

The Future of Dating Is Fluid

What the last year on Tinder tells us about the next decade of dating

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This past year, as social distancing became the new normal, it was a tough time to be single. Many places young people used to go to connect with others were closed, but their need for human connection was more urgent than ever. During the pandemic, Tinder emerged as one of the few places young people could go for much needed human interaction. In fact, 60% of members came to Tinder because they felt lonely and wanted to connect with people. And Gen Z specifically came to Tinder to meet *new* people to get them out of their echo chamber: 40% visited Tinder to see “new and different people”.

Social engagement on Tinder was also up during the pandemic. Gen Z spent more time talking on Tinder, as 19% more messages were sent per day in Feb 2021, compared to Feb 2020. And conversations were 32% longer during the pandemic. Members also updated their bios more often to fuel conversation, with Gen Z updating their bios nearly 3x as often as they did pre-pandemic and still 2x as often as Millennials. And pandemic bios included more timely topics, like the election, or popular content, like Bridgerton.

Gen Z also turned to video chats, as the constraints of COVID had them looking to connect in different ways. Nearly half of Tinder had a video chat with a match during the pandemic, and 40% plan to continue using video to get to know people even when the pandemic is over. These virtual experiences helped satisfy Gen Z’s cravings for social interaction: according to Ypulse, 43% of dating app users said the apps made them feel less lonely in the pandemic.

The innovation in Gen Z dating behavior and Tinder’s growth in the social discovery category, made **2020 the busiest year in Tinder’s history**. Tinder’s engagement and activity grew significantly throughout the year with 11% more Swipes and 42% more matches per Tinder member. On March 29, 2020, Tinder’s SWIPE activity broke 3 billion in a single day, the first time to do so, then broke that single day, 3 billion record, 130 more times in the last year. **Some of the top Swipe activity days** of the past year were:

10/25/2020: pre-Halloween	8/13/2020: back to school	4/5/2020: lockdown	1/3/2021: swiping Sunday	2/14/2021: Valentine’s Day
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The past year has led to some fascinating shifts in Gen Z behavior; shifts that reveal the future of dating. Let’s look at how the events of the past year help predict the next decade of dating.

#1: Daters will be more honest and authentic.

The pandemic helped many people put things in perspective. It led Tinder members to be more truthful and vulnerable about who they are, how they look, and what they're going through. Mentions of 'anxiety' and 'normalize' in bios grew during the pandemic ('anxiety' grew 31%; 'normalize' grew more than 15X). And thousands of young people responded to Tinder's Put Yourself Out There challenge by submitting profiles that reflect their authentic selves. This shift toward honesty will accelerate in the future as Gen Z, a generation [known for valuing authenticity](#), becomes more of the dating population (today, over 50% of Tinder is Gen Z).

Bio callouts in graphics:

"6 ft and 3 in of pure depression and anxiety. Let's vibe and pet cats."

"Scars, tats, stretch marks, idgaf"

#2: Boundaries will become more transparent

The pandemic brought up more discussions of personal boundaries. Tinder members used their bios to make their expectations clear: the phrase 'wear a mask' went up 100X over the course of the pandemic, 'boundaries' is being used more than ever (up 19%), and the term 'consent' rose 11%. YPulse's Dating in a Post-COVID World study also found signs of these discussions, saying that 17% of daters 'had a conversation on safety precautions before meeting up' and 16% 'asked for consent to physically touch a date'. This practice will make conversations about consent more commonplace and comfortable in the future. As conversations move to intimate matters, people will use the skills they've honed during the pandemic to make dating safer and happier.

Bio callouts in graphics:

"If U Wanna be my lover...Let's talk about our desires AND our boundaries."

"If you can beat me in smash, I'll give you a smooch.. (with your consent of course)."

#3: More people will want to "See where things go"

In an uncertain world, daters had less expectations for the future of their relationships. Mentions of phrases like 'see where things go' and 'open to' reached all time highs in Tinder bios, as members showed a greater openness to possibility this past year, ('see where things go' rose 19%, 'open to' rose 17%). And in a recent survey of Tinder members, the number of daters looking for 'no particular type of relationship' was up nearly 50%. So rather than the pandemic driving a desire for marriage, the next generation of daters will seek more open-ended relationships.

Bio callouts in graphics:

"open to hookups or a relationship or a cool friendo or a picnic date."

"Mainly looking for friends, but if we end up falling in love that's fine too ;) jk, but what if?"

#4: Digital dates will remain part of the new normal.

As in-person contact became risky, daters turned to virtual experiences for human connection. Instead of meeting up, Gen Z looked to video chat or virtual dates. During the pandemic, half of Gen Z Tinder members video chatted with a match, and a third were doing more virtual shared activities. Rather than go out, people were more likely to meet through Tinder, then go on a date on Animal Crossing (AC mentions grew 30X) or eat DoorDash meals together over Zoom (DoorDash up 3X; Zoom grew 30X). And while it may have started out of necessity, the digital date is here to stay. According to a recent Tinder survey, those who tried it see it as a low pressure way to get a sense for someone, and 40 percent of Gen Z Tinder members say they will continue to go on digital dates, even as date spots re-open.

Bio callouts in graphics: *"Can we FaceTime while I play you piano and you eat the Carne Asada fries I doordashed to you?"*

#5: First dates will be more about activities than icebreakers.

In the last year, with conversations on Tinder up 19% and video dates on the rise, people did a lot of 'getting to know you' digitally before they met for a date. According to Ypulse, 20% of daters had a virtual pre-date before meeting up in person. And with many bars and restaurants closed, many traditional first date venues were no longer an option. So when it came time to meet up, daters chose more creative, personal, and casual first date activities than in the past. For example, Tinder saw a 3X increase in mentions of 'rollerskating' in bios and requests for date activities from fort building to snowball fights pop up in bios. This trend towards activity-based first dates that skip the small talk will shape the next decade of dating. Daters will pick more interesting, unique first date activities that help them really get to know each other.

Bio callouts in graphics: *"Now accepting cute winter dates including but not limited to: -cozy cuddles -making hot cocoa bombs -a good old-fashioned snowball fight"*

#6: Small touches will have a big impact.

The impact of 2020's [touch deprivation](#) is showing up on Tinder, as people have come to seek the most innocent types of physical contact. Members are using their bios to seek out affection like hand holding, cuddling, or someone to touch their hair: use of the word 'cuddle' grew 23%, and 'hand holding' is up 22%. After experiencing months without physical contact, daters have come to greatly appreciate the smallest moments of physical affection. So even when meet-ups become common, little physical gestures will play a more important role in people's dating lives.

Bio callouts in graphics:

"Literally just here for the cuddles"

"Someone hold my hand"

#7: People will always want to date someone close by.

For many Tinder members, 2020 came with a coronavirus-prompted move. While some headed to new cities, others moved in with family. According to the [PEW Research Center](#), 52% of young adults were living with a parent in July, the highest rate in decades. And soon after people moved, they came to Tinder to meet new people in their new city. Mentions of 'moving' in bios were up 28% in 2020. Tinder's geolocation, or ability to find someone nearby, was highly relevant for the pandemic moving boom. So while technology continues to enable people to live or [work anywhere](#), they are still coming to Tinder to find someone who lives close to them. This trend suggests that there won't be a post-pandemic surge in long distance relationships. Instead, Gen Z will want to connect with people who live around the corner, no matter where they live.

Bio callouts in graphics:

"Moved to LA from Seattle, and then the pandemic happened"

"Just moved here for work, looking for someone to take me to their favorite italian spot"

#8: A 'summer of love' could be coming.

Gen Z's longing for social interaction could make for a busy summer for dating. For most of Gen Z, they've spent this year stuck with mom and dad ([52% according to Pew Research](#)) forced to kiss their social lives goodbye. As of Oct 2020, more than 40% of Tinder members under the age of 30 had not met a match in person*. But according to Tinder bios, that might be changing. "Go on a date" hit an all time high in U.S. bios in February 2021. And while people slowed down in-person dating in 2020 (54% of singles shared with YPulse that "Covid 19 has significantly delayed my love life"), they are ready to start getting out more as soon as vaccines (or antibodies) are in place. Nearly a third of daters told YPulse that there has to be a vaccine before they feel comfortable dating in person. That time is coming. Tinder has seen large increases in mentions of both 'vaccine' (up 8x) and 'antibodies' (up 20X) since the start of the pandemic, as members use their bios to post their positive antibody test results and vaccine confirmations.

Bio callouts in graphics:

"Fully vaccinated so I can cuddle u without worry"

"My biggest flex is I got the covid vaccine"

Other call outs/data that could be included:

1. Mentions of **Top Pandemic terms** in a chart we'd call: Phases of the pandemic, according to what people are talking about on Tinder

Overlay a graphic to talk about the phases

Phase 1: Quarantine & Chill

Phase 2: Mask up & Meet Up

Phase 3: Shoot Your Shot

Data / methodology

Terms: All data above comes from Tinder profiles or aggregated Tinder app activity. Data was pulled from Jan 2020 - Feb 2021.

Messages is average number of messages sent per member

Bio updates is average bio edits per user, per month

WAV / survey data comes from ***Findings based on a survey of ~5,000 Tinder members in the US between May 6 and May 12, 2020 and August 14 to 24, 2020*

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<https://sg.tinderpressroom.com/news?item=122504>