

Relationships: A Status Update



information
desk

insights from
VICE media
group

Relationships: A Status Update



Change is a mainstay in the world today. The constant forward-push of technology, society, and culture presents both ongoing uncertainty and uncapped opportunity. This new world we live in has changed the way we build and approach the relationships we take with us on the journey. This change is especially visceral for young generations who are more diverse, complex, and nonconforming than any before. They are shaping our future with every connection they make, both online and off, and challenging what relationships can look like.

In this report, we take a look at the relationship statuses in their lives: their relationship with themselves, their relationship with others, and their relationship with brands. We unpack the intricacies of how and why these connections form and how they help young people navigate the world around them. It's not nearly as simple as swiping left or swiping right.

#3

**Most consumed
VICE video
content is Sex &
Relationships**

Source: VICE YouTube Analytics

METHODOLOGY

This report combines a wide range of recently conducted research across VICE Media Group.

All studies focused on 16-39 year olds.

SOURCES INCLUDE:

VICE Voices: VICE's proprietary insights community in the US & UK of 40K audience members. Sample size of 500+ per study.

Mad Chatter: Refinery29's proprietary insights community in the US & UK of 12K women. Sample size of 400+ per study.

VMG Youth Census: A survey run bi-yearly of general youth and VICE's audience across 23 countries. Sample size of over 40K.



Turning Inward for Me and We

In this ever-evolving world, where young people often struggle to find clarity and certainty, they are turning their attention inwards to the one thing they can control: themselves.

Knowing who they are at the core grounds them. It is the place from which they access their intuition, their core values, and ultimately their place in the world around them.

It also empowers them to be of service to the world. In the case of an emergency on an airplane, the flight attendant instructs the individual to put on their own oxygen mask before helping others; quite similarly, young people know they must take care of themselves before they can take care of others.

But this is not as easy as it sounds...

74%

Young women say, “I know I need to take care of myself, in order to take care of others”

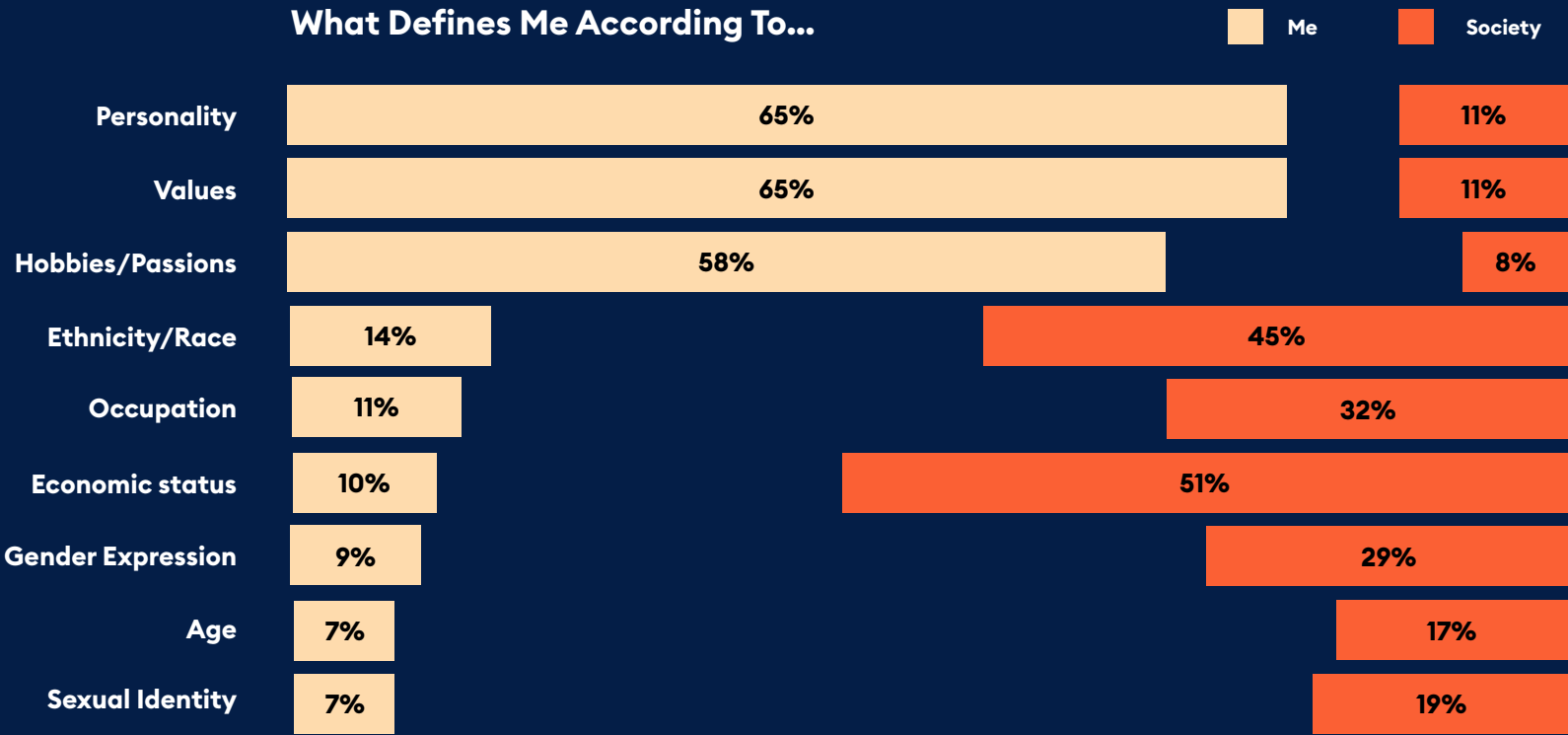
Source: Mad Chatter - Audience Segment Exploration

Identity Crisis

Young people know who they are and what makes them unique individuals. They recognize that their identity is fluid and layered, and they’re excited and comforted by the endless possibilities open to them. They primarily identify by who they are: their values, their personality, and their passion points.

The crisis occurs when the society they live in is structured differently. Culture has not caught up. It still identifies people by what they are: their gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, etc. These attributes are fixed and binary.

What Defines Me According To...



Source: VICE Voices - Privacy & Identity

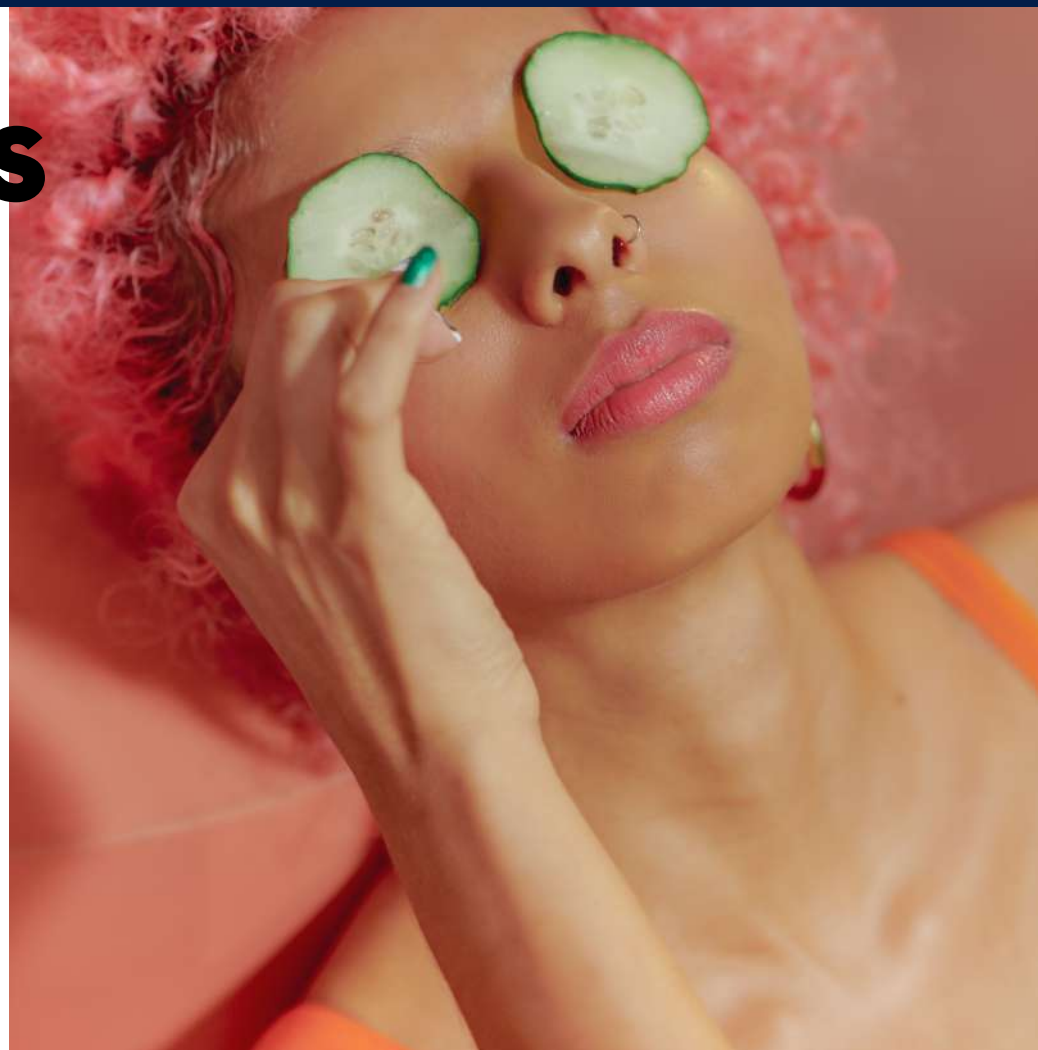
Health Hurdles

Health and wellness are extremely important to young people when it comes to living a happy life. But managing one's health and achieving one's health goals is challenging and can feel overwhelming. Not only is it hard to find the time to stay healthy, but there is also so much advice out there that it's hard to know where to turn and what to do.

91%

Say health and wellness is important to live their best life

Source: VICE Voices—Health & Wellness



BUT

SELF CARE TAKES TIME

2 in 5

Say finding time to stay healthy is challenging

Source: VMG Youth Census

IT'S OVERWHELMING

78%

Think there is so much advice it's hard to know who to trust

Source: VICE Voices—Health & Wellness

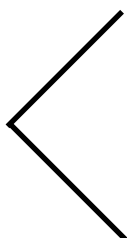
As a result, most young people struggle to actualize their goals and rate their current health as far less than ideal.

ONLY

6%

Describe their overall health and wellness as excellent

Source: VICE Voices—Health & Wellness



ONLY

1 in 2

Young women feel they “Have their shit together” when it comes to self-care

Source: Mad Chatter - How to Feel Better

Self-care has become an integral part of young people's lives. This is especially true for Gen Z's, who feel mental health is the most important element to leading a happy life. More and more, young people are turning to meditation, focusing on sleep to recharge and rejuvenate, and spending "healthy alone time" to ensure they are putting the best versions of themselves forward.

#1 Mental Health has the largest impact on Gen Z's Health & Wellness

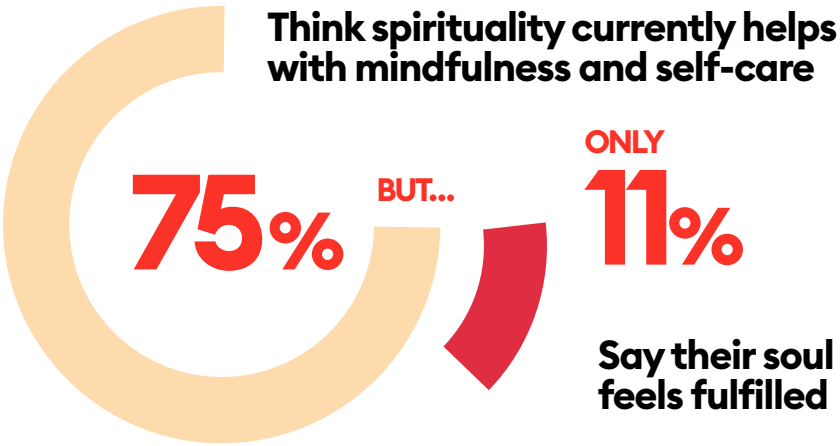
Source: VICE Voices—Health & Wellness



"I experienced a major depressive episode and thought, F*ck, I've got to actually start checking in and taking care of myself. I'm of no use or help to anyone if I can't even survive a Tube ride without bursting into tears. I've definitely found that I'm a more productive employee and supportive, reliable friend when I'm feeling healthy and stable. And—counterintuitive as it seems—I think limiting my social and professional commitments is helping me get there."

— GENEVIEVE, 26, WHO COMMITS TWO NIGHTS A WEEK TO QUALITY ALONE TIME

Spirituality is also a common tool used to help nurture their minds and their souls. But for young people, spirituality doesn't mean organized religion. Instead, they are turning toward alternative methods to get in touch with a higher power – including tuning into their intuition, creating art, even finding inspiration in music. Yet with all of this focus, a void still remains.

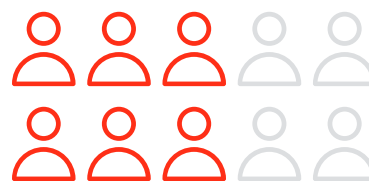


Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

Focus Fatigue

The future holds untapped potential for young generations, and they are striving for it all. They believe success is self-made and their personal ambition is most critical to their success. While they are optimistic about the future, it is the future itself that also causes them the most stress. As young people put more focus and attention on themselves and are more aware of their personal goals, they consequently feel more pressure to achieve all they have set out for.

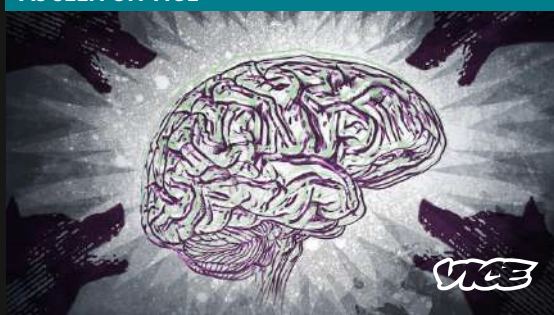


6 in 10

Young people prefer to create their own wealth opportunities (Age 22-37)

Source: VICE Voices - Financial Savvy

AS SEEN ON VICE



How Self-Employment Can Impact Your Mental Health

“

The number of freelancers is growing; there's been a permanent change in the way we work. It's time to create some new structures of support if we're going to pay our rent, meet deadlines, and avoid, if possible, completely losing our minds.

”

As a result of the focus on mental health and self-care, they are also more aware when feelings of stress occur in their bodies... so they feel stressed out about being stressed out.

Turning inward to ground oneself in an ever-changing world leads to inner conflict. For young people, it's a complicated relationship between themselves and themselves. With ambition comes pressure. With optimism comes uncertainty. With self-care comes self-doubt.



Young people feel stressed weekly

Top factor causing stress: Personal Future

Top area of young women's lives they feel is most damaging to wellbeing: Putting too much pressure on myself

Sources: VICE Voices - Burnout & Escapism; Mad Chatter - How to Feel better



STATUS UPDATE: IT'S COMPLICATED



Connect with Others to Connect with Self



There is an inevitable correlation between the relationship young people have with themselves and the relationships they form with other people. A deep internal focus and practice of self-care has made young generations very independent. They believe the work they put into taking care of themselves ultimately enhances their relationships, but they don't need, or want, to be dependent on others.

“My ideal relationship is more about bettering myself and less about dependency. At the end of the day, you have to rely on you.”

— FEMALE, AGE 25 - 34 *Source: VICE Voices - Love & Loyalty*



6 in 10

Believe the biggest drawback to being committed to someone or something is becoming too reliant on that someone / something

Source: VICE Voices - Love & Loyalty

While they understand that relationships require compromise, they are unwilling to compromise on who they are. They know they cannot neglect their personal passions and values for another person. Instead, they look to others to enhance their lives and bring out their best selves.

AS SEEN ON R29



**Living Apart Together:
The Relationship
Status That More &
More Millennials Are
Signing Up For**

“...they realize they thrive when they have independence and personal space, and they don't want to give that up when they begin a committed relationship.”

Same Value, Deeper Meaning

As with previous generations, Millennials and Gen Z place enormous value on relationships. They are looking for meaningful connections that involve trust, honesty, and a good laugh.

The independence they build in navigating the complexity of their own inner worlds has built empathy for those sharing the journey. They understand that every individual faces their own unique experience when it comes to self-discovery and self-love, which opens them up to truly seeing what makes a person who they are and spending less time considering surface attributes. In friendships, Gen Z in particular gain self-confidence as friends enable them to express, and be accepted for, who they truly are. In romantic relationships, superficial factors such as financial stability are no longer a must-have. Young people are looking for passion – for life, for hobbies and interests, for each other.



#1

Having strong relationships with family and friends is what they value most in life

Source: VMG Youth Census

Friends must be:

- #1** → **Fun**
- #2** → **Funny**
- #3** → **Trustworthy**

3x Gen Z say friends give me confidence vs. Millennials

Source: VICE Voices—Social Life

Romantic Relationships must have:

- #1** → **Loyalty**
- #2** → **Humor**
- #3** → **Honesty**
- #4** → **Passion**
- ...
- #14** → **Financial Stability**

Source: VICE Voices—Love & Loyalty

AS SEEN ON R29



How Marriage Became An Outdated Concept — Sorta

“There’s been a social change and a cultural change...”

Marriage is still important, it hasn’t gone away, but there are now other legitimate ways to make families and be in relationships.”

More Is Better

This focus on the deeper layers of an individual results in a more open mindset. Young people are peeling back the confines of gender and sexuality and experimenting with a more open-minded lifestyle. This provides more opportunities for connections. Couple that with the technology that has flooded culture with myriad ways to find relationships of all kinds, and the possibilities feel truly endless.

1 in 2 Gen Z

1 in 3 Gen Y

Define themselves non-heterosexual

Source: VICE Voices - Privacy & Identity

64%

Gen Z Women don't mind reversing gender roles

Source: Mad Chatter - Dating & Relationships



We Asked Couples Why They Opened Up Their Relationship

“...We never place limits on emotions other than love...with monogamy, it's like only one person is allowed to feel your love. And love is such a crazy emotion, so why not experience it with a bunch of people?”

—CHRIS, 23



Allosexual, Demisexual, Bicurious — & Other Sexualities You Need To Know

“There are so many ways someone can identify their sexual orientation — and it's time that we start talking about them, too.”

With unlimited choices, young people are often faced with option-overwhelm and are ultimately less willing to commit, for fear that they are settling or that something better will come along. But choice is not the only reason young people keep their eyes open for other relationships. There is no longer the expectation that one person will fulfill your needs until death do you part. As one grows and changes, so do one's needs, and they may change or add relationships to their lives accordingly. As young generations have a better understanding of who they are and what they need, they take a more practical approach to relationships.

1 in 2

Say even when I'm committed, I want to keep my options open

Source: VICE Voices - Love & Loyalty

ONLY 32%

Expect to only have one romantic partner fulfill all of their life needs

Source: VICE Voices - Love & Loyalty



STATUS UPDATE: POLYAMOROUS



Connect with Brands to Express Self

The relationship young people have with brands is also interconnected with the relationship they have with themselves. They want to align themselves with brands that get them. They look for brands that reflect their values, personality, and passions and use them as a way to communicate to the world who they are and what they believe in.

78%

Are looking for brands that align with their values

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality



Values Must Be a Match

With brands playing such an important role in young people's lives today, youth are incredibly thoughtful in the brands they choose to support, ensuring these brands align with their beliefs.

Young people see themselves as agents of change and are not afraid to take a stand, even if it goes against what their friends and family believe in. They expect the brands they engage with to follow suit – they need to have a clear purpose and do good for the world and the people in it. Gen Z are not simply more open to brands speaking on behalf of their values; they demand it. The top values young people want to see matched by brands are equality, inclusivity, and sustainability.

68% Gen Z

56%

Brands have the power to speak on behalf of my generation's values

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

80% Gen Z

73%

Say brands should take a stand on social causes

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

An Extension of Self

With identity focused on who they are at the core, unrestricted by binaries or labels, young people are looking for ways to express themselves. Brands play a pivotal role here. They provide not only the physical means to express oneself through their products and services, but also support and acceptance of the wide variety of identities that exist today.

Young people are looking for brands that offer a sense of belonging. They want brands to make them feel like part of a community – not an exclusive club, but a community that is open and inclusive and full of like-minded people.

74% Gen Z

67%

Think brands help them express their identities

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

84%

Like brands that make them feel good about themselves

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

1 in 2

Look for brands that make me feel part of a community

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

Loyal in Love but Not Purchase

Commitment to a brand is hard to come by. It involves an emotional connection through a true understanding and reflection of a young person's values. Love for a brand is often expressed outwardly via social media and word of mouth. Engagement with other brands is often functional, fickle, and private. Young people will buy a range of brands according to their needs at the time.

As important as brands are to young people today, if a brand is not a good match, they will not compromise. Not only are they unwilling to get into any sort of relationship with brands that don't reflect who they are and what they stand for, they are also quick to drop a brand if it makes a mistake and doesn't own up to it with a solution.

74%

Are very loyal to the brands they **love** today

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

ONLY

24%

Think it's important to be loyal to the brands they **buy**

Source: VICE Voices - Spirituality

86%

Young women boycott brands that don't align with their values 'sometimes' or 'every chance they get'

Source: Mad Chatter - Values



STATUS UPDATE: IN AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP

Key Takeaways



RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF: IT'S COMPLICATED

An increased focus inward can make the growing expectations of oneself toxic.



RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS: POLYAMOROUS

No longer looking for someone to depend on; relationships with others are built in multiples to enhance one's life in different ways.



RELATIONSHIP WITH BRANDS: IN AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP

A deep connection is built with brands that reflect one's values; buying others on the side also fulfills more functional and timely needs.

A focus on the self impacts relationships of all kinds for young generations today. But this focus does not mean young people are selfish. In fact, it is quite the opposite. They are focusing inward to improve their ability to engage with others in a meaningful way and make positive change in the world.

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insights from
VICE media group

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