



**The following paper was researched and written
as part of LSE GROUPS 2023.**

LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the LSE summer term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question, and carry out every stage of a small-scale research project in less than two weeks.

LSE GROUPS is part of the LSE commitment to students learning through enquiry, and developing the skills for knowledge creation.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2023 was *Connections*.

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.

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Papers are presented as submitted by the students, without corrections.

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THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Digital Dating: the impact of dating apps on the experiences and perceptions of social connection and relationships among LSE students

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Abstract

The growing popularity of dating applications ('apps') has fundamentally changed the notion of intimacy and relationships. However, the effect they have on users' perceptions of social connection is ambiguous. Focusing on LSE students, we use primary data from semi-structured interviews and a survey. Our survey explore potential relationships between dating apps and students' experiences of social connection. We discover moderate introverts and extroverts are more likely to use dating apps compared to extreme introverts and extroverts. Our interviews provide insights into individuals' perceptions of dating app usage, particularly how aspects of their personal identity, such as sexuality and gender influence their experiences with dating and social connection. We reveal dating apps are important to queer and neurodivergent individuals; apps have allowed users to connect to other minority groups. This article highlights the significance of these findings, as they have broader implications for improving our understanding of the social impacts of dating apps on students.

Keywords: gender, connection, dating apps, relationships, sexuality

1 Introduction

According to Marston et al. (2020), dating and relationships are an important part of a person's life, health, wellbeing, and social connectedness. With 365 million users worldwide using dating services in 2022 (Statista, 2023), the advent of technology has transformed the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Most existing literature only focus on heteronormative experiences, neglecting the effect personal factors have on experiences of dating app usage. They also generally agree that further research is necessary to examine the experiences of those who have grown up with technology, and how this impacts their sense of intimacy and relationships. To extend this research, we answer the question

How does the use of dating apps impact experiences and perceptions of social connection and relationships among LSE students?

Focusing on LSE students allows us to address other gaps in research by highlighting the specific experiences of LGBTQ and neurodivergent individuals. We use and analyse interviews and surveys to investigate characteristics like introversion, gender and sexuality. In doing so, we discover that reasons for using apps are tied to aspects of personal identity such as sexuality and gender. Furthermore, motivations extends to people wishing to seek sexual intimacy, social validation and broadening social networks.

The remainder of this paper starts with an overview of existing research into this topic, an explanation of our methodology followed by a discussion of our results.

2 Literature review

To explore this topic, we interrogate existing research of users' motivations and experiences. Entertainment and connection were the two main motivations behind people's use of Tinder (Kallis, 2020). By conducting this literature review, we focus on how dating apps impact social connection.

2.1 Motivations

Marston et al. (2020) suggests that users use dating apps for potential to reducing loneliness, sexual engagement and intimacy, as well as for finding long-term relationships. However, other research, such as (Thomas et al., 2023), highlight how many users do not use dating apps to facilitate offline encounters, but to receive social gratification and self-validation. They treat the app as a game with the goal of match accumulation. This is supported by Timmermans and Courtois (2018), who reveal more than half of users never go on in-person dates.

Users' motivations within the apps also differ depending on gender and sexuality. For example, men primarily use the app for casual sex, travel opportunities and relationships whilst women use it to make new friends and to seek personal validation (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). They discover many users, especially women, report that accumulating matches satisfies their need for social affirmation, particularly with regards to their physical appearance. They also discover that high self-esteem is linked to less deceptive and more authentic forms of self-presentation, with self-confidence having the strongest effect.

2.2 Identity formation: Queer and minority experience of dating apps

Wu and Trottier (2022) discusses why people choose to use dating apps. They highlight that apps are important to marginalised minority groups who lack other opportunities to engage with similar people.

Goldenburg (2019) highlights that online dating expands the number of potential partners, offering the benefit of bypassing social barriers which exist in the real world. This wider social network decreases isolation for sexual minorities by locating them in “both geographic and metaphysical gay and queer spaces” (2019, p. 361). Same-sex couples meet online at three times the rate as opposite-sex couples. With the vast majority of same-couples meeting online (Rosenfeld, 2012), this suggests experiences and motivations of groups with certain sexualities are different.

Goldenberg also explores the effect of technologically mediated intimacy in how dating apps reshape intimacy within the queer community. He extends these findings to other marginalise groups. The developmental process of sexual orientation identity is different for gay and queer adolescents compared to heterosexual peer; technology can have a positive effect on this. This is because dating apps provides an untraceable means for trying out different personas. Online dating has added a “layer of mediation between the self and the community or social context of the identity”, helping marginalised minorities who experience discrimination in society (Goldenburg, 2019, p.362).

2.3 Connection

Goldenburg (2019) outlines the possible link between certain apps and levels of happiness. Grindr is associated with the highest level of unhappiness. He suggests that mediating intimacy through technology may help meet sexual needs, but that people also strive to meet multiple intimacy needs. Dating apps skip necessary steps to help individuals find partners who are more likely to fulfil these needs. He argues that a truly successful connection app would need to account for more variables than is available on most apps. He highlights the conflicting goals between dating apps and their users. Whereby most dating apps have the aim of ensuring the user does not quit the app, the individual has the goal of using it to meet people in real life. The app ‘Hinge’ acknowledges this and incorporates it into its branding. It markets itself as ‘The dating app designed to be deleted’, highlighting that a dating app that fulfils the user’s desire to find a long-term monogamous relationship may not be an effective business model.

3 Methodology

We employ a mixed-methods approach of interviews and surveys. The interviews provide us with a holistic detailed understanding of participants’ perspectives on our research topic (Hafsa, 2019). However, due to time constraints,

could not conduct a sufficient number of interviews, thus necessitating survey data to allow us to sample a larger number of responses.

3.1 Ethics

Introducing the survey and interview to participants, we provided them with a consent form, shown in the appendix, that assured them of the anonymity of their responses. Potential interviewees were required to explicitly consent to the interview, whilst there was a question on the survey asking if they were willing to participate.

The consent form, ethics form interview and survey questions are in the appendix.

3.2 Interview

We conducted three, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews to maintain the interviewees' privacy. They consisted of: a non-binary person (age 32), a heterosexual female (age 18), and a queer autistic female (age 19). To gather the participants, self-selecting and convenience sampling methods were used. A limitation of our sample is that extroverts are more likely to volunteer for interviews. However, it is ethically important that participants volunteered as the research topic and questions were very private.

3.3 Survey

We conducted a voluntary survey using Qualtrics and received 46 responses. The survey was distributed through group chats, emails, and various departments to ensure a diverse participant pool. We collected data on gender, age, household income, and familial relationships for regression analysis and for control purposes. Additionally, we inquired about students' experiences, opinions and motivations related to dating apps. Questions were answered with a Likert scale, with 'Strongly Agree' coded as 5 and 'Strongly Disagree' coded as 1 to aid analysis. All questions concerning dating apps were taken or adapted from the Pew Research Center (2019) trends panel topline questionnaire to standardise procedures and ensure internal validity. Using six questions adapted from Goldberg's (1992) markers for the Big Five personality traits, we assessed the level of introversion or extroversion for each participant. An introversion/extroversion score was calculated for use in our analysis; the higher the score the more extroverted one is.

Given the limited time to conduct our research, we only obtained 46 responses to our survey. Our sample size does not adequately represent our target population. This limits the extent of our analysis as we are unable to draw causal inference from our findings, as well as reducing the validity of our study. In addition, females made up a large proportion of our sample (65%), further limiting the ability to make gender-based comparisons in our sample and in the broader population. Finally, due to concerns about the length of our survey, only six questions were asked regarding one's extroversion. This raises the risk that we did not accurately measure levels of extroversion or introversion.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Analysing the survey

A brief overview of the ordinal logistic regression model is given in Appendix E.

We run the model

$$\text{logitP}(\text{frequency_apps} \leq j) = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 \text{gender}_i + \beta_2 \text{sexuality}_i + \beta_3 \text{age}_i + \beta_4 \text{curiosity}_i + \beta_5 \text{broaden_social_connection}_i + \beta_6 \text{hookup}_i$$

where

- $\text{logitP}(\text{frequency_apps} \leq j)$ is the log-odds of the frequency of using a dating app being equal to or below a level j .
- curiosity_i measures the extent to which people agreed with the statement ‘I use dating apps out of curiosity’ in the survey.
- $\text{broaden_social_connection}_i$ measures the extent to which people agreed with the statement ‘I use dating apps to broaden my social networks’.
- hookup_i measures the extent to which people agreed with the statement ‘I use dating apps for casual sex/hookups’.
- gender_i , sexuality_i and age_i are controls.

We then conduct a two-tailed hypothesis test with

H_0 : The frequency of LSE students using dating apps does not differ by gender, sexuality, age, personality type and other reasons for using dating apps

H_1 : The frequency of LSE students using dating apps differs by gender, sexuality, age, and personality type and other reasons for using dating apps

3.4.2 Analysing the interviews

Once all interviews are conducted, we use thematic analysis to code and analyse them to identify patterns amongst our participants’ responses (Soiferman, 2010). We categorise our findings into three key themes: the users’ intentions, self-representation and expansion of social networks.

4 Results and discussions

4.1 Qualitative analysis

4.1.1 User’s intentions

We discover that users know the differences between hookup apps and relationship apps based on their designs. For example, selection is more appearance based on Tinder, meaning it is perceived as being more for ‘hook-ups’. On Hinge, one’s profile conveys their personality more effectively, which is more conducive to relationship-style dating.

“Grindr, which is its own thing. That one’s more like you know, a queer gay app for finding sex and it’s a bit faster I guess... The other ones, you know Tinder, Hinge, Field are more match based... It makes it a bit more serious, for dating, doesn’t mean you can’t date people on Grindr but it is framed differently.”

Moreover, people's intentions are more clearly defined on dating apps compared to real life. This is because the apps allow users to clearly state their goals on their profile. Thus, individuals do not need to decipher social cues to determine mutual interest and relationship goals. This makes it clear for everyone, but is especially helpful for neurodivergent people who may have difficulty in perceiving social cues.

“Being autistic, it's really difficult for me to be able to perceive what someone's like, do I approach them or do they approach me? And I'd say having the intentions known is quite simple through a dating app”

4.1.2 Self-representation

The ways in which dating apps allow users to describe themselves make it easier for people to disclose factors such as neurodivergence, disability, and gender identity. This reduces discomfort around how such things should be disclosed, and removes the possibility of face-to-face rejection as those who are uninterested can choose not to match.

“I think just in terms of individuals who have hidden disabilities and that kind of stuff, perhaps if they feel that it's easier disclosing it on a dating app where they are then able to get it out the way”.

All interviewees described their self-presentation within the apps, navigating between an idealised version of themselves and a realistic portrayal. Important themes included fatphobia, xenophobia, racism and body terrorism. This people's confidence to meet in person and explains how online profiles can be used for identity formation.

“... a big concern that I had when it came to actually meeting my boyfriend was do I look prettier in the photos I'm presenting because obviously I want to look my best when on a dating app to present that but also have I been too flattering to myself?”

4.1.3 Expanding social networks

We find an important function of dating apps in facilitating social connection is to expand social networks. This enables marginalised groups to access communities beyond their real-life social circles. For example, dating apps offer a way to locate metaphysical communities of other queer, neurodivergent or minority ethnic groups. Socio-cultural and legal changes in attitudes towards LGBTQ visibility have changed the way queer people approach dating.

One interviewee describes how, in the 80s and 90s, gay people had to try to hide their sexuality. People had to date in a discreet fashion, with signs (such as “the look”) within communities which conveyed queerness. In the modern day, people can state their sexuality more directly. the option to declare your sexuality on dating app profiles enables explicit communication of this factor which previously had to be conveyed implicitly.

“I also think it's helped in terms of minority groups to find people – me myself I'm queer and neurodivergent so it's also helped me to find people like that without having to go through the barriers – like being scared of stigma”

“...especially in the queer communities, dating apps are like a structural pillar at this point as it's a very easy way to meet people like you... At the end of the day, it's one of the most accessible, convenient and easy ways to meet queer people.”

However, as people are able to connect to users outside of their own social circles, some may feel more comfortable to engage in anonymous, inappropriate antisocial behaviour. For example, an interviewee explained that sexualisation,

ghosting and negatively commenting on physical appearance was often encountered online. The anonymity that dating apps provide means there is a lack of accountability users' behaviours.

'My pictures were sexualised. I think it's the anonymity of it, men are gonna be more comfortable doing that online compared to catcalling in the street. It allows them to feel safer and to be more vulgar.'

In summary, our three themes broadly cover our findings that our participants' experiences, perceptions and motivations of using dating apps are greatly informed by their personal characteristics, such as their gender and sexuality.

4.2 Quantitative analysis

A table showing the regression results is shown below.

VARIABLES	(1) frequency
Dating_app = 3, used before	16.61 (2,057)
Dating_app = 7, never	1.998** (0.903)
gender = 2, female	2.364* (1.243)
gender = 3, non-binary	3.343* (1.888)
sexuality = 2, homosexual	1.124 (1.485)
sexuality = 3, bisexual	-0.410 (0.993)
sexuality = 4, queer	-1.725 (1.287)
sexuality = 5, prefer not to say	0.162 (2,909)
age	0.0144 (0.112)
curiosity	-0.481 (0.419)
broaden_social_connections	-0.499* (0.290)
hookup	0.153 (0.285)
/cut1	-1.090 (3.287)
/cut2	-0.235 (3.309)
/cut3	-0.0822 (3.309)
/cut4	0.597 (3.311)
/cut5	1.383 (3.296)
Observations	35
Standard errors in parentheses	
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

Figure 1: OLR regression results

The table shows that, at the 5% level, most coefficients are insignificant. We hence fail to reject H_0 at the 5% level, suggesting there is insufficient evidence to conclude the regressors have some effect on the log-odds of having a frequency that is equal to or below j .

We also conduct a robustness check by including an extra regressor *introversion/extroversion*, measuring how extroverted one is, in the regression and discover our coefficients remain insignificant at the 5% level. This supports

the structural validity of this analysis. The table is shown in appendix F.

We also discover that, for our participants,

- 65% identify as female, 25% males and 10% as other.
- 61% report that they have used or are currently using dating apps.

As shown in the graph below, participants who agreed they never use dating apps exhibit a wider range of extroversion scores

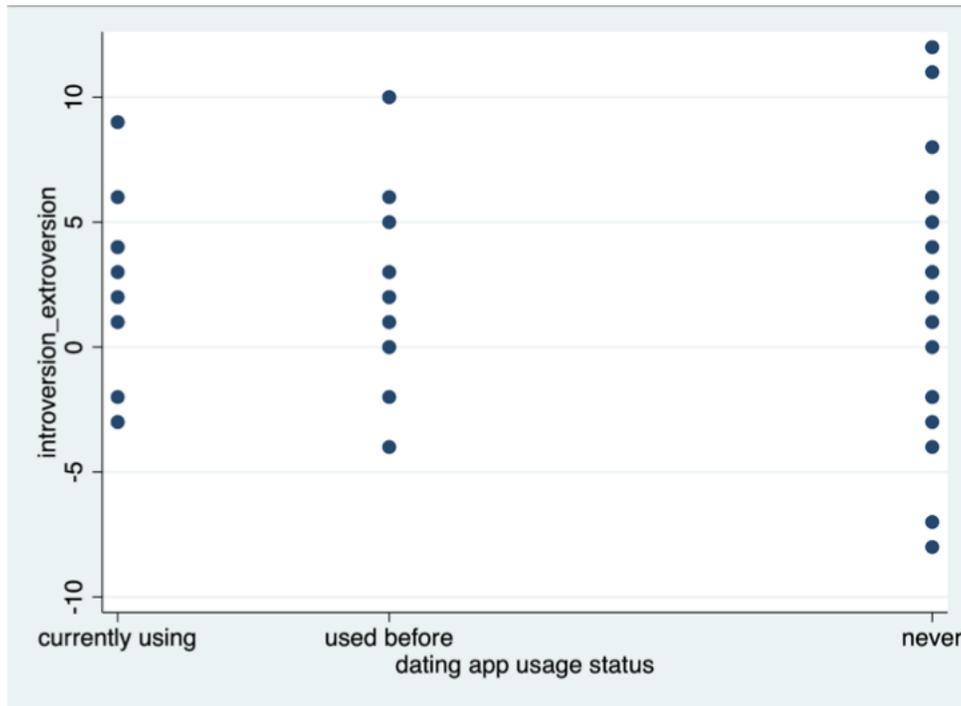


Figure 2: Relationship between the level of introversion and dating app usage

In contrast, we see those who have at least previously used dating apps report a less dispersed extroversion score. This suggests users who are not on the extremes are more likely to use dating apps. This is supported by our qualitative analysis; all interviewees were not extremely introverted nor extremely extroverted.

“It’s difficult to say either or, I’d say probably depends what situation I’m in - I’d say more introverted but in social settings if I have to be extroverted then I’ll put on that sort of facade.”

“I would consider myself an extrovert when I’m ready to meet someone. If I agreed on meeting someone I would be an extrovert when I go see them.”

This vindicates the use of a mixed-methods approach; our qualitative analysis supports our quantitative analysis.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, the broader implications of our findings are significant in that we have highlighted personal characteristics such as introversion and extroversion, gender and sexuality to be the most important factors in determining students' experiences and perceptions of connections when using dating apps. Regarding introversion and extroversion, a key finding is that users of dating apps typically displayed characteristics occupying the middle ground of introversion and extroversion, rather than being at the extremes. This finding is also supported by our interview accounts. With regards to sexual and gender identity, major findings from our interviews revealed that dating apps facilitate social connection, enabling people to find romantic partners and friends, build social networks, and are used to explore one's identity and sexuality which is of crucial importance especially for members of minority groups (e.g queer community, neurodivergent people). We suggest these strengths of dating apps to be important in that they have the potential to encourage social connection and identity formation. However, we have also highlighted the weaknesses of our study as we have raised concerns for our sampling biases, sample size, and methodological constraints. These issues limit the validity of our research. Overall, for further research, we recommend that investigating personal characteristics such as introversion and extroversion, as well as gender and sexuality are extremely relevant for future research on dating apps and social connection.

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A Ethics form

Below are screenshots of the ethics form sent to the LSE Research Ethics Committee

LSE GROUPS
Condensed ethics review form

You need to complete this form as a group and share it with your supervisor.
They'll send it on to the GROUPS coordinator, we'll discuss it together and approve it, or ask you for more information.

You need to do this **before you start recruiting any live participants for your work, and/or you start work with any pre-existing data** (e.g. online content, media, datasets).

For any of these answers, you can cut and paste material from the Research Ethics Overview. We want to know you've read it and understood it – but you don't need to put it into a new, original wording.

Do add in anything else that your group have identified, either additional risks or other solutions. We've described the essentials - they're not the only problems, or the only precautions you can take!

Group number:

3

Supervisor:

Magda Muter

What's your research question?

How does the use of dating apps impact LSE students' sense of connection and relationships?

How are you planning to research this? (e.g. what methods are you using, what resources)

For more qualitative data, we will interview LSE students about their experiences with using dating apps. For more quantitative data (i.e. questions that can be answered using a scale of 1 to 5), we will use a survey. We will use a program like STATA to help us analyse the data.

Have you – as a group - read the [overview of research ethics for LSE GROUPS](#)?

Yes

Did you understand the promises that the GROUPS organisers made to the research ethics committee, on behalf of all projects?

Yes

Have you asked your supervisor about anything that didn't make sense?

N/A - everything made sense.

Which of these promises specifically apply to the research method(s) you've chosen to use?

We won't recruit under-16s or vulnerable people. We won't ask participants about sensitive topics. We won't lie to participants. We'll use the consent sheet to ask for consent for participants to be interviewed as well as providing information about our research. We will ask for permission to use secondary data and make any surveys optional. Participants will be told participation is optional. Names will be anonymised. Data will be stored in safe locations e.g., Microsoft Teams. In the event something goes badly, we will seek guidance from our supervisor. Our research process will not cause harm to any participants.

If you're working with live participants, what might go wrong with your research method, for participants? How can you minimise the chance of that? (Think of recruitment; during data gathering; storing data)

An under-16 may decide to fill in the survey/be interviewed; to deal with this, we will ask participants to confirm their age. They may feel awkward about the questions we ask; we will offer the chance for them to not answer questions/withdraw from the study. Interviews may take too long; to minimise this, we will aim to not make interviews too long.

If you're working with preexisting data, what ethical responsibilities do you have?

N/A – we will not be working with secondary data.

What might go wrong for you, as researchers? How can you minimise the chance of that?

A participant may request to have their interview/survey answers to be withdrawn. We will comply with requests to withdraw data.

Could your sharing your findings have negative impacts? Think about: for your participants, or wherever you obtained the data; for yourselves as researchers; for LSE.

No; the sharing of our findings will not cause physical or mental distress to anyone involved in our research process.

B Consent forms

Below is a screenshot of the consent form used in the interviews.

LSE GROUPS Consent and information sheet

Dear _____
Thanks for your interest in this project. In this email, I give you information about the project and ask for your consent to participate. If you agree, please reply to this email, stating your name and that you agree to the statements in the table below to give your consent.

What is the study about?

Our study is interested in people's experiences and opinions of dating apps.

What will my involvement be?

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in a one-on-one interview answering questions around your dating experiences and opinions of dating apps.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. There are no negative consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part but then later on you change your mind, you can let me know by [10/06] - you will not have to give any explanation why. It is also absolutely fine if you feel that you don't want to answer any specific questions – you can just tell me, and we will move on.

What will my information be used for?

This research project is a part of the end-of-GROUPS conference, thus we will be presenting information collected by the interviews, and our research paper may also be hosted on the LSE website; moreover, there is a possibility that we present the work at other UK conferences, in a blog post etc.

Will my information be anonymous?

In all aspects of our research project, your participation will be anonymous - your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

If you agree to take part in the research, please complete the section below

Your name: (type first name and surname here)

Please read these three statements. If you agree with the statement, put X in the box next to it.

I have read this message and had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I agree to participate in the interview	
I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and that my personal information will be kept securely and destroyed at the end of the study	

Once completed, please email this back to me. Thank you!

Researcher name: Email address:

If you have any questions about the study, please email j.squibb@lse.ac.uk
If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please email eden.groups@lse.ac.uk [The LSE Research Privacy Policy](#).

C Interview questions and transcripts

Below is a screenshot of an excerpt of an interview and the interview questions. Note that there was slight variation in the questions asked depending on the answers given.

We are doing a study on dating apps experiences, have you ever used a dating app?

Yes

Which one?

Two, Hinge and Tinder

Why did you choose those specific apps?

Tinder because I already knew about it, it's like the go-to dating app. You hear about it everywhere. Hinge because I was referred to it by a friend who had had a good experience with Hinge.

How would you describe your intentions when you're talking to people on each dating app?

I am a singer, so I actually was trying to promote my instagram and songs, so at first I got the dating app to promote myself and my music as I am an artist, however through actual using it and meeting these people in person my intentions became more genuine because they're like actual people then I started to connect with other people on the app within the music industry. But also at the same time I was picky with who I would choose based on my intentions on why I would meet them. Like it would be to benefit me in some sort of way.

And you mentioned your music, does that mean you only looked at people involved in music?

Yeah, anyone with connections to the music industry.

Could you describe your experience of using dating apps more generally?

From my experience, I think I was very careful with who I have met. I've only met two people. And they were good experiences. They've brought a new perspective for me. But I had to go through a lot of people to get to that.

Can you describe a positive experience of using a dating app?

One positive experience is I was invited to a club membership holiday, it's called Soho house, and you need a membership to be part of it. Because my date had a Soho club membership, I got to go to Soho farmhouse, which is super exclusive. It's where Meghan Markle had her baby shower, that was cool and something I would never expect to get out of real life dating. Obviously I was intrigued when I got the invite, and so I went. It was a really cool experience. For people like me to be able to go was cool.

Official Interview Guide :

1. We're doing a study on dating app experiences... Have you ever used a dating app?
 - a. Which one?
 - b. Why did you choose that specific dating app?
 - c. How would you describe your intentions when talking to people on dating apps?
2. Would you like to describe your experience of using dating apps?
3. Can you describe a positive experience of using a dating app?
4. Can you describe a negative experience of using a dating app?
5. Have you been on an in-person date with someone you met through a dating app?
6. What was it like to date the person in the app versus in real life?
7. From your own experience, do you think
 - a. ... **connecting to people** through dating apps or real life is easier?
 - b. ... finding people with **similar relationship goals** through dating apps or real life is easier?
 - c. ... **getting to know a person** through dating apps or real life is easier?
 - d. ... **emotional and personal intimacy** is easier to find when dating online or in real life?
 - e. ... **safer** meeting people using dating apps or dating in real life?
8. Do you prefer to date using dating apps or dating in real life?
9. Would you consider yourself an extrovert or introvert?
 - a. Do you think that this has shaped your opinions and experiences of dating apps?
10. Do you feel that your gender and/ or sexual identity has shaped your experiences with dating apps? How so?
11. Would you want, or have you had a relationship with someone you met through a dating app?
12. Overall, how do you think dating apps have shaped dating and relationships in general society?
13. Any final words...

D Survey questions

Below are screenshots of the survey used in our project.

Only participants who answered question 8 with ‘Yes, I am currently using dating app(s)’ or ‘Yes, in the past. But I am not currently using dating app(s)’ were asked question 10.

Only participants who answered Q10 with ‘Yes’ were asked question 11.

Q1

We are doing a study on people's experiences and attitudes towards dating apps.
This study involves a questionnaire and your participation is voluntary. If for any reason you are uncomfortable or no longer wish to participate during or after the questionnaire, you may withdraw from the study and none of your data will be used. All responses and information will be anonymous and your name and information will not be included in any research findings.
This survey will take approximately 5 minutes.
If you have any questions about this questionnaire or study, please feel free to contact us: h.quantrill@lse.ac.uk

If you are 18 years old or above, understand the above and freely consent to the study, please select the 'Yes' option below.

Yes
 No

Q2

Which of the following gender identities best describes you?

Male
 Female
 Non-binary / third gender
 Prefer not to say

Q3

Which of the following best describes your sexuality?

Heterosexual
 Homosexual
 Bisexual
 Queer
 Prefer not to say

Q4

How old are you? (In years)

Q5

Roughly, what is your family's annual income in pounds (£)?

Below £20,000/year
 Between £20,000-£40,000/year
 Between £40,000-£60,000/year
 Between £60,000-£80,000/year
 Between £80,000-£100,000/year
 Above £100,000/year
 Prefer not to say

Q6

What is the main course that you study at university?

- General Course
- Accounting and Finance
- Anthropology
- Economics
- Economic History
- Finance
- Environment and Sustainable Development
- Geography
- Politics
- Data Science
- International Relations
- Philosophy
- History
- Languages
- Law
- Management
- Psychological and Behavioural Science
- Social and Public Policy
- Sociology
- Actuarial Science
- Mathematics
- Other

Q7



How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	N/A
I have positive relations with my parent(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parent(s) empathise with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend quality time with my parent(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parent(s) would help me if I had a problem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I value my parent(s) opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8

Have you ever used a dating app?

- Yes, I am currently using dating app(s)
- Yes, in the past. But I am not currently using dating app(s)
- No, I have never used dating apps

Q9



How strongly do the following options represent the reasons why you do not use dating apps?

	Not at all representative	Slightly representative	Very representative	I did not consider this	N/A
I am in a committed relationship already	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People are scammers / misrepresent themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of personal or emotional interaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Just not a good way to meet people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They focus on sex/hookups, not meaningful relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People have too many options of people to date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Safety concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasises physical traits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilitates cheating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People are impolite / ghosting / sexual harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10

Have you ever gone on a date with someone you first met through dating apps?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever been in a committed relationship with someone you first met through a dating app?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q12



How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
My personal experiences with dating apps have been positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The effect of dating apps on society has been positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating apps have made it easier to find a long-term partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating apps make me feel optimistic about romantic relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating apps are a safer way of meeting people than in real life, in terms of physical harm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating app algorithms can predict love	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating apps are only good for hookups, not long-term romantic relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dating through dating apps is easier than dating in real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding people with similar relationship goals through dating apps is easier than in real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easier to form an emotional bond with someone who you met through a dating app than someone you met in real life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13

How frequently do you use / have you used dating apps?

- Every day
- Multiple times a week
- Once or twice a week
- Less than every week
- Monthly
- Tried it once
-  Not applicable

Q14



To what extent do you agree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	 N/A
I use dating apps for casual sex/ hookups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps to pursue romantic relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps for fun / to pass time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps for validation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps to broaden my social networks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps out of curiosity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use dating apps to find other members of my community (e.g queer / ethnic community)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15



How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel comfortable around people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't talk a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk to a lot of different people at parties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't have much to say	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I keep in the background	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I start conversations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16



How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My current social connections (e.g with friends and family members) in real life are strong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17

Have you got any additional comments or information you would like to mention?

Q18



Thank you for your participation! This survey has aimed to investigate the connections which users and non-users feel between themselves and dating apps, and themselves and other users. As aforementioned, all responses and information will be anonymous and your name and information will not be included in any research findings. If you have used or are using a dating app and would be willing to participate in further research through a follow-up interview, please leave your email address below so that it can be organised and scheduled. *This is not compulsory.*

E Ordinal Logistic Regression

To analyse our data, we use ordinal logistic regression (OLR). According to McCullagh (1980), OLR is used when we aim to analyse the impact of explanatory variables on the likelihood of achieving specific outcomes for an ordinal dependent variable. Ordinal variables are discrete variables whose categories can be ranked, but where the specific differences between each category may be unknown.

Generally speaking, an OLR model is given by

$$\text{logit}[\text{P}(Y \leq j)] = \alpha_j + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i x_i, \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, J - 1$$

where

- Y is the ordinal variable and j is a specific realisation of Y . There are J categories that are ordered.
- x_i is an independent variable
- $\text{logit}[\text{P}(Y \leq j)] = \log\left(\frac{\text{P}(Y \leq j)}{1 - \text{P}(Y \leq j)}\right) = \log\left(\frac{\text{P}(Y \leq j)}{\text{P}(Y > j)}\right)$. This is the log of the odds that Y is less than or equal to j .
- β_i measures the change in the logit of being in or below category j if x_i increases by one unit. Y will be $\exp(\beta_i)$ more likely to be in or below j .
- α_j measures $\text{logit}[\text{P}(Y \leq j)]$ if all regressors equal zero. There are $J - 1$ such terms.

To obtain $\text{P}(Y = j)$, we can rearrange $\text{logit}[\text{P}(Y \leq j)]$. Therefore,

$$\text{P}(Y = j) = \text{P}(Y \leq j) - \text{P}(Y \leq j - 1)$$

McCullagh also states the proportional odds assumption must hold: the effect of changing the independent variables on the log-odds must be the same regardless of j . This will ensure we have one value for α_i . Furthermore, the regressors must not have a perfect pairwise correlation. This is the case for our model.

F Robustness check

VARIABLES	(1) frequency
BFI	-0.0588 (0.0748)
gender = 2, female	2.342* (1.210)
gender = 3, non-binary	1.470 (1.611)
sexuality = 2, homosexual	1.206 (1.330)
sexuality = 3, bisexual	0.355 (0.983)
sexuality = 4, queer	-1.484 (1.209)
sexuality = 5, prefer not to say	14.42 (1,193)
age	0.0390 (0.113)
curiosity	-0.279 (0.391)
broaden_social_connections	-0.293 (0.305)
hookup	0.177 (0.292)
/cut1	-0.519 (3.436)
/cut2	0.396 (3.460)
/cut3	0.568 (3.460)
/cut4	1.212 (3.460)
/cut5	1.838 (3.453)
Observations	34

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1