



eharmony's 2024 Rule Breaker Report

Redefining Red Flags, the Rise of Textual Chemistry, and Practical Romance in 2025

Dating in 2025 will be all about breaking the rules. To close out 2024, eharmony took a look at how American singles (18+) are challenging traditional dating beliefs and redefining love and relationships ahead of the new year. From leaving behind outdated adages to reimagining family dynamics and even drawing inspiration from pop culture, **eharmony's Rule Breaker Report uncovers the trends and values shaping a bold new era of relationships in 2025. Let's dive in!**

Rewriting the Dating Rule Book

Dating beliefs like *once a cheater, always a cheater, or avoiding talking about your ex with your crush are on the 2025 "OUT list."* These days, singles are less strict about these so-called "rules" and more focused on staying true to their values and connecting on what matters.

According to the report Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X are giving new perspectives to old dating beliefs and uncovering new mindsets that fit a refreshed approach to dating. While dating, 75% of US singles don't believe you have to avoid taboo topics like politics, money, and your ex — **which means filter-free dating is in for 2025.** When it comes to old dating adages, only 39% of singles believe that cheaters will cheat again — insinuating there is room for growth, and 38% of singles question if they'll really *just know* when they've met "The One."

Dating adages are on the decline; here are the sayings singles still believe to be true:

- Once a cheater, always a cheater 39%
- You'll just know when you meet 'The One' 38%
- Opposites attract 31%
- Men are afraid of commitment 20%
- Women want to be chased 20%

Dating rules singles are breaking; here's what singles disagree with:

- Avoid talking about exes 23%
- Men should bring flowers to a first date 21%
- Don't get intoxicated on a first date 19%
- Don't talk about politics on a first date 19%
- Don't talk about money on a first date 19%

Laurel House, an eharmony dating and relationship expert, notes, "**Daters are looking for authenticity in 2025** and to find something authentic, daters need to get real about what's important to them, including understanding their non-starters." House defines **non-starters as traits in someone that make a relationship with them seem impossible.**

According to House, singles looking to address non-starter topics should:

- **Have these conversations early:** "Non-starter conversations are best had early on in the dating process — even on the first date — before investing your time, energy, or heart into someone who is simply not right for you. While different political and financial beliefs are non-starters for

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some, for many they are red or orange flags, which is why seeking context and clarity is key to understanding where beliefs stem from.”




- **Avoid being blindsided by empowering hard conversations:** “Today’s daters feel more empowered to discuss historically taboo topics because they are more commonly intertwined into daily discourse. **What you want to avoid is being blindsided by your new partner's political or financial beliefs** while at the dinner table with a friend or family member, and suddenly it is unavoidably apparent that you two are not a match.”

These conversations can foster understanding, which can lead to deeper connections—even between people with differing political or financial beliefs.

De-coding Connection and Communication

Forget the waiting game—**2025 will be the year of *Textual Chemistry***. Across all age groups (18+) the preferred method of communicating while dating in the US is text message (69%), with promptness and spontaneity being key factors in building chemistry.

💖 2025's Communication Crushes and Cringes:

-  **The Instant Gratifiers:** According to the report, more than two-thirds (69%) of singles follow a “no wait” protocol when it comes to responding to a text from someone they’ve been dating in the first three months (this is especially true for Gen X at 69%). And 57% of singles respond as soon as they’re able—which is especially true for men (62%) and Millennials (60%).
-  **The Dial-Up Daters:** After texting, **US singles' second favorite method of communication is spontaneous phone calls (41%)**. It’s giving bold, confident, “I know what I want” energy that would make Samantha Jones proud.
-  **Chat-Icks:** US singles are leaving it at audio only, with survey respondents describing spontaneous (22%) and scheduled (19%) video calls as “cringe,” along with social media messaging (17%) – **sorry, Yo Gotti!**
- **(AI)fluence:** As AI continues to become an everyday part of our lives, a majority of singles (64%) have never used AI to help them communicate either with someone they are dating or on dating apps, more than a third of respondents (36%) have, with 14% of daters using AI tools to seem more interesting.

We asked Minaa B., MSW, LMSW, an eharmony relationship expert share her thoughts on **why we’re seeing a rise in “Textual Chemistry”**:

“Over the last few years, people have been experiencing high rates of loneliness and social disconnection. As a result, people are eager to connect and be more intentional about putting in the effort necessary to create meaningful relationships. **The rise of “Textual Chemistry” and prompt responses to text messages may indicate that people are striving to build healthier relationships and social support systems.**”

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When it comes to unpacking the frustration daters might be feeling from those who are not “**Instant Gratifiers**”, Minaa notes: “For a long time, there has been a sense of frustration around the concepts of effort, communication, and dating. **People have felt disappointed and rejected when others ignore their messages for days (especially, when seeing them engaging on social media)**. When you are the person who is taking hours on end to reply, you may also notice a decrease in communication because people are choosing not to communicate with you due to your inactivity.”

According to Minaa, 2025 will be the era of showing up and building connection. Taking five business days to get back to someone is no longer going to be tolerated.

For those who experience stress or anxiety when it comes to building “Textual Chemistry”, Minaa has some tips:

- **Be vocal about your communication preferences:** “It’s important to set the tone and let people know your preference regarding communication. If you’re bad at texting, let them know. If you hate video calls (hello cringe list!), opt for phone calls instead.”
- **Be willing to explore other communication styles:** “The most important thing to understand is that a relationship cannot thrive if there is merely any communication happening. So if you don’t want to text, be willing to hop on a call every few days or explore voice notes as an alternative to texting.”

Building Connection Before Bed Chem

The rise of the chemistry test: When it comes to getting physical with a new partner, American daters are embracing authentic connection **before betting on bed chem**, with a third saying that they will never sleep with someone on the first date (35%). Meanwhile, a little more than a quarter (26%) *have* slept with someone on the first date, but they note it’s “*unusual*.”

According to Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert: “For those who prioritize emotional connection before becoming sexually intimate, **the first step is clear communication**. Share your thoughts and preferences with your partner—discuss the pace at which you typically connect and what makes you feel comfortable. If deepening emotional intimacy is important to you, create space for meaningful conversations and shared experiences. Building an emotional connection takes time, and while the timeline varies for everyone, certain elements—such as open communication, shared meaningful experiences, and vulnerable self-expression—are foundational. **Emotional connection also thrives in a relational dynamic that is built on care, consistency, and reliability.**”

The decline of the late-night roster: The booty call is out. When it comes to navigating the notion of waiting to be physically intimate with a new partner, only 10% of singles in the US say booty calls “are their favorite” and that “they have a roster of intimate partners”. A mere 6% prefer one-night stands. While the booty call might be phasing out, 23% of U.S. singles don’t have a rule for how many dates they go on before sleeping with someone, allowing them flexibility! *Sabrina Carpenter was on to something!*

According to Baratz: “There’s no universal rule about the timing of sex or the level of emotional connection required—it’s all about what feels safest, most comfortable, and most exciting for each individual.”

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But dating today isn't just about timing—it's about boundaries and deal breakers. Smoking cigarettes (34%) or vapes (29%), lying about height (29%), and overusing therapy buzzwords like "gaslight" (25%) top the red flag list. [Goodbye therapy speak!](#)

▶ Red flags

- Smoking cigarettes 34%
- Smoking vapes 29%
- Lying about their height 29%
- Facial piercings 26%
- Uses therapy terminology in conversation, like "gaslight" 25%
- Holding an alcoholic beverage in their dating app photos 24%
- Calls themselves a cinephile 18%
- Wearing Crocs 12%
- Bleached hair 12%

"While people are entitled to preferences, **it's important to distinguish between a preference and an actual red flag.** Identifying true red flags on a dating profile can be challenging since profiles offer limited insight into a person's deeper traits or values. Preferences, on the other hand, often reflect personal taste rather than an indication of toxic behavior. Understanding this distinction can help individuals avoid unnecessary judgment while focusing on what truly matters in a partner."

-Todd Baratz

While clocking red flags halts a potential date, authenticity, and emotional safety drive connections. Nearly a third (31%) of singles say they knew they were in love when they felt free to be their true selves (*there's still hope for the cinephiles!*), and (33%) when they couldn't stop thinking about the other person, *must be love on the brain!*

The Checklist: How US daters knew they were in love:

- Can't stop thinking about them/always wanted to be with them 33%
- Could be their most authentic self with them 31%
- Were able to have open communication 28%
- Was very happy most of the time 28%
- Could be vulnerable with them 22%

Beyond falling in love, defining commitment and monogamy is different for everyone—it's not a one-size-fits-all approach. According to our survey, **how we define commitment is changing** with less than half of respondents defining it within the framework of relationship monogamy (35%). In fact, emotional support (28%), and meeting each other's loved ones (29%) were within the top three definitions of commitment in 2024.

How U.S. singles are defining commitment:

- Only dating the other person 35%
- Meeting each other's loved ones (friends/family) 29%
- Sexual monogamy 28%
- Having someone to emotionally support you 28%

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- Making someone else a priority in your life 27%
- Getting off dating apps 24%
- Wanting to eventually get married to that person 23%
- Seeing the other person at least 2-4 times per week 17%
- Planning trips/vacations together 14%

How US singles are defining monogamy:

- Only have sex with the person I'm in a relationship with 56%
- Dating one person 48%
- Being emotionally involved with one person 40%
- Not being on dating apps while dating someone 26%
- Being married/engaged to one person 20%

The Rise of Practical Dating

Turns out, the cost-of-living crisis is giving Cupid a budget-friendly edge, with just over half of singles (51%) admitting they'd consider moving in with a partner sooner than planned to save money. Who says romance can't be practical? When it comes to starting a family, over half of US singles want an adoption-ready romance, saying it's important to find a partner who's willing to adopt, and less than half (40%) need the commitment of marriage or engagement before having children — **in fact 22% of US singles don't plan to have children.**

Defining The Make-or-Break Move-In strategy, according to House: "Housing and life expenses can be unmanageable for many singles, forcing many to look for alternatives. Some people are moving in with their families, others are getting roommates, and then many in newly minted relationships are opting to move in together to have a two-income household which can simultaneously fast-track their connection, putting their relationship to the ultimate test of living together. This strategy has become more common, accepted, and even encouraged as the old "rules" around dating and relating have continued to evolve, as they don't fit into our lifestyles anymore."

A Pop(culture) of Confidence

Pop culture continues to shape the dating world, including the rise of reality romance which, according to the survey, has a hand in reinforcing our own dating beliefs.

The TV shows reinforcing our dating beliefs:

- Friends 19%
- Sex and The City 16%
- Living Single 14%
- Love is Blind 14%
- The Bachelor 13%
- Love Island 12%
- Married at First Sight 10%

The impact of reality dating shows on our dating lives:

- It Makes me feel better about my own dating life 24%

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- It helps me spot red flags when dating 23%
- Watching the dynamics helps me make better dating choices 21%
- The show(s) empower me to speak up for what I want 20%

“Beyond providing an inside look at couples, these shows often include experts who offer insights into how participants can address common relationship issues. For example, ‘Married at First Sight’ encourages couples to value personality traits like kindness, communication, and thoughtfulness, rather than focusing solely on physical chemistry. ‘The Bachelor’ demonstrates how shared experiences can create feelings of connection and require new levels of trust and vulnerability. This allows viewers to take valuable lessons from the show that they can apply to their own dating lives.”

-Laurel House

When it comes to music, not even Taylor Swift’s lyrical wisdom can sway everyone. In the US, 44% of singles claim no artist has inspired them to rethink their approach to dating. That said, 2024 hits *have* helped them feel sexy, with Beyoncé’s “Bodyguard” (16%) and SZA’s “Saturn” (14%) leading the way.

2024’s Turn-Me-On Playlist:

1. “Bodyguard” - Beyoncé 16%
2. “Saturn” - SZA 14%
3. “Lunch” - Billie Eilish 13%
4. “Nasty” - Tinashe 12%
5. “HISS” - Megan Thee Stallion 11%

So what’s the TL;DR? Historic dating rules, patterns, and beliefs can be great tools to provide clarity into how we build our own authentic relationships. But let's be real — times change, and so do our perspectives. In 2025, for singles it’s all about finding balance: honoring the wisdom of the past while rewriting the rules to fit our unapologetic, authentic selves. Whether it’s redefining labels or ditching traditions that don’t serve us, we’re here to build connections that feel real. So, take what works, and leave what doesn’t to make your own dating rule book!

Methodology: Dating Diaries: The Rule Breaker report was commissioned by eharmony and conducted by 3Gem Research & Insights. It was fielded online between November 21st through November 28th, 2024, and surveyed 1,000 participants. Participants qualified if they were aged 18+ and interested in dating in the short term.

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