

BUMBLE  
DATING  
TRENDS  
2020

# Bumble is a platform and community that exists to create empowering connections in love, life and business.

Recognising the importance of relationships and how crucial they are to healthy and happy lives, Bumble has built their platform on the foundation of kindness, respect and equality.

With the goal of understanding how culture, age and technology shapes preferences and attitudes around dating, Bumble undertook a study across Europe and the United Kingdom around the future of dating and romance in 2020.



# We engaged 12,000 Millennials and Gen Z in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands and Ireland.

We asked them questions around their dating app habits (the good and the bad) and their personal preferences from initial swipe to meet up.

To help us contextualise our findings, we spoke to five experts on dating and relationship culture who provided insight into the cultural and generational differences across Europe and the United Kingdom.



# REWRITING THE RULES

What does it mean to date in 2020? The 21st century's first decade brought with it technological advancements that changed how we communicate and connect. Meeting new people, sharing new experiences and embarking on new adventures became the hallmarks of our tech enabled dating lives. Now, five years since Bumble's founding, women across Europe are appropriating dating app technology to their needs. Apps are responding with new features to cater to new wants: old rules are being rewritten. When it comes to gender, sexuality, roles and relationships, we've moved from one way of doing things to a better way; a way that demonstrates our ability to navigate modern dating. From playful language, to experimental dating and new milestones: this is what it means to date and fall in love in the dawn of a new decade.

Over the next few pages we'll explore the ways in which women across Europe are making dating work for - and empower - them, and highlighting the key trends that will shape their approach and attitude in the year to come.

# EXPERTS

## Jo Hemmings

Jo is a behavioural psychologist, specialising in dating and relationship coaching.

## Come Curious

Duo Florence Barkway and Reed Amber have a successful YouTube channel and podcast centred around sex positivity and relationships.

## Elisabeth Timmermans

Elisabeth is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Media & Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her research expertise involves mobile daters motives and outcomes as well as ghosting and infidelity experiences on dating apps.

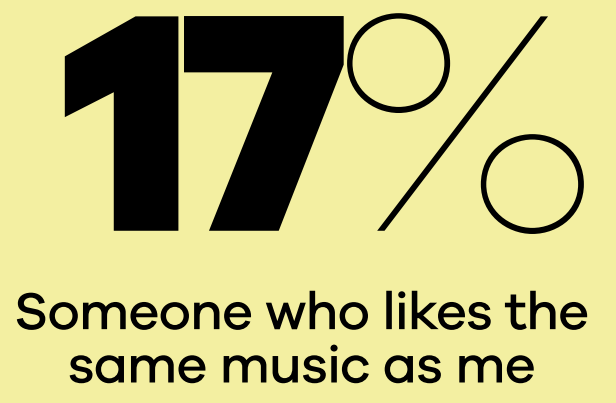
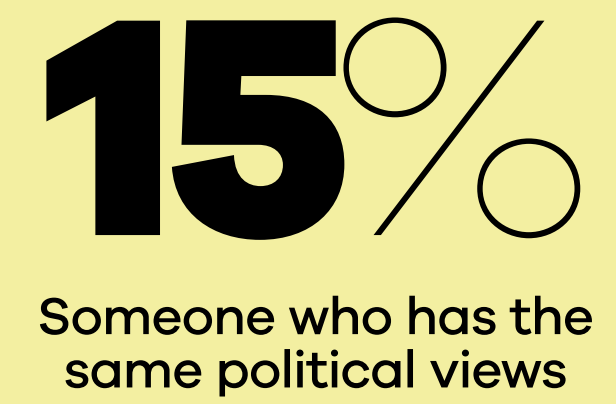
## Nana Baah

Nana is the sex and relationships staff writer for Vice UK. She writes a series called: 'Are you getting any?' where she covers topics such as sexuality and the contemporary dating scene.

# WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A PARTNER?

# Which of the following do you look for in a partner?

\*Select all that apply





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“Has the love story become more boring thanks to technology? No, I think that the love story has become less boring. We’ve got the technology, we’ve got the reach. We’ve got so many more opportunities than the generation that met the guy or the girl locally. We know that there’s much more out there.”

— *Jo Hemmings*

**EXPLORE**  
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*Today's daters are realising that in order to meet their match, they cannot hide away: they have to be emotionally prepared to put themselves out there. Embracing a sense of exploration has added benefits. Witnessing the widest dating pool in history - afforded to them by app and online dating - they're learning, growing and playing in the process.*

Being an active dater brings benefits. Meeting new people, experiencing new moments and understanding who you are and what you want: dating in 2020 is as much about the journey as the destination. Dating expert Jo Hemmings reminds us that the potential to meet and explore are greater than ever: "We've got the technology, we've got the reach. We've got so many more opportunities than the generation that met the guy or the girl locally. We know that there's much more out there."

Daters are realising the benefits of being exposed to a wide pool of people in 2020. It used to be the case that friends were by far the most popular way couples met partners: the internet has changed all that. 64% of our respondents think dating apps are a way to meet people they otherwise would not have. Before anything serious kicks off, having the opportunity to date different people doesn't just make the chances of meeting 'The One' higher, it is a means for personal growth. Bumble users agree: in the early dating phase, 59% think it is okay to date multiple people at the same time. But, generations differ.

Gen Z's increasingly fluid dating habits, compared to millennials' more traditional outlook, mean the pool to explore is extended wider. For Gen Z in particular, sexuality and gender exist on a spectrum. Dating app technology affords them the chance to explore their preferences in an anonymous - and judgement free - space.

"You can be anyone when you're talking to somebody through the internet or through a profile," says Reed Amber, one half of sex positive YouTube and Podcast creators, Come Curious. Dating apps are the perfect way to explore and see what else is

out there. Nonetheless, 90% of all respondents stated that their Bumble profile is a true and accurate representation of them. However that representation can be, and should be, altered as they and their preferences grow.

**90% of all respondents stated that their Bumble profile is a true and accurate representation of them**



“There’s no one format for a relationship, or for what people are looking for from a relationship, because there are so many different types. We’ve got so many different genders and sexualities out there. There needs to be less stigma around the fact that if you are only looking for a specific type of person, it’s easy for you to find them.”

— *Florence Barkway*



**64% of our respondents  
think dating apps are  
a way to meet people they  
otherwise would not have.**

**“We’ve got a very small window in which to present ourselves, our best selves, and there is pressure on us to make sure our photographs, our profiles, are going to sell ourselves to the biggest slice of the most appropriate market.”**

*— Jo Hemmings*





It's not just identity that daters are playing around with. Language is evolving too. Thanks to technology - and the expectation of immediateness that comes with it - informal language is part of our daily lexicon. "Emojis are a lot quicker than spelling something out," explains Nana Baah, a writer for Vice UK. "Some emojis have a universal meaning. It's a lot easier to flirt - and somehow it makes it seem less explicit." Emojis give us a sense of gesture, body language, and tone of voice that is lost when not speaking face-to-face; all of which are highly important when flirting with someone online.

Daters in 2020 are playing with language and visuals to flirt with potential partners. While visual cues are clearly all the rage, a mastery of language is important too. "Who's funny, who uses puns: these characteristics are not helping when you're dating in an offline context," explains Timmermans. "But online it's more about your writing style and how funny you are in your writing."





# GERMANS



# EMOJIS



# I regularly use emojis when I'm messaging someone I fancy:

Spain

**78%**

United Kingdom

**70%**

Netherlands

**73%**

Germany

**91%**

France

**75%**

Ireland

**77%**

# AUTHENTIC

*There is a growing awareness of the superficial nature of much of the online world. Rather than switching off, today's users are reclaiming apps for their needs: injecting honesty and authenticity into their presentation and interaction. Being upfront with your wants and needs is no longer a no no.*

2020 will see daters continue to be upfront and honest about their needs and wants from a relationship. 61% of the women we surveyed look for a partner who shares their values. Today's apps create new means to realise

whether a profile is worth considering. Political leanings are openly stated, so too are personality types. Bumble's astrology features offers the mystics among us the chance to scope out complementary signs and aligning beliefs. "People are lacking compatibility in terms of a motive for using apps: the first thing that you have to tackle is finding someone with a similar motive," explains Timmermans. "That becomes part of the conversation. At some point, people will ask each other, "Hey, what's your motive? What do you hope to get out of this?""



**61%**  
**look for**  
**a partner**  
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**their values**

Platforms naturally have a role to play. The apps daters use often shape the context of their intentions. When it comes to Bumble, the context is more relationship and less hook up focused. “Bumble to me is more progressive,” says Reed Amber. “It’s more respectful, and I feel if you’re using Bumble, you’re looking for a relationship seriously.”

acceptance: whatever shame there once was is gone, and the potentials of dating are there for all to enjoy.


We are also experiencing greater honesty when it comes to the role of apps in our dating lives. 90% are happy to admit when they met a date online. What was once a niche is now mainstream, and with that mass adoption comes

**90% are  
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a date online.**



**30% of daters say they have no set rules when it comes to the time they spend chatting before committing to a date.**





However, getting to a stage where you and your partner discuss how you met requires a date. App users want to see their online interaction translate into offline experiences. Perhaps the greatest frustration with apps has been with the lack of translation into IRL interaction. Daters in 2020 are changing that: 30% say they have no set rules when it comes to the time they spend chatting before committing to a date, and only 10% say they want to chat with a match for over a week before committing to a date. Nonetheless 70% think getting to know a match online is an important step before meeting them IRL.

This is especially true for the Irish, 80% of whom agree with the statement. As Jo Hemmings says, “you don’t want a penpal.”

**70% believe that getting to know a match online is an important step before meeting them IRL.**

# Why do you use dating apps?

\*Select all that apply

**65%**

To meet a long term partner

**43%**

To hook up with someone

**26%**

To go on lots of dates

**64%**

To meet people I'd otherwise not have met

**29%**

To make friends

# 85% of our respondents are happy to openly discuss their sexual preferences with a partner.

Being honest in your wants as a dater and your desire to connect IRL are part of a growing confidence amongst women in Europe. It is fair to say destigmatising taboos have gone a long way in providing space for free expression when it comes to dating, relationships and, of course, sex. A growing

public discussion of sex and sexuality means women now have more freedom to openly discuss what they like and don't like. "Women are feeling more empowered to say: this is about my pleasure," explains Florence Barkway from Come Curious. "No one taught us about female pleasure, but I feel like the media is now opening up this conversation." 85% of our respondents are happy to openly discuss their sexual preferences with a partner, while less than half (44%) of our sample say they need to go on a certain number of dates before sleeping with someone.



I need to go on a certain number of dates before I sleep with someone:

Netherlands

**45%**

Ireland

**51%**

United Kingdom

**47%**

Spain

**35%**

Germany

**37%**

France

**48%**

OF ALL THE  
COUNTRIES, IT'S THE  
**FRENCH** WHO ARE  
THE LEAST OPEN TO  
DISCUSSING THEIR  
SEXUAL PREFERENCES.

I'm happy to openly discuss my sexual preferences with a partner:

Spain

**92%**

United Kingdom

**89%**

Ireland

**87%**

Germany

**81%**

Netherlands

**90%**

France

**70%**

EMPOWERED  
**EMPOWERED**  
EMPOWERED  
**EMPOWERED**

**EMPOWERED**  
EMPOWERED  
**EMPOWERED**  
EMPOWERED

Cultural and social shifts have created a growing awareness of the obstacles women face in achieving their aims. Rather than give up, they're fighting back, utilising new tools to overcome old issues.

**95%**

think that a relationship is as much about their own personal growth as it is supporting their partner.

**82%**

look for photo verification when they are speaking to someone on a dating app.



A focus on your individual needs is shaping much of dating in 2020. Hectic work schedules and rising living costs mean singles often don't have the time or the money to sacrifice in the name of a partner. A desire to be stable and secure before setting down has created a sort of slow love, one that means a new level of consideration and thought goes into selecting The One. 95% think that a relationship is as much about their own personal growth as it is supporting their partner.

For many, marriage is something you enter into only after you've come into possession of the financial, emotional, and professional maturity you need.



**58% say romantic relationships  
have at one stage had  
a negative impact on their  
mental health.**



Caution is also paramount in an age in which the ready availability of matches, dates and partners can mean a ready availability of rejection, heart-break and frustration. As Jo Hemmings says, “We’re rejected by people we’ve never met. We don’t necessarily know someone’s intent. It makes you anxious and it impacts our self-esteem.” 58% say romantic relationships have at one stage had a negative impact on their mental health. However, 2020 is seeing daters turn to self help Instagrams and digital apps to help them heal. Bumble’s Snooze feature allows users to pause activity, or hide their profile on Bumble, while keeping their matches.

It is a convenient way to take a pause from the world of dating when users need a timeout.

It’s important to remember that technology has not so much created, rather than amplified a lot of modern dating behaviours. When it comes to ending relationships, anthropologist Helen Fisher has explored how dating apps haven’t changed happy relationships much but lowered the threshold of when to leave an unhappy one. It is much easier to explore what a better relationship might look like when you don’t need to leave the confines of your home.

“Today, it’s as if you’re not allowed to be upset about being ghosted, but obviously you are. Someone not replying to you is like, “Oh, God. Someone doesn’t like me. I barely even said anything. They’re already not interested.”

— *Nana Baah*

# 59% will check out a prospective date's social media page before meeting them or swiping right.

Some of the pitfalls of dating are all the more immediate. There is a growing awareness of the safety issues surrounding dating. Ensuring today's app users are not catfished or bothered with unsolicited messages is a key priority for 2020. 65% of our sample say that they are careful when it comes to sharing their phone number with an online match and 82% say they look for photo verification when they are speaking to someone on a

dating app. A sense of reassurance can also come from learning about a prospective date on social. 59% will check out a prospective date's social media page before meeting them or swiping right.

Similarly following a relationship, daters need to protect their peace of mind and focus on their own self-care. 43% have had to block an ex from their social media account to help heal following

a relationship — in the UK this figure was as high as 50%. Bumble's recent features are all about ensuring this peace of mind: from verified photos to the option to call prospective dates within the app. Self care in dating means protecting yourself in an often tricky terrain.



# Have you ever been ghosted?

United Kingdom

**77%**

Netherlands

**63%**

Spain

**57%**

France

**66%**

Germany

**65%**

Ireland

**79%**

**FREE FREE FREE FREE**

**FREE FREE FREE**

*We know labels and definitions are becoming increasingly fluid, so too are the milestones we set in the development of a relationship. Today, your romantic story is written on your terms.*

*“Being traditional is not traditional anymore,” wrote Shonda Rhimes, TV producer and single mother of three, in her book ‘Year of Yes’. “It’s funny that we still think of it that way. Normalize your lives, people. You don’t want a baby? Don’t have one. I don’t want to get*

*married? I won’t. You want to live alone? Enjoy it.” In the UK, ONS data has already seen almost a 25% increase in the number of people living with their parents. This figure is predicted to rise to nearly one in three young people living with parents by 2050. The age for a first marriage has been rising since the early 70s and is now 37.9 for men and 35.5 for women. In other words, people are doing a lot more dating and experimenting. before settling down.*

**Only 25% of daters  
feel pressure  
to get married  
and settle down.**



## 65% of our respondents use a dating app to meet a long term partner.

Social media and hookup culture have changed the notion of courtship. The traditional blueprint of dating, going steady, and so on, is no more. Oftentimes relationships begin with hooking up and are cemented through a post on Instagram. “Posting a picture on Instagram is what’s making it official actually,” says Amber.

“When it’s on your social media, that’s when you’re officially together.”

In spite of the talk of shifting milestones and blurred blueprints, oftentimes the end goal is still the same: 65% of our respondents use a dating app to meet a long term partner.



“Some people ask me, ‘Did the way we date change because of dating apps? I sometimes wonder maybe dating apps these days are so popular because the way we date has already changed ... People have more relationships and different relationships in a certain time frame or during their life, and dating apps actually make it easier to connect people in different life stages.’”

— *Elisabeth Timmermans*

Perhaps in this freedom to explore and define for ourselves, we're experiencing greater success when it comes to relationships. It is important to remember: dating apps work.

A 2015 study found that the wide adoption of internet dating had probably increased the total number of marriages by 33% compared to a hypothetical internet-free world. Then there's e-babies – babies born to parents who met online. According to research by Imperial College Business School and eHarmony, within 20 years, e-babies will be more common than babies born to couples who met by traditional means.

A new set of values is shaping our contemporary times. Self development, self actualisation, and self care are part and parcel of a period in which the individual reigns supreme. As we recognise the value in prioritising our needs, singledom is being recast in a new light, one that celebrates the radical potential in living your life solo. Slow love has meant that singles take their time settling down and with that the cut off points to achieve certain goals (read: marriage and children) have shifted. Only 25% of our respondents feel pressure to get married and settle down.

2020 is the year where a focus on your own personal development in a relationship is given the weight it deserves. It's clear: single people like being single. According to findings from a survey by JWT, the majority of respondents say that they love being single, with upwards of 70% saying being single is their choice. The emphasis here is choice. 2020 is awarding us the ability not only to choose how we shape relationships, but if we even engage in them in the first place.



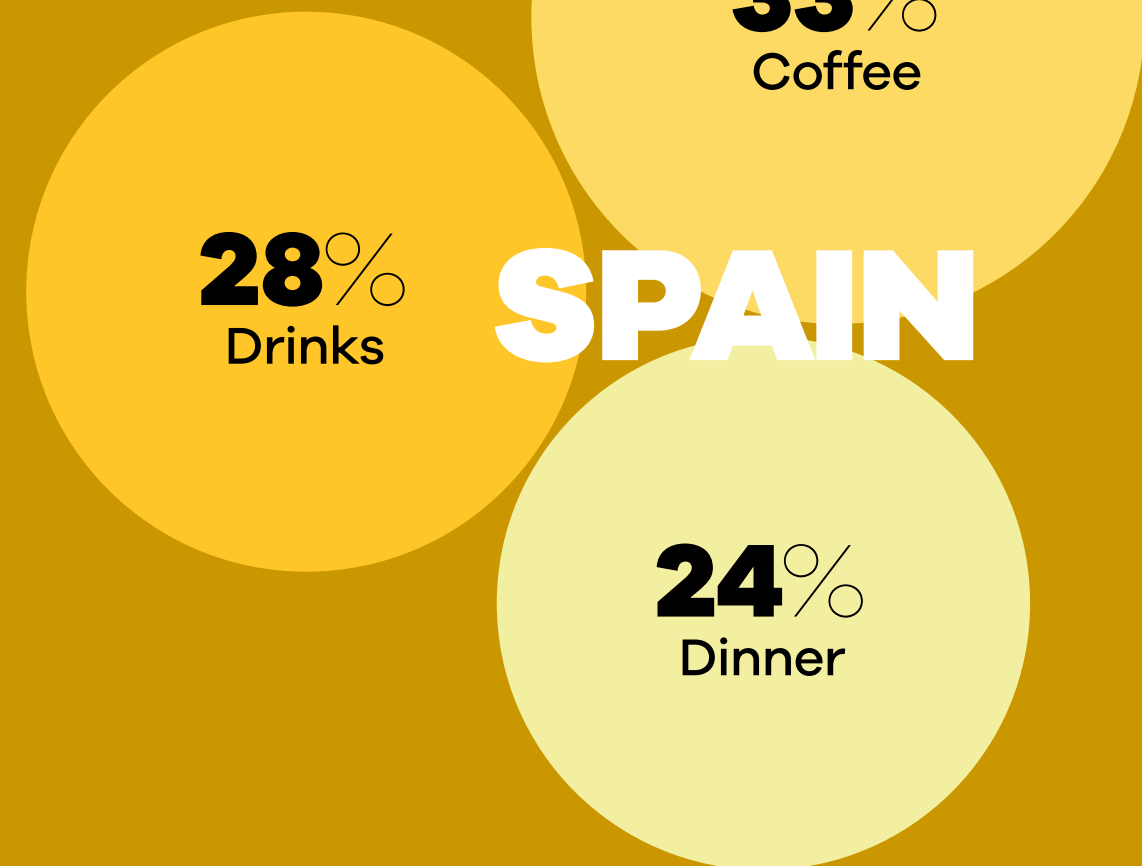
“There was a time when it was assumed that you have to have kids before you’re thirty. That was so dead set, and now it’s like, ‘No you can actually have kids whenever you want.’”

— *Reed Amber, Come Curious*

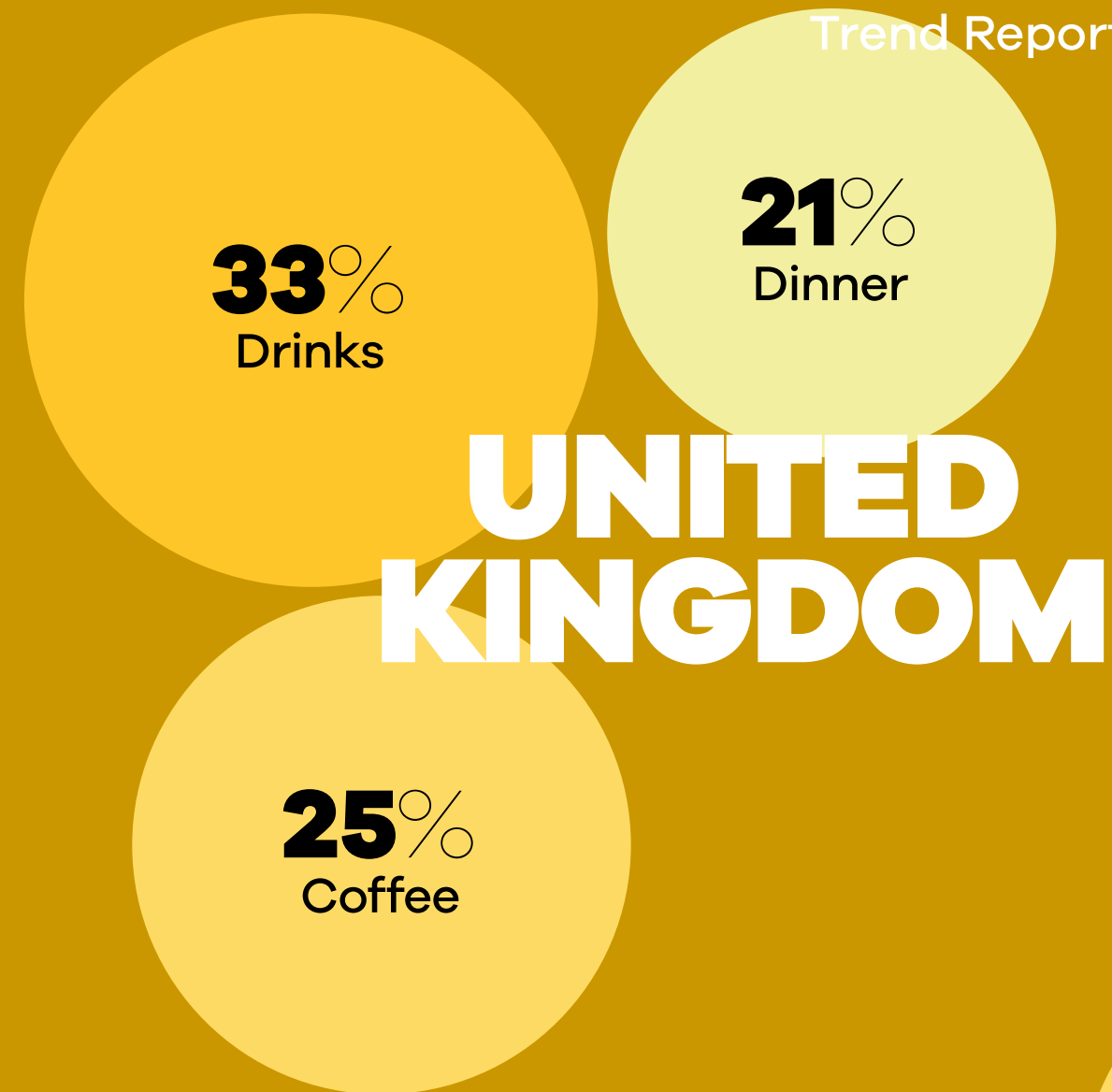
**GERMANS ARE  
SAYING NO TO BOOZE  
WHEN IT COMES  
TO A FIRST DATE,  
UNLIKE THEIR FRENCH  
COUNTERPARTS.**

# For a first date, where would you prefer to go?

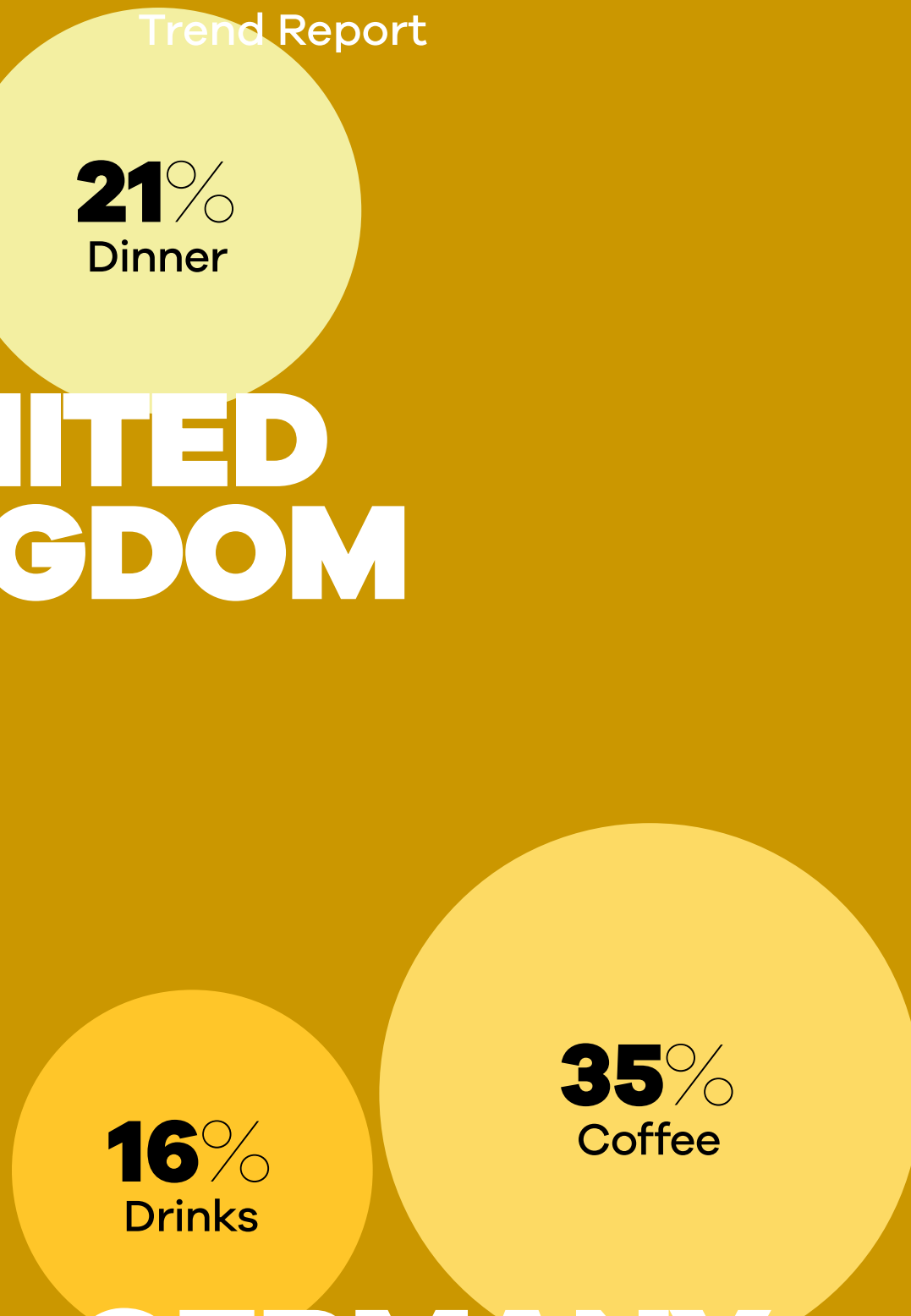
\*Top three per country



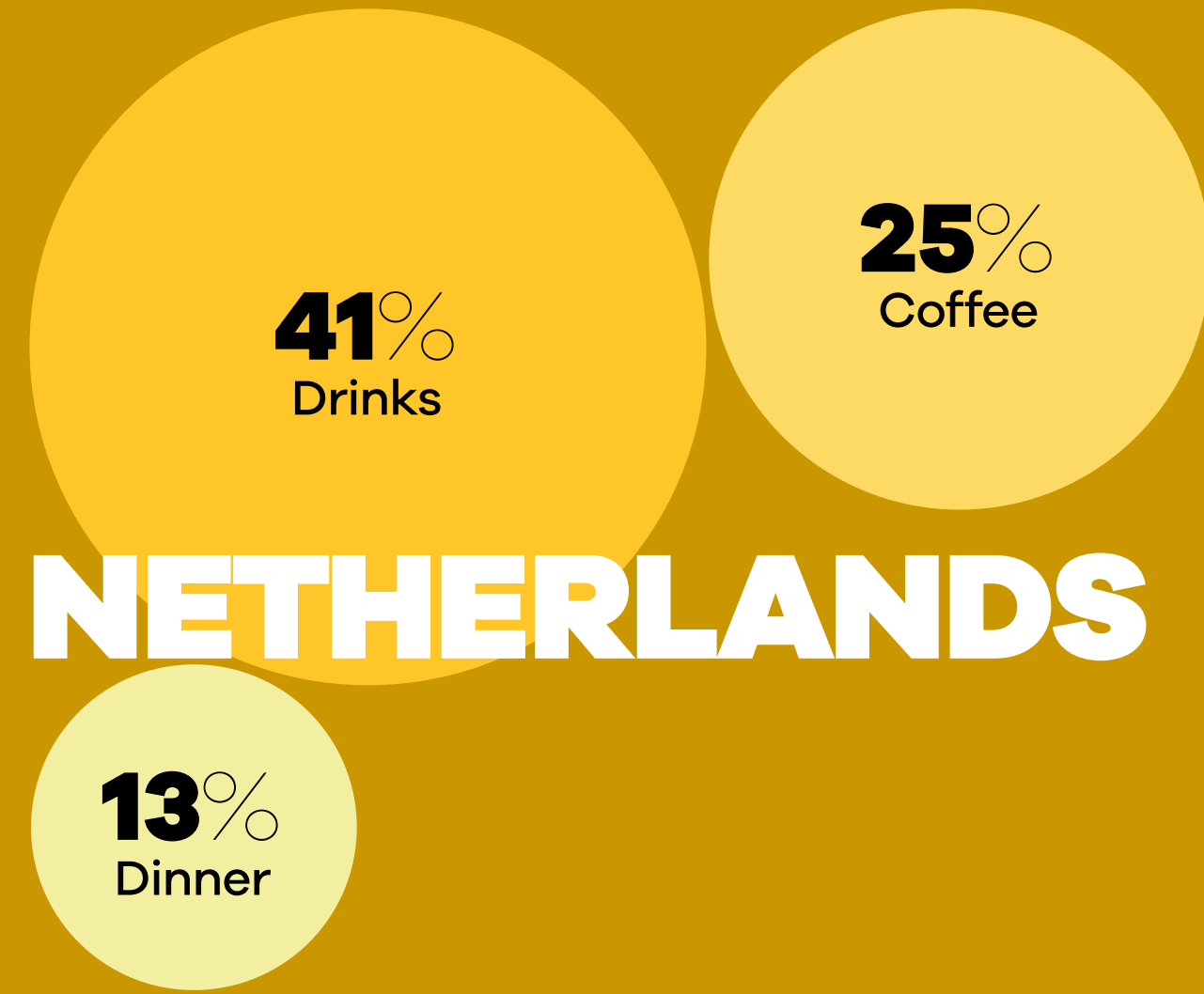
## SPAIN



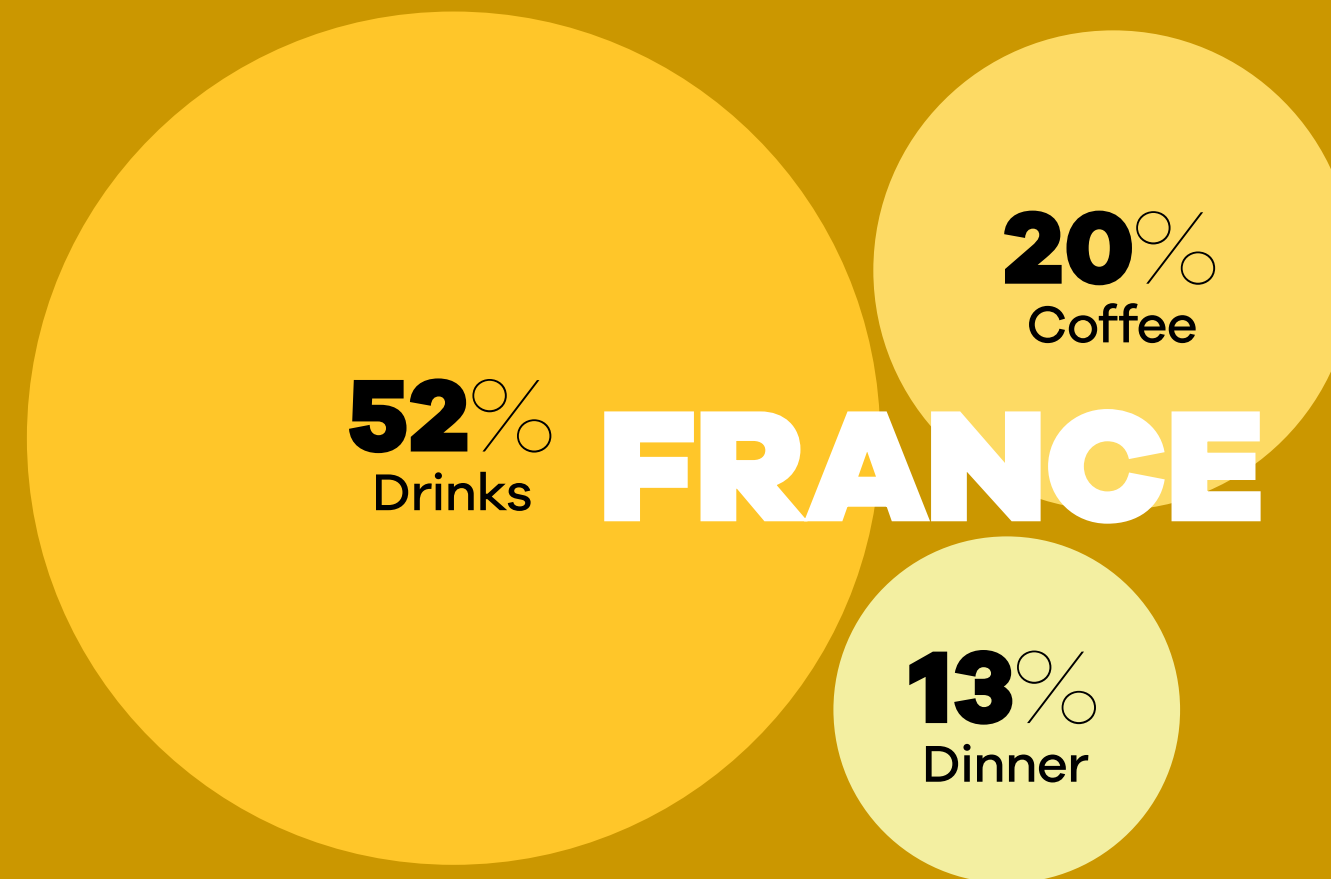
## UNITED KINGDOM



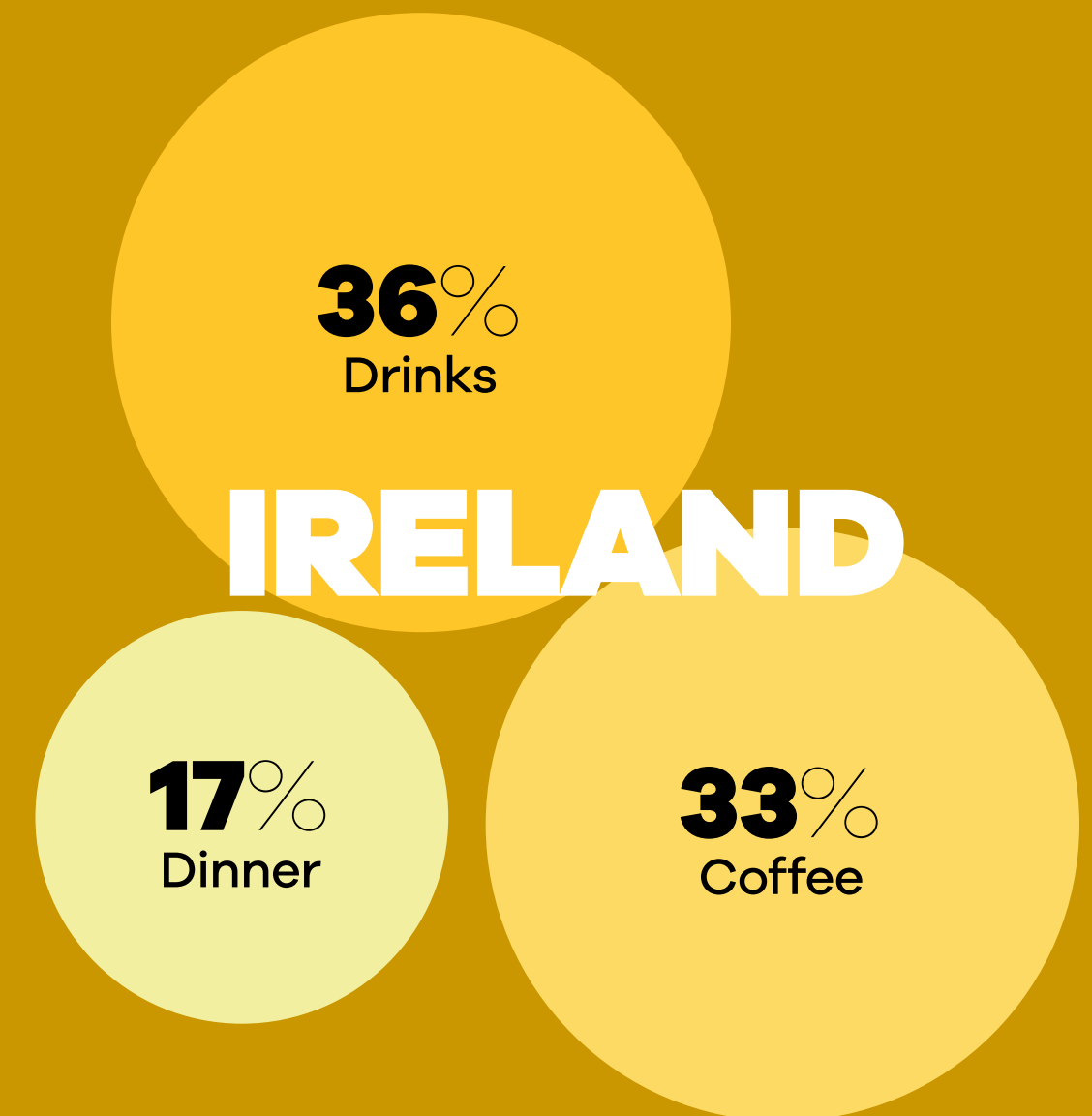
## GERMANY



## NETHERLANDS



## FRANCE



## IRELAND

NEW  
**DATING**  
TERMS

# SLOW LOVE

Gen Z and Millennials are marrying later, taking more time to find stability in a relationship before settling down.





# SITUATION-SHIP

The space between a committed relationship and something that is more than a friendship. On the one hand, removing the pressure of putting parameters on what the relationship is and isn't can be freeing – as long as both parties are okay with leaving things open.”



# CHIRPSING

Slang for chatting up. The chase. Basically - trying to get with someone (more in a dating sense than hook-up sense).



# LINKING

Getting together.



# DEMI- SEXUAL

A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone.



# DEEP LIKE

When you scroll through your crush's (or potential date's) social media profiles and like very, very old photos, either intentionally or accidentally. A deep like risks letting someone know that you're not only interested in them but that you also spent time researching them.



# CATCH FEELS

Short for 'catching feelings', the moment when you realise you like someone. For example, 'I've been speaking to this girl I met on a dating app... I think I'm about to catch feels!'



