

Closing The Communication Gap



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Your Inner Voices Brought to Life

Before a message is sent or a question is asked, there's usually a voice in your head—sometimes confident, sometimes cautious, always curious. In this report, we bring those inner voices to life: the ones that shape what we say, what we don't, and how connection really begins.

The Communication Gap at a Glance

The desire for more emotional connection in dating is strong: 84% of Gen Z Hinge daters want to find new ways to build deeper connections with the people they’re dating.



Yet, The Communication Gap is in their way. Gen Z daters are 36% more hesitant than millennials to initiate a deep conversation on the first date.

Assumptions around gender are adding to the disconnect: 42% of heterosexual Gen Z women feel like the people they date don’t want deep conversations on the first few dates—yet 65% of Gen Z heterosexual men say they do.



For Gen Z men, it’s due to pressures about how they will be perceived. 48% are holding back from emotional intimacy because they don’t want to seem ‘too much.’



Gen Z doesn’t think their dates ask enough questions, so closing the Question Deficit can make for better dates and stronger connections. In fact, 85% of daters are more likely to want a second date when they’re asked thoughtful questions.



Additionally, younger daters are experimenting with new ways to connect and build emotional intimacy—from voice notes to 60% of younger (18–22-year-old) Gen Z daters being open to using AI to help them in dating.



Introducing

The

Communication

Gap

Why Gen Z daters want deeper connection but still hold back.

In this section we cover:

The big picture of dating today—what The Communication Gap is, why it matters, and how gendered expectations shape the way we show up. You'll also meet the experts behind the data—the people translating stats into real advice daters can actually use.

Today, there's a growing cultural conversation, especially online, about how Gen Z daters are feeling increasingly divided, from social values to behaviors.

According to headlines—and to daters themselves—that divide is shaping how people approach intimacy, romance, and dating.



of Gen Z Hinge daters want to find new ways to build deeper connections with the people they're dating.*

Yet Hinge's 2025 D.A.T.E. Report finds that Gen Z daters are still optimistic and curious when it comes to building emotional intimacy:

*This includes cisgender and trans daters, heterosexual daters, and daters from across the LGBTQIA+community.

There are many elements shaping the tension between men and women today, but one factor sits at the heart of it all: communication—or more specifically, what's not being said. At Hinge, we call this disconnect:

The Communication Gap^(Noun)



The disconnect between the deeper connection daters want and their willingness to initiate it.

After surveying approximately 30,000 Hinge daters globally, we found that Gen Z daters are 36% more hesitant than millennials to initiate a deep conversation on the first date.

64%

Millenial daters are 64% less hesitant than Gen Z to initiate a deep conversation on the first date.

36%

Gen Z daters are 36% more hesitant than millennials to initiate a deep conversation on the first date.

While Gen Z is the most fluid generation when it comes to gender and sexuality, traditional assumptions about identity, gender norms and mixed signals often make people hold back in conversations.

35%

of Hinge daters across all genders and sexualities say they're holding back from having deeper conversations because they don't know how to start.

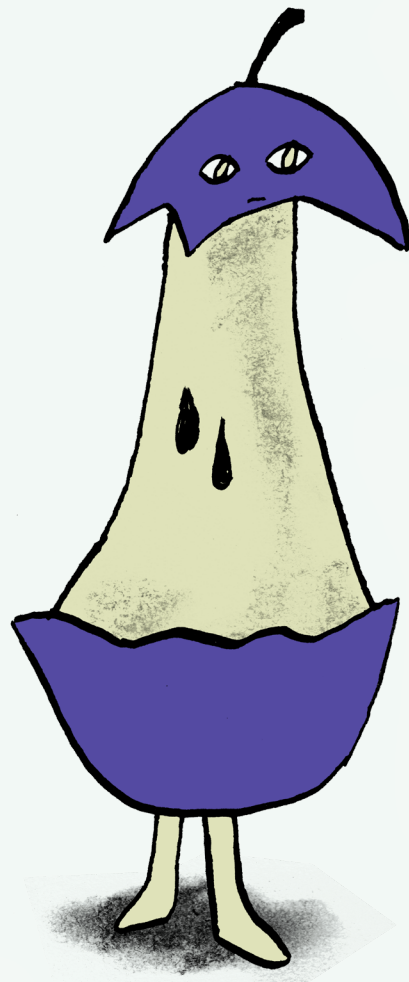
43%

of Gen Z women wait for the other person to initiate deep conversations, partly because they assume men don't want to have them.

48%

of Gen Z men hold back from emotional intimacy because they don't want to seem 'too much.'

Gen Z daters want
deeper connections,



but often hold back.

This report looks at what's getting
in the way of communication and
offers tools to change that.

You'll find expert advice on everything from asking the right follow-up questions (pg. 17), to sending a Voice Note that doesn't feel cringe (pg. 43), to understanding when to use or not use AI (pg. 49). We know that no report can close the gap for all daters, but this one can make it easier for daters who want to show up differently—and build something real.

Meet the Experts

Hinge’s in-house love and relationship experts have developed evidence-based, reliable guidance to support daters. Drawing from deep expertise and real user insights, their advice offers credible, practical tools for navigating relationships.



Logan Ury
(she/her) Lead Relationship
Scientist at Hinge

Logan is a behavioral scientist turned dating coach and the author of the best-selling book *How to Not Die Alone*. She’s also the on-screen coach on the Netflix series *The Later Daters*. Before joining Hinge, she led Google’s behavioral science team, the Irrational Lab, and studied psychology at Harvard University.



Moe Ari Brown
(he/they) Love & Connection
Expert at Hinge

Moe is a licensed marriage and family therapist with over a decade of experience helping people build authentic, lasting relationships. They have worked with people across identities on their journey to love their authentic selves and form meaningful connections. Moe also serves as a diversity and equity consultant and holds an MS in Marriage and Family Therapy from Northwestern University.

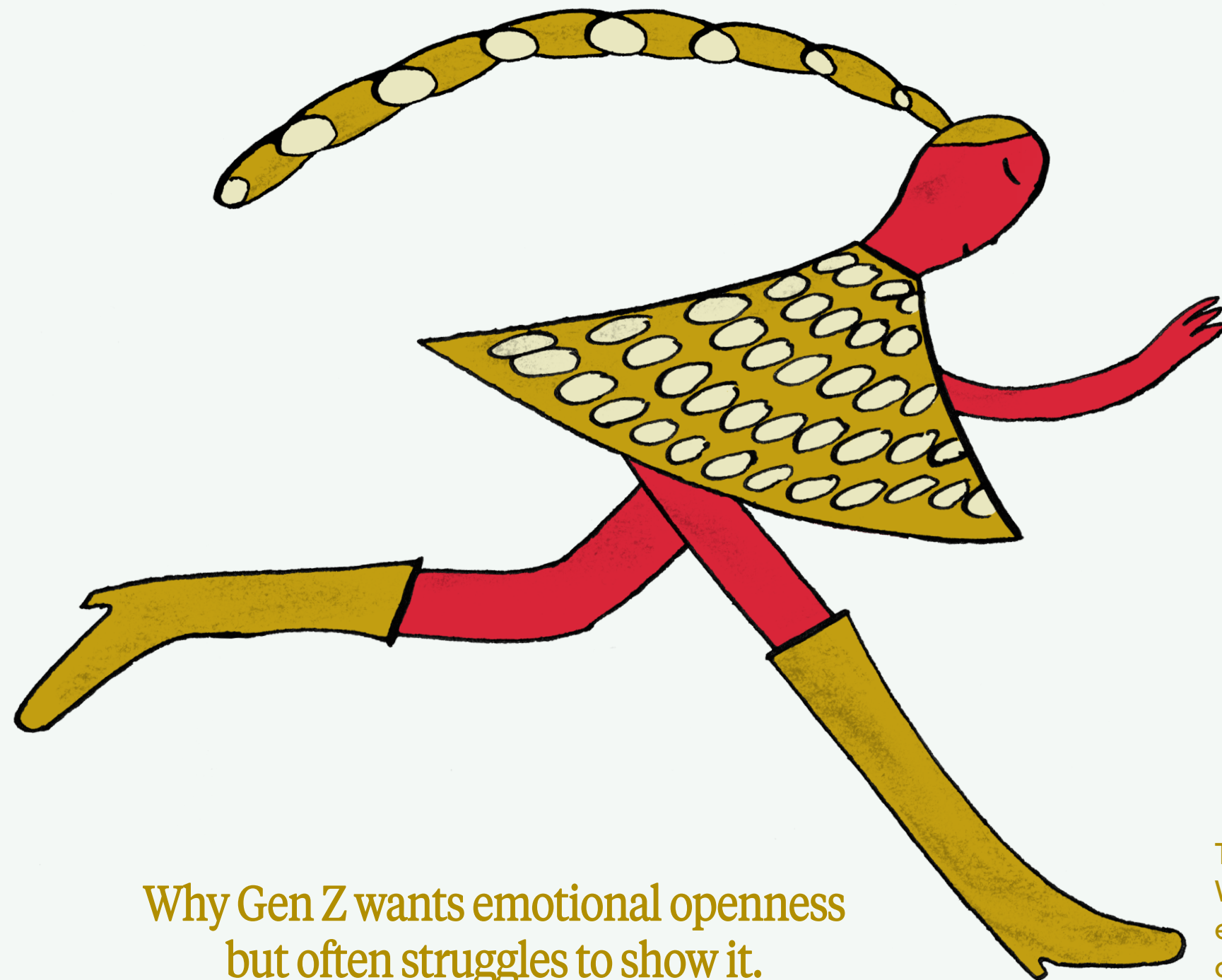
The Communication Gap

isn't about avoiding emotional intimacy—it's about fear, timing, and mixed expectations.

With expert voices and new data, this report shows how Gen Z can move from hesitation to openness.

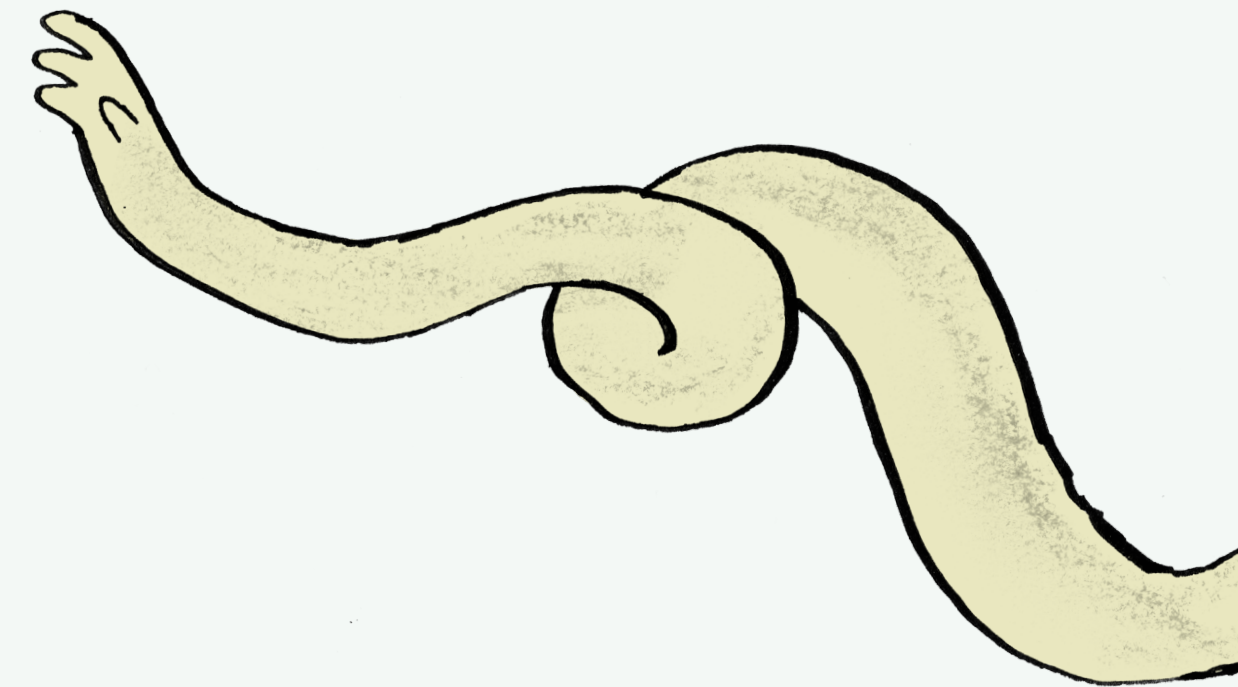
Ask the deeper question, send the thoughtful message, and show up as your full self. Vulnerability isn't a risk to avoid—it's the spark that makes connection real.

Craving Connection



Why Gen Z wants emotional openness
but often struggles to show it.

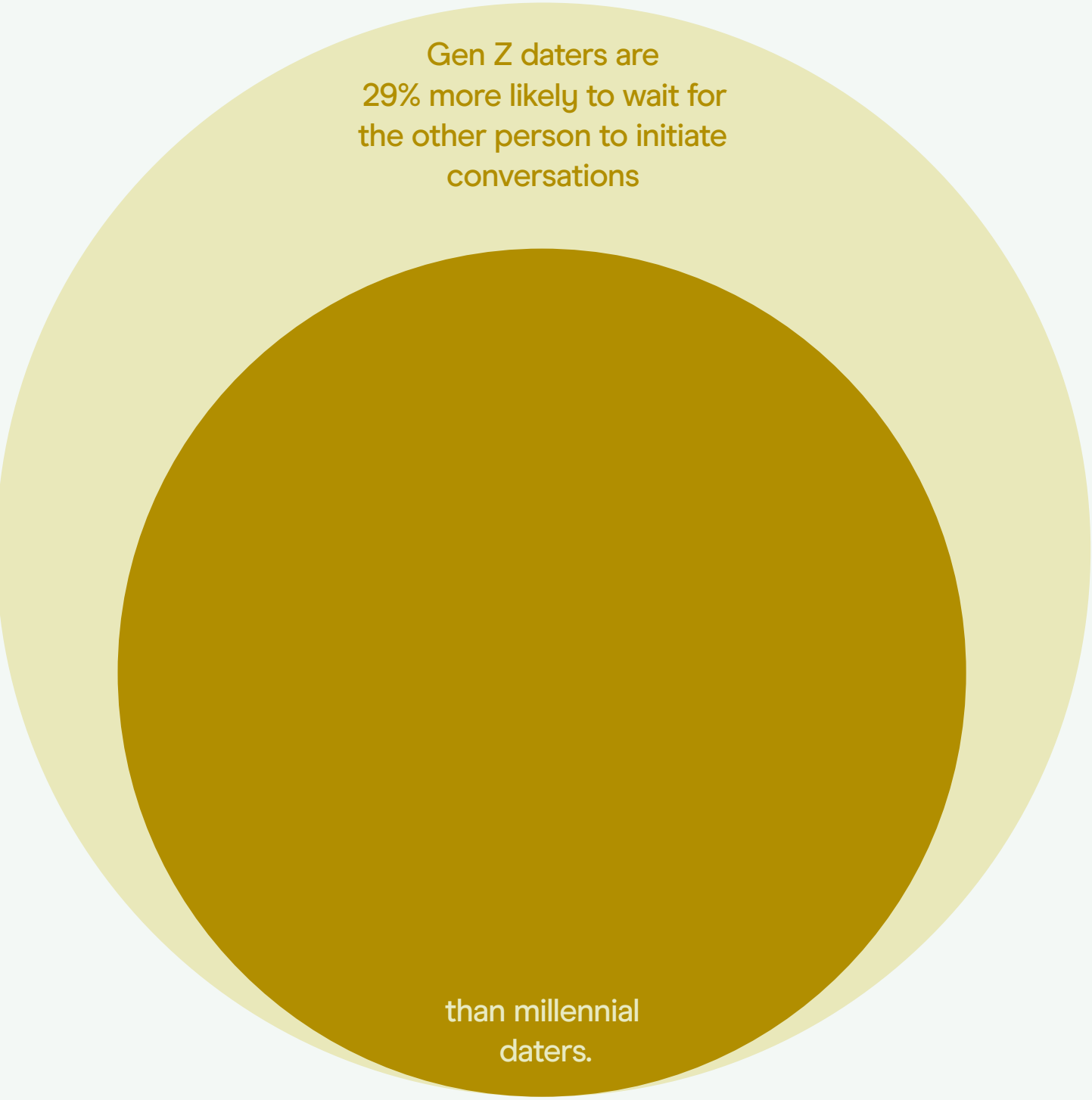
Keeping a Distance



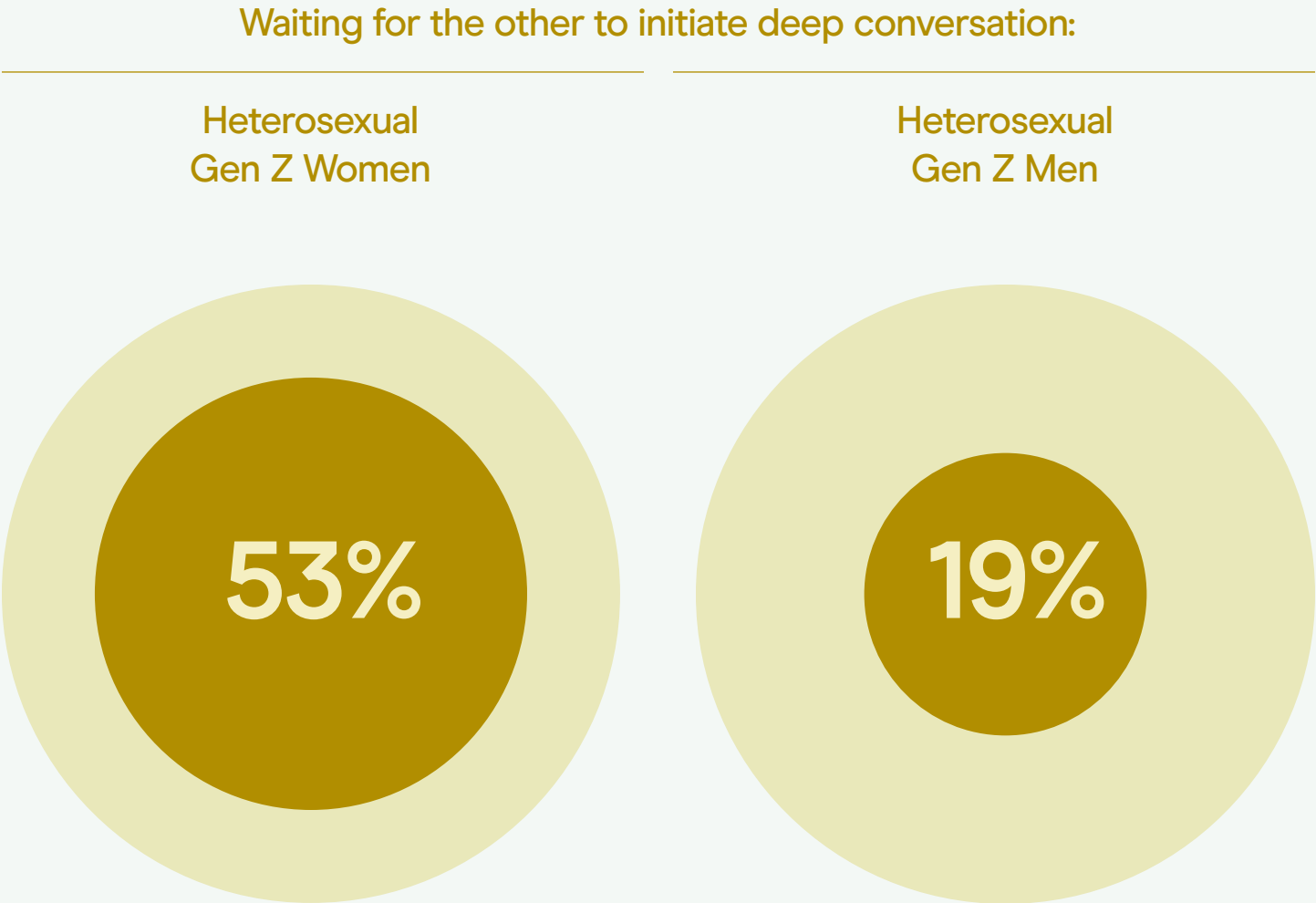
In this section we cover:

The push and pull of wanting closeness but fearing exposure. We unpack gendered double standards, reveal how 'too much' / 'not enough' plays out in real dates, and show how assumptions often create the very distance daters want to avoid.

For younger daters, gendered ideas about how to communicate or show up are fueling a ‘play it cool culture’ that can get in the way of connection.



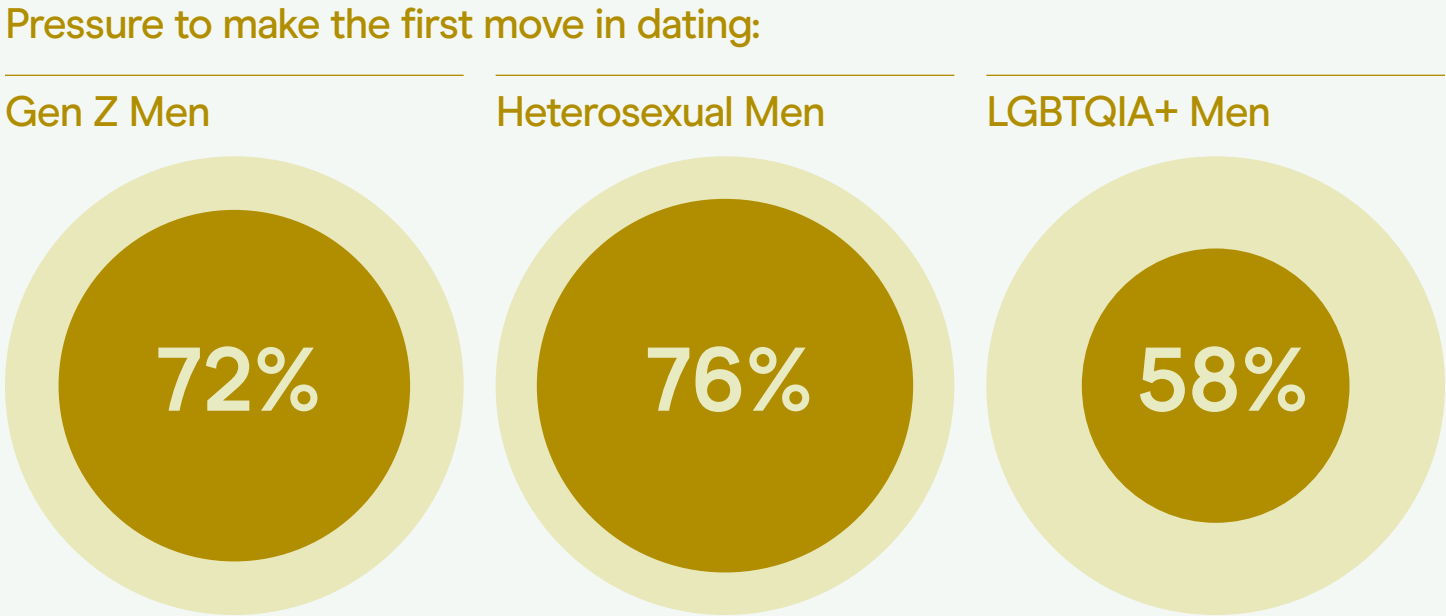
As the first generation to grow up fully online, Gen Z often holds back from expressing themselves authentically. Social media has created a sense of being watched, leading many to self-censor and worry about how they’re perceived. 53% of heterosexual younger Gen Z women (ages 18–22) wait for the other person to initiate deep conversation (a conversation that goes beyond small talk), compared to 19% of heterosexual younger Gen Z men.



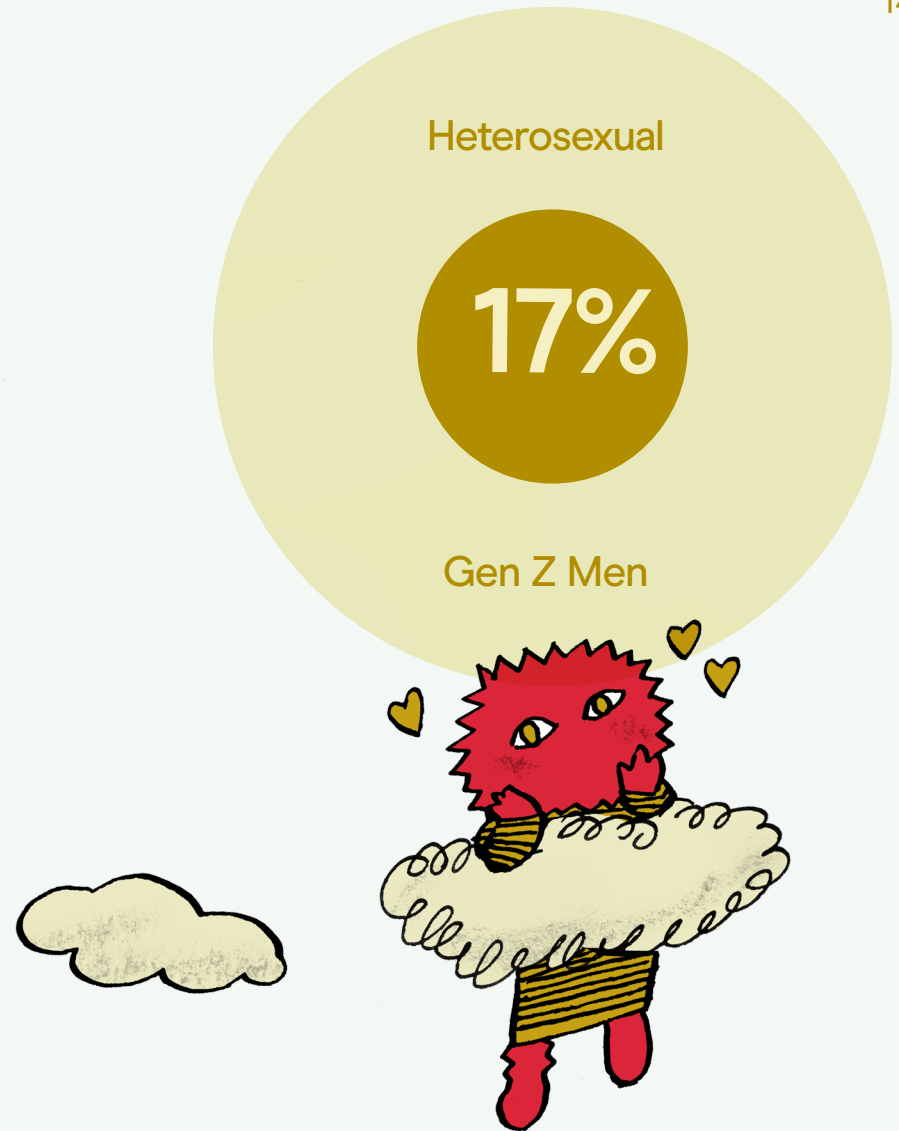
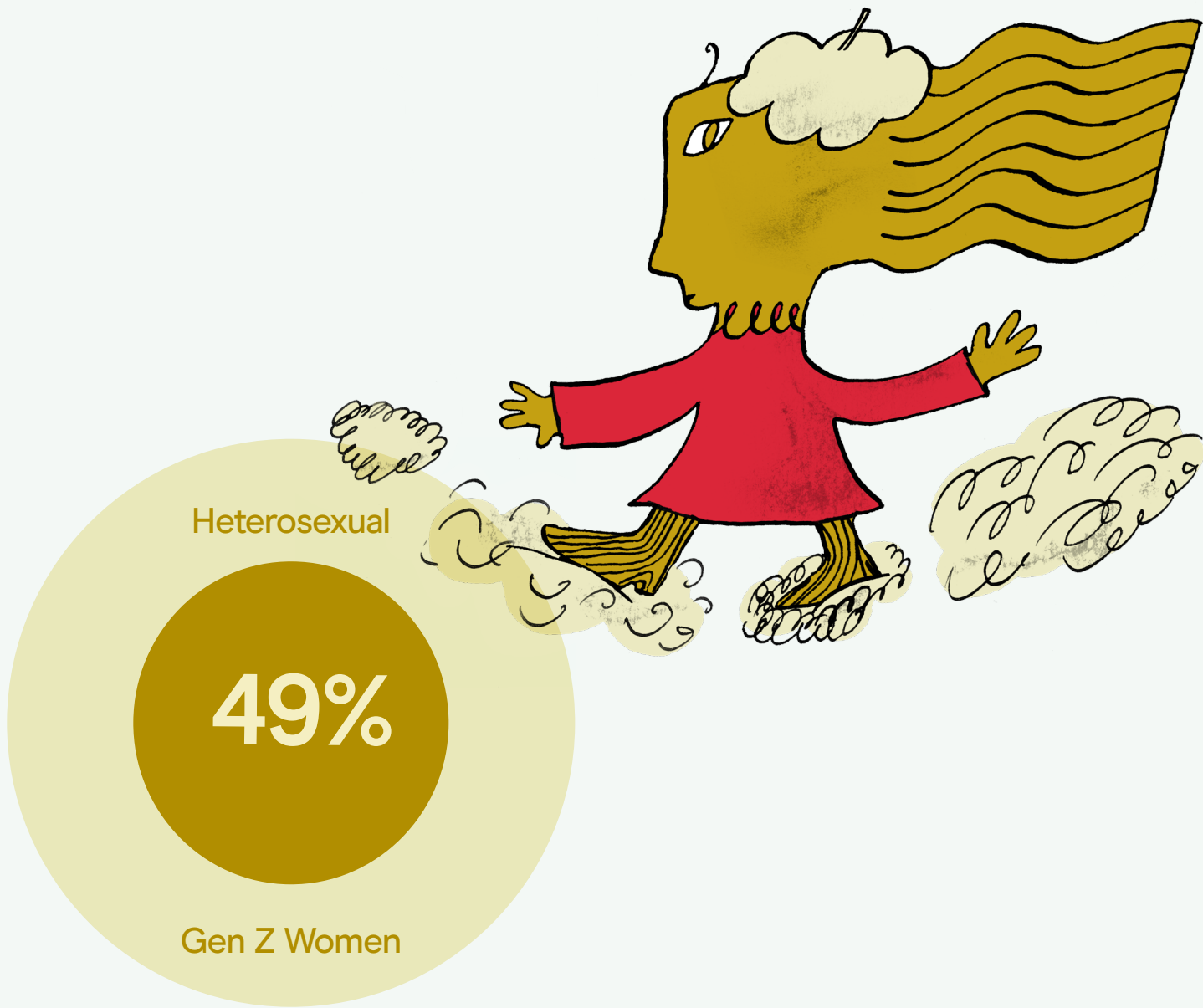
Making the First Move

When it comes to who should initiate, the old rules of courtship—where men are expected to lead—still linger in heterosexual dynamics. From early messages to deep chats, Gen Z men report feeling pressure to take the first step. Meanwhile, many Gen Z women say they wait for men’s cues.

72% of Gen Z men have felt pressured to make the first move—rising to 76% among heterosexual men compared to 58% of LGBTQIA+ men.



49% of heterosexual Gen Z women are hesitant to start deep conversations on the first date because they want the other person to go first, while only 17% of heterosexual Gen Z men say the same.



Connection doesn't happen when everyone's waiting. It starts when both people decide to try—not because they're 'supposed to,' but because they want to.

Dater Story



“The cultural stereotype (a Western one, at least) is that men must direct things and show certainty. He must lead the dance. I wish people I dated knew that this is hard and rare to do truthfully.”

“Anyone can fake certainty, and most men do, but to feel it and then do it honestly takes time. I wish those I dated could understand that.”

Baron Ryan

(he/him)
@americanbaron, US

Dater Story



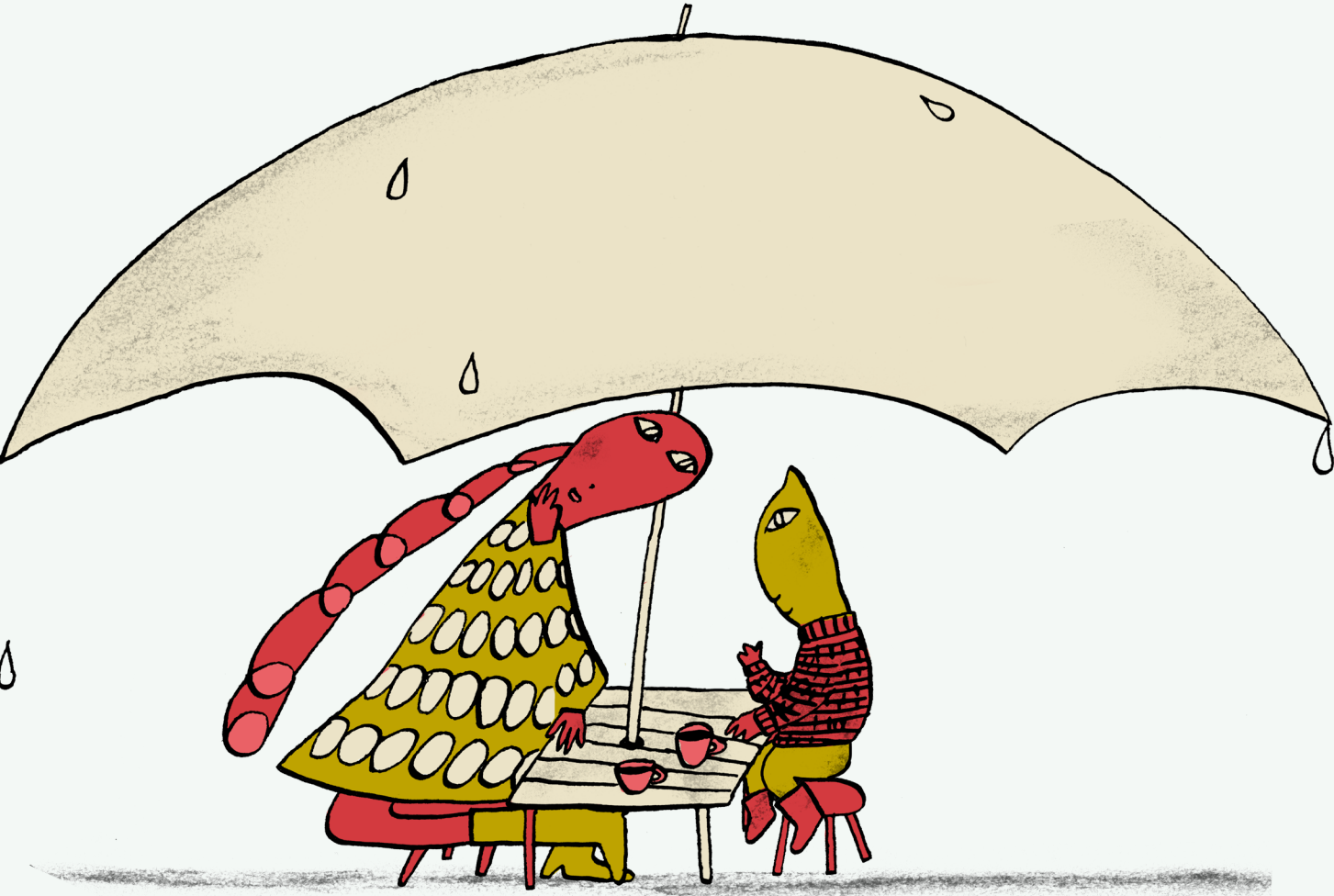
“Being a woman definitely impacts how I communicate on dates, and it depends on the gender of the person I’m on a date with! With women, I find dates can slip into the friend-zone more easily, so I lean into romance and emotion. With men, I’m more cautious that all they’re interested in is something casual.”

“I hold back emotionally in the beginning to protect myself from getting hurt.”

Lucy Holz

(she/her)
@lucy.holz, AUS

Date Expectations



Daters don’t just bring their own expectations into dating—they also bring assumptions about what the other person wants. And often, those guesses miss the mark.

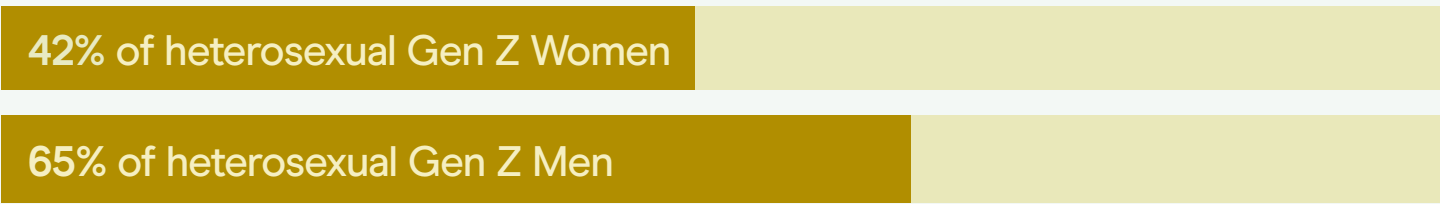
74% of Gen Z men and 70% of Gen Z women say they feel comfortable being emotionally open on the first date.

Comfortable being emotionally open on the first date:



42% of heterosexual Gen Z women feel like the men they date don’t want to have deep conversations on the first few dates. 65% of heterosexual Gen Z men say they do want those more meaningful chats.

Open to deep conversations on the first few dates:



Emotional availability isn’t gendered—it’s something daters of every gender are both longing for and ready to embrace.

Expert Advice

How to Push Past Invisible Scripts

Moe Ari Brown (they/he)
Love & Connection Expert at Hinge



Early dating often locks people into invisible scripts, such as who texts first, who plans the date, and who shows more emotion. Especially in a culture that tells young men to be a certain way and young women to be another, such as active or passive.

These roles aren't necessarily romantic—they're habits and quite often, expectations. They can create a role cycle before we've even figured out what works for us. Falling into these kinds of roles can quietly sabotage the connection because, while habits create routines, they can also create monotony or imbalance.

When there's a disconnect between how we think we should act and communicate, and how we actually want to act and communicate, it can also lead to us feeling unfulfilled and inauthentic to ourselves. Relationships feel stronger when both people get to contribute in ways that feel fulfilling to them.

Try switching it up:

“I'll plan this date if you want to plan the next?” or
“I'll choose the takeout and you choose the film?”

Men: Avoidant? or Anxious?

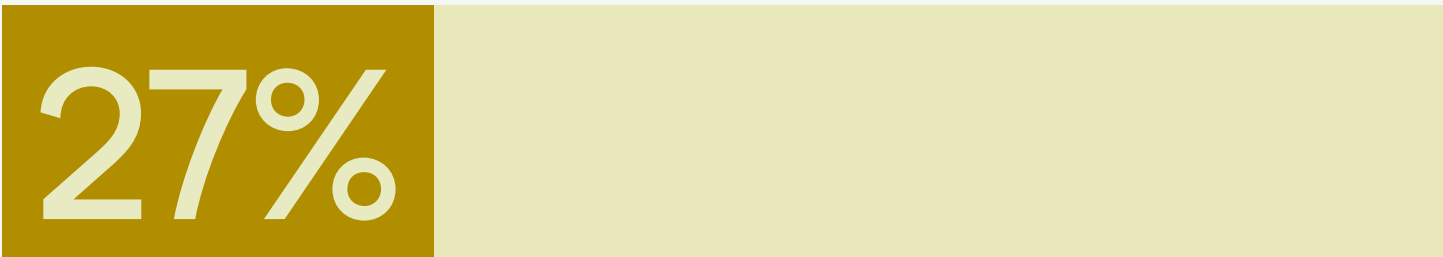
71%

of Gen Z men say they do want to have deep conversations on the first date.

The stereotype says men are slow to open up. Hinge’s data shows something more complex: men want depth, but worry about how they’ll be perceived.



47% of Gen Z men have held back from asking deep questions out of fear of coming off as ‘cringe,’ compared to 39% of Gen Z women.



Among heterosexual daters, men are 27% more likely than women to worry about seeming cringe when it comes to asking deep questions.

Queer Daters: Different Concerns, Same Hesitation.

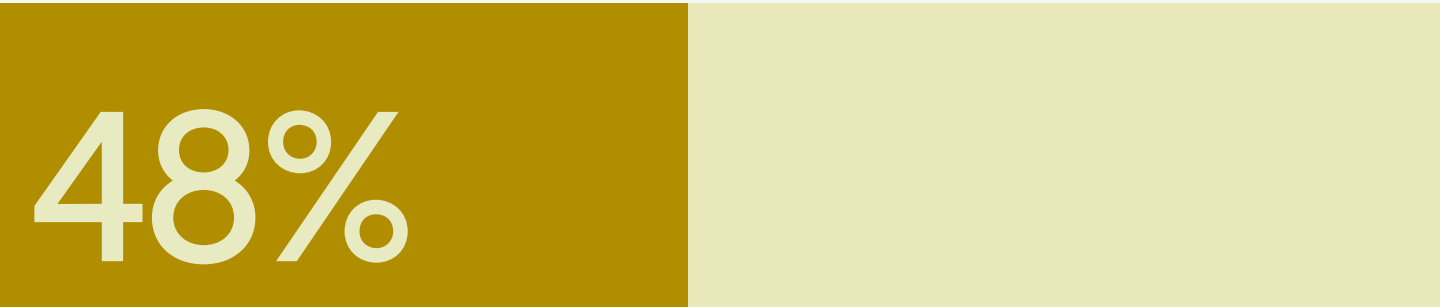
When conversations turn deeper, queer daters’ anxieties take a different shape.



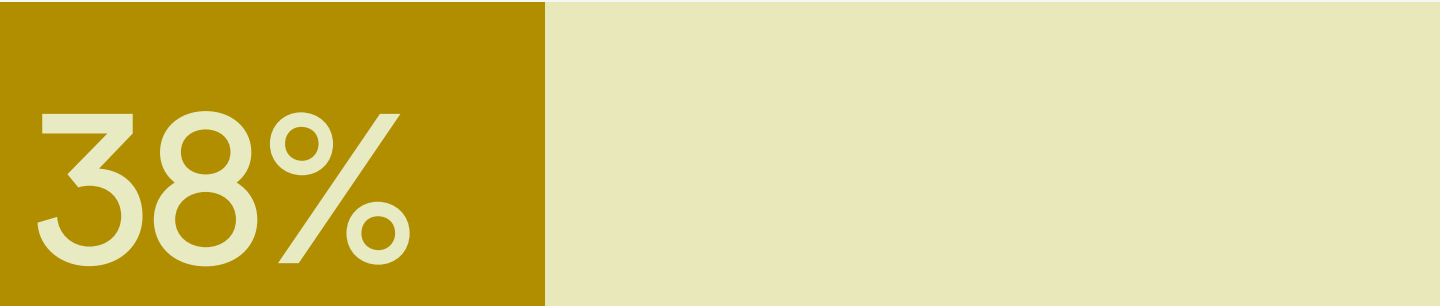
of LGBTQIA+ Gen Z daters worry about asking deep questions too early because they don’t want to seem too intense.



of heterosexual Gen Z daters worry, too.



of LGBTQIA+ men are hesitant to initiate deep conversation because they fear rejection.



of heterosexual man feel the fear, too.

Expert Advice

Why LGBTQIA+ Gen Z Holds Back

Moe Ari Brown (they/he)
Love & Connection Expert at Hinge



Dating as an LGBTQIA+ person sometimes includes moments where conversations go deep on dates, and the questions are all about our identities in ways that feel invasive or flatten our wholeness.

That's just one reason why vulnerability while dating at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities can be more nuanced. Many queer daters, including myself, have consistently been told that we'd have to forego some part of our authenticity to be accepted.

Some queer daters might find themselves trying to balance the desire for openness with a fear of losing connection by opening up especially when the fear is rooted in negative and isolating lived experiences.

The key is pacing. Start with shared interests, then move into values and vulnerabilities. Using affirmations like "I like where this is going" during deeper conversations signals safety to the person you're dating and also to your own nervous system. In a world where queer daters are not always celebrated for their authenticity in every room, each intentional, affirming exchange helps normalize emotional depth as an early dating norm.

Top Barriers to Building Emotional Connection

Compared to millennials, Gen Z daters report stronger fears around emotional intimacy.

Gen Z		Millennials
46%	Worry about being ‘too much’	40%
34%	Fear rejection	28%
31%	Worry about being judged	24%
30%	Know how to build intimacy	18%
27%	Fear embarrassment	18%
29%	Worry it’s a turn-off	29%

Dater Story



“As a woman, it is the norm to behave mysteriously, so I hold back from showing too much personality. Sometimes, dating feels like a battle of who cares less, so naturally you hold back. The nonchalance competition needs to be eradicated.”

“It’s not uncool to care. Stop beating around the bush and make intentions clear.”

Maria Luz Lobete
Ejeleri

(she/her)
@mariaej0, UK

Dater Story



“I wish men knew that most women actually see vulnerability as a strength, not as a sign of weakness. Men often feel pressure to present like they have everything figured out—the perfect financial life, emotional stability, a practical plan for the future—which makes them less likely to be honest on dates. I wish men knew that women don’t need them to be perfect.”

“Emotional intelligence and connecting through vulnerability are hotter than bravado.”

Jade Bowler

(she/her)
@unjadedjade, US

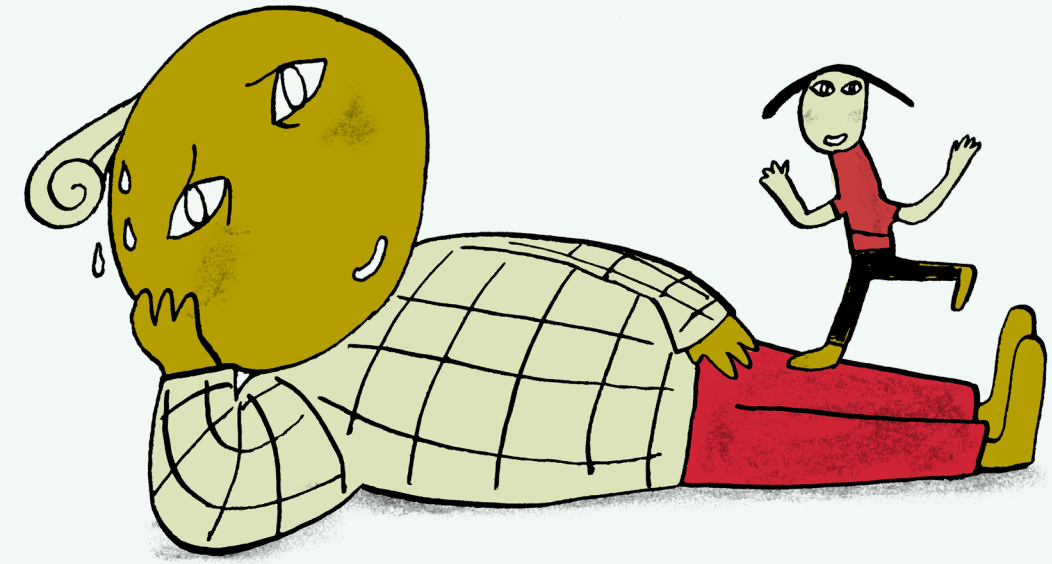
Expert Advice

‘Too Much’ vs. ‘Not Enough’

Logan Ury (she/her)
Lead Relationship Scientist at Hinge



Across the board, the number one reason why people hold themselves back is the fear of coming across as ‘too much.’ When we’re concerned about how we’re being perceived, we self-censor.



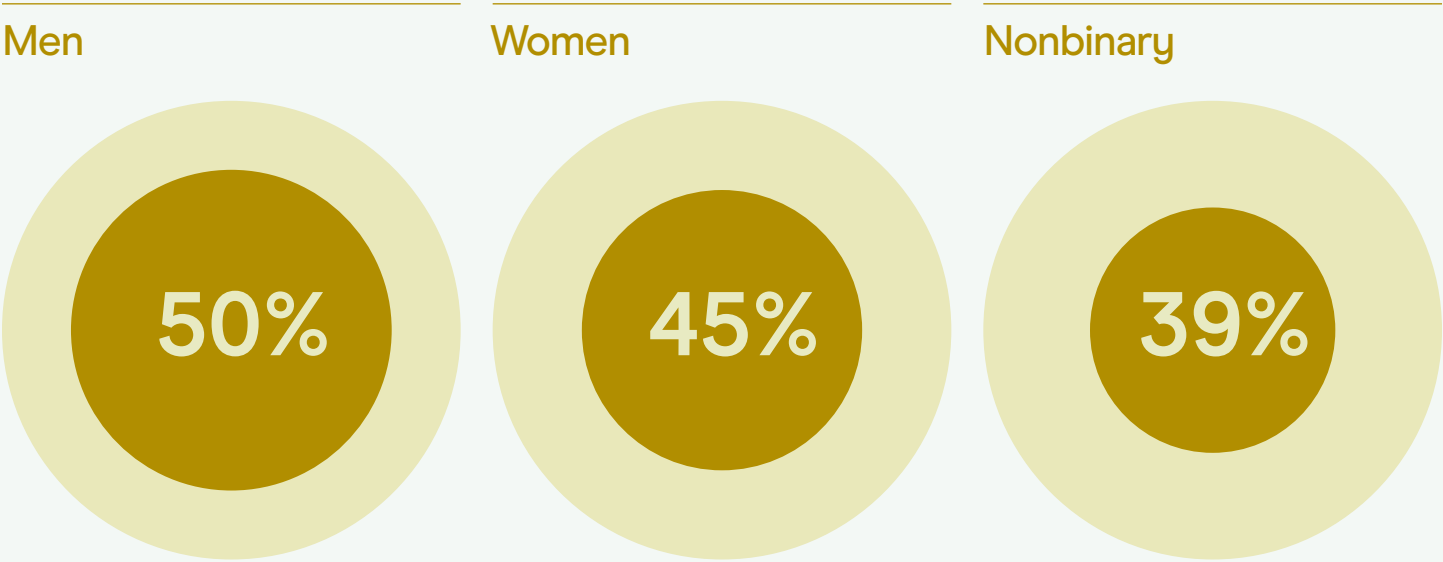
We become our own worst critics, imagining judgment that’s usually harsher than what anyone else would actually think. The fear of being ‘too much’ makes us hold back so much that we end up doing nothing at all. Here’s the thing: when you’re constantly worried about seeming desperate or cringe, you’re already living in that rejection you’re trying to avoid. You’re just doing it to yourself first. The people worth knowing aren’t looking for someone perfect. They want someone who’s real. And real includes wanting things badly, caring deeply, and showing up fully even when it feels scary.

The Social Media Effect

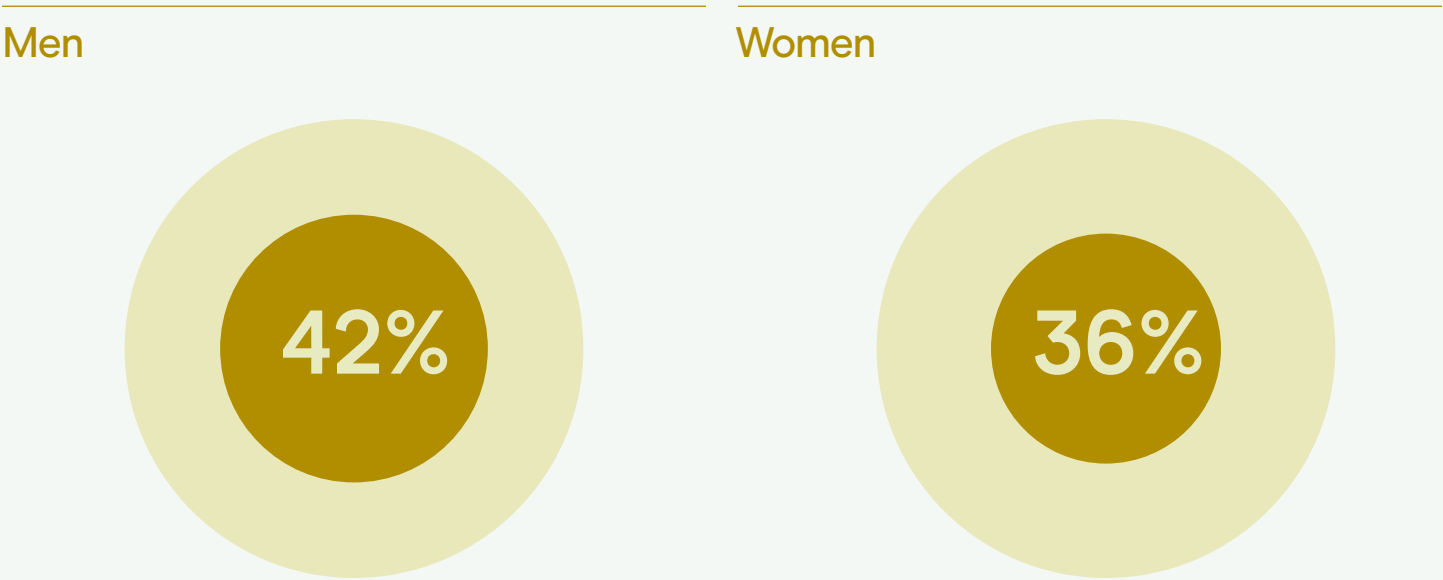
Talking about dating doesn't just happen late at night with friends or over Sunday brunch anymore. With social media, private dating adventures often turn into dater-tainment—content shared publicly for laughs, likes, or relatability.

The result: a generation hyper-aware that their private messages or first dates could end up on someone's feed. Many daters now worry less about rejection from a match and more about being memed, misrepresented, or exposed.

% of Gen Z daters who say social media has made them more hesitant to be emotionally open:



% of millennial daters who say social media has made them more hesitant to be emotionally open:



*All nonbinary daters in this sample were Gen Z and identified as LGBTQIA+.

Dater Story



“Social media reinforces gender norms by showing idealized versions of how men and women “should” act. That pressure makes it harder to be authentic. I try to resist it by showing up to dates only as myself.”

“Real connection comes from honesty and thoughtful conversation—not from following stereotypes.”

Brad Martin

(he/him)
@radmartin_, US

Dater Story



“I always believed in financial equality and splitting the bill, but social media made me question whether that meant I was “disrespecting myself.” I spiraled into second-guessing: double texting, triple texting, even whether ghosting is an acceptable way to end things. Social media has also left me worrying I wasn’t “gay enough.” If I wasn’t sporting a carabiner to signal my queerness, would any girl fancy me? I ended up wearing markers of queerness that didn’t match my style, just to fit an online idea of what gay should look like.”

“I hate how reductionist Gen Z dating advice on social media is—it’s made me overthink everything.”

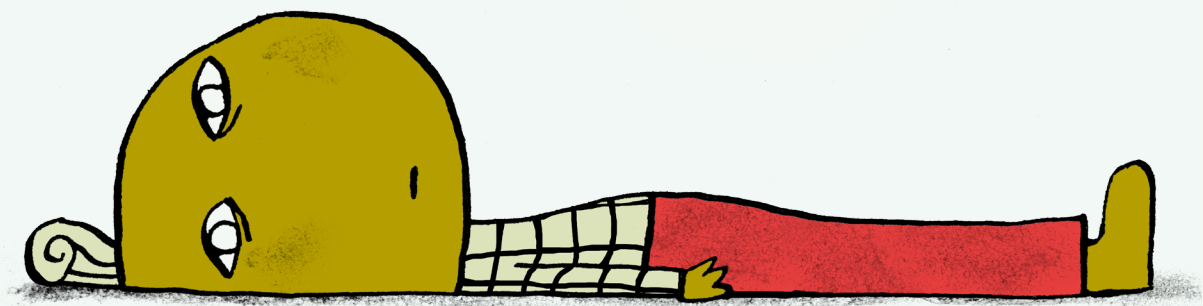
Jade Bowler

(she/her)
@unjadedjade, US

Past experiences shape how open daters are willing to be. Many Gen Z daters approach new connections already bracing for how their vulnerability might be received.

Vulnerability Hangover^(Noun)

When you’ve shared openly, feel exposed, and second-guess every word.



52%

of Gen Z daters say they’ve felt shame after showing vulnerability.

58%

of LGBTQIA+ Gen Z women report the same.

Expert Advice

Moving Through a Vulnerability Hangover

Moe Ari Brown (they/he)
Love and Connection Expert at Hinge



In the Moment

Ground in your body.

Take three slow breaths: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for at least 6. This calms your nervous system.

Name what’s happening.

Silently acknowledge it: “I am feeling vulnerable after opening up to my date.” Naming the feeling reduces fear and overthinking.

Shift from outcome to intention.

Any act of authenticity is a win. Focus on why you shared—truth, openness, tenderness—instead of how it was received.

Expert Advice

By Moe Ari Brown (they/he)
Love and Connection Expert at Hinge

If You’ve Been Hurt Before

- Acknowledge the wound.

Recognize how past experiences shaped you. Honoring the pain validates what it cost, what it taught, and the strategies you used to cope.
- Update the story.

Rewrite old narratives. If you thought, “I’m too intense,” try reframing it: “That was about their capacity, not my worth.”
- Rebuild your tolerance.

Practice small disclosures in trusted spaces. Over time, you can retrain yourself to see vulnerability as safe—and even exciting.

Questions To Move Past Assumptions

- 01** Where might I be holding back my full self out of habit, fear, or an old story about who I’m ‘supposed’ to be?
- 02** If I set aside gendered expectations, dating ‘rules,’ and preemptive fears, what would it look like to show up as my most present, unfiltered self?
- 03** How do I want to feel on this date—and what energy can I bring to help create that feeling?

Gen Z wants closeness but often pulls back, worried about being ‘too much’ or misread.

19%

of daters say vulnerability makes them uncomfortable—most welcome it.

Instead of assuming honesty is a risk, treat it like a filter. If vulnerability puts someone off, they weren't your match anyway.

Try:
Flipping the script.

But if they lean in? You've just skipped weeks of 'playing it cool' and gotten to the real good stuff faster.

Thoughtful Questions



Why conversations stall—
and how to spark ones that last.

Meaningful Messages

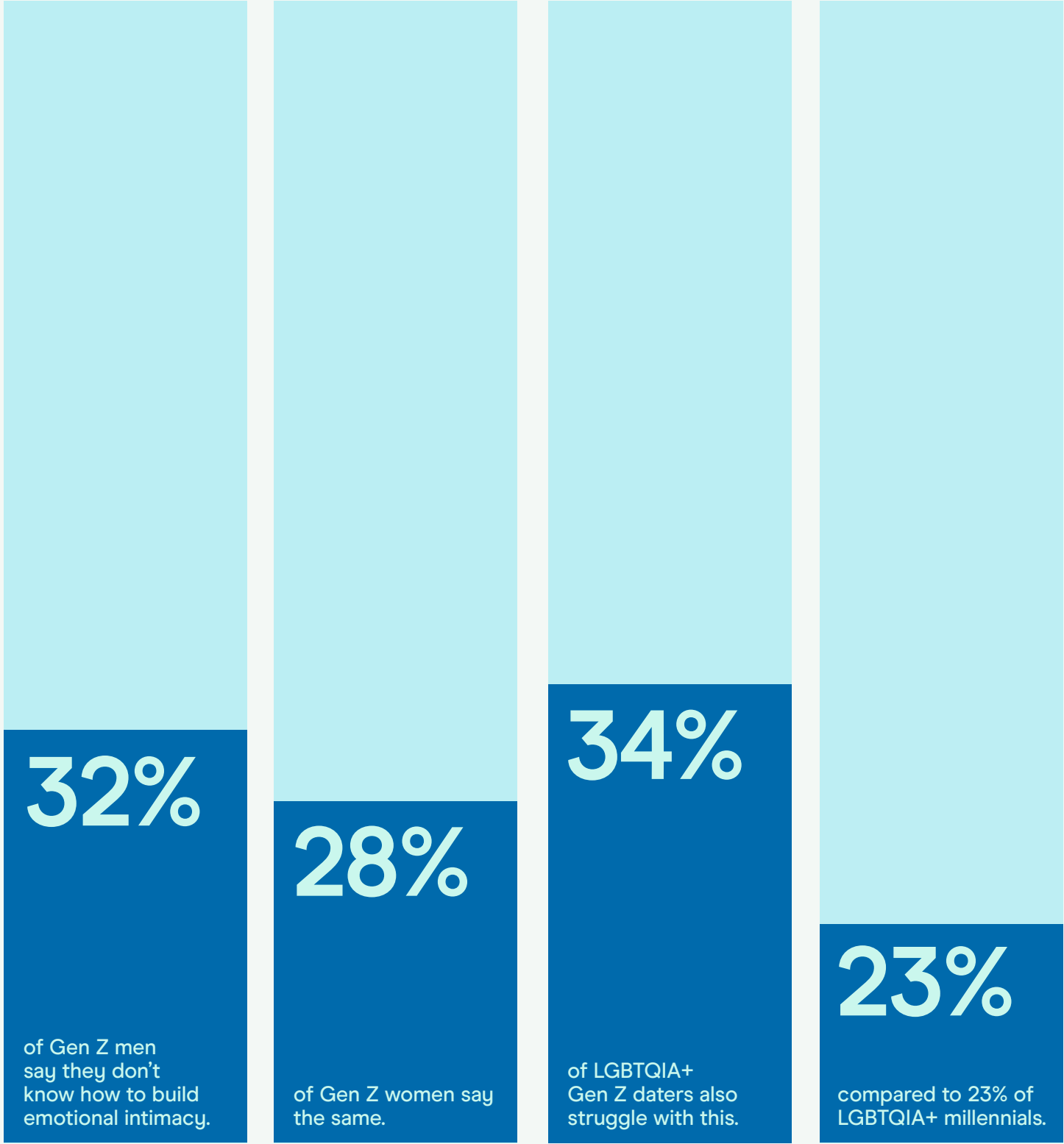


In this section we cover:

The Question Deficit (why so few daters ask enough), the texting standoff, and how 'wyd?' rarely cuts it. We dig into what Gen Z really wants from early conversations, from better first-date questions to meaningful messages in the first two weeks.

Beyond Asking ‘WYD:’ Questions That Count

Many Gen Z daters crave deeper connections but admit they’re unsure how to build intimacy.

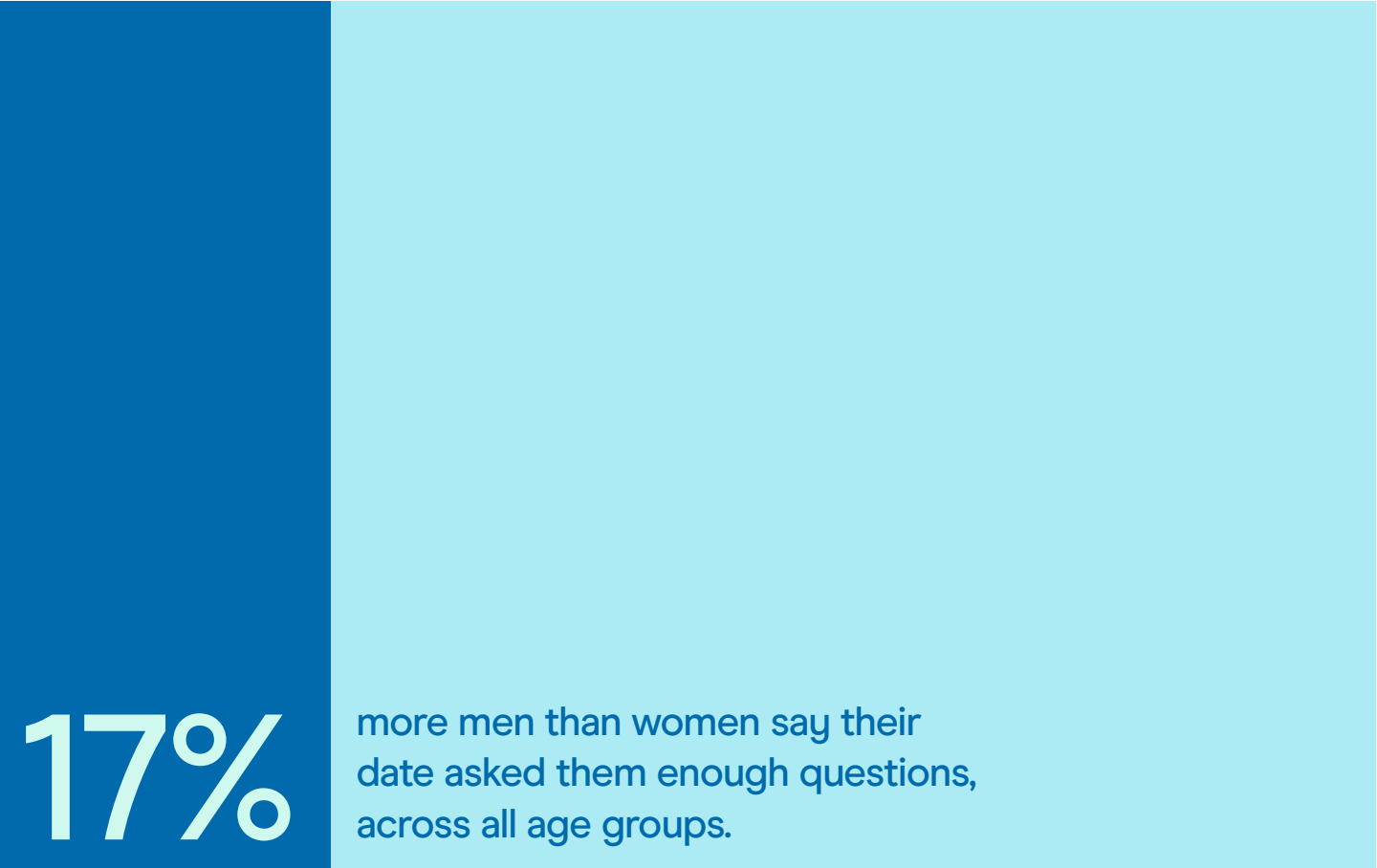
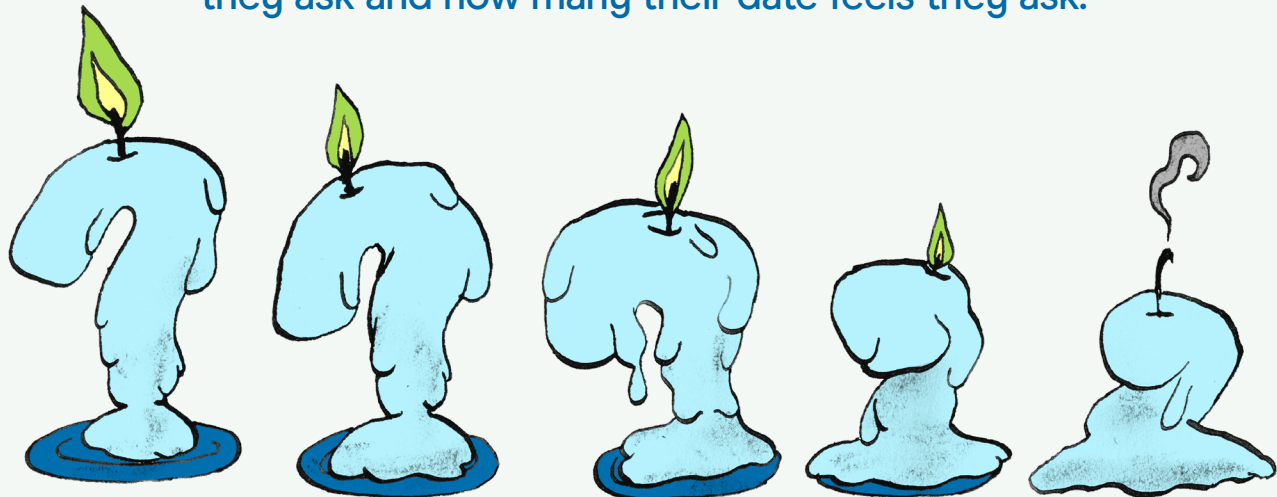


At the same time, daters are under-communicating and dissatisfied with both the quantity and quality of the messages they receive. For those stuck in surface-level small talk or passive texting, learning to communicate with intention can be the difference between going quiet—and getting close.

Many daters think they’re showing more interest than they really are. In reality, a ‘question deficit’ exists: people overestimate how much they engage on dates, while their potential partners often feel under-asked.

Question Deficit ^(Noun)

The gap between how many questions people think they ask and how many their date feels they ask.



Who’s Asking the Questions?

A closer look shows the ‘question deficit’ in action: many daters think they’re pulling their weight in conversation—far fewer feel that effort returned.

Daters who feel they are asked enough questions on a first date:

Heterosexual
Gen Z Daters

30%

LGBTQIA+
Gen Z Daters

25%

Daters who feel they ask enough questions on a first date:

Heterosexual
Gen Z Daters

62%

LGBTQIA+
Gen Z Daters

61%

The mismatch is clear: most people believe they’re curious, but far fewer feel curiosity coming back their way.

Dater Story



“I’ve definitely felt a ‘question deficit’ on dates—sometimes I didn’t ask enough, sometimes my date didn’t. It often comes from nerves, distraction, or sticking to ‘safe’ topics. For me, curiosity is essential. It helps both people feel seen and valued.”

“I always encourage thoughtful, open-ended questions that spark deeper conversation.”

Brad Martin

(he/him)
@radmartin_, US

Dater Story



“I love when people ask about my real interests—what makes me tick. What I don’t love is when they assume: “He’s a gay guy who wears makeup, so he must be into *Drag Race*, Beyoncé, and *Love Island*.” That couldn’t be further from the truth.”

“I’m into football, geography, and history. If someone shares those passions, I know we’ll never run out of things to talk about.”

Mathew Matos

(he/him)
@mathew.matosg, UK

Expert Advice

How to Avoid the ‘Zero Questions’ Date

Logan Ury (she/her)
Lead Relationship Scientist at Hinge

Daters who never ask questions—let’s call them ZQs (Zero Questions)—leave the people they’re dating feeling unseen.

Here’s how to avoid being a ZQ:

Answer, then Reflect Back

If your date asks you something, answer—and then ask them the same. Don’t assume their silence means they’d rather listen. Even a simple “How about you?” keeps the conversation reciprocal.

Listen to Understand

Real listening isn’t just waiting for your turn to speak. Focus on what they’re saying, not your reply. Curiosity makes your date feel valued and helps both of you connect.

Too many people walk away from dates saying: “He didn’t ask me a single question” or “I could’ve written her biography, but she doesn’t know a thing about me.” Questions are the foundation of intimacy—so don’t be a ZQ.

Dater Stories

Try These Questions

“Why are your dreams your dreams?”

@americanbaron

“What makes you nerd out?”

@mathew.matosg

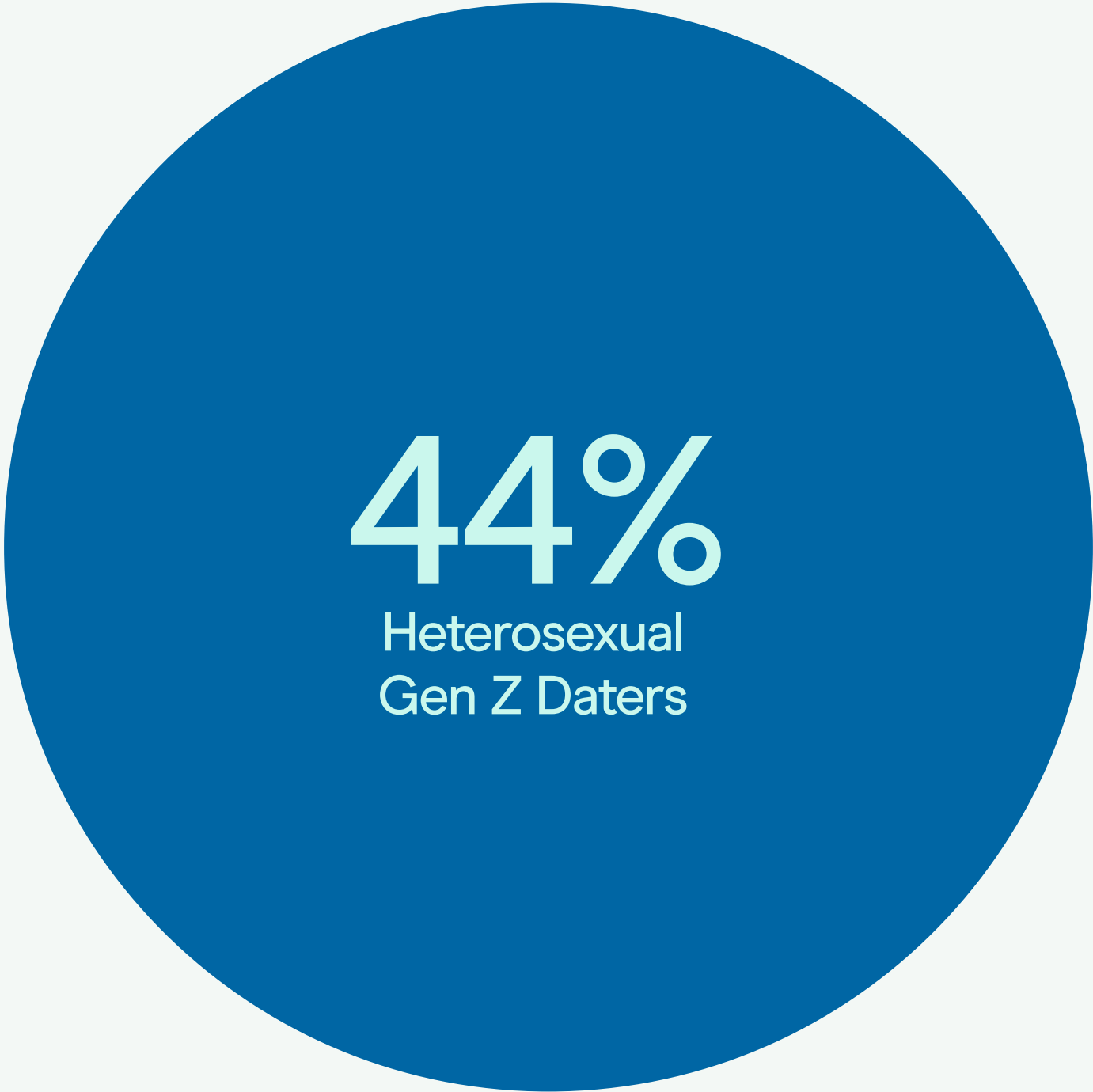
“How would you define authenticity?”

@Unjadedjade

“What’s something you’ve learned about yourself in the last couple of years that really surprised you?”

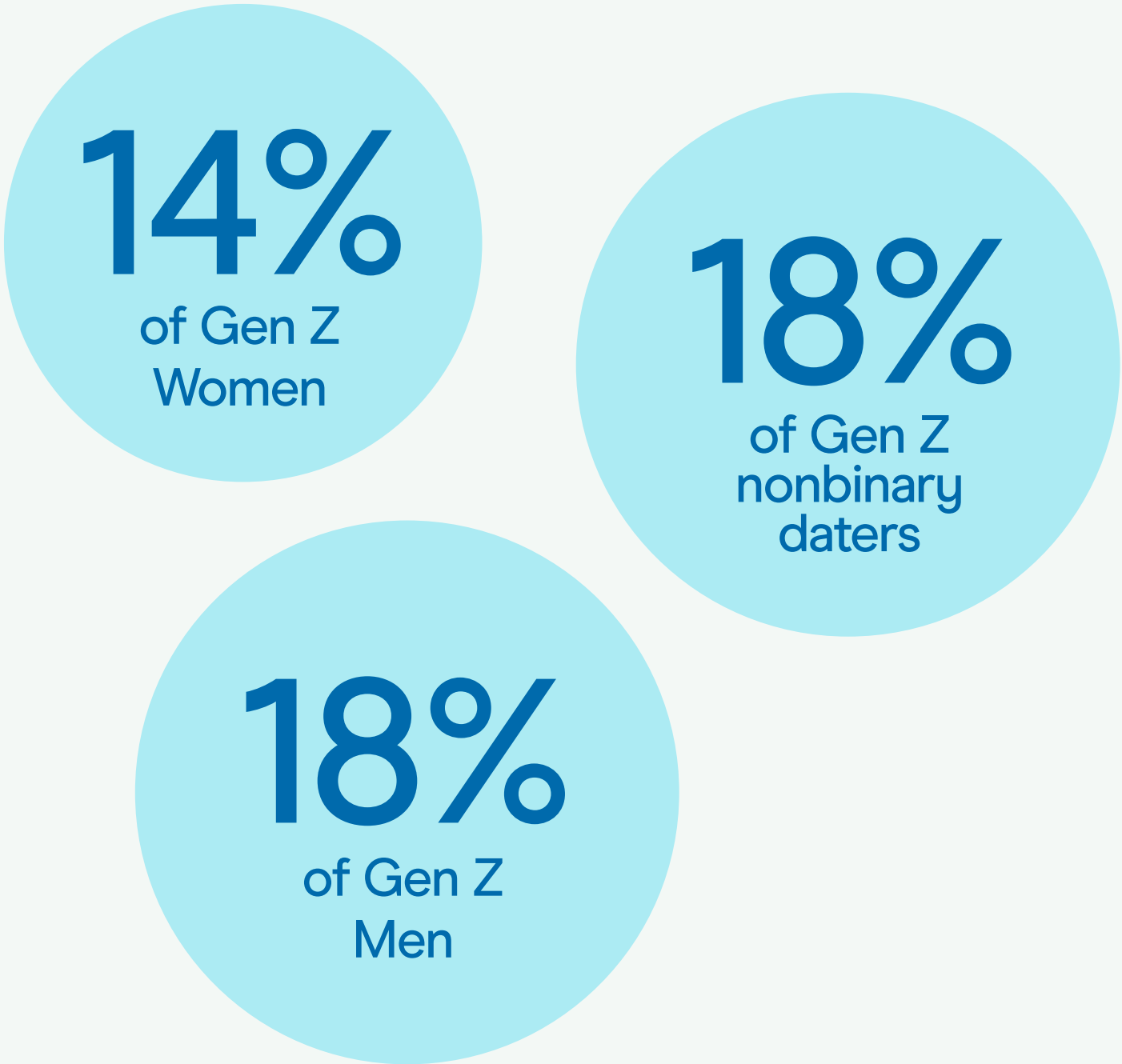
@Mariaej0

Daters want conversations that engage them, but often feel they’re receiving generic or surface-level texts. That can cause the conversation to fizzle before it gets off the ground—or leave daters assuming their match isn’t that interested, missing the chance to move toward a second date.



44% of heterosexual Gen Z daters say they exchange meaningful texts in the first two weeks.

It also fuels the ‘waiting to reply’ standoff, where daters match their partner’s texting frequency or tone instead of showing authentic engagement or enthusiasm.



14% of Gen Z women, 18% of Gen Z men, and 19% of Gen Z nonbinary daters say they regularly receive meaningful messages.

Expert Advice

Going Beyond ‘WYD?’

Moe Ari Brown (they/he)

Love and Connection Expert at Hinge



A meaningful question invites a story, a reflection, and something more than yes/no. Instead of ‘wyd?’, a meaningful question might be: “What’s been the highlight of your day so far?” or “What’s exciting you and lighting you up right now?”

Going beyond the surface in conversations requires questions like this, which signal real interest and open a window into someone’s inner world. Meaningful curiosity feels specific, present, and open-ended. Momentum builds when each question connects to something already shared and moves the conversation from logistics into emotional territory, where connection deepens naturally.

One of the biggest frustrations in dating today is inconsistency. Someone shows up with what seems to be great energy one week and then disappears the next.

What people are really craving isn’t endless communication but a steady, reliable connection. I encourage daters to know their own capacity and set expectations they can actually uphold. Instead of overextending and pulling back, showing up with honesty about what you can give builds trust, and trust is the foundation of relationships that last.

Dater Story



“My hope for dating in my own life is earnest questions, honest answers and a mutual eagerness for each other. In all fairness, I have a tendency to shy away from being direct when it comes to communication past the second or third date. It’s something I’d like to be better at: when to call it quits, stay friends or pursue something more.”

“I have a tendency to shy away from being direct when it comes to communication past the second or third date.”

Ryan Bailey Potter

(she/they)
@ryanbaileypotter, US

Dater Story



“I hope communication in dating continues to move toward emotional openness and curiosity. Nothing is hotter than straightforward communication and genuine intentions.”

“Out with being nonchalant, being ‘chalant’ and loving loudly is what we need more of!”

Brad Martin

(he/him)
@radmartin_, US

Less than half of Gen Z daters say they exchange meaningful texts in the first two weeks.



Ditch the ‘wyd’ loop and ask something that actually opens a door: “What made you laugh today?” or “What’s something you’re obsessed with right now?” People don’t remember if you texted back in 12 minutes or 2 hours—they remember if you made them feel interesting.

Try: Making curiosity your strategy.

Less than half of Gen Z daters say they exchange meaningful texts in the first two weeks, yet 85% say thoughtful questions make them more likely to want a second date. Curiosity—not timing—is what builds connection.

Hinge’s data shows that 61% of Gen Z daters value follow-ups to something said earlier, 50% value being asked about personal interests, and 49% value being asked about personal values. Asking what made someone laugh today or what they’re currently obsessed with can do more than fill silence—it signals interest, builds connection, and turns first dates into second ones.

New Tools



How Gen Z is rethinking old dating scripts with Voice Notes, sober dates, chosen family, and experiments with AI.

Stronger Bonds

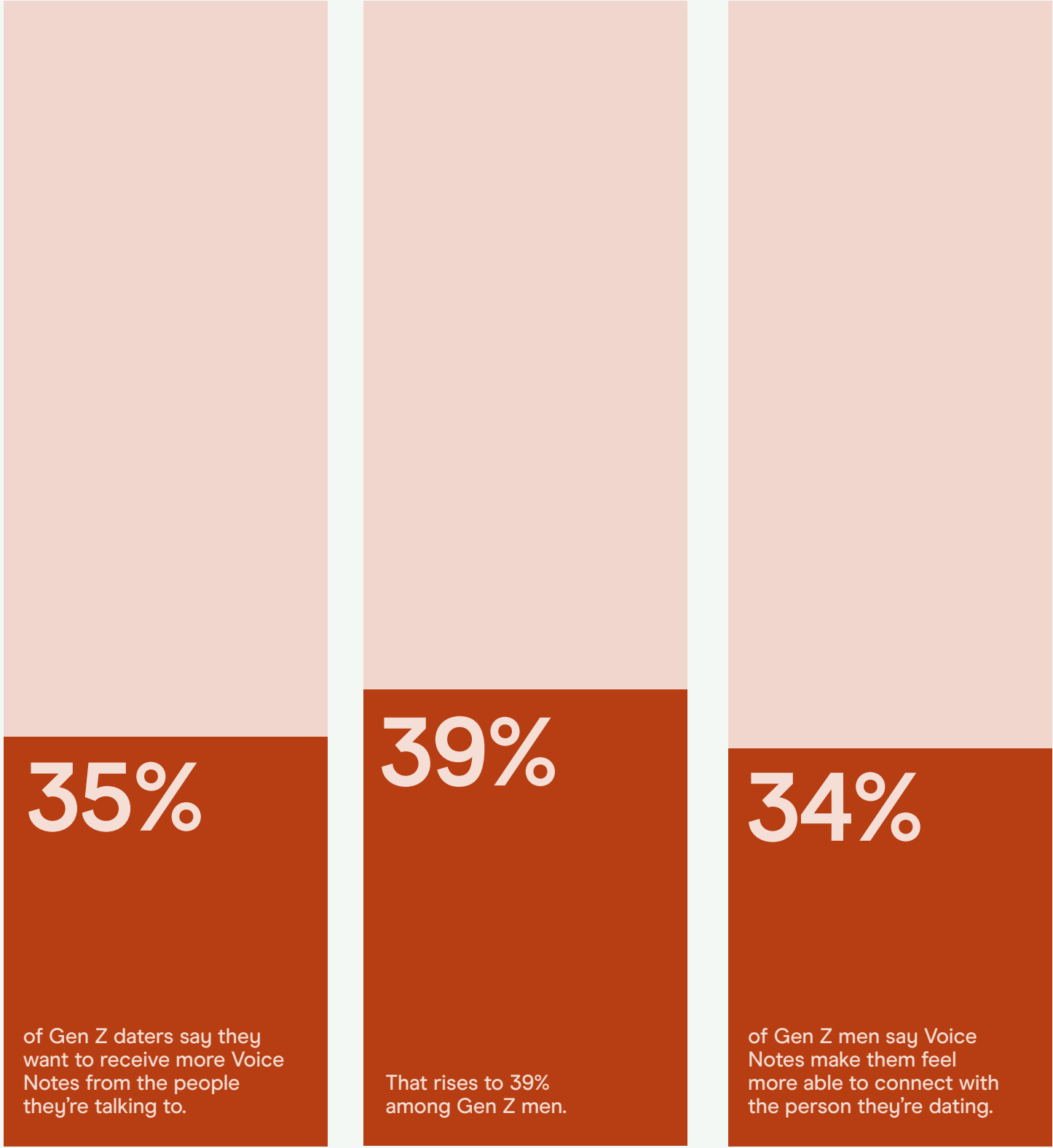


In this section we cover:

How Gen Z daters are rewriting the rules of connection—skipping alcohol to get to deeper conversation, leaning on community as practice for emotional openness, and testing AI as a tool for support (but not a replacement for real vulnerability).

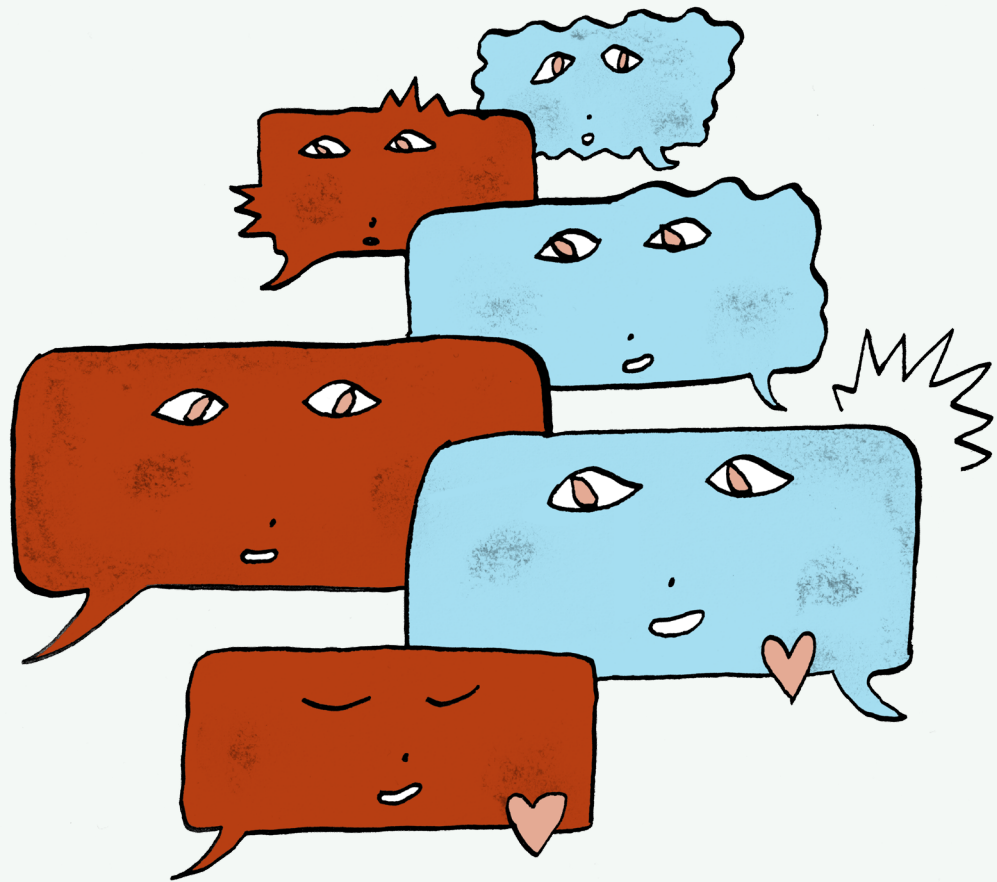
How Voice Notes Create Deeper Connections

Long, rambling Voice Notes with no questions can be a turnoff—especially when no one asked for them. But Gen Z daters also see Voice Notes as a powerful way to build emotional connection, offering more warmth and nuance than text alone.



For many, Voice Notes help bridge the uncertainty that comes with expressing feelings over text.

Expert Advice



Voice Notes 101

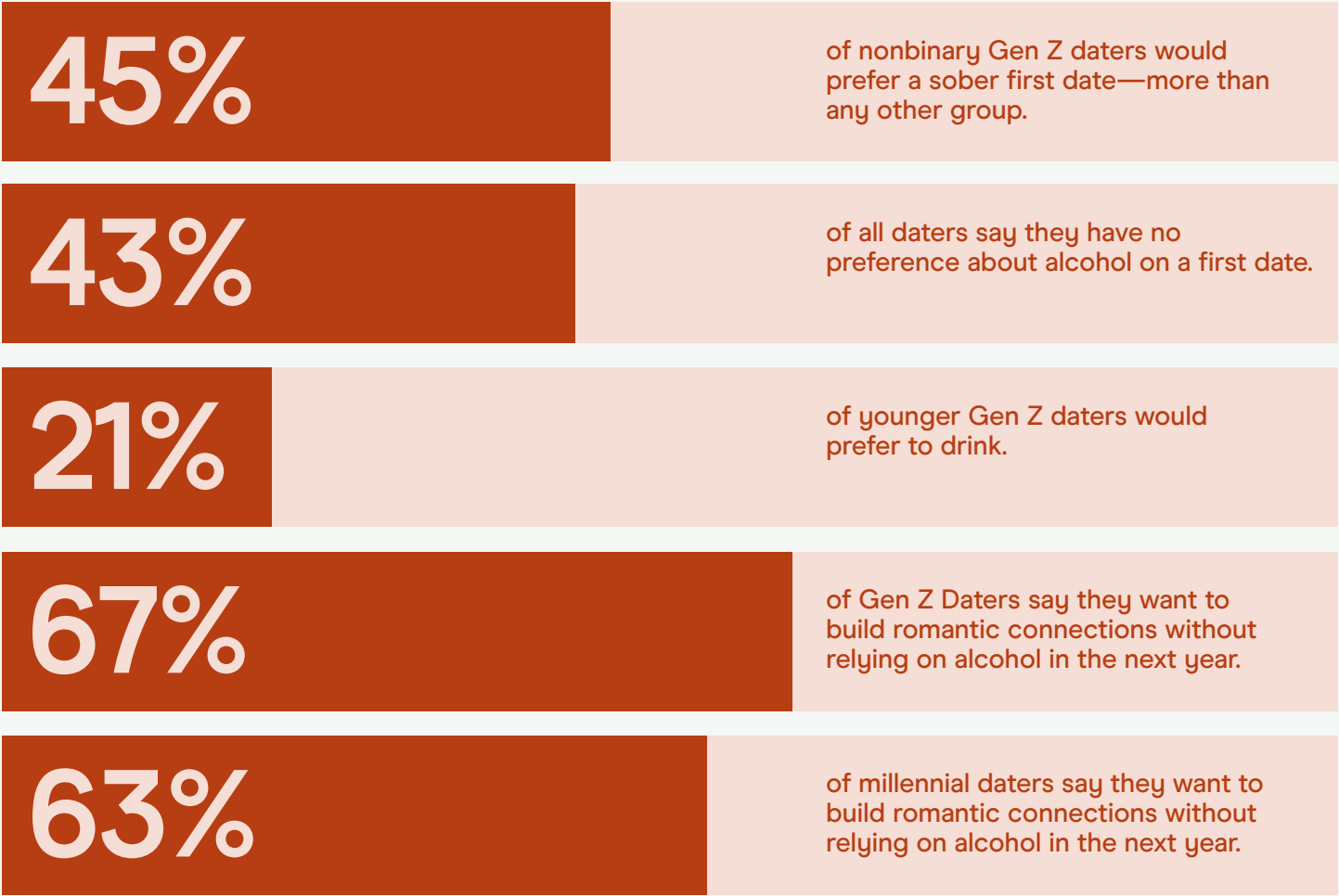
By Logan Ury (she/her)
Lead Relationship Scientist at Hinge



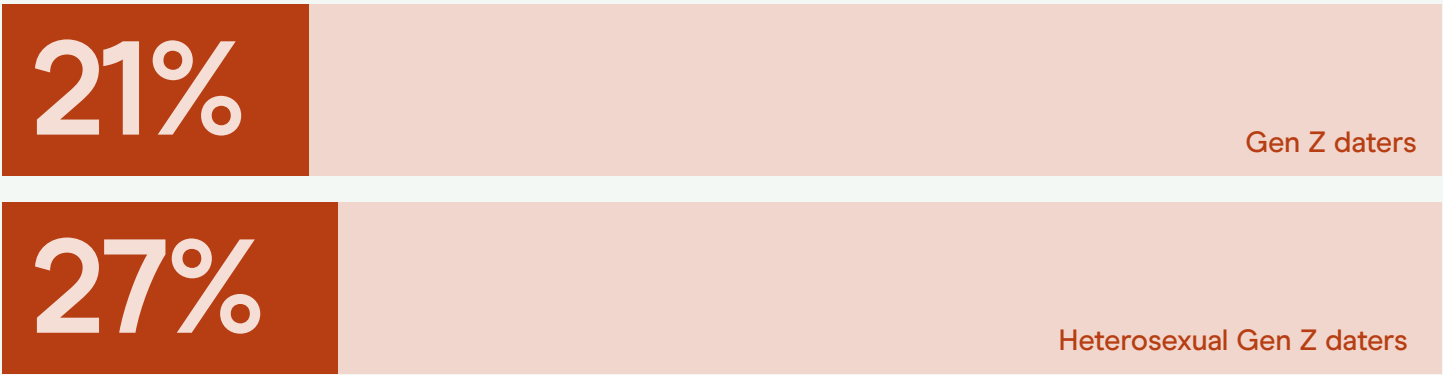
Q: How long is too long when it comes to Voice Notes?	A: Keep them short and sweet. Enough to make an impact, but not so long it feels like you're starting a podcast. If you need to say more, break your message into shorter segments.
Q: Should I send Voice Notes if the person I'm dating doesn't?	A: Try it. Voice Notes can spark chemistry, inside jokes, and connection. But if your date isn't into them, follow their lead—send fewer, or skip them altogether. Ask what they prefer.
Q: How can I use humor in Voice Notes?	A: They're a great way to show personality. Jokes that might fall flat over text often land better when you can share your tone of voice.
Q: Why use Voice Notes on Hinge?	A: To stand out! Your voice lets your personality shine through.
Q: Top tips for Voice Notes?	A: Be Natural! 1. Don't overthink it. Talk like you're chatting with a friend. 2. Be natural. Try recording while walking to stay relaxed. 3. Single take only. Re-recording makes you sound less like yourself.

Hold the Drinks

Back in 2022, [Hinge research](#) showed early signs that younger daters were rejecting alcohol on first dates. That shift is now clear: Gen Z continues to lead the sober-dating movement.



LGBTQIA+ Gen Z daters are less likely than heterosexual Gen Z daters to prefer alcohol on a first date.



Dater Story



Ryan Bailey Potter

(she/they)
@ryanbaileypotter, US

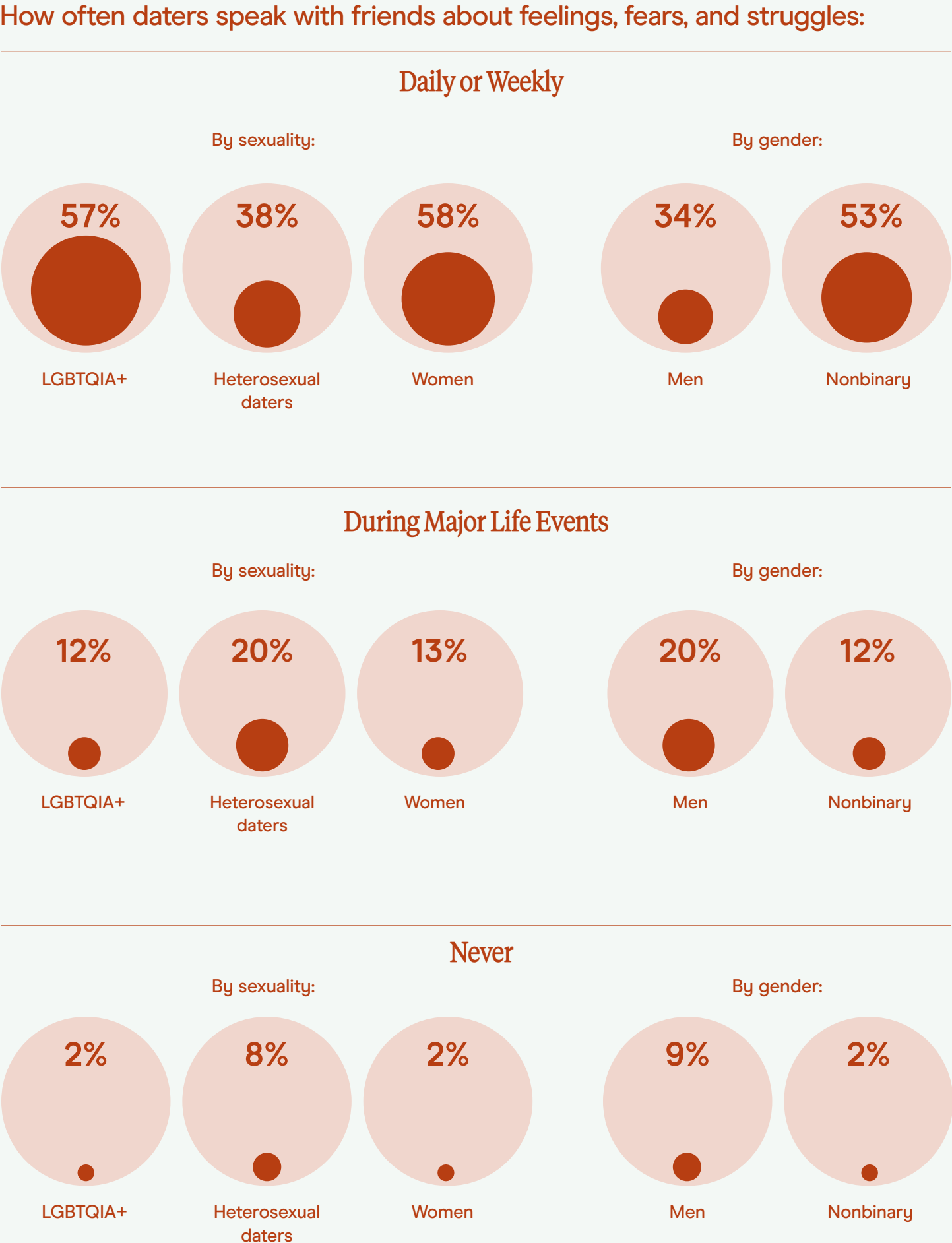
“It’s refreshing to find the same level of passion and open dialogue that could have easily only been found with liquid courage.”

“A couple of weeks after a date that began with shots at a bar, I met up with the same man. The quick coffee turned into a long brunch that was full of even more deep conversations. It’s refreshing to find the same level of passion and open dialogue that could have easily only been found with liquid courage. I even found that our sober conversations were more enlightening than our first initial talks.”

Love Learnt in Community

Emotional openness in dating often begins elsewhere—with friends. But not all groups practice it equally.

Women and LGBTQIA+ daters are far more likely than men with heterosexual daters to talk with friends about life, feelings, and dating. LGBTQIA+ women reported these conversations most often—heterosexual men the least. When emotional expression isn’t practiced in trusted spaces, it becomes harder to access in new or romantic ones.



Expert Advice

Chosen Family

Moe Ari (they/he)
Love & Connection Expert at Hinge



For many in LGBTQIA+ and other often-marginalized communities, emotional intimacy extends far beyond romantic partners. Friendships, chosen family, and community networks teach us that emotional intimacy can be shared, sustained, and replenished in many forms.

Strong support systems matter in dating because they create a sense of belonging that doesn't depend on one person meeting all your needs. These relationships can teach us deep listening, emotional reciprocity, and help us develop our standards for all relationships. This way, when we approach dating, we are doing so from a place of lived experience in relationships, platonic and romantic, where we've engaged intentionally.

For more emotionally reserved daters, cultivating intimacy in friendships can expand emotional range and build confidence in expressing care. When you practice trust, vulnerability, and empathy in multiple relationships, you remove pressure from romance to be your sole source of connection, and you often show up to dating more open, grounded, and ready to give and receive love.



Gen Z daters are curious about AI—but only when it feels like a support tool, not a substitute. They see value in getting feedback, inspiration, or a gut check, but authenticity still matters most.

The main reason daters use AI right now is for a virtual ‘second opinion.’ Among Gen Z daters who use AI for dating, 52% vibe-check their messages before sending them.

Gen Z men and women who turn to AI for dating use it for different types of support:



Across generations:

60% of younger Gen Z daters (18–22) say they’re open to using AI for dating help, compared with 67% of older millennials.

Expert Advice

Your Personality Isn't Copy-Paste

Logan Ury (she/her)
Lead Relationship Scientist at Hinge

AI can excel at pattern recognition but lacks genuine emotional intelligence or lived relationship experience. The core concern



isn't bad advice, but outsourcing our emotional growth to systems that can't understand the nuanced reality of human connection. Consistently turning to AI for relationship decisions

risks 'emotional muscle atrophy'—becoming less comfortable with uncertainty and more dependent on external validation.

There's also an 'echo chamber' effect when you get advice from AI. They're designed to be helpful and agreeable, which means they're more likely to validate your perspective than challenge it in meaningful ways.

If you're seeking advice about a relationship conflict, AI might help you craft a response that sounds diplomatic, but won't necessarily help you examine whether your underlying assumptions or expectations need adjustment.

The key isn't whether to use AI, but when and how. Use it for brainstorming or gut-checking whether a message sounds harsh, but keep the final decisions—what you send, how you interpret responses, whether to pursue connections—as yours. Most importantly, authentic connection requires vulnerability and imperfection.

The slight awkwardness in your words, your unique way of expressing enthusiasm—these aren't flaws to polish away, but the very qualities that help someone fall for the real you.

Authenticity and AI

Hinge's data reveals how daters are using AI thoughtfully—drawing the line between support and substitution. With care, it can actually deepen connection instead of diluting it.

Do: Get feedback on your profile.

63% of Hinge users say they struggle with what to write. Tools like Prompt Feedback can give personalized nudges to help daters better express their personality, interests, and intentions.

Don't: Present yourself inauthentically.

88% of Hinge daters are uncomfortable with AI-generated profile photos. Skip artificial images—choose photos that truly represent you.

Do: Brainstorm creative date ideas.

69% of Hinge daters are comfortable (or neutral) with AI helping plan dates. Let AI handle logistics, but ground ideas in what your match actually enjoys.

Don't: Copy and paste your chats.

Only **34%** of daters are comfortable or neutral about using AI to write messages—showing most still prefer daters to do it themselves.

Nearly half of Gen Z daters say social media makes them more hesitant to open up,

while Voice Notes, sober dating, and chosen family all point to new ways of connecting.

Use AI to brainstorm, not to ghostwrite. Send a Voice Note to add warmth, not a podcast-length monologue. Swap the bar for a coffee or walk if alcohol feels like a crutch.

Try:
Experimenting with new tools to build better connections.

Technology and trends can support intimacy, but the real work is you, showing up as yourself.

Key Takeaways

Logan Ury (she/her)
Lead Relationship Scientist at Hinge



Gen Z has grown up in a world that often rewards playing it safe, but meaningful connection requires the opposite.

The research is clear: the very things we're afraid will make us 'too much' are actually what create the intimacy we're craving. Whether it's asking that follow-up question, sending a thoughtful Voice Note, or simply showing up as your authentic self on a first date, small acts of emotional bravery compound into deeper relationships.

The Communication Gap isn't permanent—it's an invitation to be the person who goes first, who asks better questions, and who chooses vulnerability over the illusion of safety. The people worth knowing aren't looking for someone perfect—they're looking for someone who shows up honestly, even when it feels uncomfortable.

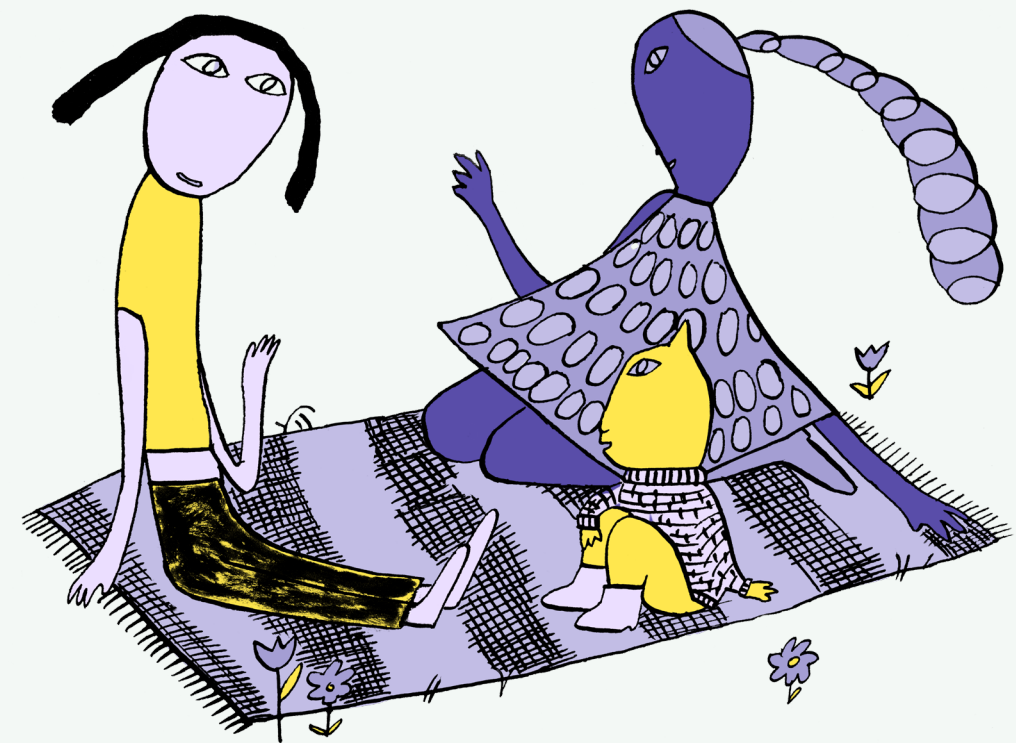
Methodology

This report was developed by Hinge Labs, the app's dedicated research team. Hinge Labs blends behavioral science, psychology, and in-app survey data to understand how people actually date today.

For this report, Hinge Labs surveyed ~30,000 Hinge daters worldwide in 2025, across genders, sexualities, and age ranges. Data was analyzed for differences between Gen Z (18–28) and millennial (29–42) cohorts, and segmented by heterosexual, LGBTQIA+, and nonbinary identities.

About the Illustrator

Molly Fairhurst is a UK-based artist focusing on illustration and animation. She prefers to work analogue, with ink or paper collages. Molly's playful illustrations are used in a wide range of editorials, music videos, marketing campaigns, games and furnishings. Renowned media and brands have already commissioned her to illustrate their campaigns, magazine pages and cosy blankets. Discover more of Molly's work: mollyfairhurst.com



Learn more about Hinge's D.A.T.E. Report and 'The Communication Gap' by contacting us at press@hinge.co.