



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 2024, eharmony took a look at how Canadian 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 From leaving behind outdated adages to reimagining family dynamics and even drawing inspiration from pop culture, **eharmony's Rule Breaker Report uncovers the trends and values shaping a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 anticipation of 2025. Let's dive in!**

Rewriting the dating rule book

Dating beliefs like *once a cheater, always a cheater* 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 our 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. When it comes to old dating adages, less than half of Canadian singles (43%) believe that cheaters will cheat again—insinuating there is room for growth,—and only 35% of singles believe they'll really *just know* when they've met "The One". Finally, finding more similarities than differences within a potential partner is key with only 27% of Canadian singles believing that opposites attract.

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

- Once a cheater, always a cheater 43%
- You'll just know when you meet 'The One' 35%
- Opposites attract 27%

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.**




These conversations can foster understanding, which can lead to deeper connections—even between people with differing dating 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 Canada is text message (67%), with promptness and spontaneity being key factors in building chemistry.

 **2025's Communication Crushes and Cringes:**

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-  **The Instant Gratifiers:** According to our report, more than two-thirds (68%) 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 Millennials at 65%. And 56% of singles respond as soon as they’re able—which is especially true for men (60%).
-  **The Dial-Up Daters:** After texting, **Canadian singles' second favorite method of communication is spontaneous phone calls (38%)**. It’s giving bold, confident, “I know what I want” energy that would make Samantha Jones proud.
-  **Chat-Icks:** But Canadian singles are leaving it at audio only, with survey respondents describing spontaneous (23%) and scheduled (21%) video calls as “cringe”, along with social media messaging (16%) – *sorry, Yo Gotti!*
- **(AI)fluence:** Finally, as AI continues to become an everyday part of our lives, while a majority of singles (71%) have never used AI to help them communicate either with someone they are dating or on dating apps, over a quarter of respondents (29%) have.

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.**”

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, Canadian daters are embracing authentic connection **before betting on bed chem**, with over a quarter saying that they will never sleep with someone on the first date (32%). Meanwhile, a little more than a quarter (23%) *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 Canada say "booty calls are their favorite" and that "they have a roster of intimate partners". A mere 5% prefer one-night stands. While the booty call might be phasing out, 30% of 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."

But dating today isn't just about timing—it's about boundaries and deal breakers. Smoking cigarettes (37%) or vapes (32%), lying about height (36%), and overusing therapy buzzwords like "gaslight" (25%) top the red flag list. [Goodbye therapy speak!](#)

▶ Red flags

- Smoking cigarettes 37%
- Lying about their height 36%
- Smoking vapes 32%
- Facial piercings 28%
- Holding an alcoholic beverage in their dating app photos 26 %
- Uses therapy terminology in conversation, like "gaslight" 25%

"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. A third (35%) of singles say they knew they were in love when they felt free to be their true selves, and (32%) when they couldn't stop thinking about the other person, *must be love on the brain!*



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

- I could be my most authentic self with them 35%
- I couldn't stop thinking about them/always wanted to be with them 32%
- I was very happy most of the time 29%
- We were able to have open communication 26%
- I could be vulnerable with them 23%
- I stopped having/didn't have doubts about them being in my life 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, making someone else a priority in your life (31%) and having someone to emotionally support you (29%) were within the top 5 definitions of commitment in 2024.

How Canadian singles are defining commitment:

- Only dating the other person 35%
- Sexual monogamy 33%
- Making someone else a priority in your life 31%
- Having someone to emotionally support you 29%
- Meeting each other's loved ones (friends/family) 25%
- Getting off dating apps 23%

How Canadian singles are defining monogamy:

- Dating one person 53%
- Only have sex with the person I'm in a relationship with 52%
- Being emotionally involved with one person 37%
- Not being on dating apps while dating someone 27%
- Being married/engaged to one person 24%

The Rise of Practical Dating

Turns out, the cost-of-living crisis is giving Cupid a budget-friendly edge, with just half of singles (50%) 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 a quarter of Canadian singles (41%) want an adoption-ready romance, and less than half 30% need the commitment of marriage or engagement before having children — **in fact 31% of Canadian 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 our survey, has a hand in reinforcing Canadian's own dating beliefs. While 42% of Canadian singles say they don't watch reality shows, those who do are taking note of valuable lessons to apply to their own dating lives.

The impact of reality dating shows on our dating lives:

- Watching the dynamics helps me make better dating choices 22%
- It makes me feel better about my own dating life 21%
- It helps me spot red flags when dating 21%

“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

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 December 2, 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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