



The New Leading Man: eharmony Unpacks Masculinity's Impact on Dating Dynamics In 2024

What it means to be masculine today is so much more broad and inclusive than it was in the past, but between social stereotypes and expectations for a man to be a knight in shining armor, how does that play out in today's dating world? **In this edition of Dating Diaries, eharmony explores that question with brand new data directly from men (age 18+) and the GenZers and Millennials who date them, including insightful takes and tips from eharmony relationship experts. Let's dive in!**

The mixed messages of modern masculinity

Between the various dating expectations shared on social media like wanting a [#rodentboyfriend](#) or a [#maninfinance](#), to the pressures that come from romantic partners to change aspects of themselves or their lives, **men are receiving mixed messages**. So what exactly are they? Well, **25% of American men have felt pressure from a romantic partner to change their attitude, followed by their emotions (22%)**.

Additional things US men feel pressured to change due their partner

- Clothing 18%
- Weight 16%
- Job 15%

Things US men feel pressured to change due to social media:

- Weight 17%
- Fitness 15%
- Emotions/attitude 12%

Conflicting expectations, combined with unfair traditional stereotypes (like being strong both physically and mentally) can create challenges for men trying to navigate dating and form authentic connections.

"These conflicting expectations make it tough for men to navigate dating vulnerably. When men face these mixed messages, it can lead to confusion and insecurity, making it challenging to approach relationships with confidence and authenticity. This often results in a lack of vulnerability, preventing genuine connections from developing, or creating barriers and guardedness that hinder the establishment of safety and trust in relationships."

Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert

While mixed messages can lead to confusion, surface-level deal breakers can not only impact male confidence, but also singles' dating pool options: **The #1 deal breaker for people who date men impacts short kings the most with 42% of Gen Z and 35% of Millennials saying they won't date a man who is shorter than them**. Laurel House, an eharmony relationship expert, weighs in on why deal breakers around someone's appearance can negatively impact your dating pool.



"Daters who are only interested in men who maintain a small spectrum of what's considered attractive are missing out on the majority of eligible bachelors, and possibly overlooking and dismissing someone who could be their match. By opening and expanding the spectrum of what is attractive, daters are dramatically increasing their options and opportunities for connection, relationships, and love."


Laurel House, an eharmony relationship expert

According to House, **we should be looking beyond superficial looks and focusing on who someone truly is**, including their personality, priorities, values, lifestyle, and how they treat and make you feel.

House adds, *"What's interesting is that oftentimes men who have historically been viewed as less attractive because of these superficial physical attributes like height, tend to be more attentive, aware, and purposeful with their partners."*

Things to consider, according to Laurel House:

When it comes to a long-term enduring relationship, getting what you "need" from your partner will ultimately create a deeper sense of happiness than being with someone who physically aligns with your "type".

What's more important? How tall someone is and how they look  How they treat you and make me feel

Should you wait for a leading man?

More often than not, men receive signals that they should take the lead with dating, including planning and paying for dates. And recently there's been a rise in trending TikTok hashtags like [#feminineenergy](#) and [#tradwives](#), suggesting that women expect to be chased and financially doted on, reinforcing a stereotypical belief in gender roles. **But is waiting for men to take the lead realistic?** Not really. While American men are open to taking the lead when it comes to planning dates (31%), **women are even more inclined to take on the task in a romantic relationship with men, including 49% of Gen Z women and 46% of Millennial women.**

"Making the first move shouldn't be gender-specific. Everyone, regardless of gender, should feel empowered to initiate and engage in dating. Whether it's planning a date or expressing interest, both parties should share the responsibility to foster more balanced and authentic connections. Regardless of gender, be genuine and share the responsibility across all dating experiences to create mutuality and balance. Communicate openly and always be yourself to build a foundation of trust and respect in your relationships."

Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert



But when it comes to paying the bill, American men are first to put their card down. **Only 37% of Gen Zers who date men are open to paying for a first date.**

Men are hesitant to talk about mental health struggles

While American men listed mental health as a top struggle they face, less than a third (23%) of American men are open to having conversations about mental health in relationships. Meanwhile, 73% of Gen Z and 67% of Millennials who date men say it's important for men to know that emotional intimacy is just as important as physical intimacy.

The top struggles American men are facing right now:

- Finances 23%
- Mental Health 14%
- Time for self care 10%

"Even in 2024, definitions of masculinity remain rigid, often confining men to narrow roles and expectations. However, there is ample room for more fluidity based on what men truly want for themselves and what their partners desire from them."

Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert

According to Baratz: When men embrace fluidity → they can redefine their perception of masculinity — which leads to opportunities to be vulnerable, express their emotions, and find mutual support in relationships.

This empowers men to break free from traditional stereotypes, which opens up space to create more authentic, fulfilling connections with their partners. This also allows growing relationships to be rooted in genuine understanding and shared values. And for the men struggling to prioritize their mental health and self care, Baratz shares a helpful perspective.

"Being open about your mental health not only strengthens your bond with your partner but is also an essential act of self-care. The better we care for ourselves, the better we can care for others. When men embrace emotional vulnerability, it fosters trust and intimacy, allowing both partners to feel understood and supported. This openness creates a safe space for both individuals to share their struggles and triumphs, ultimately leading to a deeper, more meaningful relationship."

Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert

A one man show...in the bedroom

When it comes to the bedroom, American men have their own insecurities. More specifically, they are the most self conscious about their performance. The ability to give their partner an orgasm makes men the most self conscious (31%), followed by stamina (29%).



What makes American men self-conscious during sex?

- Ability to give their partner an orgasm (31%)
- Stamina (29%)
- Sex Drive (22%)

So how can men put these insecurities to bed and make more room for mutual pleasure for themselves and prospective partners? **An open dialogue with current or future partners might be the answer.**

"Everyone has sexual insecurities and anxieties because of the sex-negative and sex-phobic culture many of us have been raised in. It's crucial to actively work through these anxieties and insecurities with your partner. Communication is key. By being open and vulnerable in the bedroom, men can achieve a more pleasurable physical connection for both partners and build self-confidence. This openness not only enhances the sexual experience but also strengthens the overall relationship by fostering trust and understanding."

Todd Baratz LMHC, an eharmony relationship expert

When it comes to the bedroom, people who date men want them to:

- **Understand their sexual health:** 55% of Gen Z and 51% of Millennials think it's important for men to understand sexual health.
- **Prioritize foreplay:** 38% of Gen Z and 46% of Millennials want men to understand that they need foreplay.
- **Be more fluid when it comes to positions in the bedroom:** 38% of Gen Zers want men to understand that they don't want to always bottom or top during physical intimacy.

So whether you date men or identify as one, unpacking perceptions about masculinity can help us navigate how we approach dating and the mixed messages we all face:

- **Shoot your shot:** No matter who you are making the first move shouldn't be gender-specific
- **Embrace the short king:** Don't let physical appearance "shorten" your dating pool!
- **Get fluid:** Fluid thinking opens up opportunities to be vulnerable, express yourself, and find mutual support in relationships!
- **Communication leads to confidence:** In and outside of the bedroom!

About eharmony

eharmony celebrates the passions, quirks and vulnerabilities that make us who we are, helping daters find relationships based on authentic self-expression and acceptance. We have and continue to help millions of daters find someone they can be themselves with – someone who gets them.



eharmony is headquartered in Los Angeles, and operates in the UK, US, Canada and Australia. For more information, visit www.eharmony.com, download the app on iOS and Android, and follow @eharmony on social platforms.

Methodology: Dating Diaries: The New Leading Man report was commissioned by eharmony and conducted by Harris Interactive. It was fielded online between July 4th and July 10th, 2024 and surveyed over 2,000 participants. Participants qualified if they were aged 18+ and were men or dating/in relationships with men. Results were weighted to be nationally representative.