

Hinge's 2023 LGBTQIA+ DATE Report

Beyond the Talking Stage

Hinge



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Foreword

At Hinge, our mission is to empower anyone looking for love to find it. Hinge is at its best—and Hinge users are more successful—when daters from every background can fully express themselves, share and explore their identities, and get support at every point in their dating journey. Plus, the more guidance and resources they have, the faster they'll be able to find a meaningful relationship.

This work is especially important when it comes to serving our LGBTQIA+ community. Unlike their straight or cis counterparts, queer daters simply haven't received the same level of guidance and resources when it comes to navigating dating. That puts this community at a real disadvantage as they seek to build healthy, intentional relationships.

Our first major project to address this need was NFAQ (Not-so Frequently Asked Questions), a global resource covering some of the most important and often nuanced questions that queer daters face. Since launching NFAQ,

we've received clear feedback from users: these kinds of insights—on queer dating, relationships, and identity—are invaluable. Since launch, #HingeNFAQ has garnered over 29 million views on TikTok.

To extend this work, we're releasing Beyond the Talking Stage, our first LGBTQIA+ DATE (Data, Advice, Trends, and Expertise) report. We cover what is top of mind for queer daters—what they're looking for, their biggest hurdles to success—and provide tips to empower their dating journey in the coming year. I want to especially thank Moe Ari Brown, Hinge's Love and Connection Expert and a licensed therapist, for their expertise throughout this project, as well as the entire Hinge Labs team. The goal of this report is simple: give more people the tools they need to find a meaningful relationship. We hope this is the first of many to come.

Justin McLeod, CEO (he/him)



Introduction

LGBTQIA+ daters on Hinge feel empowered by clear communication. But when it comes to exploring sexuality or breaking cycles of “talking” stages, the words don’t always come as easy. Aiming to help queer daters find deeper connections and get Beyond the Talking Stage, this LGBTQIA+ DATE (Data, Advice, Trends, and Expertise) Report covers three timely conversations to have in 2023:

- The first time
- The first date
- The first fight

Along with our findings, Hinge’s Love and Connection Expert, Moe Ari Brown, provides insights, tips, and advice on how daters can apply the report’s findings to their own lives. Additionally, queer voices from Hinge’s NFAQ (Not-So Frequently Asked Questions)* resource help guide and celebrate daters throughout.

We hope the insights and advice in this first LGBTQIA+ DATE report help queer daters around the world feel seen, heard, and supported along their journeys.

* Hinge’s NFAQ is a free educational resource that addresses the questions of sexuality, self-discovery, and connection that queer daters need answered most. Have a NFAQ? Visit hinge.NFAQ.co to submit your own.



About Moe Ari Brown, LMFT, Hinge’s Love and Connection Expert (they/he)

Moe is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Hinge’s Love and Connection Expert. As a leading mental health expert specializing in transgender identity, they use their expertise to help daters create healthy and meaningful relationships. Over the past decade, Moe has worked with LGBTQIA+ individuals,

couples, and families on their journeys of self-love and connection. With a passion for cultivating radical authenticity, Moe works with Hinge to ensure that everyone, no matter their identity, feels empowered to present their full self in dating and beyond.

The First Time

FOE (fear of exploration) isn't just a barrier to dating, it's a barrier to self-acceptance.

Overview

The number of LGBTQIA+ adults in the US nearly doubled over the last decade (Gallup, 2022). Meaning, every year more and more people are experiencing their “first time.” As long as daters are transparent about this exploration, more people are willing to be a part of the journey in 2023 than you might think.

Opening up a meaningful conversation with anyone is tricky, let alone on a first date. Meeting new people comes with potential triggers, expectations to live up to, and the added pressure of making a great first impression. But creating a connection means overcoming the fear and potential discomfort of

sharing intimate information about dating preferences.

It's understandable then that nearly half of Hinge bisexual daters who've never had a queer experience say they feel afraid to navigate open discussions about their dating past.



Bisexual daters are three times more likely to have never had a queer dating experience than other LGBTQIA+ daters.

Despite being the largest self-identified group in the LGBTQIA+ community (Gallup, 2021), bisexual people encounter misunderstanding and prejudice from both within and outside the community. Biphobia can take the shape of discriminatory rejection, when daters are unwilling to explore connections with bisexual partners, leaving many feeling hesitant to discuss their sexuality.

Biphobia and FOE also make it harder for bisexual people to form community bonds. For those on a journey of self-understanding, turning to the LGBTQIA+ community for guidance can be vital. In 2022, three quarters of queer daters on Hinge explored their sexuality through conversation with others.





“I spent a good portion of my life feeling shame and guilt around the topic of sexuality, and I don’t want to let that affect my choices while dating in the future. Having my sexuality ‘visible’ on my profile helps me and my dates avoid confusion. And while that kind of openness is hard at times, putting everything on the table means I’m connecting with someone who truly understands, and wants to be with all of me. It also builds trust at the beginning of your relationship, which is super important.”

↳ Grant Knoche, musician (he/him)

Many LGBTQIA+ people would advocate that open conversations build self-acceptance. If you're one of the 87% of bisexual Hinge daters wanting to explore their sexuality in 2023, you deserve that freedom. Build connections by getting comfortable with honest conversations about your self-exploration. And considering 80% of

queer daters on Hinge are open to being someone's "first time," there are many people who will accept you as you are.

Daters feel most comfortable being someone's first queer experience if they're willing to talk about it early on and are completely out (or are at least out to friends).



A majority (80%) of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters are open to being someone's first queer dating experience.



3 common myths vs. the truth about bisexual daters

By Hinge's Love and Connection Expert



× Myth

Bisexuality doesn't exist, and regardless of a person's experiences with people of other genders, if someone is sexually attracted to someone of the same gender, they're gay or lesbian.

✓ Truth

Somebody's previous sexual experiences don't define their identity. We all have a right to decide how we identify according to what feels right. The labels 'gay' and 'lesbian' denote people who are exclusively attracted to people of their same gender. Bisexual people experience attraction to at least two genders.

× Myth

You aren't really a bisexual person until you've had experiences with more than one gender.

✓ Truth

As it goes for most people, regardless of identity, bisexual people can experience attraction and understand their sexual orientation well before they have any sexual relationships. Someone can identify as bisexual while only having sexual experiences with people of one gender.

× Myth

Bisexual people can't be monogamous.

✓ Truth

Sexual orientation is about how we do or don't experience sexual attraction—it doesn't tell us the kind of relationship people want. Even though they're attracted to more than one gender, bisexual people who practice monogamy still choose to date one person exclusively.

Hinge NFAQ voices on how to embrace exploration...

Unsure of how to approach someone?

“Let’s get one thing clear, directness is sexy. Directness is a green flag to others that you know what you want and that you’re grounded enough to name it. When done through a place of confidence, it also means that if you’re rejected, your sense of self will remain intact, and you’ll end on a neutral or positive note. Making your flirting direct can be as simple as making subtle language adjustments, like making “I” statements or taking initiative with planning dates. For example: Do you want to hang out vs I’d love to take you out.”

↪ **Annika Hansteen-Izora, artist, writer, and designer (they/she/he)**



Around half of queer, bisexual, trans, and non-binary Hinge daters have never had a queer dating experience because they’re not sure how to approach a romantic interest.





Almost a quarter of bisexual Hinge daters have never had a queer dating experience because they haven't come out to family or friends.

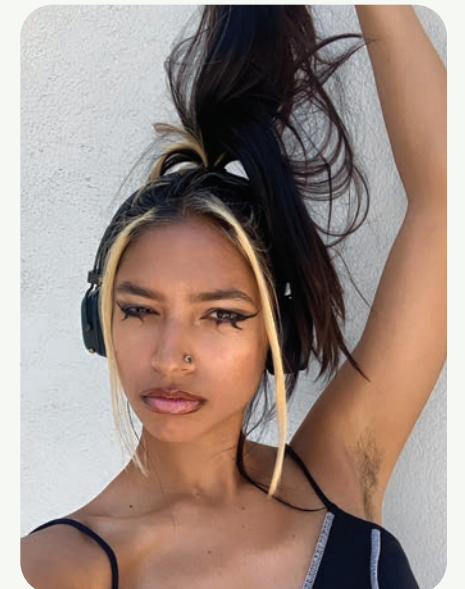
Still becoming comfortable with your identity?

“As you start to date, get to know people based on who they are. Try not to compare what you haven't done to what they may have. You don't need to be shy, or hide where you are in your journey—where you are is perfect and should never be judged by anyone, including you!”
↪ **Ericka Hart, M.Ed., sex educator, racial/social/gender/justice educator, writer, and model (she/they)**



Not out to family/friends?

“Dating if you're not out is totally okay!!! Just make sure to communicate to your partner(s) what your feelings are around coming out and the boundaries you have with different people in your life.”
↪ **Tara Raani, writer, actor, and filmmaker (she/they/he)**





Half of all LGBTQIA+ and a third of bisexual Hinge daters have never had a queer dating experience because they're still getting comfortable with their identity.

The First Date

Overview

In the past year, lack of communication has been the number one challenge and biggest area of opportunity for LGBTQIA+ daters. In 2023, people throughout the community will be learning how to have healthy dialogue and how to be more upfront during every stage of dating.

71%

Before meeting in person, 71% of trans daters plan to lay out expectations about the type of relationship (monogamous vs non-monogamous) they're looking for.

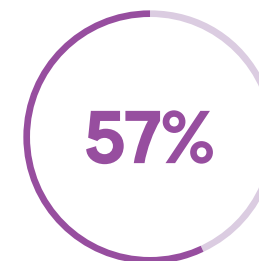
Becoming a better communicator starts before the first date

Trans Hinge daters are leading the way in fostering open communication. Even before the first date, 71% of trans daters plan to lay out expectations about the type of relationship they want.

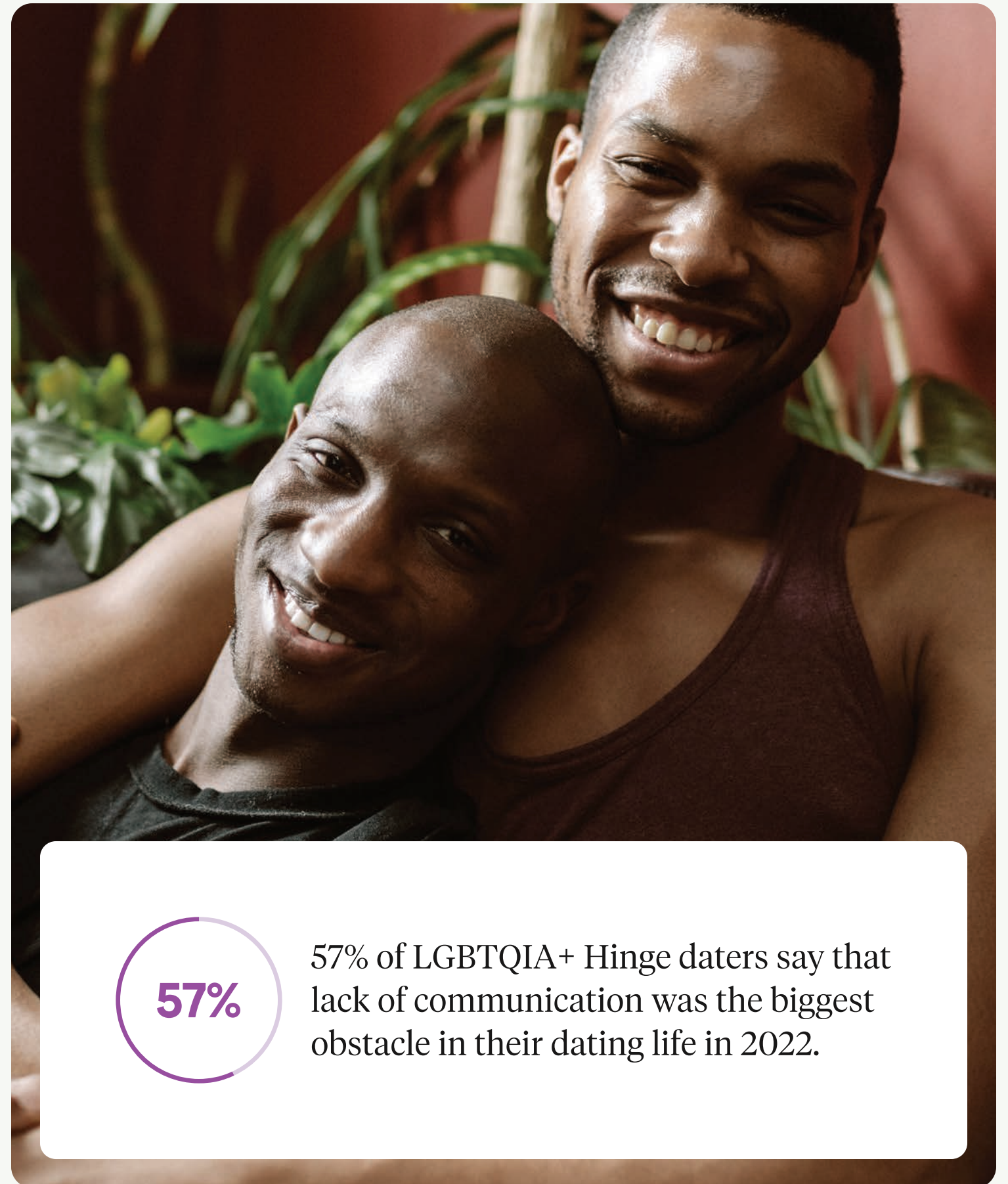
Given the higher likelihood of encountering misunderstandings about their identities, including assumptions about their relationship preferences and gender expression, trans people often intentionally communicate their desires and expectations early on. Ultimately, these conversations ensure their date is someone who will celebrate who they are for *who* they are.

Trans daters also expect the same level of open communication from potential partners. Compared with other groups in the community, trans daters are more likely to want their date to confirm the day of the date and send an update when they're on the way.

Successful relationships nurture positive communication habits from the very beginning. If you've recognized you need to be better at communicating, take note. Be clear about the type of relationship you're looking for by having an "expectation check" before going on the first date.



57% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters say that lack of communication was the biggest obstacle in their dating life in 2022.





“I can’t stress enough the prioritization of trans joy and safety/survival, and that starts with us being willing to take up/make that space for ourselves and accepting nothing less...know what your worth is. Be unwavering in what you deserve. Know that you’re in control of the conversation.”

↪ Bay Davis, artist and writer (she/her)



Pre-Date communication essentials

By Hinge’s Love and Connection Expert

Choosing the location

LGBTQIA+ people aren’t always celebrated and affirmed in public spaces and “bad energy” can throw off a connection. Checking in with one another about where you feel safe and celebrated can help you create a first date that leaves you both feeling relaxed. You might start the conversation like this:

Hey [insert name], I would love to go on a date with you soon. What places do you enjoy going to? I want to find somewhere positive and fun for both of us!”

Aligning your relationship goals

Being upfront about your intentions before a date helps you understand if your potential partner shares your goals and values. Discussing each other’s preferred relationship type helps you envision the kind of relationship you may build together. Here’s an example of how this conversation may go:

Hey [insert name], I’ve enjoyed getting to know you. You’ve probably seen on my profile that I’m interested in non-monogamous relationships. I would love to learn more about you and what you’re looking for before we meet in person. I’m also open to answering any questions you might have about what non-monogamy looks like for me.

Setting a date and following up

Once you’ve agreed to meet up, it’s essential to pick a concrete location, date, and time so no one’s confused. On the day of the date or the night before, you could send a text saying:

Hey, [insert name], I’m looking forward to seeing you at [time of date].

If you’re receiving this kind of text, you could reply by saying:

I look forward to seeing you too!

so they know you received their text and to confirm that you still plan on attending. If you’re running late, it’s good to give your date a heads up so they’re not wondering where you are.



How to handle the bill

For cisgender, heterosexual relationships, it's been traditionally assumed that the man covers the bill. However, many LGBTQIA+ daters don't observe hard-and-fast rules on who should pay. Talking about it beforehand can prevent any discomfort and avoid any overanalyzing of what it means afterward.

Here's how you can bring up the subject:

Hey [*insert name*], I'm excited about our first date. How do you usually like to handle the bill? I often [*insert how you want the bill to be taken care of*]. What feels best for you?

If you're both unsure of how to handle the bill, here are some options:

- Split the bill evenly
- Whoever picks the place has to get the bill
- One person could pay this time, and the other else pays the next date
- One person pays the bill, and the other gets the tip

How to land the second date with conversation—not physical intimacy

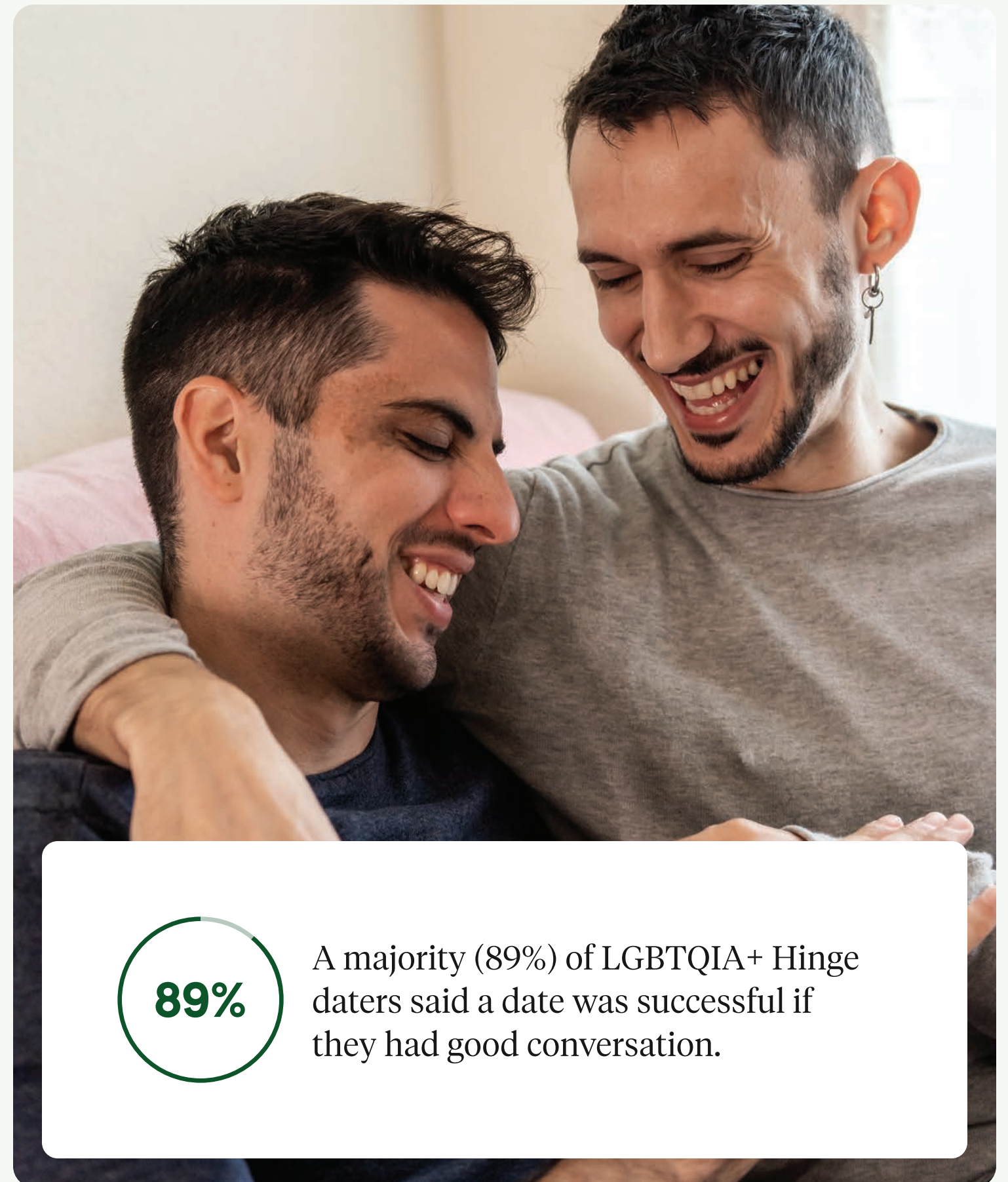
A deeper connection on the first date can signal lasting success for LGBTQIA+ daters. According to Hinge's research, you can increase the chances of going on a second date if your first date focuses on good conversation more than physical intimacy.

So, what do daters want to talk about most? Intentions. Because in a world full of uncertainty, the last thing you need is confusion about your relationships. A majority (75%) of LGBTQIA+ people on Hinge say they're looking to find a life partner within the

next three years. Furthermore, only 36% said they would go on a second date with someone with unclear intentions.

Establishing positive communication habits is another huge green flag for queer daters on the first date. You may even want to discuss how frequently you want to hear from a partner.

If you've struggled to turn your first dates into second ones, avoid the small talk and start an honest conversation about both of your relationship expectations instead.



A majority (89%) of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters said a date was successful if they had good conversation.

Three must-ask first date questions

By Hinge's Love and Connection Expert

“Why did your last relationship end?”

A potential partner's response to this question can tell you a lot about their level of self-reflection, self-awareness, curiosity, and compassion. If their response to this question:

- *Places blame on their ex for everything*, they may not reflect on their role during conflicts and challenges. This could show up in your potential relationship together.
- *Honors their emotions and takes accountability for their part in ending the relationship*, they're probably self-reflective in conflicts and want to hold themselves accountable for their own growth.
- *Leads to them talking about their ex for hours*, it's a good sign that they're still healing and that the wound is fresh. In this case, I'd encourage you to ask them more about their dating intentions.

“What are your favorite ways of having fun?”

86% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters said a date is successful if they have fun. This new take on the old question, “What do you do for fun?” allows you to learn more about your date's interests and may give you inspiration for your second date.

“Do you want to go on another date?”

This question gets missed a lot, but it's an important one. If you enjoyed the first date, this question can clarify where you stand. It also answers any questions in their mind about whether or not you enjoyed their company and want to continue the connection.

2x

You're twice as likely to go on a second date if you focus on having a good conversation versus physical intimacy.



“Boundaries are a great indication of healthy relationships with others. We often view setting boundaries as placing walls up between us and the people we love, know, or want to know. But, reality couldn’t be further from that. Boundaries are bridges, not fences. In setting these expectations, you create opportunities for you and your potential partners to better understand each other’s emotional needs, desires, and limitations.”

↪ Shahem McLaurin, licensed therapist and social worker (they/them)

Do's and don'ts of a first date conversation

✓ Do

Ask questions

A majority of LGBTQIA+ folks said they wouldn't go on a second date with someone who doesn't ask questions or makes rude remarks on the first date.

✗ Don't

Spend too much time on the past

This is especially true for lesbian and bisexual people.

✓ Do

Talk about where you see yourself living one day

69% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters would like to buy a house in the future. Sharing your vision for where you'll live and your goals helps your date understand whether or not your separate journeys have common ground.

✗ Don't

Suggest travel plans with each other

Only 9% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters are willing to go on a trip with someone they've known for less than a month. Save the vacation plans for after date #5.

✓ Do

Bring up your spiritual journey

A majority (70%) of LGBTQIA+ people want to discuss religion/spirituality on the first date because it helps them assess values-based compatibility and connection to community. However, almost 40% of daters hesitate to talk about it.

✗ Don't

Only talk about yourself

91% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters said they wouldn't go on a second date with someone who only talks about themselves on the first date.

↪ A tip from Moe

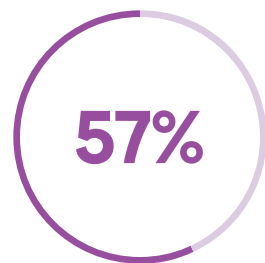
"Practice active listening. Being present and curious with your dates helps build connections. Some common active listening skills include eye contact, open body language, removing distractions, and reflecting on what your date is saying by summarizing their statements. These tools show you care and want to understand them."



"If you start a conversation about religion with a relative stranger, you should be prepared to be open—and not defensive—about their personal experiences with their faith, and why they may have set boundaries around it. I know that most faith traditions teach us to lead with compassion when people have been wrongfully marginalized. Do your best to let your faith guide you appropriately in that scenario."

↪ Phillip Picardi, magazine editor (he/him)





Over half of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters are religious or spiritual.

Meet fizzling: ghosting's passive-aggressive cousin

Fizzling occurs when you become slower and shorter in your responses to someone before you completely stop responding. While this might not seem as harmful as ghosting, it can be just as painful.

Slowly phasing someone out without offering an explanation can trigger feelings of unworthiness, confusion, and self-doubt. If you're not feeling the

connection, remember there's another human being on the other side of that screen—and they deserve closure.

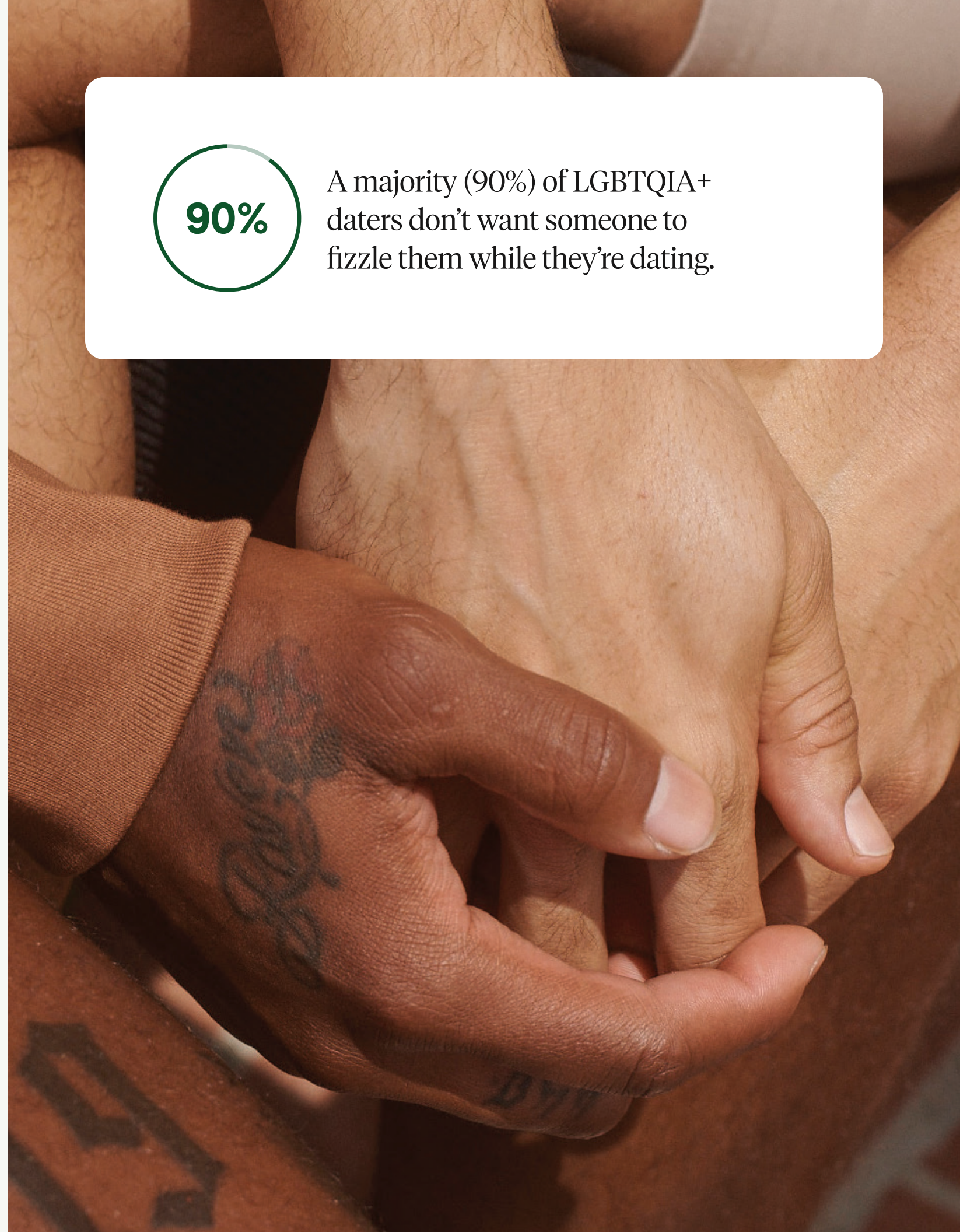
How do you respectfully tell someone you're no longer interested? Be direct, not coy. Although sending a text may seem blunt, it's accepted modern-day etiquette. Daters on the receiving end are 13 times more likely to prefer a text to a call.



A majority (90%) of LGBTQIA+ daters don't want someone to fizzle them while they're dating.

13x

Daters are 13 times more likely to prefer you let them know you're no longer interested over text than a phone call.



Excited about how well a date went?

Post-date courtesies that can keep the connection going

- Trans daters are most likely to want a date to check they made it home and text first afterward.
- Bisexual daters prefer dates to ask if they're home safe, while gay and lesbian daters care more about talking after the first date in general.
- Phone calls aren't necessary. Only 11% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters want their date to call first after the date.

Not feeling the connection?

Being loving as you're leaving by Hinge's Love and Connection Expert

- Share the positives of the date or relationship.
- Compassionately express the challenges you experienced or what led to you wanting to not see each other again.
- Express gratitude for the experience.

After you share a message like this with someone, they may have follow-up questions. You might even feel moved to ask them about their thoughts and feelings, depending on how long the connection lasted. Remember to be curious and truthful as you navigate endings. Compassionate honesty can help the other person gain closure, and it conveys respect and care for the other person while ending the relationship. *The idea is to be loving as you're leaving.*

[Name], I've enjoyed getting to know you. I especially enjoyed hearing you sing on our first date. Unfortunately, I don't want to continue seeing each other because our dating intentions aren't similar. Still, I'm grateful for the time we shared together, and I wish you all the best.

The First Fight

Getting comfortable with conflict.

Overview

In a world filled with chaos, it's understandable that LGBTQIA+ daters seek relationships that provide them with peace and respite they can't find elsewhere. But the only way to break the cycles that keep us from deeper connection is to address conflict head-on.

LGBTQIA+ daters want someone who gives them a “soft life,” a life without stress or worry. A life free from judgment and misunderstanding. So, it's not surprising only 21% said it was most important to have healthy conflict or compromise when dating. Many queer daters underestimate the positive role conflict resolution has in even the most healthy relationships. In fact, feeling comfortable around each other is seen as 7x more important for LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters than talking about the future.

Relationships can't be drama-free all of the time. For example, you might want

to go out for a night of clubbing, but your potential partner would rather stay in. Or, you might be a diehard dog lover, and they think cats are superior. Minor disagreements like these are normal and don't necessarily indicate incompatibility.

An ideal partner isn't perfect. It's someone who can accept responsibility for their actions and work through disagreements respectfully. Find someone who gives you a sense of peace but is also willing to work through the inevitable challenges and conflicts ahead.



Tips for embracing healthy conflict

By Hinge's Love and Connection Expert

If you typically avoid conflict

Becoming aware of how you feel about something is your first step to embracing it: Many people avoid conflict because they fear that it ends relationships. Or, because conflict activates attachment wounds from childhood.

- Take note of what you feel when you think about conflict.

- Think of the most difficult conversation you've ever had and journal about the feelings that surface.
- Examine those feelings and any narratives you may have about disagreements, like "conflict is bad" or "conflict leads to relationships ending."

When you're still getting to know each other

Rely on your relationship's newness: Get curious about each other. The practice of empathetically asking questions helps you get to the root of the conflict. Ask things like:

- "I feel like there's a misunderstanding between us. Can you share your perspective with me?"
- "I'm having a difficult time sharing how I feel, but I want to discuss this topic. Can we try and hold space for each other? I'll listen to your side, I'll reflect back to make sure I understood, and afterward, you can do the same for me?"

- "I want to understand what you're trying to communicate. Can you share more about what you want me to know?"

After they explain their point of view, here's how you can respond:

- "Thank you for sharing your feelings and experiences with me. I appreciate your openness."

Continues on the next page →



Feeling comfortable around each other is 7x more important to queer daters than talking about the future.

Release any judgment you have about conflict: Disagreements are neither good nor bad. We can navigate them in not-so-great ways but having a different viewpoint than someone else is a natural part of life. Affirm to yourself that disagreements are just a part of diversity of thought.

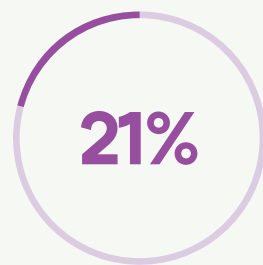
Remember conflict isn't always a negative sign: The amount of conflict a relationship endures might not directly predict if it will be successful. What dictates the future of a relationship is how we mend and rebuild after those disagreements. When daters don't mend the conflicts they experience, they allow consistent disrepair and abandonment to severely harm the relationship.

After DTR (defining the relationship)

Have regular check-ins: Connecting regularly and chatting about your relationship can serve as a safe space and time for difficult conversations. The more you normalize checking in, the more you're supporting healthy communication in your relationship.

Practice active listening: Not only is this important while dating, active listening supports effective communication, reduces stress, and helps resolve conflicts.

Talk about the present conflict: You might have enough history with your partner for conflicts to become layered. Remain present with what's happening in the moment rather than creating connections to past experiences and disagreements. This process helps you overcome any conflict-avoidant behavior.



Only 21% of LGBTQIA+ daters said it was most important to have healthy conflict or compromise when dating someone. The #SoftLife has taken over how people think about dating, with more than 602M views on TikTok currently.

Takeaways

To get beyond the talking stage in 2023, LGBTQIA+ daters will need to...



1 Push past their FOE and come out as first-timers

Although bisexual daters are 3x more likely to have never had a queer dating experience, a majority (87%) of bisexual people are ready to explore their sexuality more. To push past their FOE (fear of exploration), they'll have the first-time conversation with potential partners early on.

What queer daters need to know
The best cure for FOE is having an honest conversation about your self-exploration journey upfront.

2 Communicate more before, during, and after the first date

Over half of LGBTQIA+ daters see a lack of communication can keep them from achieving their dating goals. Daters are realizing that consistent communication and transparency at every point of the dating journey helps build lasting connections when dating within the community.

What queer daters need to know
Establish healthy communication from the start by having the "expectation check" before the first date.

3 Break the cycle of avoiding conflict

79% of LGBTQIA+ daters don't recognize healthy conflict (a vital part of healthy relationships) as the most important aspect of dating. However, relationship psychology shows us embracing disagreements is a vital part of healthy relationships.

What queer daters need to know
Embrace healthy conflict as a part of a healthy relationship.

Methodology

Hinge's team of Ph.D. researchers and dating experts conducted surveys in November 2022 to more than 14,000 respondents in the LGBTQIA+ community.

About Hinge Labs: our love scientists

Hinge Labs is a first-of-its-kind research team of professional relationship scientists with the sole purpose of providing evidence-based insights to help daters find love. By studying successful daters, Hinge Labs teaches people how to have a successful dating life. The team works on understanding what makes a Hinge match successful, so they can make your next first date your last first date.