

# These young Singaporeans are happy to remain single long term because of 'exhausting, bleak' dating culture

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- **For many Singaporean singles, looking for love has taken a backseat**
- **They attribute it to a dismal and draining online dating scene filled with fake profiles and misaligned expectations**
- **Instead, these young people are focusing on personal growth and self-fulfilment**
- **However, it does not mean that they have not closed the door completely should someone suitable come along**
- **Observers in the field said that the modern dating scene is challenging, with many people preferring real-life interactions over digital dating**

SINGAPORE — The last person Ms Claire Tan met on a dating application led to an on-and-off 10-month relationship cut short by a cruel revelation.

What began with the promise of companionship ended when she discovered that the man had never broken up with his girlfriend and that Ms Tan was merely, in her own words, a “perfectly timed sidepiece”.

That was back in 2022, and the 33-year-old has not been on a date that was initiated through dating apps since then.

While she entertains the idea of eventually finding the right person and settling down, looking for this potential partner is no longer a priority for her, scarred as she is by her bad experience.

“I just leave the (dating) apps there, not opening them for months and then logging in again after a while out of curiosity,” she said. “I usually give up quite quickly because the thought of having to open up to a new person just drains me.”

Like Ms Tan, a small but growing group of young people are deciding not to make the effort to look for love, and are making peace with the possibility of [staying single](#) long-term.

They exist alongside those Singaporeans who do find meaningful relationships but are marrying later.

In the inaugural Family Trends Report published on July 15 by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), the median age of first marriage in 2023 went up compared to 2013 — from 30.2 years to 31 years for grooms and 28.1 years to 29.5 years for brides.

The singles who spoke to TODAY gave various reasons for stepping away from actively engaging in dating. Many attributed it to the “bleak” modern dating scene, with several saying that dating apps have created a dating culture that is [more focused on casual flings](#) rather than meaningful connections.

Against this backdrop, they said that they would prefer to expend their energy on working on themselves, focusing on their own lives and finding happiness and fulfilment without a partner.

Ms Rian Atullah, 36, said: "I enjoy my freedom, and I feel like I'm already very busy trying to maintain the relationships and hobbies I have at the moment."

The content producer added: "I'm not sure if I have the capacity or headspace to care for another person either."

Similarly, Ms Tan said: "I've experienced some of my happiest moments in life as a single woman; who is to say I'll get the same joy with a partner in my life? I'm happy with the way things are."

Others such as Mr Gabriel Matienzo, 24, also want to better themselves before they bring another partner into the picture.

The intern at an IT firm said: "I think what has motivated me to stay single is working on myself and growing into my own person."

This trend of young people choosing not to seek love appears to be growing. An Institute of Policy Studies study in collaboration with the National Youth Council found that two in five of the respondents (39 per cent) had never been in a relationship, with the main barrier being that they had not met the right person yet.

Other commonly given reasons included having more important priorities in life, while some found that dating in Singapore is stressful in terms of "expenses and expectations".

To find out what is driving this trend, TODAY spoke to 10 singles who have chosen not to pursue romance at all or have put dating on the back burner.

## **A 'BLEAK, UNINSPIRING' DATING SCENE**

Singles told TODAY that the dating scene in Singapore is dreary and dismal. Especially when swiping online, it is a draining endeavour, rife with fake profiles and misaligned expectations.

Mr Felix Yuen, 35, an educator, said: "The modern dating scene is rough. I'm growing disillusioned with how exhausting and time-consuming dating and, more specifically, the pre-dating process is."

Mr Kyle Tan, a 30-year-old accountant, called the scene "bleak".

"There are too many options on dating apps, which may lead to decision fatigue," he said.

"Plus, the emphasis on looks over personality on dating apps means that if one is not conventionally good-looking, they will be swiped away, no matter how wonderful their profile write-up is."

A 29-year-old legal executive who wants to be known only as Angel said that the dating pool is now made up of two distinct groups of people: Those looking for a meaningful partnership that could eventually lead to marriage, and those looking for purely physical relationships.

Angel said that while there is nothing wrong with either group, it can be hard to identify what someone's intentions are, because she has come across people who have lied about them.

“It makes me feel like it has become extremely difficult to identify genuine people, and a lot of effort has to be invested to figure that out,” she added.

Ms Cece Cheng, 38, who works in the media industry, said that the never-ending cycle of talking to someone new leaves her feeling worse than before, and is not something she wants to go through anymore.

“After three months of talking to someone without it culminating into a lasting relationship, instead of it being a more fulfilling experience for myself, I find myself feeling more empty.

“Then, what’s the point?”

In response to queries from TODAY, a representative for popular dating app Tinder acknowledged that dating has become more challenging, and more young people are searching for authentic connections.

This disappointment is exacerbated by people expecting “quick and perfect matches”, the representative said.

“This is largely influenced by the instant gratification we get from services like Amazon, Netflix, TikTok or Uber. This expectation sets a high standard for dating apps and reshapes how we view successful dating experiences.”

People also tend to look “nostalgically” at the “meet-cute” scenarios from sitcoms and movies, which make modern dating methods seem “somewhat lacklustre” in comparison, Tinder’s representative added.

### **THE DOOR IS NOT CLOSED, IT IS JUST NOT USED**

Even though these singles are not actively looking for dates, they told TODAY that they are still open to the possibility of romance — if it happens to come their way serendipitously.

“If it happens, it happens,” Ms Rian said. “Either way, I’m not too bothered about what other people think. If this is what they deem to be an extreme lifestyle, then maybe they’re the ones who need to re-evaluate their life choices.”

Similarly, Angel said: “I am not shutting my door, but I am simply not standing in the doorway waiting for someone to walk by and neither am I exiting the door to explore the world outside.”

Mr Viknesh Pillai, 27, echoed her sentiment.

“I don’t wait at the door for a girl to come; I live and enjoy my own life meanwhile, and if a girl passes by and wants to walk through the door, I will happily do my best to make her stay,” the IT professional said.

Ms Simaran Panaech, 44, is not holding her breath for a partner. The freelance writer has had her fair share of dating mishaps and decided in her 30s that she was “totally okay” with being alone.

“I’d rather live happy on my own, doing the things I enjoy, healing my traumas and addressing my issues than deal with someone else and their baggage,” she said.

Lately though, she is starting to think that she should push herself to try because, like most people, she wants a partner with whom to share her life.

“But if that’s not meant to be, I’m not suffering over it.”

## **HOW ‘GAMIFIED’ HOPE LEADS TO DISAPPOINTMENT**

Observers in the field agreed that a growing number of young Singaporeans, both men and women, are choosing to remain single.

Ms Violet Lim, a co-founder of the dating service Lunch Actually, noted: “Women often talk about the lack of genuine connection and the superficiality of online dating platforms as key frustrations.

“Men, on the other hand, frequently mention the challenges of meeting compatible partners and the pressure to meet societal expectations.”

Echoing what the singles told TODAY, she added that people often feel overwhelmed by the complexities and time investment required in modern dating.

There are many hurdles that singles have to go through before even securing a date, such as filtering genuine daters from non-genuine ones and going through the swiping and chatting process, Ms Lim said.

“While it’s enjoyable and exciting in the beginning, many singles will experience swiping fatigue after a while.”

Ms Noorindah Iskandar, founder of Shy and Curious, a blog that explores sex and love, agreed, saying that the proliferation of dating apps amplifies this disillusionment by “gamifying hope” that your future partner might be one swipe away.

“It’s the idea that there’s endless possibilities and matches as you swipe,” Ms Nooridah added. “It can feel very validating and addictive to have this amount of choice.”

Counsellors such as Ms Theresa Pong, founder and counselling director at The Relationship Room, said that they are seeing more youth focusing more on investing time in hobbies and interests that bring fulfilment outside of romantic relationships.

“Interestingly, instead of relying on dating apps to make new connections, we observe that individuals are engaging in activities that promote mental and emotional health such as therapy, mindfulness practices and fitness routines.”

This is certainly true for Mr Tan the accountant, who is now focused on taking care of himself and focusing on his own needs. He spends his time playing football and reading graphic novels.

The tipping point that turned him off dating was not a single incident but a series of “bad experiences” in his past relationships, from being cheated on to dealing with emotionally unavailable partners.

For the moment, he is resolute in staying single to not “get heartbroken yet again”.

“Staying single for now is a way to protect myself from further emotional pain.”