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AUSSIE SENIORS SWIPE RIGHT TO ONLINE DATING

Over six in ten single seniors open to finding new love, new research reveals

Australian seniors who find themselves single are certainly not giving up on love and are turning to online dating with the support of their families, according to a new study released today by Australian Seniors.

Although traditional routes to finding love are still popular, more seniors are open to a digital dating approach. Those embracing technology and are using dating apps are using them frequently, South Australians are leading the way with almost six in 10 (56.2%) using this technology two to three times a week, followed by nearly four in 10 (39.0%) seniors in New South Wales*.

The *Modern Dating* report is the fifteenth instalment of *The Australian Seniors Series* – an ongoing national study that explores the shifting attitudes and concerns affecting Australia's over 50s. This chapter delves into how seniors feel about online dating, re-entering the dating game and how this impacts their family.

When navigating the dating scene, the majority of seniors say they prefer to be free to 'play the field' until they find the right person (63.2%) and would consider dating someone considerably younger (55.9%) than themselves. However, it's not just romantic connections that are being formed, more than two in five (44.0%) dating seniors say they have met or made new friends via dating websites. Of these, over one in five (21.0%) say they would now consider the people they met as close friends.

Australian Seniors spokesperson, Sarah Richards, said: "Our research shows that while most seniors feel as though dating doesn't get easier with age, they are more open to new ways of connecting with people. The bonds they form, whether romantic or otherwise, are encouraging seniors to feel empowered as they choose which method they prefer to meet new people."

The vast majority of seniors (82.6%) believe their peers are less likely to stay in unhappy relationships, with many enjoying the feeling of having more freedom when single compared to when in a relationship (86.3%). And, when comparing the state of play with their parents' generation, more than three in four (76.1%) think the attitude and approach to relationships has changed for the better.

The research also reveals that it is common for seniors to put more effort into their physical appearance when they begin dating again. This includes taking more care of their hairstyle and makeup (52.1%), watching their weight (46.1%) and paying more attention to their clothes, accessories and jewellery (44.2%).

Despite this, most seniors are interested in forming in-depth connections that go beyond physical appearance. The vast majority are looking for a sense of humour (83.7%), companionship (78.5%), similar interests (61.3%) and an interesting personality (74.4%) in a potential partner as well as stability and reliability (66.0%) in the relationship itself.

Dr Karen Phillip, Psychotherapist commented: “Seniors diving back into the dating pool will have a very different experience than they did when they were younger. The report shows that many seniors are having better dating experiences now they’re older than they did in their 20s, 30s and 40s, while more than half of respondents say they are more confident dating than they were when they were younger.”

Families are generally supportive when it comes to seniors finding a new partner. In fact, nearly a quarter (23.2%) of those surveyed say their children or grandchildren actively encouraged them to get back in the dating game.

This familial support extends to the times when partners’ families combine. One in 10 (10.6%) seniors say they are currently part of a blended family and the vast majority of their children were supportive when they became a step-family (82.1%).

“Introducing a new partner to friends and family can be an daunting process. It’s encouraging to see that seniors are being backed by their loved ones, both when they’re searching for new partners and once their families come together,” Dr Phillip added.

Despite the potential challenges, the majority of seniors are approaching dating later in life with an open and positive outlook.

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*State data is indicative based on sample size.

Further findings from the research:

- Similar proportions of dating seniors who have used dating websites say they decided to use one since they felt they had nothing to lose (48.2%) or felt lonely (47.3%). Male seniors are more likely to say they felt they had nothing to lose (54.5% vs. 42.6%) and were looking to find a casual relationship (30.7% vs. 12.6%) compared to their female counterparts.
- Most dating seniors look for a sense of humour (83.7%), companionship (78.5%) and an interesting personality (74.4%) in a potential partner. Physical attraction (68.4%), stability and reliability (66.0%) and having the same interests as them (61.3%) are also important things dating seniors consider in a potential partner.
- Seven in 10 (70.9%) dating seniors say they generally kiss on a first date, mostly depending on how the date went.
- The large majority of dating seniors believe physical intimacy is an important part of dating (75.3%), while close to three in five (55.1%) think this improves with age. Similar proportions feel less self-conscious about their appearance during intimate moments now than when they were younger (49.2%).
- Half of dating seniors (50.4%) say they are open to the idea of reconnecting with people they have previously dated or been in a relationship with regardless of whether it was casual or serious, while one in 10 (10.0%) say they are open but only with people they have casually dated.
- Dating seniors say the average acceptable amount of money to spend on a first date to cover both people is \$93.
- Most dating seniors believe expectations of what should be spent on a date are too

high (68.8%) and that dating is too expensive these days (58.2%).

- One in five dating seniors (21.3%) say dating is very important to them so they are willing to spend a lot of money on their date and more than one in ten (11.7%) think a lot of money should be spent on impressing their date.
- Over half of dating seniors (56.8%) think the bill should be equally split between both parties for the first date, while one-fifth (21.4%) say the male should solely pay.

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About Australian Seniors

Australian Seniors launched in 1998 to meet the needs of the often-ignored over 50s market. Since then, we've helped countless Australians protect the most important things in life – whether it's their family's future, valuable assets, or even their long-planned retirement.

We strive to be different by carefully selecting underwriters that share our vision of providing insurance that's simple, easy to understand, and affordable. That's why our policies have helped everyone from hard-working over 50s to self-funded retirees take control of the things that matter most.

About the 'Australian Seniors Series'

In order to explore Australian seniors' dating habits, views on relationships later in life and the reaction of their family when deciding to date again, CoreData surveyed online 1,000 typical Australians over 50 years old across the nation in November 2018. The sample collection employed soft quotas to monitor representativeness of the Australian senior adult population.

Hard quotas by state were also employed to ensure all the main states were represented with sufficiently robust samples in the research: NSW = 200, VIC = 200, QLD = 200, WA = 200, Remaining states/territories = 200.