



THE LOVE LOWDOWN:

A Study of Modern Romance by  HARLEQUIN



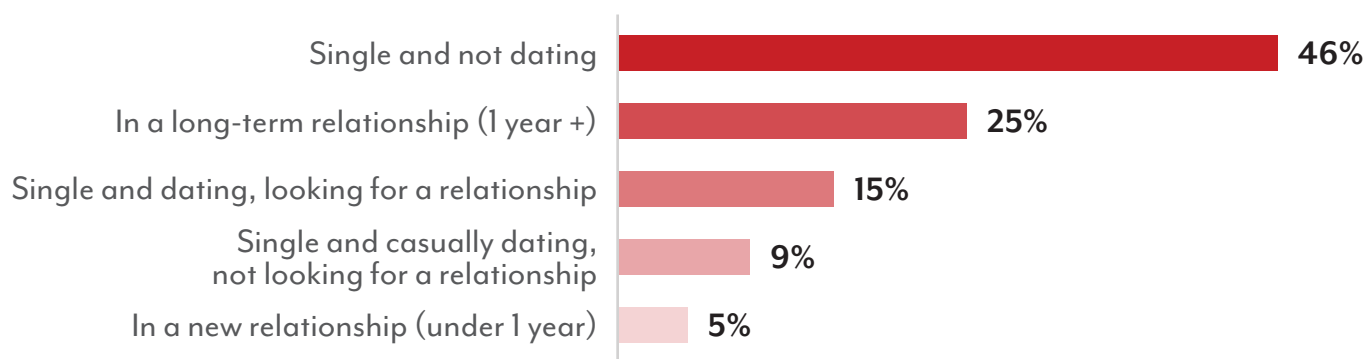
Just ahead of Summer 2023, Harlequin set out to get the lowdown on love, providing insight to attitudes about romance, love and dating. The research spanned two separate surveys of US adults: the first focusing on a nationally representative sample of 2,000 unmarried adults and a second querying 681 adults who identify as romance readers and have opted into Harlequin’s research panel. Both surveys were conducted in May 2023.

We were surprised to learn that, in this post-pandemic world with people coming back together, fewer than half of US adults who are unmarried are actively dating and, at the same time, encouraged that more than half of those who aren’t dating are perfectly comfortable being single. There were signs, too, that our definition of “happily-ever-after” is changing.

The following are key findings from the survey of 2,000 US adults.

Nearly half of unmarried adults are not dating.

Relationship Status Among Unmarried Americans.



Q1. What best describes you? Base: All unmarried respondents (n=1,202).

Among the six-tenths (60%) of US adults who are not married, almost half (46%) are single and not dating. A quarter (25%) of unmarried Americans are in a long-term relationship of one year or more.

Most unmarried Americans don't feel pressure to be in a committed relationship.

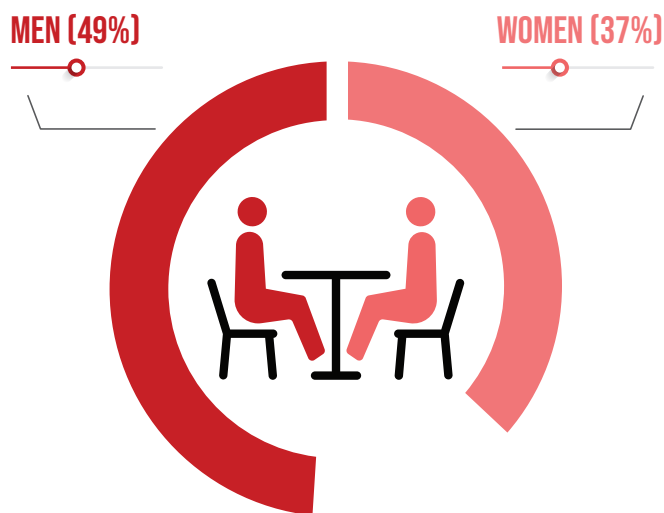
The majority (57%) of unmarried Americans say they don't feel pressured to be married or in a committed relationship. Among Americans who are currently single, exactly half (50%) are prioritizing themselves and spending time with friends over finding a partner. Women (56%) are more likely to agree with this statement than men (45%).

The approximately one in four (23%) of unmarried adults who say they do feel pressured to be in a committed relationship say they feel it from all sides – family, friends, social media and even themselves. The societal pressure is more acute for women than it is for men.

Less than half of us enjoy first dates.

One in five (20%) people do not enjoy first dates, while less than half (42%) say they enjoy them. Interestingly, men (49%) are much more likely to enjoy first dates than women (37%).

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Perhaps not surprisingly, romance readers enjoy first dates (50%) more than non-romance readers (40%). Furthering this point, one in five (18%) romance readers love first dates – far outnumbering the 7% of non-romance readers who feel the same.



Three-quarters of single adults have not been on a date in the past month.

More than three quarters (77%) report they haven't been on a date in the past month and one in five (18%) report they've been on one to two dates.

Summer is the best season for finding love.

Americans are most likely to rank summer (28%) and spring (21%) as the best seasons to go on a first date.



28%
OF AMERICANS

rank **SUMMER** as the Best Season to go on a **FIRST DATE**.

In terms of the best season for finding a long-term partner, summer (23%) ranks the best, with spring (15%) narrowly beating fall (14%) and winter (13%).

Americans say **Summer (23%)** is the best season for finding a long-term partner, followed by **Spring (15%), Fall (14%) and Winter (13%)**.

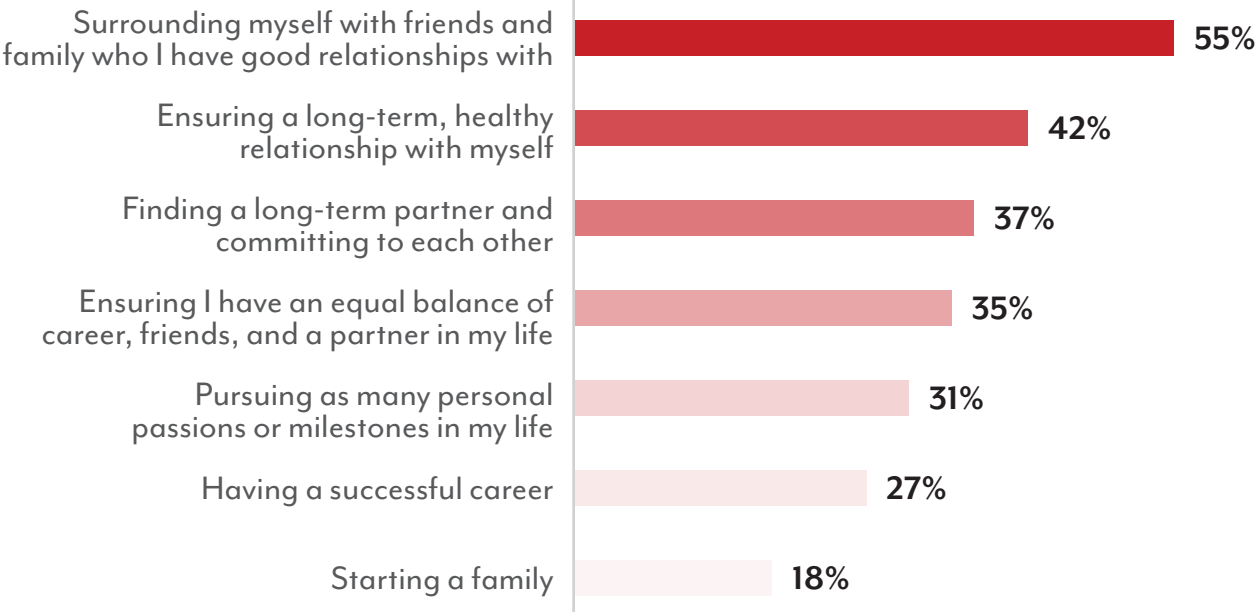


Today's happily-ever-after is bucking traditional norms.

Over half (57%) of adults say they can have a happily-ever-after with or without a long-term partner. Women are more likely to agree with this than men (63% of women vs 51% men).

Social and personal fulfillment top the list of what “happily-ever-after” means for the majority of Americans. More than half of Americans (55%) believe that good relationships with friends and family best fit their definition of “happily-ever-after.” Having a healthy relationship with yourself also ranks high (42%).

What “happily-ever-after” means to American adults.



Q5. Which of the following most aligns with your definition of “happily-ever-after” in your own life? You can select up to three different definitions. Base: All respondents (n=2,000).

THE FOLLOWING RESULTS ARE FROM THE SURVEY OF 681 US ADULTS WHO IDENTIFY AS ROMANCE READERS.

Romance readers raise their standards for romance in real life.

A significant percentage of romance readers believe they have an advantage when it comes to romance in real life. Well over half (58%) say they have raised their standards for how their partner treats them and 44% say they have higher standards for dating and relationships because they read romance books. A third (35%) say reading romance novels has made them better at spotting red flags in relationships. Younger romance readers (18-34) are more confident in their red flag spotting, with almost half (49%) saying so. Two-thirds (67%) of 18-34-year-olds have higher standards for dating and relationships because they read romance novels.

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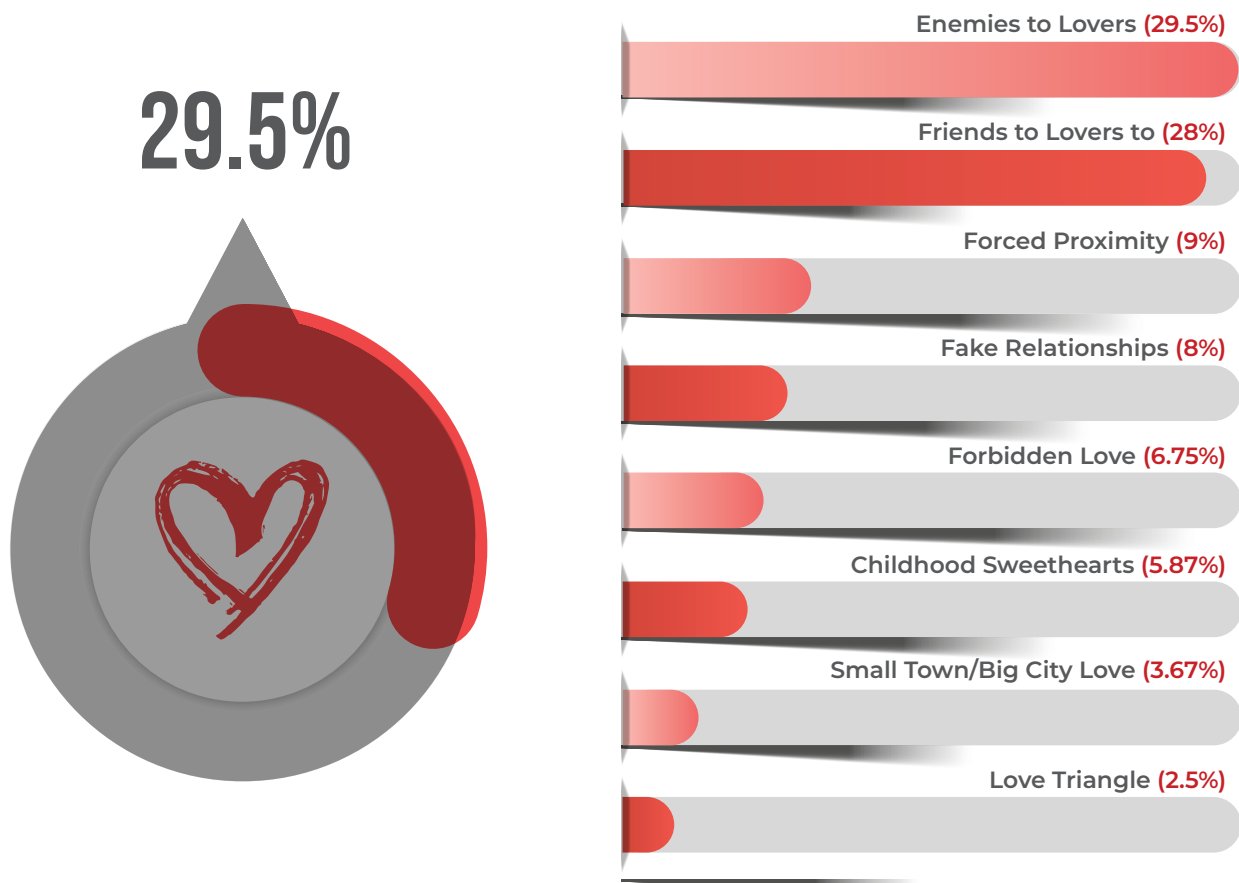


From trope to real life.

In another sign that book culture is pervading everyday life, romance novel tropes have become part of the love language used by readers and non-readers alike. For their part, romance readers believe Friends to Lovers is – by far – the trope most likely to lead to romance in real life. Friends to Lovers (83%) was followed by Childhood Sweethearts (5.29%) and Forced Proximity (2.6%) as tropes most likely to lead to romance in real life.

But Enemies to Lovers nudges out Friends to Lovers (29.5% to 28%) as the trope book lovers most want to read about. Forced Proximity (9%), Fake Relationships (8%), Forbidden Love (6.75%) Childhood Sweethearts (5.87%), Small Town/Big City Love (3.67%) and Love Triangle (2.5%) round out the list.

ENEMIES TO LOVERS IS THE MOST POPULAR TROPE!

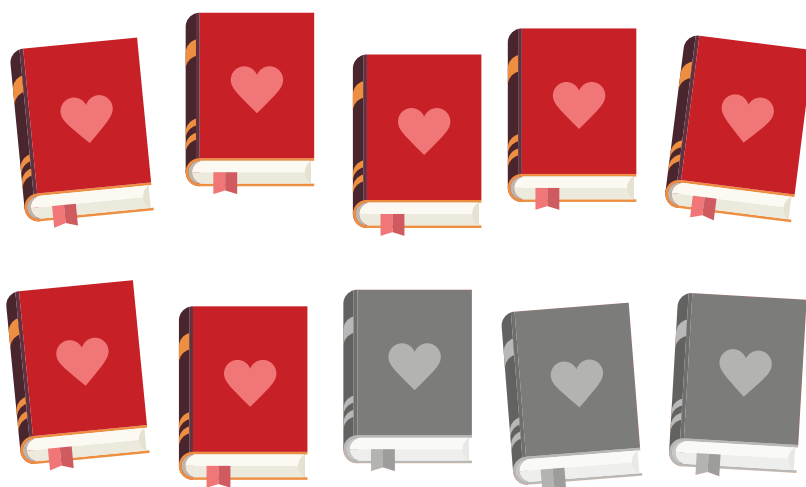


Prioritizing self-love

Only 23% of romance readers say they feel pressured to be in a committed relationship. Like gen pop, romance readers are redefining what “happily-ever-after” means today. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) romance readers say they are prioritizing self-love and spending time with friends over finding a partner. Almost half of romance readers turn to romance novels as a happy escape.

NEARLY 7 IN 10 (69%)

ROMANCE READERS SAY THEY ARE PRIORITIZING SELF-LOVE
AND SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS OVER FINDING A PARTNER



Research Methodology

Harlequin's Love Lowdown consisted of two surveys. The first, with a nationally representative sample of US adults, was conducted online May 23-26, 2023, by Opinium Research for Harlequin. The second, conducted online May 23-30, 2023, surveyed 681 romance readers living in the US who have opted into Harlequin's proprietary consumer insights panel.

Want more love?

For more information about The Love Lowdown, contact Stephanie Tzogas at stephanie.tzogas@harlequin.com.

And find new, modern romances for all at [Harlequin.com/SummerofLove](https://www.harlequin.com/SummerofLove).

About Harlequin

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