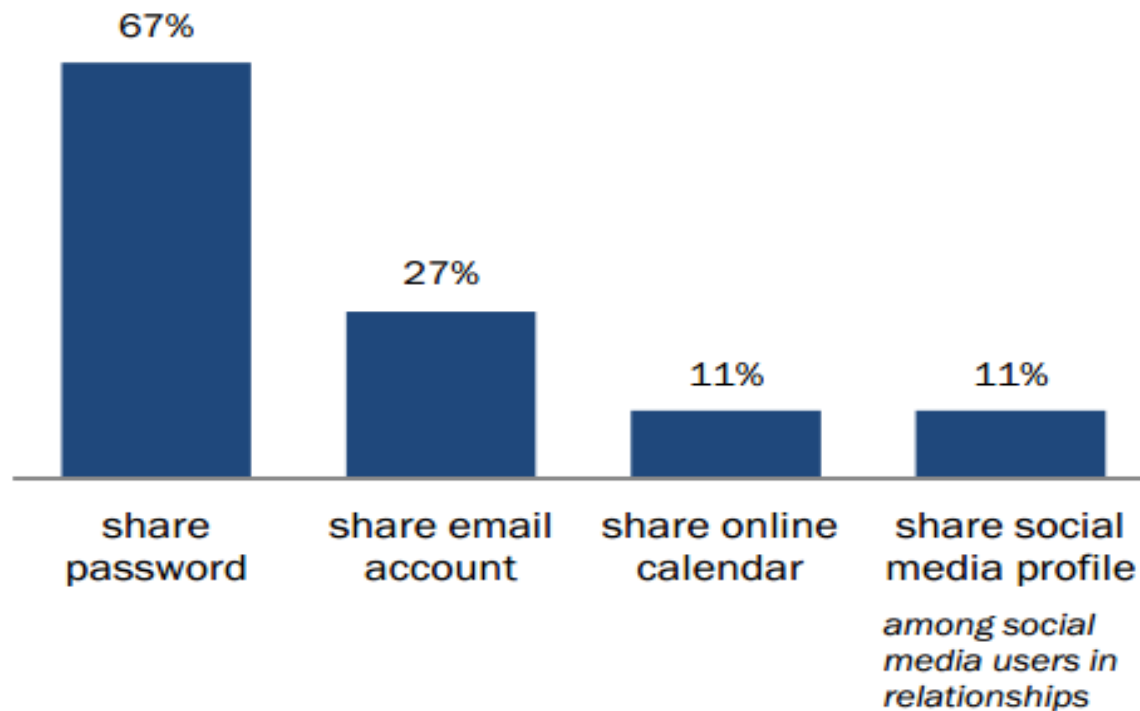
*among social
media users in
relationships*

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Sharing passwords

*Among internet users in committed relationships, the %
who have ever shared a password with their partner*

		Share passwords
	Total (n=1,268)	67
a	Male	66
b	Female	69
a	18-29	64
b	30-49	70
c	50-64	66
d	65+	69
a	White	72[bc]
b	African-American	52
c	Hispanic	49
a	<$50,000/year	56
b	$50,000+/year	76[a]
a	Parent	71[b]
b	Not a parent	65

Pew Research Center's Internet Project survey, August 7-September
16, 2013.
Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., [a])
indicates a statistically significant difference between that row and
the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of
each demographic characteristic (e.g., age).
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Sharing email accounts

Among internet users in committed relationships, the % who share an email account with their partner

		Share an email account
	Total (n=1,268)	27
a	Male	25
b	Female	29
a	18-29	12
b	30-49	24[a]
c	50-64	33[ab]
d	65+	47[abc]
a	White	28[b]
b	African-American	17
c	Hispanic	26
a	Employed full-time	24
b	Employed part-time	28
c	Retired	42[abd]
d	Unemployed	21
a	<$50,000/year	18
b	$50,000+/year	32[a]

Pew Research Center's Internet Project survey, August 7-September 16, 2013.

Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., [a]) indicates a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g., age).

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Sharing social media profiles

Among social media users in committed relationships, the % who share a social media profile with their partner

		Share a social media profile
	Total (n=889)	11
a	Male	10
b	Female	12
a	18-29	10
b	30-49	10
c	50-64	12
d	65+	11
a	Employed full-time	9
b	Employed part-time	9
c	Retired	16
d	Unemployed	11
a	<$50,000/year	10
b	$50,000+/year	11

Pew Research Center's Internet Project survey, August 7-September 16, 2013.
Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., [a]) indicates a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g., age).
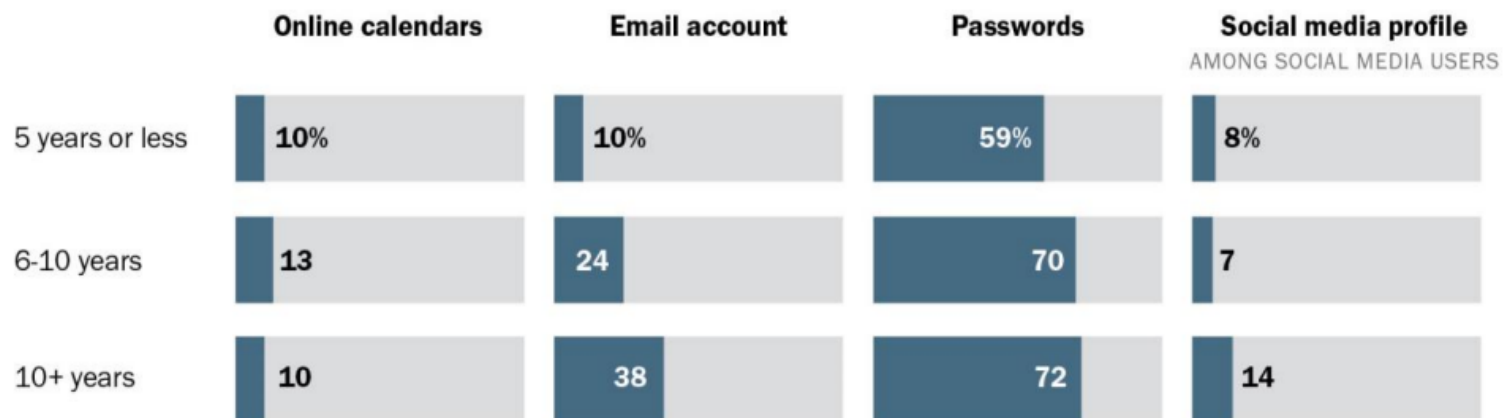
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Who Shares an Online Calendar?

- Middle aged couples – 16% of 25-34 year olds, and 12% of those ages 35-44, share an online calendar with their partner. Calendar sharing also increases at retirement age, as 11% of those 65 and older share an online calendar with a partner.

- Couples with children living at home – 13% of parents share an online calendar.

- Those who are employed full-time – 12% of those who are employed full-time share an online calendar with their spouse or partner.

- Those with higher income and/or education levels – 16% of college graduates, and 15% of those with an annual household income of $75,000 or more per year, share an online calendar with their spouse or partner.

Sharing online accounts and passwords, based on the length of the relationship

Among internet users in committed relationships, the % who share the following with their partner, by length of relationship

	Online calendars	Email account	Passwords	Social media profile AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS
5 years or less	10%	10%	59%	8%
6-10 years	13	24	70	7
10+ years	10	38	72	14

Pew Research Center's Internet Project survey, August 7-September 16, 2013.
*Sharing social media profiles was measured among all social media users in committed relationships (n=889)

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Dating, couples and digital technology

- Websites and apps are a part of a modern daters toolkit, especially those from "thin" dating markets.

- Stigma is declining as online dating becomes mainstream.

- Online dating is generally pretty enjoyable for most people, though women are more likely to have negative experiences.

- New kinds of information about potential (and past) partners is plentiful – and tempting.

Dating, couples and digital technology

- Tech impact is modest on most couples – but greater on young adults and those in shorter relatioships.

- Technology can be both a source of tension and intimacy for online couples.

- Digital media is now embedded in the functions and functioning of shared lives.

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