

# The 5 Years That Changed Dating

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On the 20th anniversary of *The New York Times*' popular Vows column, a weekly feature on notable weddings and engagements launched in 1992, its longtime editor [wrote](#) that Vows was meant to be more than just a news notice about society events. It aimed to give readers the backstory on marrying couples and, in the meantime, to explore how romance was changing with the times. "Twenty years ago, as now, most couples told us they'd met through their friends or family, or in college," wrote the editor, Bob Woletz, in 2012. "For a period that ran into the late 1990s, a number said, often sheepishly, that they had met through personal advertisements."

But in 2018, seven of the 53 couples profiled in the Vows column met on dating apps. And in the *Times*' more populous Wedding Announcements section, 93 out of some 1,000 couples profiled this year met on dating apps—Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Coffee Meets Bagel, Happn, and other specialized dating apps designed for smaller communities, like JSwipe for Jewish singles and MuzMatch for Muslims. The year before, 71 couples whose weddings were announced by the *Times* met on dating apps.

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Of course, even the absence of hard data hasn't stopped dating experts—both people who study it and people who do a lot of it—from theorizing. There's a popular suspicion, for example, that Tinder and other dating apps might make people pickier or more reluctant to settle on a single monogamous partner, a theory that the comedian Aziz Ansari spends a lot of time on in his 2015 book, *Modern Romance*, written with the sociologist Eric Klinenberg.

Eli Finkel, however, a professor of psychology at Northwestern and the author of *The All-or-Nothing Marriage*, rejects that notion. "Very smart people have expressed concern that having such easy access makes us commitment-phobic," he says, "but I'm not actually that worried about it." Research has shown that people who find a partner they're really into quickly become less interested in alternatives, and Finkel is fond of a sentiment expressed in [a 1997 Journal of Personality and Social Psychology paper](#) on the subject: "Even if the grass is greener elsewhere, happy gardeners may not notice."