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## Internet intimacy

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Internet dating has often been stereotyped as the domain of the sad and lonely. However this opinion may be changing, as younger generations now feel that meeting people online is just the same as meeting in a bar. Richard, 25 from Stockport, says 'Internet dating has definitely lost some of the stigma attached to it. These days it is something I would consider.'

### Cherry picking

Internet dating has many advantages. Shy people can find it easier to chat via a keyboard than face to face because the fear of rejection is reduced. 'You can cherry pick, you can be selective. It builds your confidence. I'm generally shy but once you've been on one date it gets easier the more you go on', said Janet, 26 from Northern Ireland. Rebecca, 26 from Liverpool agrees. 'There's just so much choice. You can list all your likes, dislikes and romantic requirements and then find exactly what you want.' There is also the convenience, as Janet says, 'It's something you can dip in and out of depending on how busy you are.' There are also many speciality sites such as millionaire dating and sites specifically for disabled people.

### Dangers

There can of course be problems associated with online dating. Many scams exist, often related to marriage agencies offering to introduce men to a foreign bride for a fee. Internet daters need to be cautious. Manote, a 29 year old student from Thailand, has friends who have experienced bad relationships which started on the internet. 'You don't know what you're going to get from online romance. I believe face to face dating is nice and easy'. Janet, a 26 year old from Northern Ireland, didn't have a great first experience and describes the man she met as a 'bit of a dodgy stalker'. Happily, she went on to meet her fiancé Robert.

### The future?

An academic study by Dr Jeff Gavin has shown that relationships formed on the internet enjoy a 94% success rate. With 12 million unattached people in Britain today and divorce rates rising dramatically, perhaps internet dating really is the best way to find love. If you don't meet someone at school, university or work, and are not interested in clubbing, it seems a great alternative and in the future may become the main way people meet.