Swipe With a Plan

A Practical Guide to Using Dating Apps Without the Burnout, With the Facts That Matter

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CHAPTER 1

Who Uses Dating Apps and How It Is Going

A February 2025 poll of 2,016 U.S. adults, run by SSRS, asked about online dating. Thirty-nine percent said they had ever used a dating app or site. Only 7 percent were using one at the time of the poll. Among adults 18 to 29, 65 percent had used online dating at some point and 16 percent were using it at the time.

The gap between ever and now is large. Many people try the apps, and most are not on them at any moment. One reading is that many people try the apps for a while and then leave, whether because they met someone, got tired or lost interest. The poll does not say which.

The same poll asked ever-users which platforms they had tried. Forty-six percent had used Tinder, 29 percent Plenty of Fish, 26 percent Bumble and 25 percent Match. Because people try several, these shares add up to more than 100 percent. They show which names are familiar and not which apps are best.

Pew Research Center asked about experience in a survey published in February 2023. Among U.S. adults who had used online dating, 53 percent called their overall experience very or somewhat positive, and 46 percent called it somewhat or very negative. Women were more likely than men to say negative. A near split of that kind tells readers that the apps work reasonably well for about half of users and poorly for the other half, so it is sensible to plan for both outcomes.

The business side shows the same split. Match Group, which owns Tinder and Hinge, announced results for 2025 in February 2026. It had 14.2 million paying users for the year, down 5 percent. Hinge grew its direct revenue by 26 percent in the fourth quarter. Trade reports say

that paying users of Tinder and Bumble fell through 2025 while those of Hinge rose, though the exact percentages differ by source and are not used here.

Company figures count payers and revenue and say nothing about satisfaction. Even so, they point to a market that is changing. Some apps are losing paying users while one is growing quickly. A reader choosing an app can reasonably look at the style of each one and pick the one that suits the kind of connection sought.

None of this predicts what will happen to a given person. It supports three simple ideas. Most people who try the apps do not stay on them. Experiences vary a great deal. The market is shifting, so the best app for a reader a few years ago may not be the best one now. The next chapter looks at what happens once a person is on an app and the messages start to arrive.