



Hinge

Clarity Builds Chemistry

2026 LGBTQIA+ D.A.T.E. Report
Data, Advice, Trends, and Expertise



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LGBTQIA+ daters are approaching connection with a new priority: clarity. In 2026, clarity isn't the opposite of chemistry. It's what creates the conditions for it.



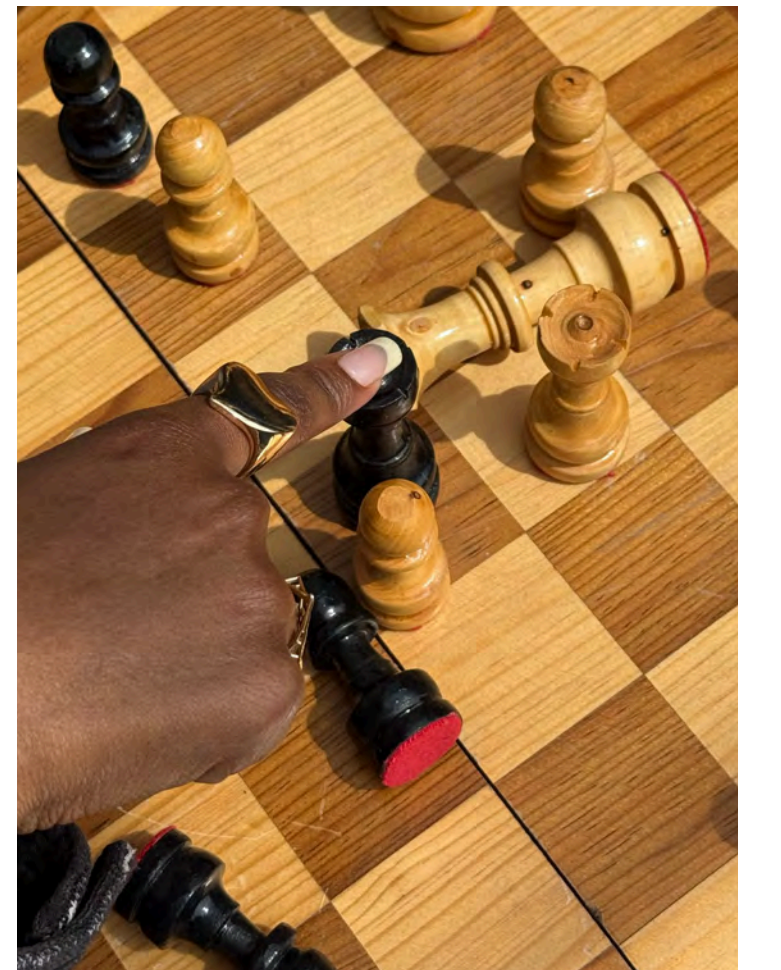
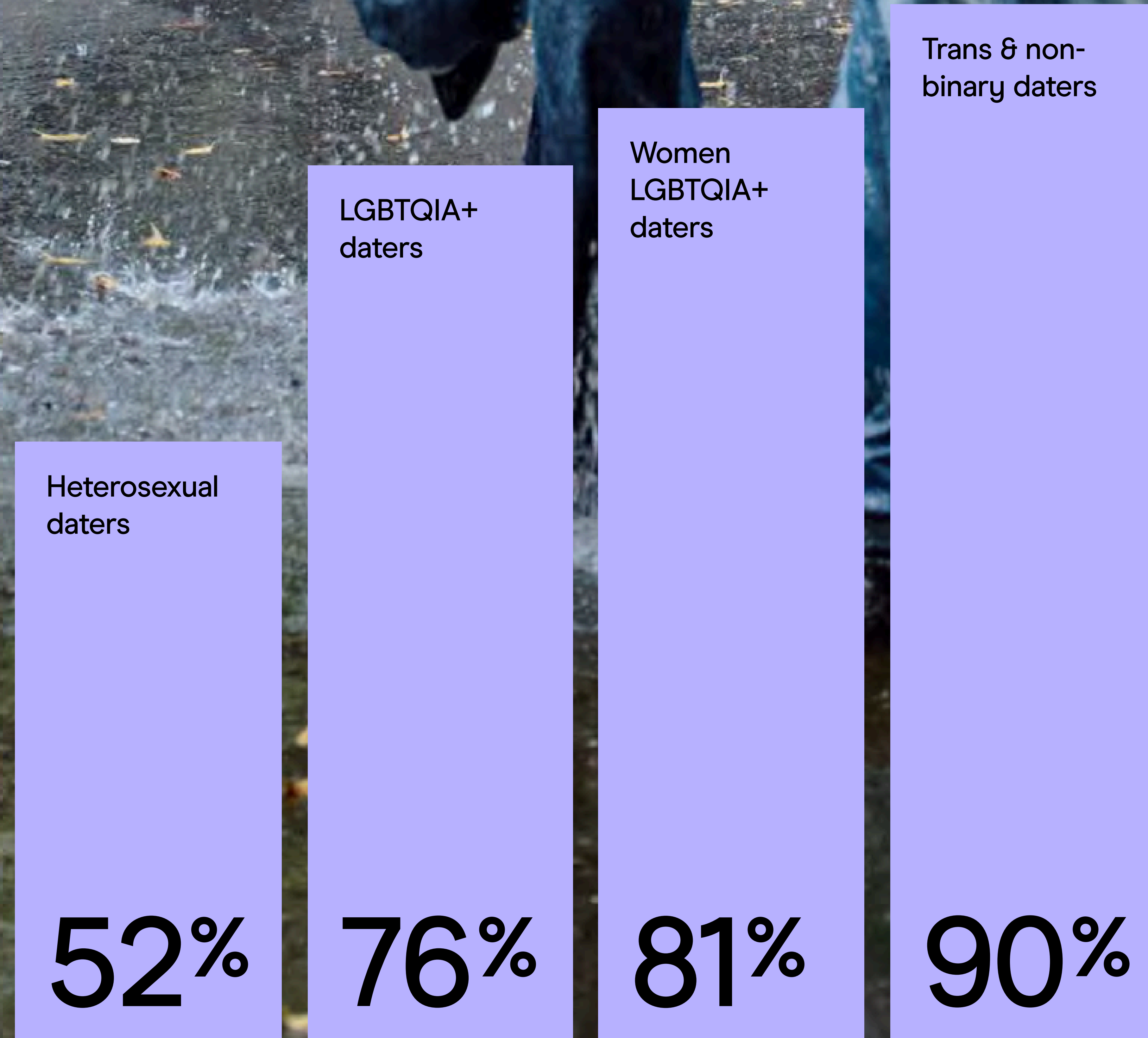
Why Clarity Builds Chemistry

Unable to control the world at large, daters are focusing on what they can control, asking, “What do I have the capacity for? And what—or who—am I looking for?”

When the news cycle feels overwhelming and life feels chaotic, daters don't want situationships or rollercoaster romances; they want to co-create emotional safety.

To find it, LGBTQIA+ daters are slowing down to notice how someone shows up, looking for compatibility, consistency, and care over time.

How much different communities feel a lot or great uncertainty about the world:



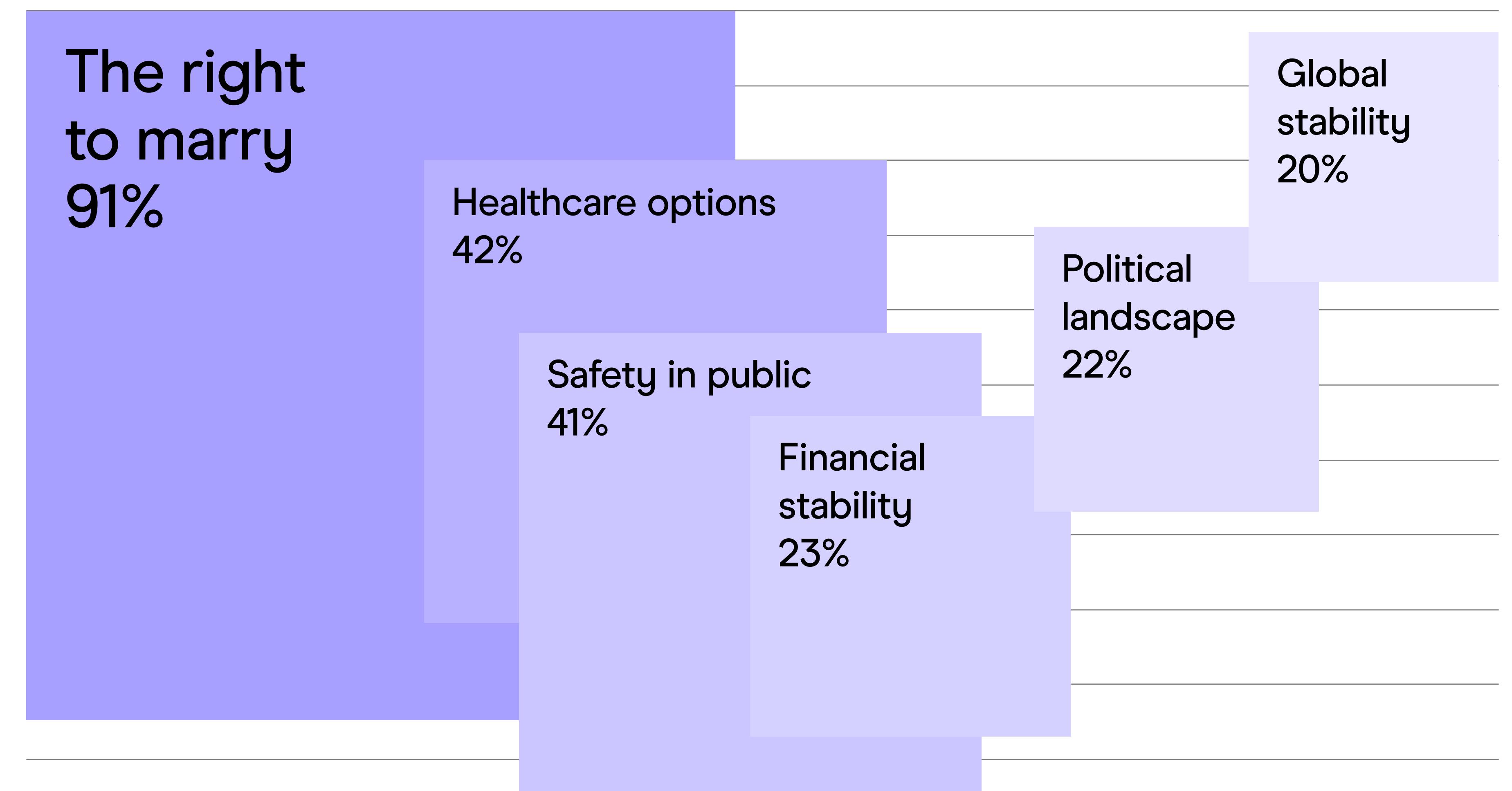
Although LGBTQIA+ daters feel uncertainty more acutely, they are 23% more likely than heterosexual daters to say that uncertainty significantly clarifies what they are looking for in a relationship.

INTRODUCTION

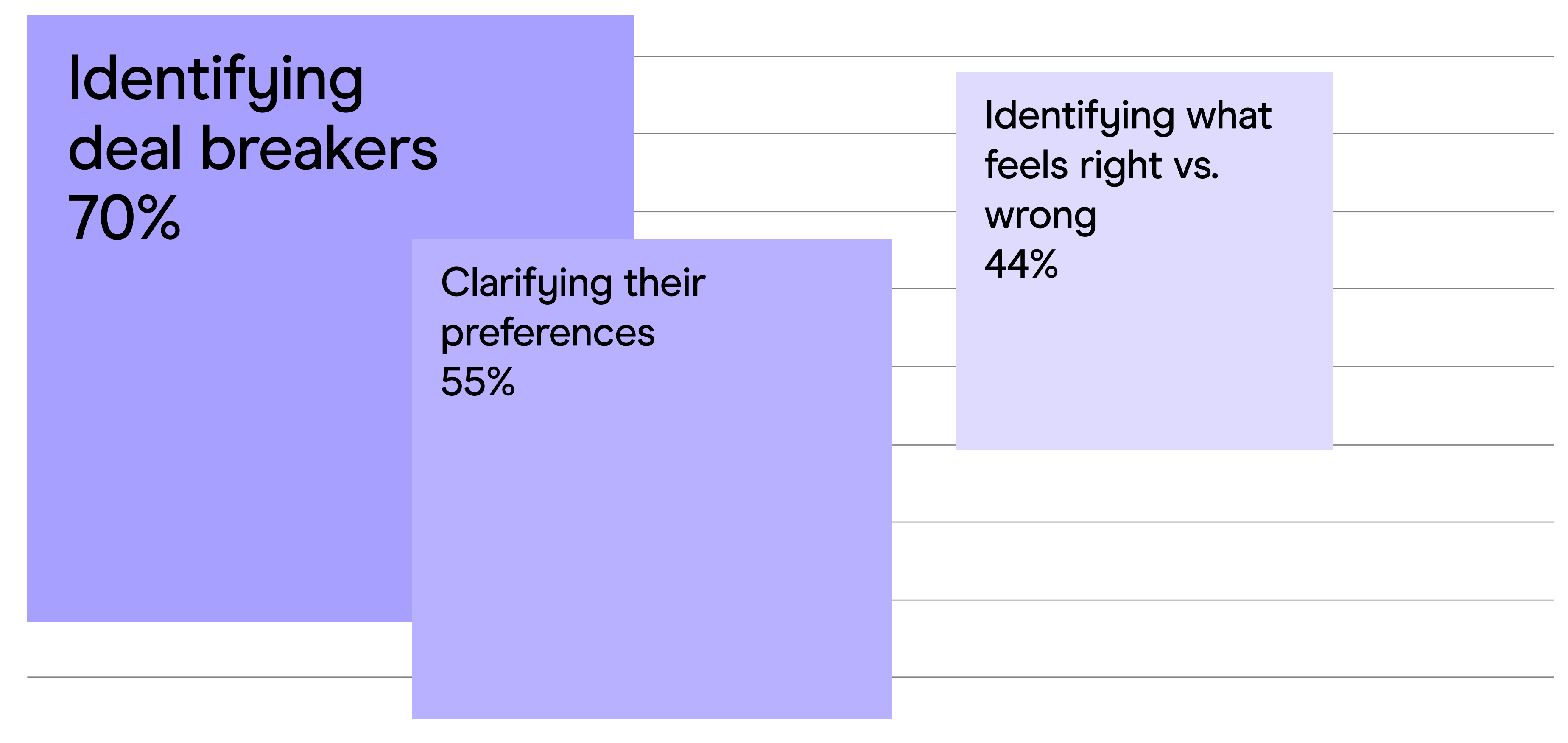
Drawing on insights from over 31,000 Hinge daters, queer daters' experiences, and dating experts, Hinge's Fourth LGBTQIA+ D.A.T.E. Report maps how LGBTQIA+ daters can build the emotional clarity they're craving. How?

By checking for alignment early through Show, Don't Tell Dating, offering and seeking reassurance, and establishing trust through consistency.

Compared with heterosexual daters, LGBTQIA+ daters are more likely to feel uncertain about:



LGBTQIA+ daters say that uncertainty is helping them better understand what they're looking for in a relationship, by:



DATER STORY



JOY JULIA CALLWOOD
@HOETOTHEWORLD
SHE/HER, 25, USA

“Uncertainty in the world has made me slow down and pay attention to the basics: communication, consistency, and whether someone actually follows through on what they say. Big romantic gestures are nice, but they don’t mean much if someone is unreliable. When everything around you feels unpredictable, the small signs that someone is steady and emotionally safe start to matter a lot more.”



“When everything around you feels unpredictable,



the small signs that someone is steady and emotionally safe start to matter a lot more.”

Uncertainty about the world is affecting everyone, but LGBTQIA+ daters are affected more.

32%

of LGBTQIA+ daters are more likely than heterosexual daters to feel it at a high level.

Uncertainty isn't making dating more confusing. It's making it clearer.

74%

of LGBTQIA+ daters say uncertainty helps them understand what they're looking for in a relationship.

More LGBTQIA+ daters are slowing down and prioritizing compatibility and alignment.

52%

of LGBTQIA+ daters say that uncertainty makes them move more slowly in their dating pace, compared with 44% of heterosexual daters.

Reassurance and consistency are key signals of emotional safety.

31%

LGBTQIA+ daters are 31% more likely than heterosexual daters to say uncertainty increases their need for reassurance in dating.

INTRODUCTION

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.



Moe Ari Brown

(HE/THEY) HINGE'S LOVE
AND CONNECTION EXPERT

Moe Ari is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) with over a decade of experience helping people feel more and fear less in relationships. His core work centers on teaching emotional fluency as a necessary foundation for modern relationships. They hold an MS in marriage and family therapy from Northwestern University.

Logan Ury

(SHE/HER) HINGE'S LEAD
RELATIONSHIP SCIENTIST

Logan is a behavioral scientist turned dating coach and the author of the best selling dating book *How to Not Die Alone*, which has been translated into 21 languages. She is also the on-screen coach on the Netflix series *The Later Daters*. She previously studied psychology at Harvard before running Google's behavioral science team, the Irrational Lab.



01 Show, Don't Tell Dating

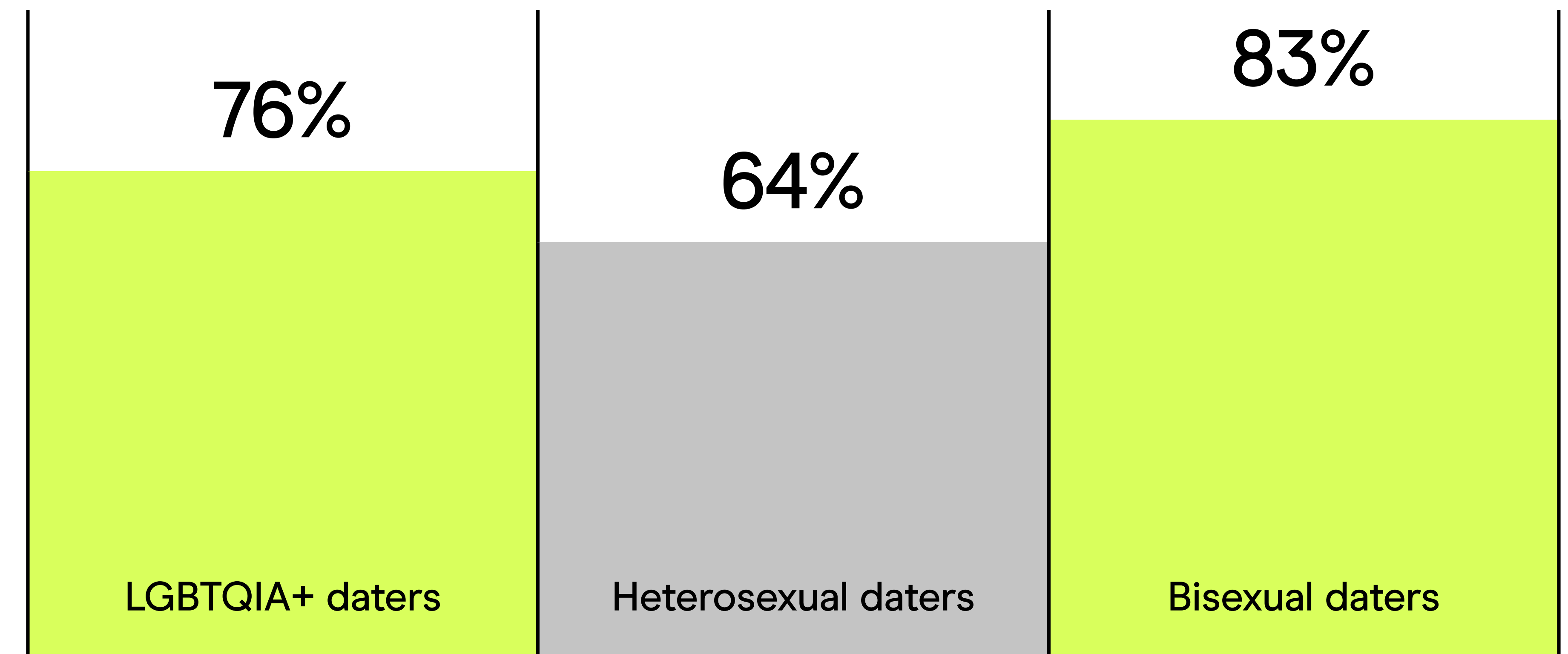


DATA

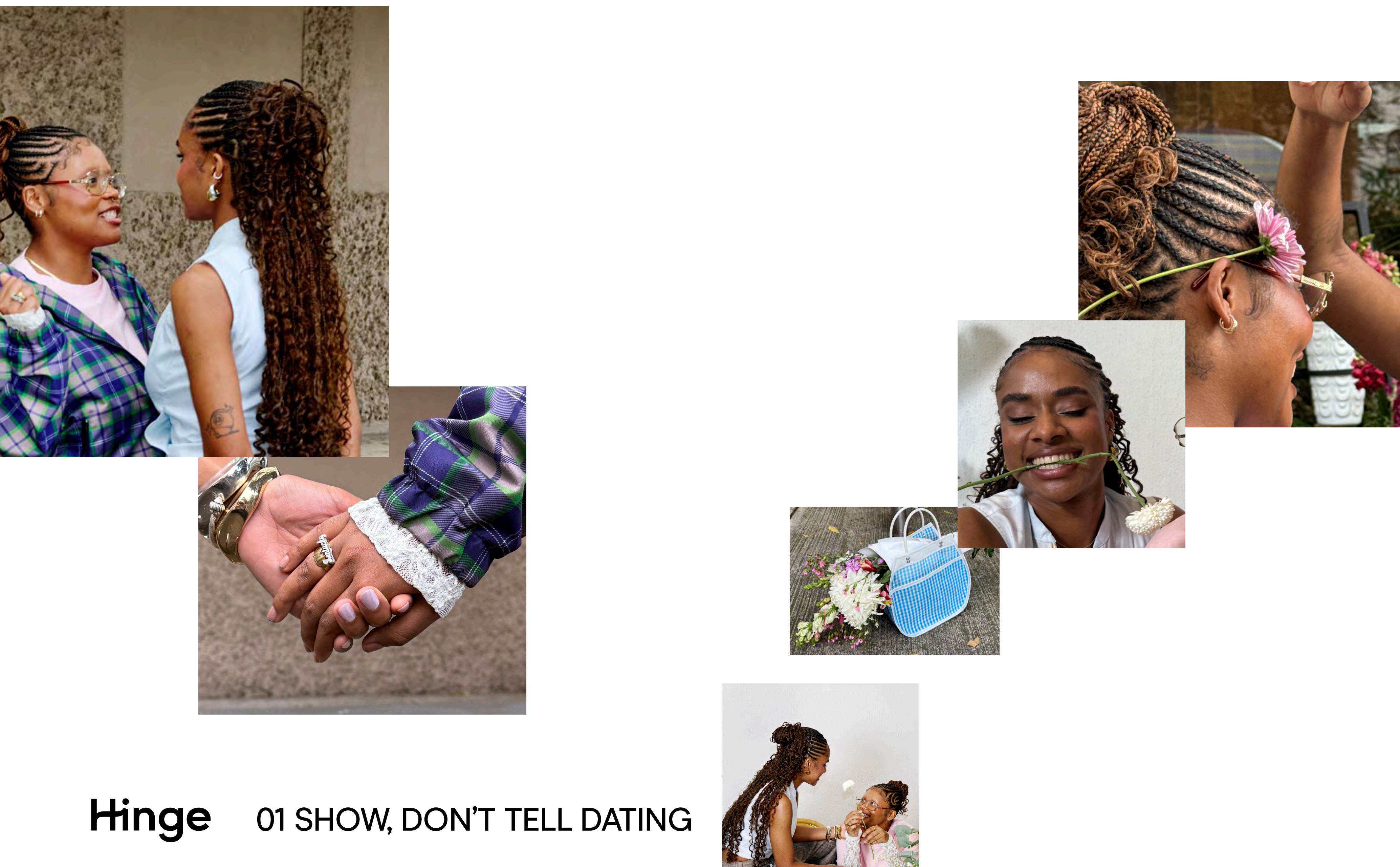
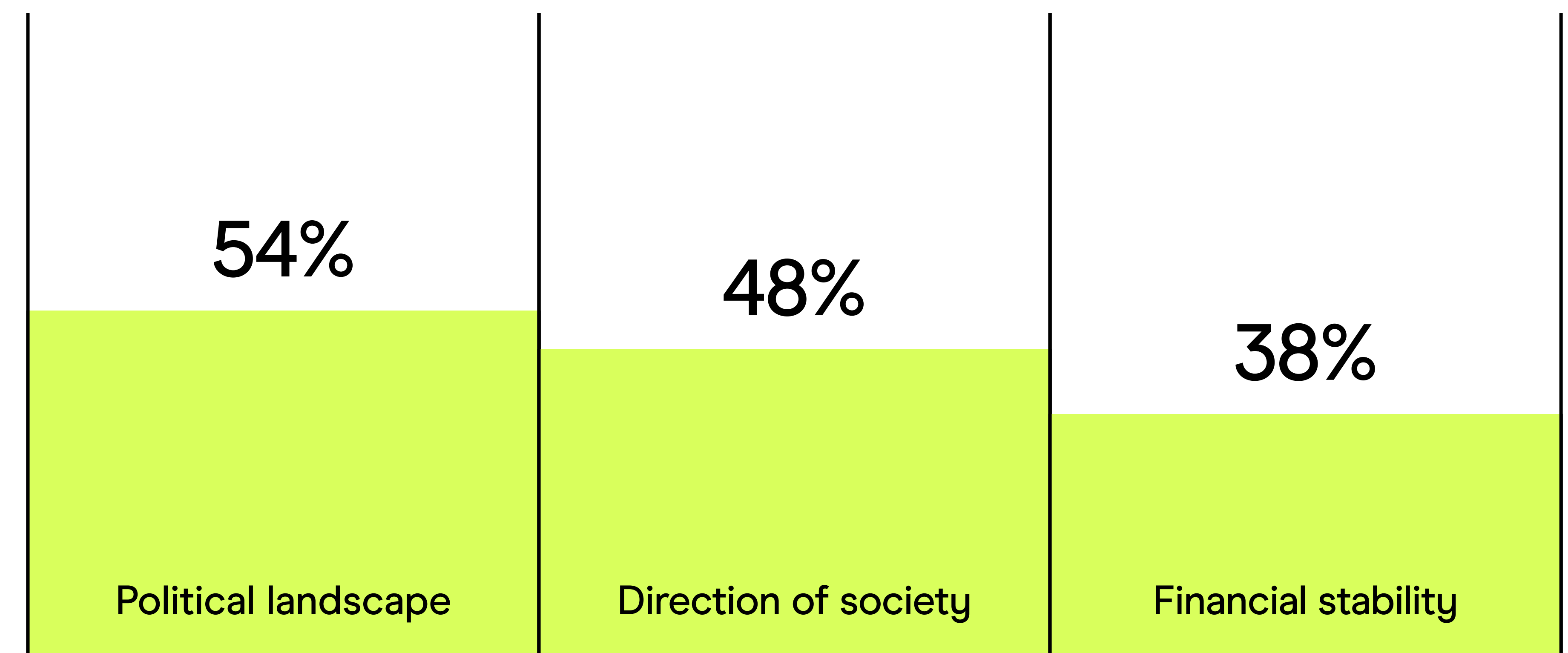
In 2024, daters from our LGBTQIA+ D.A.T.E. Report embraced the ‘slowmance’: slowing the pace of dating and setting clear intentions along the way.

In 2026, those intentions have deepened. When emotional safety comes first, daters aren’t rushing to define things—they’re allowing compatibility to be revealed by what someone does, not just what they say.

Daters who prefer to focus on slowly building a connection with someone rather than moving on a certain timeline:



LGBTQIA+ daters say that their readiness to date is impacted by uncertainty around:



KEY DEFINITION

Dating with a deadline



Definition:
We reach these milestones by this time.



Show, don't tell dating

Definition:
Rather than relying on fixed relationship scripts, we take the time we need to see how someone shows up.

Why queer love doesn't always follow fixed timelines

MOE ARI BROWN (HE/THEY)
HINGE'S LOVE & CONNECTION EXPERT

LGBTQIA+ daters are holding two truths at once. Milestone pressure is real, but the blueprint for reaching those milestones was never written for us.

That gap creates a particular kind of emotional weight. We may want partnership, children, or commitment, yet still have fewer lived models that reflect our identities, expansive relationship structures, or values. Layer political uncertainty and cultural backlash on top, and dating can feel both urgent and tender at the same time.

Queer love requires more than the courage to choose a person; it requires

the courage to author a version of the future that most of us never saw growing up. Instead of defaulting to inherited scripts that don't represent us—how we live or how we love—many of us choose to write new visions for queer love together, in real time, with no guarantee of how it ends.

For LGBTQIA+ daters today, it's not the timeline that makes a relationship work. It's the psychological safety, emotional readiness, and emotional intimacy built along the way that actually move people toward commitment.



The New Non-Negotiables

Uncertainty shifts what matters. Before talking about a romantic future with someone, LGBTQIA+ daters prioritize knowing their:

Values	84%
Comfort	80%
Intentions	77%

More so than:

Life Goals	59%
Family life	28%
Finances	26%



PAFF EVRA
@THISISPAFF
SHE/HER, 32, AUS

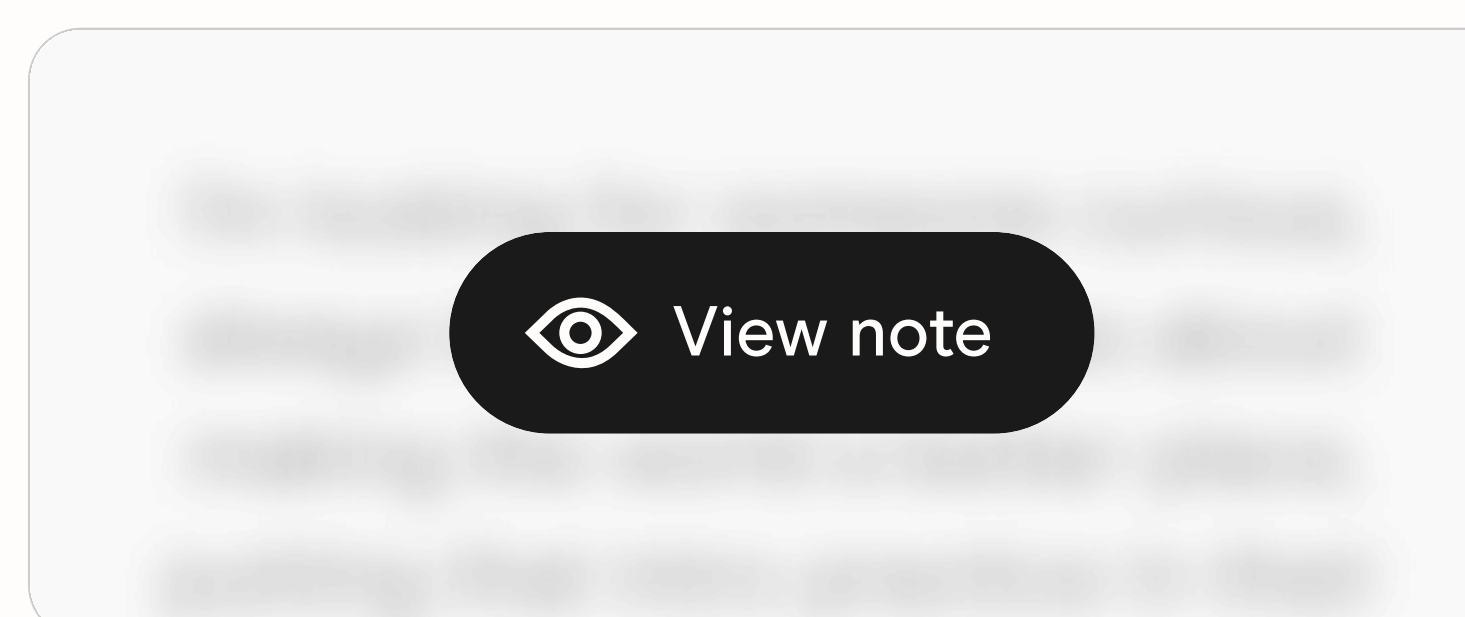
“I’m only dating people who share my values. We must be aligned at that core level—community-minded, educated (but always learning) and deeply committed to self and mutual actualisation. I’m thinking: Can I build a new world with this person? It’s that deep.”

How This Looks on Hinge: Match Note



You matched with Jamie

Bianca has something to share with you before you start chatting.



I’m looking for someone curious, always learning, and cares about making the world a better place, putting that intro practice in their own life with how they show up for friends and family.

Start the chat

Unmatch

What “Settling Down” Means to LGBTQIA+ Daters

LGBTQIA+ daters aren’t asking when—they’re asking what. What does partnership actually mean to me? What pace feels aligned with who I am, not who I’m expected to be?

“Settling down” is being redefined: not a step, but a mindset—feeling secure in where you are together, not where you’re headed next.

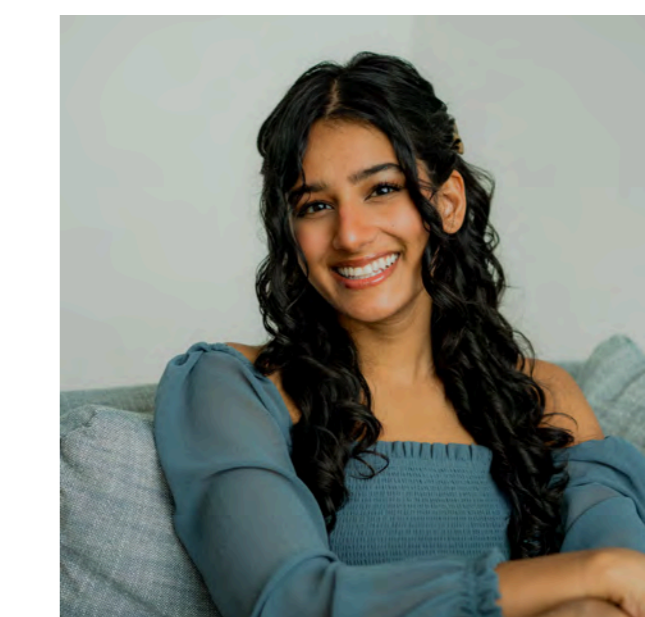


Compared with heterosexual daters, these communities are more likely to say that settling down isn’t a step but a mindset

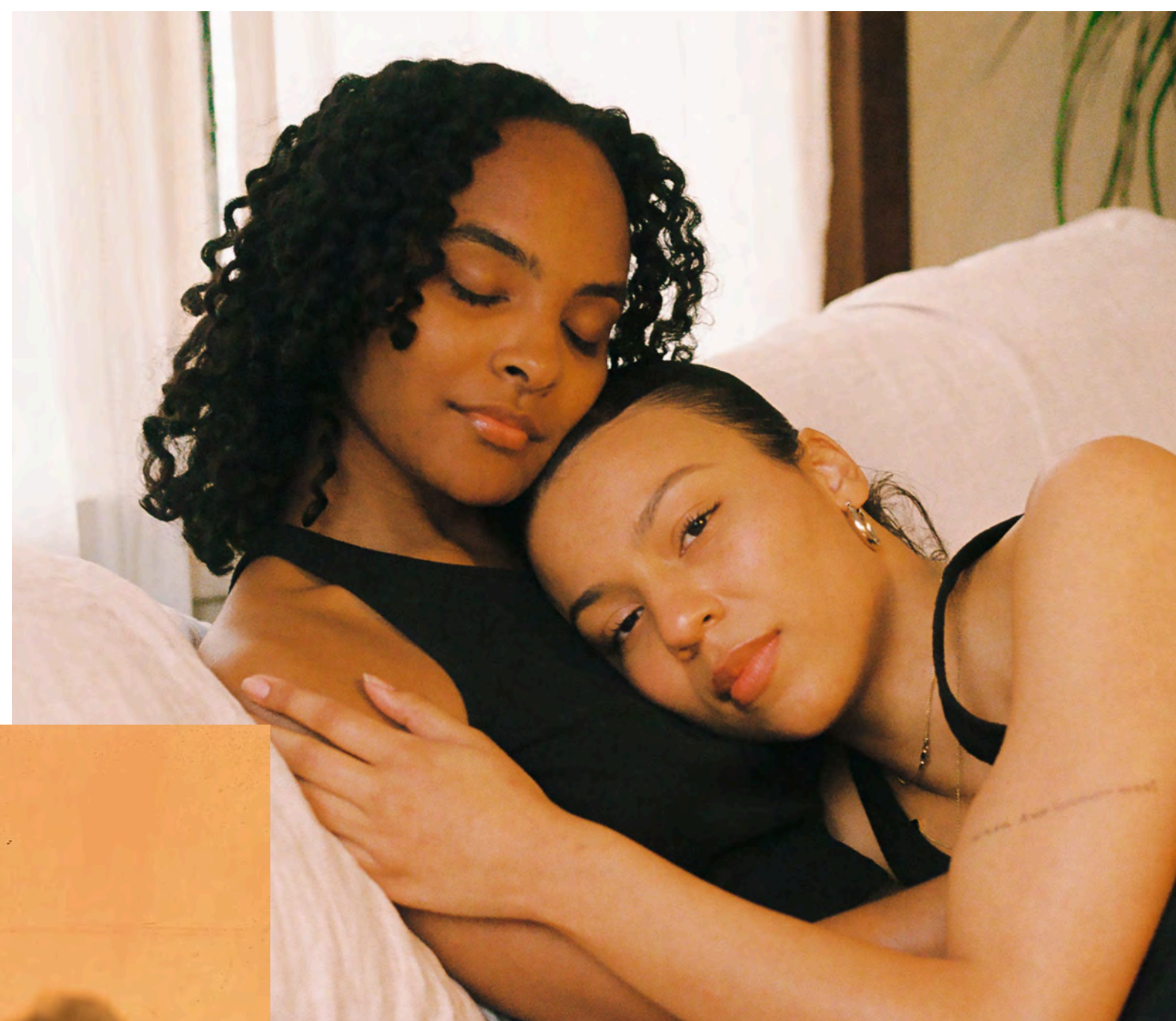
LGBTQIA+ daters are	30% more likely
Non-binary daters are	48% more likely
Queer daters	41% more likely
Transgender daters	39% more likely

“The state of the world has made me feel more comfortable slowing down and taking my time. I have felt so much pressure as a cisgender, bisexual woman to figure out my future on a certain timeline—but starting a family can take longer for LGBTQIA+ couples. I know with less certainty if starting a family is a priority for me, but I know that finding a partner who makes me feel safe, despite the constantly changing, downright scary circumstances in the world, is.”

ANJALI CHAKRA
@ANJALICHAKRA
SHE/HER, 30, US



Why actions



speaks



louder than

words

MOE ARI BROWN (HE/THEY)
HINGE'S LOVE &
CONNECTION EXPERT



There is a meaningful difference between signaling and embodying. Signaling is what someone says about themselves. Embodying is what they consistently and reliably do. Phrases like “I’m really intentional” or “I value emotional maturity” sound reassuring in early dating and are attractive on someone’s profile, but true compatibility is built on the alignment between who someone says they are and how they actually show up in the day to day. Or, as I like to joke, the date to date.

Do they follow through when they say they will reach out? Do they check in after a hard conversation? Do they disappear whenever tension surfaces only to reappear when it

feels easy again? And most importantly, how do you feel about all of it? Your responses to those questions are the actual data.

For LGBTQIA+ daters, where safety and visibility are layered into every stage of dating, this matters even more. Words can be aspirational, but behavior over time, and your feelings in the relationship, are all evidence. Slowing down is what gives you access to that insight.

Instead of asking, “Do I like what they’re saying?” try, “Do I feel more grounded or more unsettled around how they actually show up?” Your nervous system registers consistency or inconsistency before your mind catches up.

“What I
notice

most is
how

someone

interacts with
my friends.”



DANH DOAN, @DANHDOANMUA
HE/HIM, 26, AUS



“We’re extensions of the people closest to us, so introducing someone I’m dating to my friends tells me a lot. My current partner met my friends about two weeks in—very on brand for me because I prefer it to happen naturally. One day after the beach with a friend, I spontaneously asked if she wanted to meet him, and she didn’t hesitate. What I notice most is how someone interacts with my friends—are they genuinely curious about them, and do their stories line up with what they’ve told me? That’s where actions start to reveal someone’s character.”

Pace isn't one-size-fits-all

LOGAN URY (SHE/HER)
HINGE'S LEAD RELATIONSHIP SCIENTIST



There's no single script for being "serious," which means that, without a conversation, assumptions fill the gap. With 83% of Hinge daters saying that they would date someone whose approach to relationship pace is different from theirs, moving at different speeds isn't a dealbreaker—not talking about it is.

Separate pace and interest

Moving slowly doesn't mean someone is less interested. If that's you, be explicit: "I tend to move a little slower—not because I'm unsure about you, but because that's how I build trust. What would help you feel secure while I'm getting there?"

Check in without pressure

Defining commitment doesn't need to be a single dramatic "what are we?" conversation. It can look like a series of low-pressure check-ins. Instead of yes-or-no questions like "Are we official?" ask open-ended ones that let the other person share what's going on. Try, "How are you feeling about things right now?" or "Where are you hoping this relationship leads?"

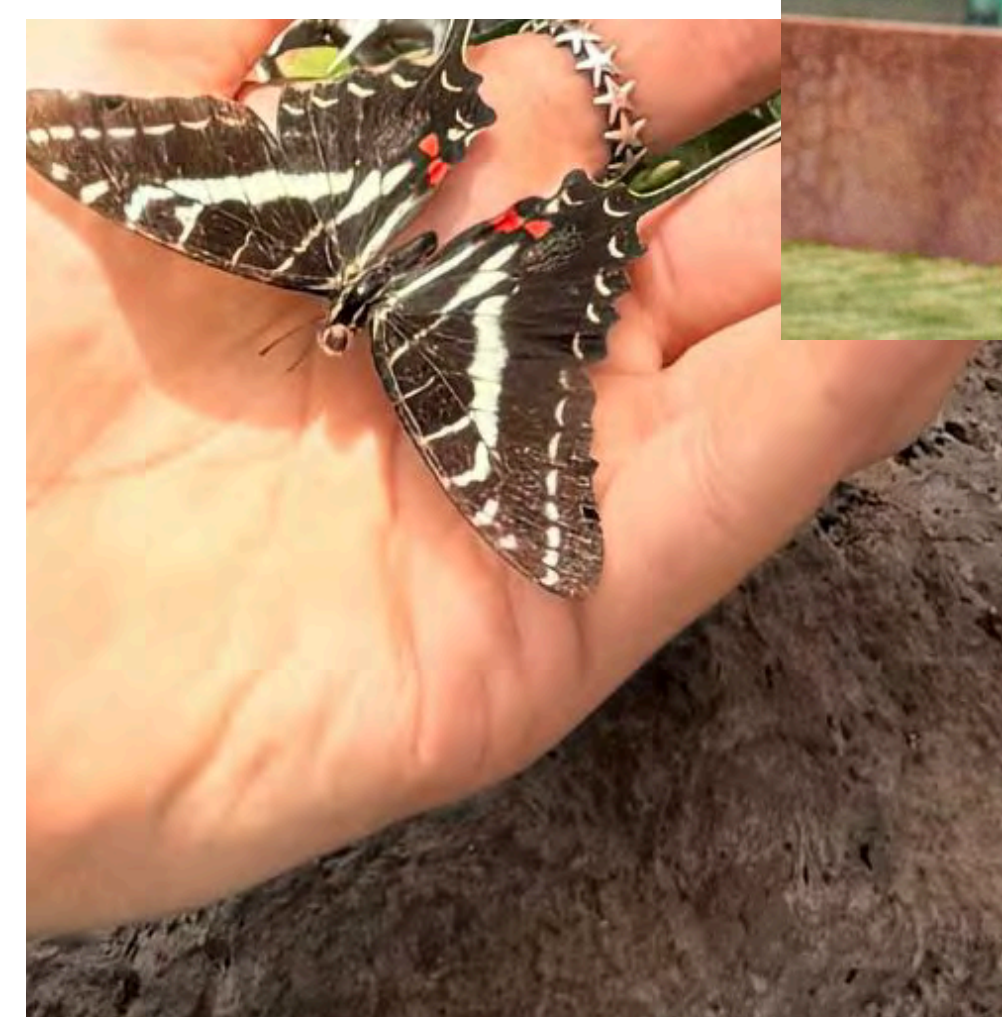
Model honesty

Go first and share how you're feeling: "I'm enjoying getting to know you and could see this turning into something long-term. How about you?" The more you open up honestly, the safer you'll make them feel to open up. Whatever they say, respect it. You're there to learn, not to persuade them.

SECTION INTRODUCTION

When someone starts to feel like a real possibility, the question becomes, how do you trust it? Needing reassurance is often dismissed as insecurity, yet the data says otherwise.

In an unpredictable world, noticing someone's needs and responding with communication and care are what make a connection feel secure.



LGBTQIA+ daters are 31% more likely than heterosexual daters to say that uncertainty about the world increases their need for reassurance in dating.

DATER STORY

“Noticing someone looking for me when we are in a room full of people makes me so happy.”

PILAR VILACIS
@ANOTHER.RANDO2.0
SHE/HER, 26, US



“Little glares across the room will always make me feel reassured. Noticing someone looking for me when we are in a room full of people makes me so happy. I value being able to read body language and knowing what to do after, like leaving a party early because you noticed your partner’s social battery has run out.”

KENNA BETHANY
@KENNA_BETHANY
SHE/HER, 27, UK



“I’m a big talker, so that’s how I express myself—I go for verbal reassurance. Asking what’s wrong if they’re open to it, inviting them to step away if they struggle, or distracting them with a silly story if they’d prefer that. I like to give options. I usually ask, ‘Do you want to talk about it or not?’ And I’m a big cuddler, so I guess that’s my toolkit: communication, distraction, and hugs.”

“I guess that’s my toolkit: communication, distraction, and hugs.”

DATA

PDA: Reassurance You Can Feel

PDA is usually understood as a signal of desire. For LGBTQIA+ daters, it can also function as a powerful form of reassurance in early dating—while carrying layers of risk, pride, safety, and vulnerability.

“If you’ve ever scanned a room before reaching for someone’s hand, you already know what this feels like. That pause is usually wisdom—a nervous system that has learned, often from real experience, that not every space is safe to be fully visible,” says Hinge’s Love and Connection Expert Moe Ari Brown.

“When queer daters do feel safe, what they want is simple: closeness, a hand to hold, a grounding touch that says, ‘I see you, and I’m not going anywhere.’ For a community that has often been asked to make itself smaller in public, these gestures are everything.”

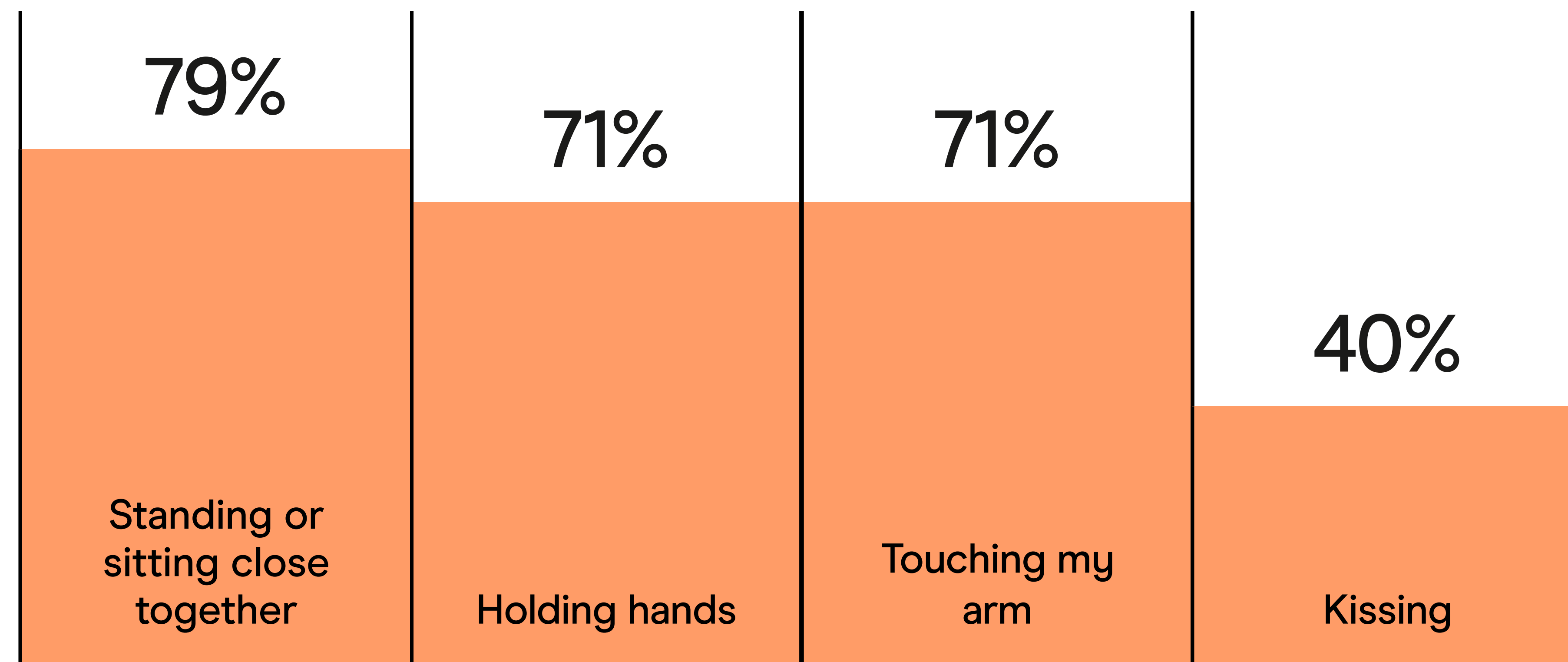
65% of LGBTQIA+ Hinge daters say PDA in an early relationship helps them feel secure.



Yet, LGBTQIA+ daters are 50% more likely than heterosexual daters to hesitate to show affection on the first date because they feel unsafe in their surroundings, and 37% more likely due to feeling vulnerable.

94% of lesbian daters chose holding hands as their preferred type of PDA, while 84% of gay men chose hugging.

Preferred PDA from someone you are newly dating for LGBTQIA+ daters:



JAMIE WINDUST, @JAMIE_WINDUST
THEY/THEM, 28, UK



“I’m a big cinema goer and recently booked a shared sofa seat on a second date. We were both nervous. A really gentle shoulder touch—just sitting closer together—felt like a really sensitive yet exciting moment. Like we were communicating our boundaries without having to speak. We were getting comfortable with each other at a pace that worked for both of us, rather than us just going 100 miles an hour.”



How to navigate PDA when comfort levels differ

MOE ARI BROWN (HE/THEY)
HINGE'S LOVE & CONNECTION EXPERT



Queer intimacy lives in nuance. You don't have to share the same comfort level to have a great date: staying present and responsive turns a potential point of tension into a moment of real connection.

Asking one another what kinds of affection feel good in public—and which feel better in private—keeps PDA grounded in reassurance.

When comfort levels don't match, try TLC:

Tender Curiosity

Stay curious, without judgment. A partner who pulls back in certain spaces may be protecting something that's been hurt before. Try, "How are you feeling in this space right now?"

Leaning Closer

When they share, listen. You don't need to fix it—just stay present. It might sound like, "Thanks for being honest. What would feel best for you right now?"

Care Through Co-Creation

Comfort with PDA isn't fixed. Build a shared language together—what feels right, where, and when. Let it evolve as trust does.

GEN Z SPOTLIGHT

Visible, Yet Vulnerable

Gen Z LGBTQIA+ daters came of age in a more accepting world than millennials did, and are less likely to hesitate showing affection in public due to safety concerns.

Yet, greater visibility brings new pressures: in a culture shaped by social media and the scrutiny that comes with it, Gen Z daters report feeling more self-conscious about PDA.

PILAR VILLACIS
@ANOTHER.RANDO2.0
SHE/HER, 26, US



“I can get really anxious in public settings sometimes. I’m also good at covering it. My ex-partner used to pick up my energy and try to make me feel better—holding my hand, reassuring me through her gaze, putting her arm around my waist, or saying, ‘I’m here.’ It was really special because no one else has been able to read me like that.”



Compared with millennial LGBTQIA+ daters, Gen Z LGBTQIA+ daters are

19%

more likely to say that they hesitate because they feel too vulnerable

19%

more likely to report that feeling self-conscious impacts their comfort showing affection

24%

less likely to show affection due to safety concerns

Dater's Question

"I want to know how to reassure someone with words. I struggle to do it without it feeling cringey or patronizing, and I don't want to say what I think they want to hear instead of what's actually helpful."



JAMIE WINDUST, @JAMIE_WINDUST
THEY/THEM, 28, UK



MOE ARI BROWN (HE/THEY), HINGE'S
LOVE AND CONNECTION EXPERT

Reassurance is about naming what's real—without pretending to have certainty you don't. Cringe often comes from trying to perform reassurance, instead of simply saying what's true.

If you're unsure where to start, notice what's already there. Are you looking forward to seeing them? Do you think about them every time you hear a certain song? Does a smell remind you of them? Saying any of this out loud is reassurance.

From there, ask them what helps them feel grounded or secure. For some, it's statements like "I like you." For others, it's small acknowledgments: "I was thinking about you."

Then share what reassures you. Maybe it's hearing their voice. Maybe it's knowing plans in advance, or an unprompted "thinking of you" text. Whatever it is, name it. You're building a shared language for what safety sounds like between the two of you—through asking, answering, and adjusting as you go.

Expert Advice

03 From PDA to PDC

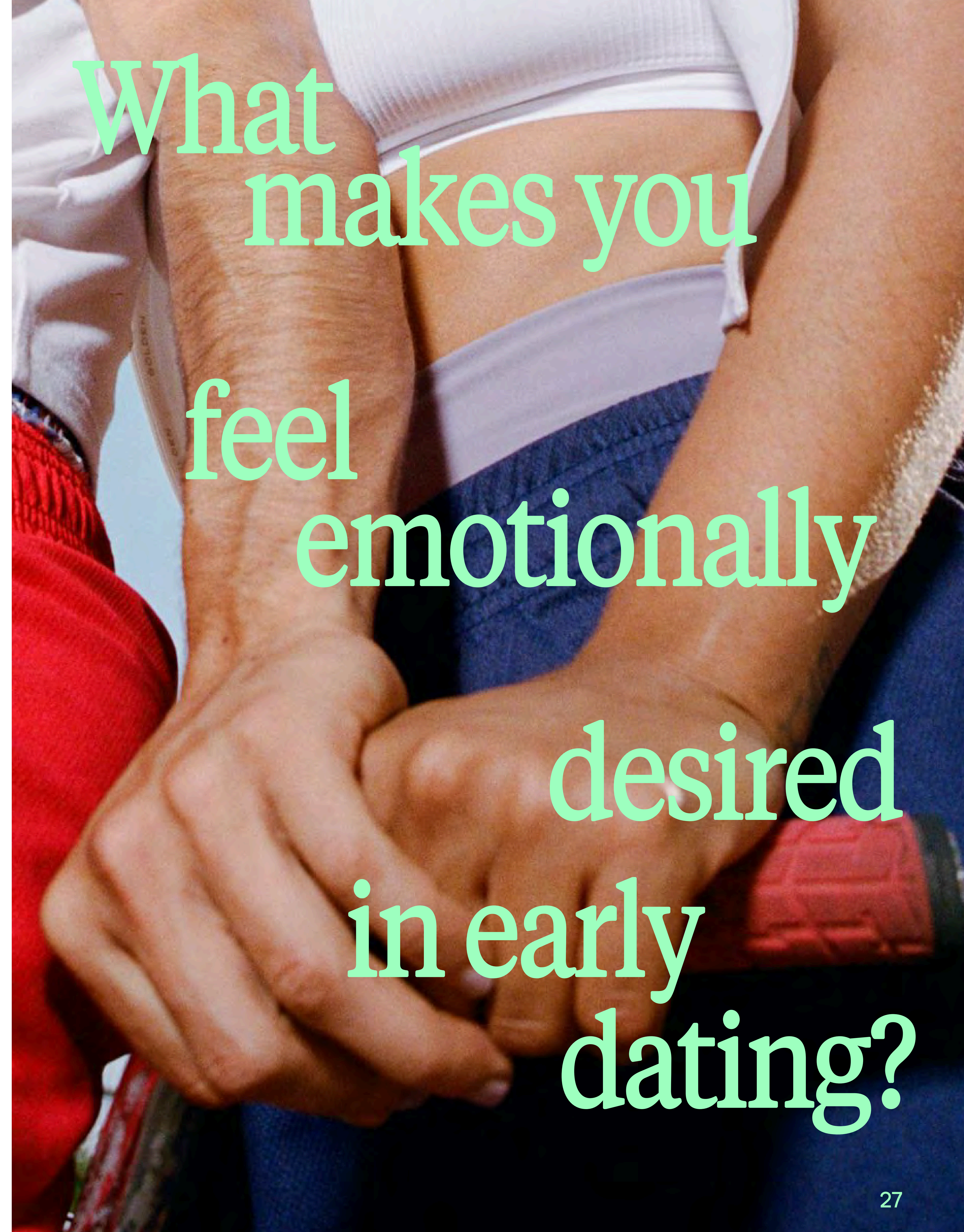
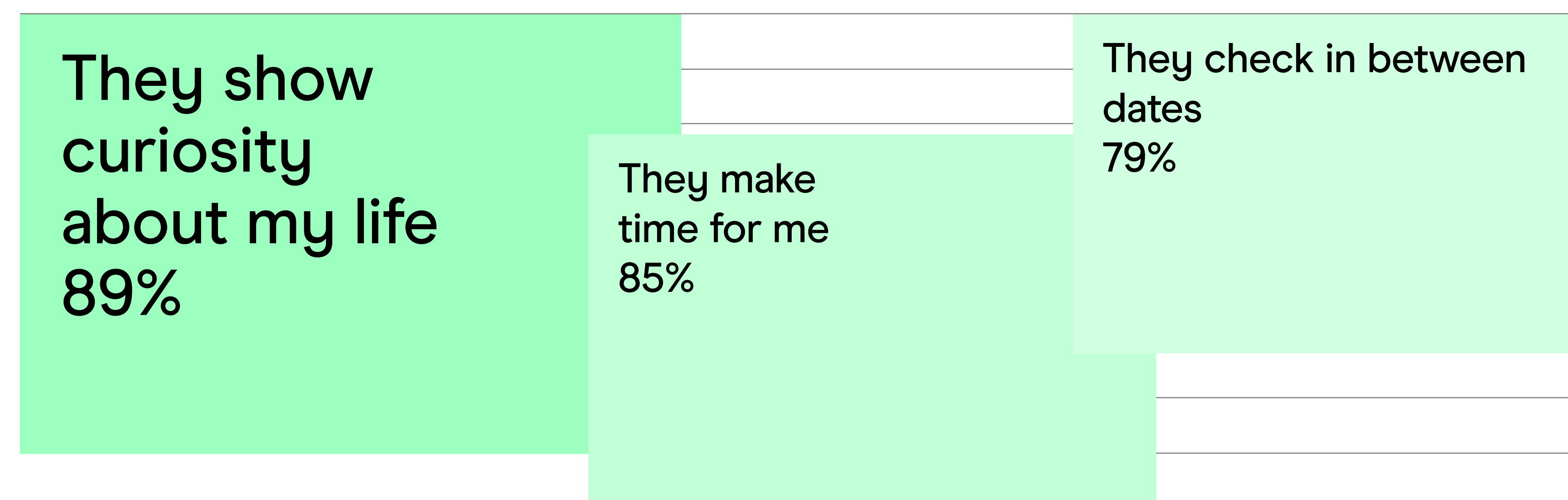


SECTION INTRODUCTION

If moments create comfort, patterns create trust. For daters seeking clarity, consistency becomes the signal: not just, “I’m interested,” but also “You can count on me to show up.”

86% of LGBTQIA+ daters say consistent communication from someone they’re starting to date makes them feel less anxious.

Factors that make daters feel emotionally desired:



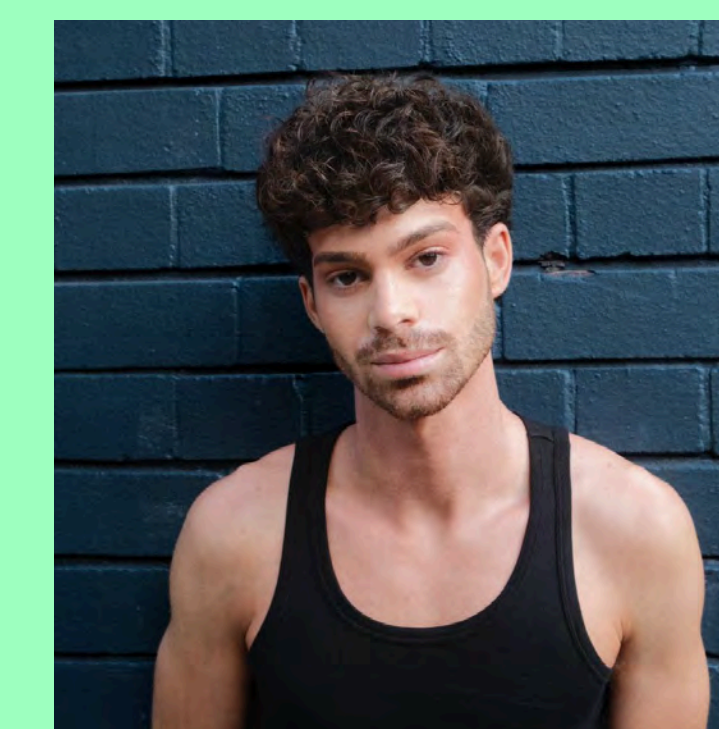
What makes you feel emotionally desired in early dating?

Private displays of consistency (PDC)



Definition:
The repeated, behind-the-scenes actions that turn interest into trust

“I find myself thinking more long term—how someone would show up during real-life moments, during grief, big life changes, or stressful situations.”



EITAN BROUDE
@EITANBROUDE
HE/HIM, 29, AUS

“Uncertainty about the world has changed how I think about dating. I find myself thinking more long term—how someone would show up during real-life moments, during grief, big life changes, or stressful situations. I’m looking for someone who feels like they could be a steady partner when life inevitably becomes complicated.”

GAY MEN SPOTLIGHT

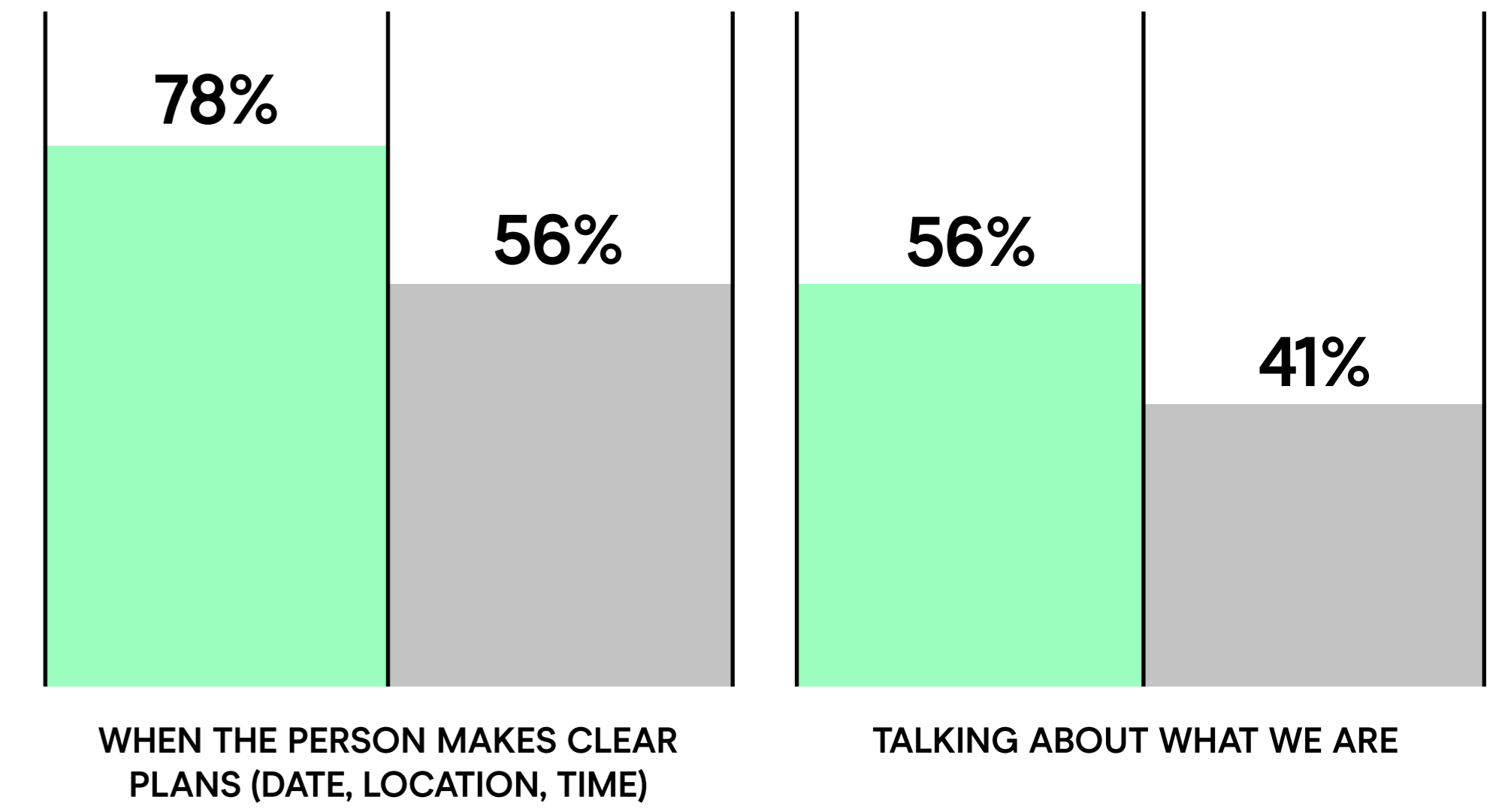


No Mixed Signals

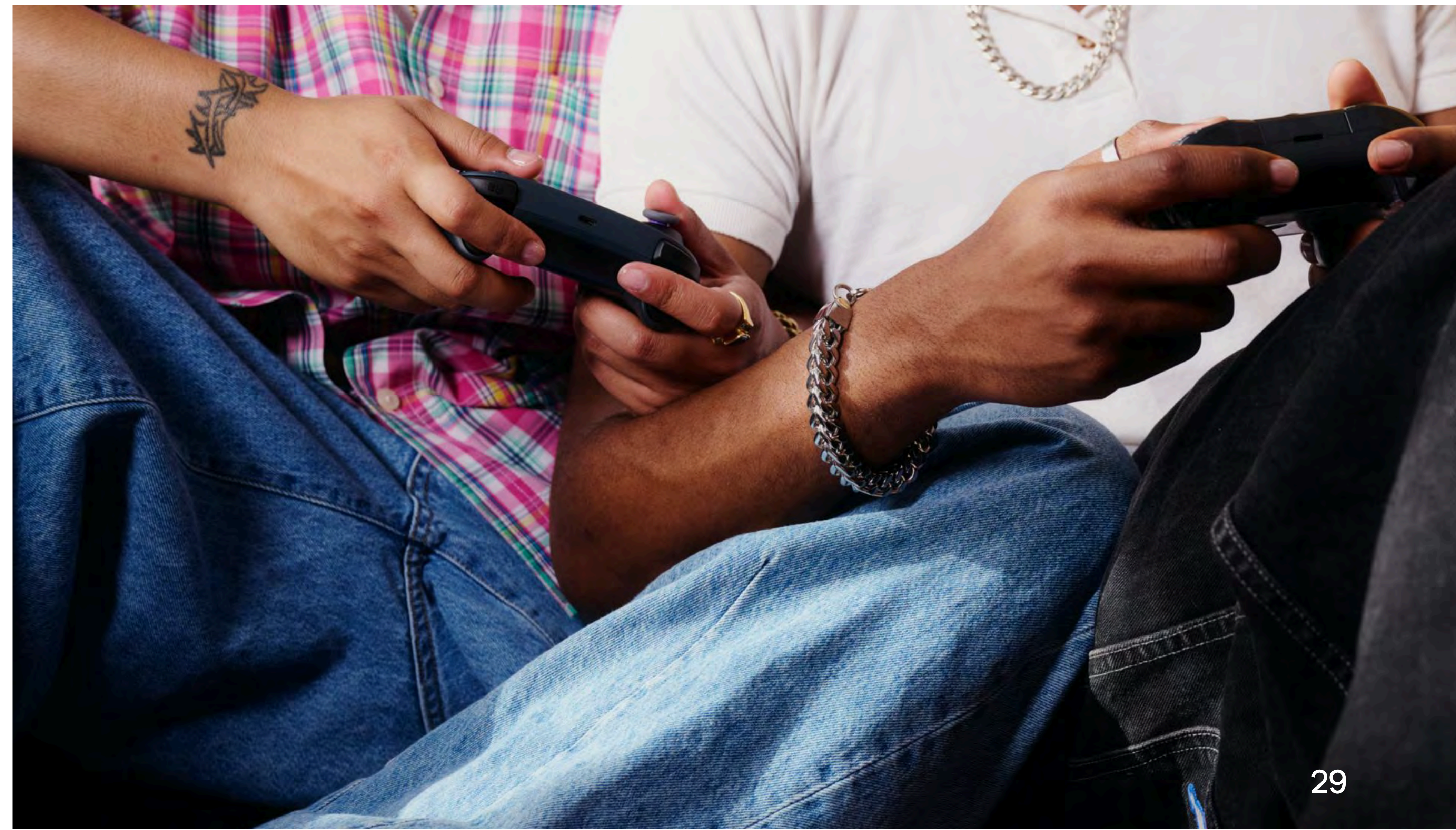
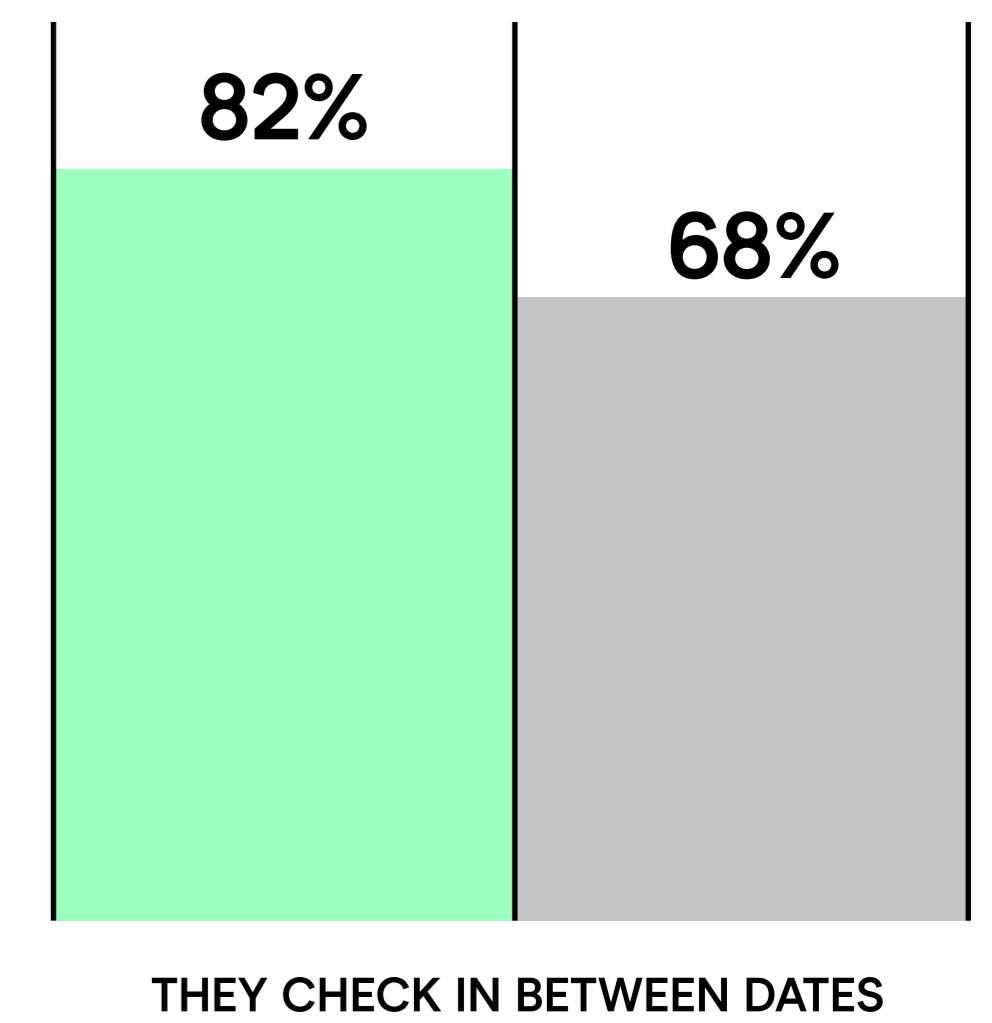
There's a version of gay dating culture that gets told as all confidence, no vulnerability. The data tells a different story. For gay men, reliability isn't a mood killer; it's the way desire is read. Potential is both the first date spark and the plans that are made and kept.

GAY HETEROSEXUAL

Which of the following actions from someone you're starting to date makes you feel less anxious?



What makes you feel emotionally desired early in dating?



DATER STORY

Tiny, Repeated Things

PDC happens when no one's watching. It lives between the dates—a text sent for no reason, a detail someone held onto, a moment that says, "You were on my mind." These aren't milestones. They're the stuff real connections are made of.



MAXINE HERON
@MAXINEHERON
SHE/HER, UK

"I love gestures that make it clear you're thinking of someone—leaving notes in places you know they'll find after you've left for work. Surprising someone with a customized WhatsApp sticker is sort of my love language."

"My partner will randomly text me "hallo" in the middle of the day to check how I'm going, and it's now become this little thing where he says "hallo" the same quirky way whenever he sees me in person."

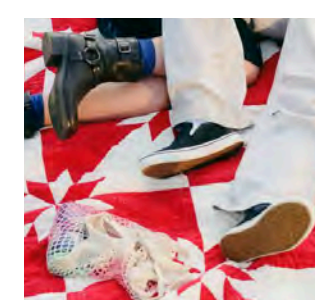
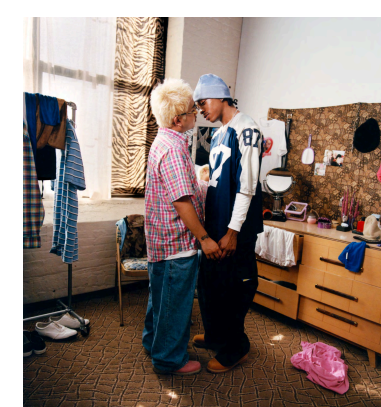
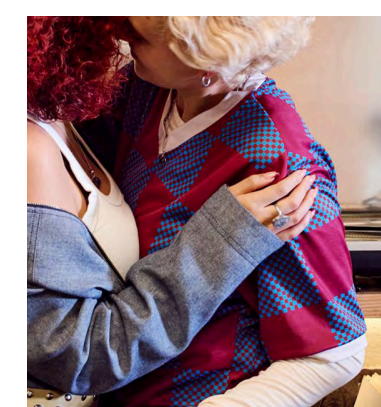
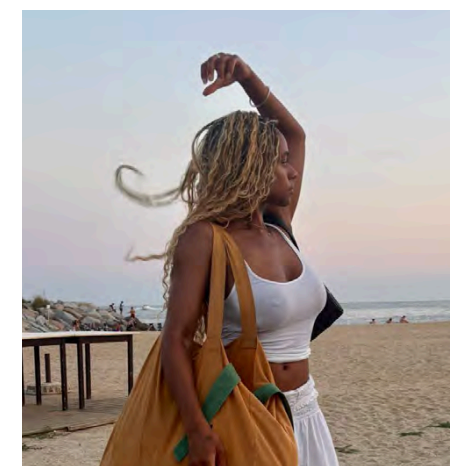
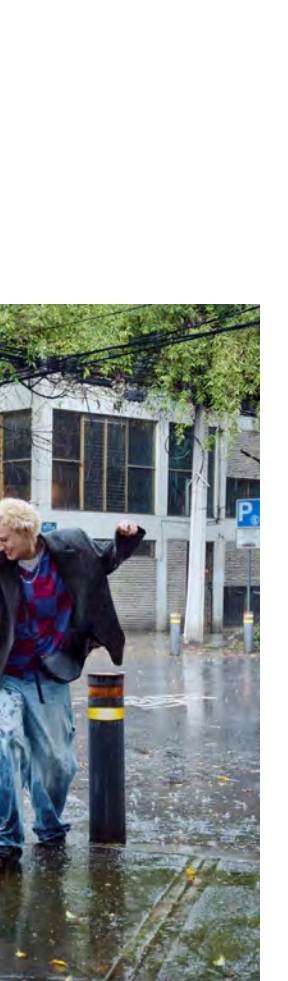
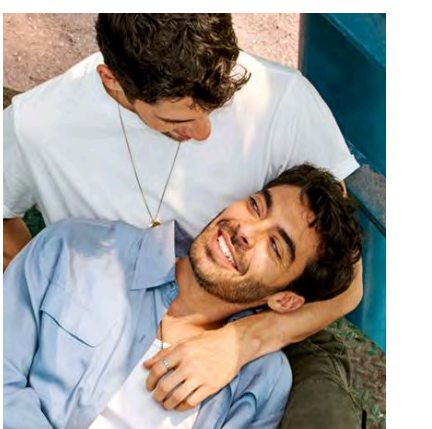
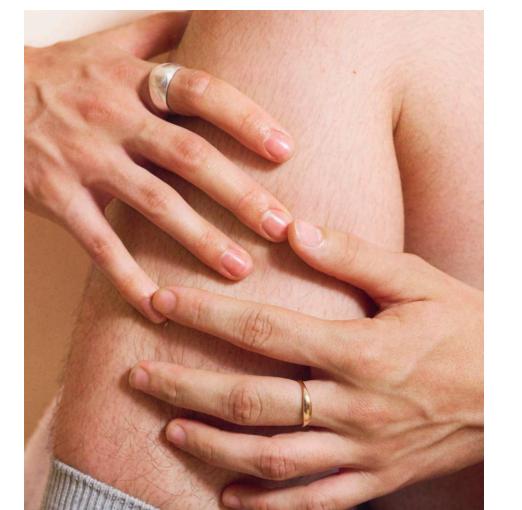


DANH DOAN
@DANHDOANMUA
HE/HIM, 26, AUS



PAFF EVRA
@THISISPAFF
SHE/HER, 32, AUS

"When they remember bits of my lore that I've only said once. Quoting me back to myself: 'It's like when you said...' Inside jokes we run into the ground that still make us laugh like kids. A shared note app with all the niche activities we want to do together—ride in a convertible, make a collage. Spending hours on playlists that express exactly how we feel about each other. Care builds in the everyday moments that become sentimental."



Life



happens:



LOGAN URY (SHE/HER)
HINGE'S LEAD
RELATIONSHIP SCIENTIST

show up



anyway

Dating happens alongside everything else in your life—work deadlines, family commitments, weeks that get away from you. You're not going to be perfectly consistent all the time. No one is.

What matters is that when you can't show up the way you want to, say so. Clarity is what builds trust. Silence destroys it.

Here's how to communicate when life gets in the way:

"I had to cancel because I genuinely didn't have time this week."

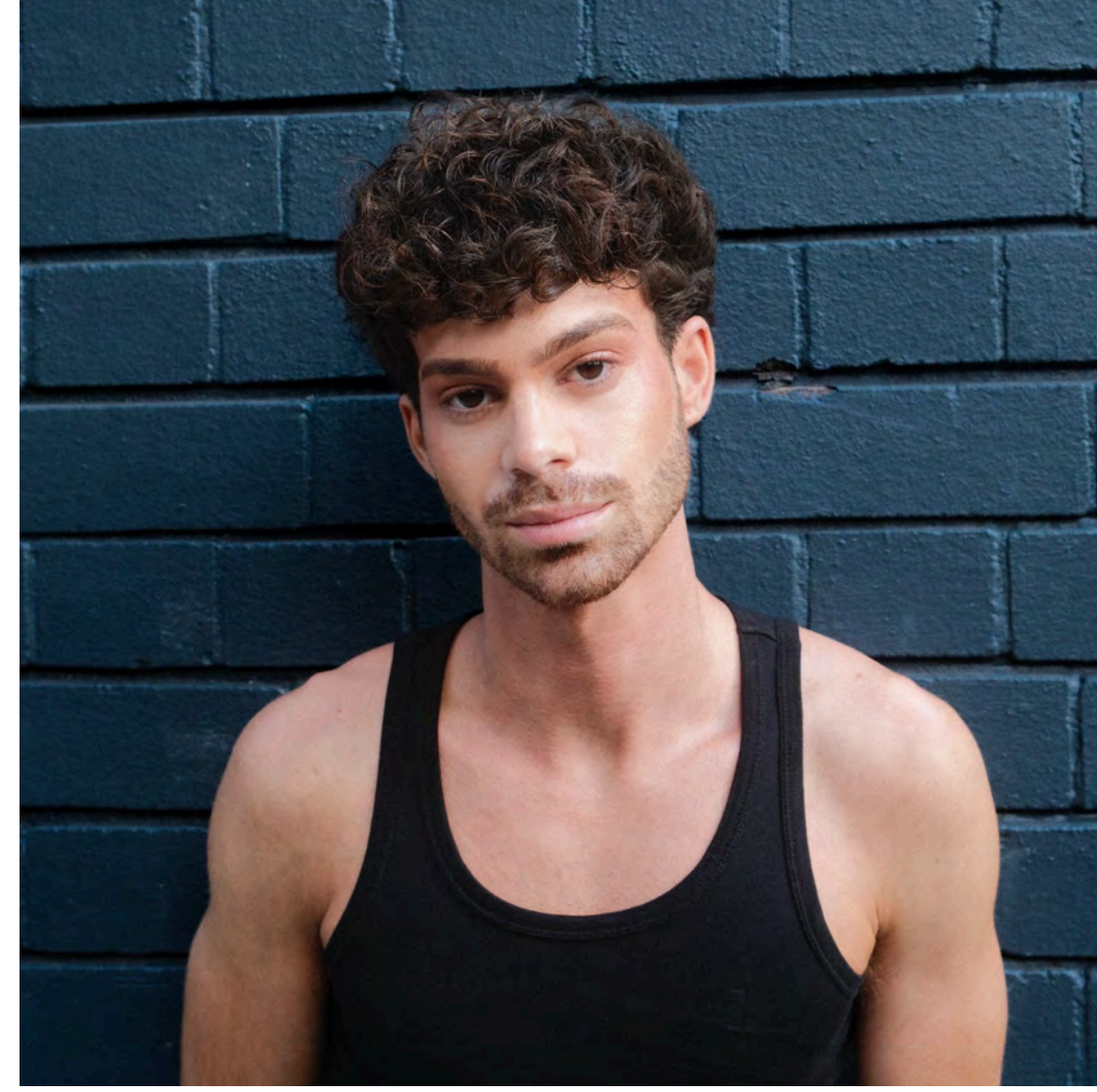
Let them know as soon as you can so they can make other plans. If you're interested in them, show it by suggesting another time: "I can't do Thursday but I'm free Sunday—are you around?" A cancellation with no alternative reads as a soft exit.

"Work got overwhelming and I disappeared for a few days."

Acknowledge it. "I'm sorry I went quiet. Work got intense this week. It's done now and I'd love to see you. Drinks tomorrow?" What matters is that it doesn't become a pattern. If you know you're about to be unavailable, say that before going dark: "I have friends visiting and I'll be in host mode this weekend. I'll check in in a few days." You don't need to be there constantly—you just need to give someone a heads up.

"I tend to go quiet when I'm stressed."

Say that on date three, not after your third disappearance. If you don't name your patterns, the other person will write their own story, and that story is usually "they're losing interest." When someone understands your silence, they don't have to guess what it means.

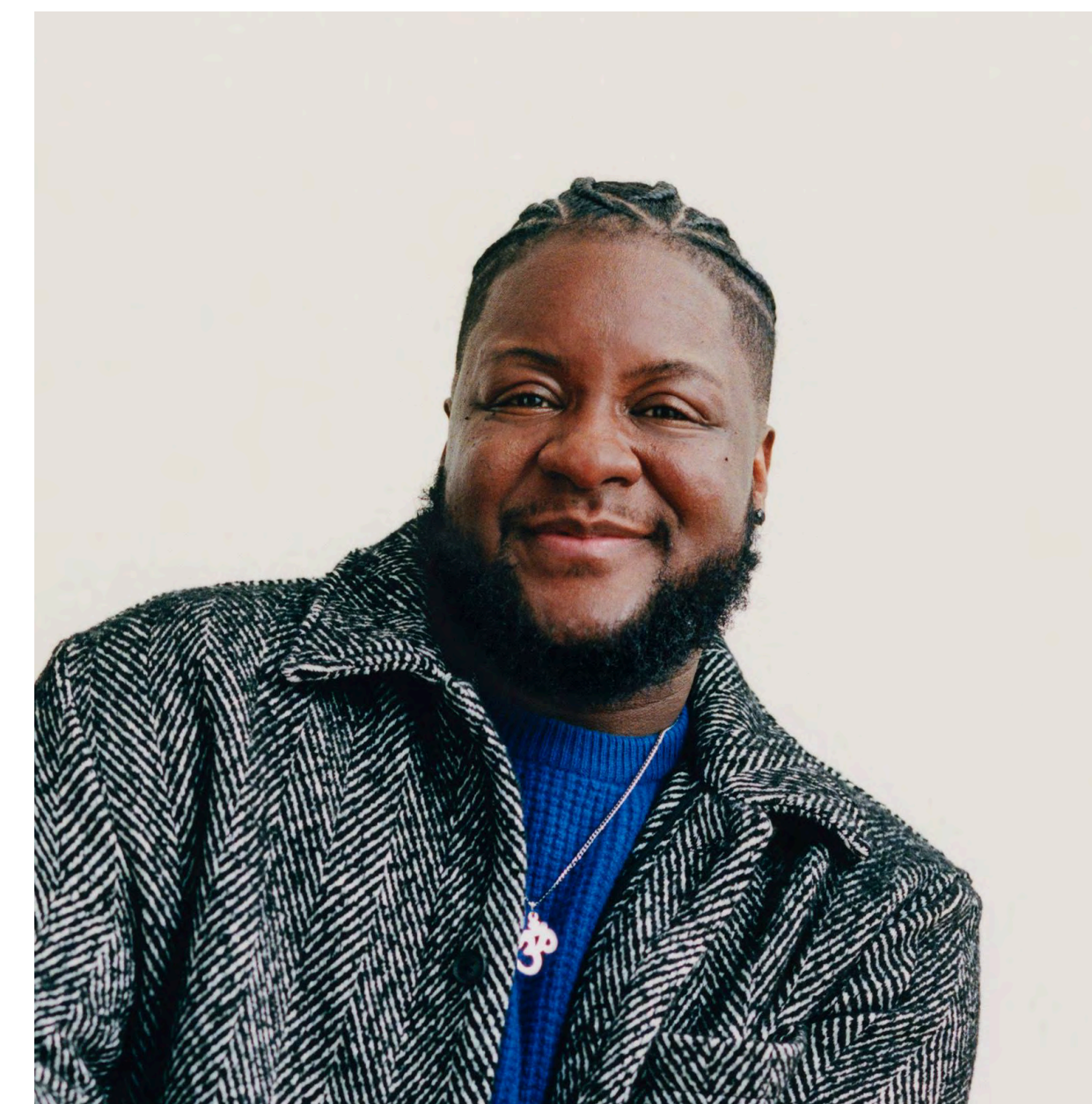


EITAN BROUDE, @EITANBROUDE
HE/HIM, 29, AUS

“How can I tell the difference between someone genuinely interested in building a relationship and someone who is simply enjoying the attention or the experience of dating? In the gay dating world, especially, it can be difficult to read someone’s intentions. I’d love advice on recognizing the signs of real emotional investment versus someone who is just passing through.”

Dater’s Question

Expert Advice



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When I read this question about genuine interest, I also hear a deeper one: how can you tell when a connection might last?

In early dating, there are no guarantees, no matter how interested someone seems. Here’s a helpful way to look at it:

The best indicator that interest will turn into investment is whether it shows up in multiple ways. Do they speak it? Do you feel it? Do you see it in their actions, hear it in their tone, or notice it in their curiosity about your intentions? When interest shows up across their whole being, it suggests integration, and that’s rarely fleeting—even if it’s not forever.

Here’s my invitation to clarity: I invite you to explore how you’re showing interest, too. Have you made your desire legible to them? Go first and tell them what you’re looking for. Their response will tell you a lot about their own desires. If they can name what they want and show up with clarity, that’s a good start.

DATA

Clarity
in the present

equals
clarity

about the

future

95%

of Hinge daters—both heterosexual and LGBTQIA+—say feeling emotionally desired makes them want to pursue something long term.

In 2026, the chemistry isn't despite the clarity, it's because of it.

Chemistry, Clarified

LGBTQIA+ daters navigate greater uncertainty in dating—the path is less defined, there's more to navigate before a hand gets held in public, and more evidence is needed before trust is given. But that uncertainty is also reshaping how connection unfolds.

The old dating lore that warns against seeming “too available” is losing relevance, as emotional visibility and steady support are read as signs of genuine desire.

At a time when much of life feels volatile, clarity in relationships takes on new urgency. Knowing where you stand with someone becomes more than romantic reassurance—it becomes the foundation.

Methodology



Hinge's D.A.T.E. Reports are produced by Hinge Labs, an internal team of PhD researchers and behavioral scientists dedicated to generating evidence-based insights into modern dating. In January 2026, the team surveyed more than 31,000 global respondents, including LGBTQIA+ and heterosexual daters. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, Hinge Labs studies what leads to successful relationships—and applies those insights to build a more effective dating app.

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POEM

...in a world of uncertainty.

BY JASMINE MANS, @POETJASMINEMANS, SHE/HER

I was wondering
if you'd like to put up a curtain with me.

I know I could've asked you out to dinner
or could've come up with a better offering.

But if the world is unraveling
Would you like to close the windows with me?

I don't know if I'm being too forward
but I'd like to invite you over for peace.

Maybe to hold hands in the doorway
however sweaty they may be.

I'm just wondering
if you have enough bravery
to be mundane with me?

Maybe bake bread with me?

And if the news refuses
to be precise with our memory
We can use our chosen names,
and just pretend to be free.

If they decide to gamble with our humanity,
would you like to stand in the kitchen with me?

In a world of uncertainty
would you mind being certain of me?

We can climb inside of our grief and find ourselves a seat
you don't have to be strong for me.



When they poke at our bodies,
and calls us enemy,

would you like to be scared with me?
...and then tomorrow we can wake up
and decide how brave we'll be.

Before we are trapped
and polluted by their big machinery
we could construction paper our wings
and fly until the night feels more disarming.

If they mock our smiles
and criticize our bodies,
tell them you built a home inside me.

...and there's a tee shirt folded on the bed,
you could lay naked in.

...and that we've been slow dancing
on floors that were expected to break
at the foundation.

and all we ever wanted

...were bodies we weren't imposters in,
in front of lovers that knew us without consequence.

So Love,
I'm not exactly sure of your capacity,
and I'm not exactly asking to sit
in your most magical of memories,

...but if on Monday, around two p.m.,
when the world is all too busy,
and you just happen to be free,
would you mind being human with me?

