

Online dating – harnessing the power of regional data

With Christmas parties being cancelled and people looking once again to limit their social mixing, spare a thought for those who are single. It has been a tough couple of years for those who have been looking for love. Face-to-face interactions have been limited at work, entertainment venues and pubs have been closed for long periods, lectures were moved online and of course people were advised to socially distance.

It probably comes as no surprise then that online dating continues to attract large audiences. In October 2021, 6.1 million people aged 15+ had visited an app or website classified by Ipsos iris as 'online dating' – that's 12.2% of the UK online population. But, for those hoping to meet their soulmate, are there certain areas of the country where they may have better luck? Given the latest 'city and town' data now available in Ipsos iris, UKOM can reveal the top 5 and bottom 5 areas in terms of reach of online dating services.

Usage of dating websites and apps

Top 5 Cities and Towns by Reach				Bottom 5 Cities and Towns by Reach			
Rank	City/Town	Audience Reach %	Audience Affinity Index	Rank	City/Town	Audience Reach %	Audience Affinity Index
1.	London	16.0%	131	96.	Middlesbrough	8.0%	65
2.	Redditch	15.3%	125	97.	Sunderland	8.0%	65
3.	Aberdeen	15.3%	125	98.	Gateshead	7.9%	64
4.	Swansea	15.2%	124	99.	Newcastle Upon Tyne	7.8%	63
5.	Edinburgh	15.0%	122	100.	Chatham	7.7%	63

Ipsos iris enables reporting of online data by 100 UK cities and towns meaning subscribers are now able to rank locations based on the audience reach for any category, website, app or online brand. For online dating, London has the highest percentage of monthly users with 16% of those aged 15+ visiting an online dating service in October 2021 – that's over 1 million Londoners searching for love online. Reach of dating services in London is more than double that of the cities and towns with the lowest reach. Chatham in Kent had the lowest usage with only 7.7% using a dating app or website. Interestingly those living in cities in Scotland seemed most likely to use online dating services with Aberdeen and Edinburgh in the top 5 whilst people living just across the border were least likely: four out of five of the cities with the lowest reach were in the North-East of England.

Ipsos iris nation level data provides further evidence of the popularity of dating sites among Scots. Over 14% of people living in Scotland and Wales used online dating services in October 2021 compared

to only 12% in England – people living in Northern Ireland were the least likely at only 10.6%. In addition to being more likely to use dating services, the Scots also spent longer on them. Across the UK, online dating users spent on average 3 hours per month (182 minutes) looking for their perfect match, whereas in Scotland the average was 5 hours (300 minutes). Conversely, although Wales had high reach of dating sites, visitors only spent an hour a month using them with Swansea, Cardiff and Newport ranking lowest out of 100 cities in terms of average minutes per person – maybe they didn't like what they saw or perhaps they are more easily pleased?

Although a bit of fun, this highlights the importance of regional differences when it comes to looking at online behaviour. In addition to national and city level data, Ipsos iris is soon to include Acorn and Fresco profiling, providing even more granular insights for campaign planning. **For more information and to download the article click here.**

Notes on data:

Source: Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Oct 2021. Online dating is defined by combining two Tier 2 categories: 'Lifestyle – online dating' plus 'Social networking – online dating'

Base = all aged 15+ years using PC/laptop, smartphone or tablet device(s).

Audience Affinity Index = The ratio of audience composition to the target audience composition (total internet population 15+)

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