

# ONLINE DATING

## MARRIAGE IS IN THE PROFILE, NOT THE STARS

OnePlusOne is a research charity dedicated to strengthening relationships and families.

In this brief report, we take a look at studies exploring whether online dating services are producing relationship longevity and explore other areas for future research.

### ODDS ON GETTING MARRIED?

The research on online dating impacting relationship longevity is mixed. One study found that 60% of couples who met online were in non-marital relationships and established three factors for this [1]:

- Online dating supplies an endless array of potential romantic partners, making it difficult for users to commit.
- Relationships online take longer to develop than those cultivated offline.
- People purposefully take longer to develop romantic relationships with their matches.

‘Since exclusivity, commitment and trust are some of the important determining factors of starting a marital relationship, the lack of these can explain the lower percentage of marriages [1]’.

### ASSESSMENT MINDSET

Online dating activity usually comes with an ‘assessment mindset’. This is one in which people rapidly evaluate another person’s potential as a romantic partner. This mindset may ‘promote the tendency to commoditise other people’ [2].

Research shows that meeting through the choice-intensive process of internet dating was significantly associated with transitions to marriage for heterosexual couples [3]. The advantage lies in getting information upfront that you may not be able to ask for on a first date.

### MARRIAGE READY

Couples whose relationship did transition to marriage after having met online did so provided (a) there is a strong partner selection process; and (b) they could use the information to ascertain who was looking for a marital spouse...

### COMMUNICATION

... which leads us to the age-old art of communication. Romantic relationships tend to ‘thrive when couples take on a communicative approach, where they respond mutually to each other’s needs and preferences, rather than an exchange orientation in which benefits and costs are assessed on an ongoing basis’ [2].

This analysis may explain some of the problems securing relationships with longevity online. The natural state of online dating takes a ‘marketplace mentality’, with potential partners being commodified, evaluated and judged in a wide market of choice is considered to ‘interfere with the communal orientation and the formation of communal bonds’ [2].

### POLITICS

And, if the above is not enough to think about when creating a profile, a study found that individuals seek relationship partners who share their political identities and level of engagement with politics [4]. So, maybe lay off or lay on the Brexit chat, depending on who you want to attract!

## We say...

The research that we consider here does not tell us **who** is dating online. This is important as the 'who' will also affect the potential for turning online romantic relationships into marriage. For example, if you date online because you are shy, older, or struggle to meet people in person; or because you live in a remote rural area, these variables can dramatically affect being 'marriage ready'.

The concept of the 'assessment mindset' is very interesting. For us, this highlights the difference between a **transactional** and **interactional** approaches to relationships.

A transactional approach is a very individual focus about what the person is seeking for their relationship, ie what they require from a partner. Looking for 'the one' requires serious knowledge about yourself (that many people either do not have, or have miscalculated).

An interactional approach requires thinking about yourself in relation to others and vice versa. It is that mutuality that makes relationships satisfying and longer lasting.

So, while it is evidently important to think about what goes into your profile statement, we would like to know more about who is dating online before we can deduce how this method of meeting people is affecting relationship longevity.

In the meantime, the short answer to succeeding in relationships is good old-fashioned communication, communication, communication!

## ENDS

OnePlusOne Marriage and Partnership Research is a registered charity, number 1087994 and a private company limited by guarantee, Company number 4133340. Our websites are [www.oneplusone.space](http://www.oneplusone.space) and [www.clickrelationships.org](http://www.clickrelationships.org)

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