

“Bitters” vs “Lovers”:

What our Valentine's Day outlook says about us

February 11, 2010

Do you send out Valentines and makes special plans for February 14th? Or do you rant against the crass commercialism of the holiday? Turns out that if you answered 'yes' to the latter, Valentine's Day is probably far from the *only* thing that makes you cranky.



“Bitters” vs “Lovers”: What our Valentine's Day outlook says about us

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Abstract

- We asked Hunch.com users about their feelings regarding Valentine’s Day—do they “love it,” are they “bitter about it,” or do they “like it when they have a Valentine”?
- We then took a deeper look at the “love it” and “bitter” groups to find out what differentiates them, exploring dozens of different demographic, personality-based, and behavioral measures.
- The report draws on aggregated and anonymous data from Hunch, an online recommendation site launched in June 2009.

Key findings

- It turns out that the way someone feels about Valentine’s Day is a pretty good predictor about how happy they are with life in general.
- The 18% of Hunch users who are “bitter” about Valentine’s Day are more likely to say they “don’t know when they’d become happy”. They are more likely to be male, to be relatively lacking in self-esteem and tend to index higher on science-focused professions. They’re also more turned on by pornography, accepting of premarital sex, and more focused on their careers than friends or relationships.
- The 20% of Hunch users who “love” Valentine’s Day are more likely to be in a relationship, have kids, be extroverts and have an interest in artistic careers. When asked when they would be happy, 44% of the Vday lovers say they are “already there.”
- Many other significant differences surface between these two groups, from attitudes about religion, luck and the “inherent good or evil nature of the human race” to feelings about kids and love at first sight.

Introduction

Hunch is a website which uses multiple-choice questions to provide customized recommendations, whether it's where to take a first date, what kind of camera to buy, where to go on vacation, or more than 6,000 other topics.

To arrive at a customized recommendation for each user, Hunch asks both "topic-specific" questions (How well do you know your date?, Do you want something more social, or romantic?) and also more general/personality-based questions (What's your gender?, Have you ever changed a spark plug?, What types of books do you like to read?) which are called "Teach Hunch About You" (THAY) questions.

There are more than 1,500 THAY questions in Hunch's question pool, and more than 41 million of them have been answered since Hunch's launch. THAYs help Hunch get to know each user so that Hunch's recommendations are customized for each individual.

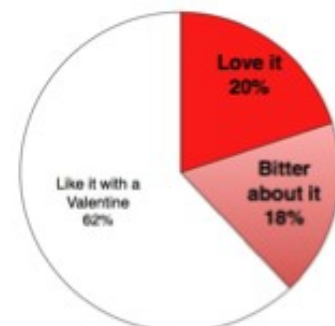
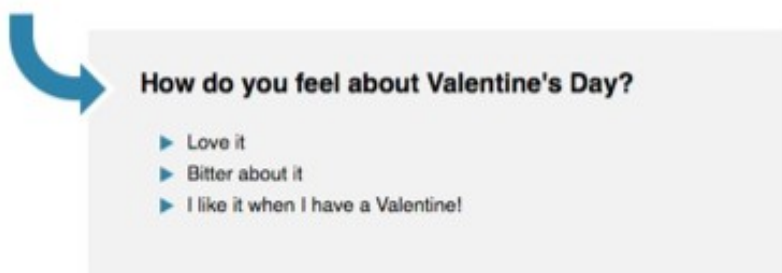
When Hunch proposes a recommendation, the site also allows users to provide feedback about whether they like the recommendation or not. This 'trains' Hunch to associate the feedback with all other questions the user answered. As a by-product of all the questions being answered on Hunch to make decisions, the response data is available for analysis in an aggregated and anonymous form. Hunch frequently creates blog entries and reports about interesting correlations using this data.

Methodology and Baseline

The data in this report relies primarily on "THAY to THAY" correlations (which might entail exploring how opinions about Valentine's Day tend to vary by gender, for example. In a few cases the report also explores "THAY to RESULT" correlations (which might entail examining the correlation between someone's Valentine's Day preference and whether they exhibit a particular phobia, for example).

About 2,300 Hunch users have answered the following question, which yielded the response below:

General



The majority of users (62%) fall into the "just depends" category, with the remaining 38 percent roughly evenly split between liking the holiday (20%) and having bitter feelings towards it (18%). We took a deeper look at these latter two groups to find out what differentiates them.

Demographics

Men are more likely to be bitter about Valentine's Day than women are

In terms of gender, the people who love Valentine's Day (or, the "Lovers") are more likely to be female than male (60 percent versus 40 percent). The opposite is true for the people who are bitter about it (or, the "Bitters"), 63 percent of whom are men. Perhaps that makes sense when we consider the role each gender is expected to embody on Valentine's—typically women get pampered and men are obligated to bow to their partner's desires. Or perhaps men are more sensitive to the "singles awareness" that Valentine's seems to promote. Either way, men are more likely to be a "Bitter" than a "Lover."

The Lovers are more than twice as likely to have kids (41 percent versus 19 percent of the bitters), with the majority (81%) of Bitters reporting that they are childfree (as far as they know). Perhaps romance doesn't die when babies arrive? Or is the romance to blame in the first place?

Over two-thirds of Lovers report being in steady, long-term relationships. A similar percentage of Bitters report being single. Is this why Lovers are into Valentine's Day, because they have a guaranteed date? It's likely that this explains at least part of their appreciation for the holiday.

Most of the Lovers (63%) live with their spouse or significant other. Only 31 percent of Bitters do, with the majority of Bitters living by themselves or with friends, roommates, or family.

Demographics	How do you feel about Valentine's Day?	
	Love it!	Bitter about it
Overall	20%	18%
Gender (n = 2212)		
- Male	40%	63%*
- Female	60%*	37%
Age (n = 2180)		
- Under 18	10%	12%
- 18-34	48%	66%*
- 35-49	21%	18%
- 50-64	14%	4%
- 65 or older	3%	<1%
- Rather not say	3%	0%
Are you a parent? (n = 2021)		
- Yes	41%*	19%
- No	58%	81%*

Demographics	How do you feel about Valentine's Day?	
	Love it!	Bitter about it
Are you either married or in a long-term relationship? (n = 1340)		
- Yes	70%*	29%
- No	27%	68%*
Do other adults live in your household? (n = 905)		
- Yes, including my spouse/partner/significant other	63%*	31%
- Yes, other adults like friends/roommates/extended family, but not my spouse/partner	20%	41%*
- No, no other adults in my household	9%	19%*

* Indicates significant differences between groups

Love, Sex and Relationships

If you love Valentine's Day, will you fare better in love? Will someone who hates Valentine's Day send you flowers any other day of the year? Who is more likely to forgive a cheating partner?

“Bitters” tend to feel more social anxiety in general

One explanation for the different rates of romantic partnering in Lovers and Bitters may be their attitudes about their aptitude for relationships. Almost two thirds (61%) of Bitters believe that they have more difficulty with relationships than the average person their age. Just over a quarter of Lovers (27 percent) feel that way. There are many possible causes for this belief, but among Hunch users who felt they had more relationship difficulty and played the Hunch topic, What phobia do I have?, 86 percent agreed with a result of sociophobia (social anxiety) Only 50 percent of the users who didn't believe they had more difficulty in relationships agreed with this result.

Bitters express skepticism in common beliefs about love, such as the concept of a soul mate or love at first sight.

Bitters are also more likely to be self-conscious when first dating someone. Seventy-two percent of Bitters (compared to 53 percent of Lovers) are more concerned with how their date perceives them, instead of how they perceive their date.

Bitters are more likely to be turned on by pornography and more likely to be accepting of premarital sex.

“Lovers” aren’t just talk. They express their romance in multiple ways, and not just on Valentine’s Day

Lovers are more likely to make romantic gestures than Bitters. They’re more likely to send flowers, keep pictures of loved ones on their work desk, engage in PDA, craft gifts by hand, and send greeting cards.

In terms of emotional relating, Bitters are more likely to dislike listening to people talk about feelings and are less likely to want to talk about relationships.

Lovers tend to be more forgiving if their partner is unfaithful, while Bitters are more likely to take the situation into account. Both groups are equally likely to break up with their partner as a result.

Category	How do you feel about Valentine’s Day?	
	Love it	Bitter about it
Do you believe you have more difficulty in relationships than average people your age?	<u>72% say no</u>	<u>61% say yes</u>
Have you ever been in love?	<u>34% more likely to have been in love</u>	<u>5 times as likely to say they’ve never been in love</u>
Have you found your soul mate?	<u>54% say “yes, and we’re married/dating/intimately engaged”</u>	<u>34% say not yet, 28% say “I don’t believe that I have one”</u>
Do you believe in love at first sight?	<u>62% say yes</u>	<u>65% say no</u>
Do opposites attract?	<u>73% say yes</u>	<u>59% say yes</u>
When you first date someone, are you more concerned about...?	<u>70% more likely to be concerned about how I perceive him/her</u>	<u>36% more likely to be concerned about how he/she perceives me</u>
Premarital sex	<u>39% say if you’re of legal age it’s OK, but it’s better to wait; 44% say go for it</u>	<u>63% say go for it; 28% say it’s better to wait</u>
Pornography	<u>68% more likely to say it’s “fine for others, but not to my liking”</u>	<u>33% more likely to say it’s “hot in the right circumstances”</u>

Category	How do you feel about Valentine's Day?	
	Love it	Bitter about it
Said "I love you" in the past 24 hours	<u>81% did</u>	<u>56% did not</u>
Sent flowers in the last year	<u>61% did</u>	<u>53% say it's been longer than a year since the last time they sent flowers</u>
Keep pictures of loved ones on a work desk	<u>47% do</u>	<u>69% don't</u>
Public displays of affection	<u>46% say "Hey—Love is a splendid thing. Let people express it."</u>	<u>42% say "It makes me uncomfortable."</u>
Ever hand-crafted a gift for someone?	<u>33% routinely knit sweaters/build birdhouses/make stained glass windows for others</u>	<u>45% haven't and "probably never will"</u>
Sent greeting cards in the last year	<u>67% sent at least one</u>	<u>55% didn't send any</u>
Do you keep a box somewhere filled with love letters or romantic cards?	<u>62% do</u>	<u>65% don't</u>
More likely to...	<u>53% say "Let's talk about our relationship"</u>	<u>57% cringe when someone else says, "Let's talk about our relationship"</u>
Listening to people talk about their feelings	<u>22% more likely to like it</u>	<u>58% more likely to dislike it</u>
Suppose your significant other cheated on you. Are you likely to...	<u>Twice as likely to forgive them</u>	<u>24% more likely to say "depends on who they cheated with and why"</u>

Bitters and Lovers have similar attitudes towards cheating and jealousy

What do Bitters and Lovers have in common when it comes to love?

Bitters and Lovers seek similar qualities in potential mates. The majority of both groups agree that personality is most important in a mate.

Lovers and Bitters also feel similarly about having opportunities to cheat. Seventy-seven percent of Lovers and 73 percent of Bitters would "never" cheat on their significant others, even if there were no chance of getting caught.

Both groups, however, have similar rates of jealousy. Fifty-seven percent of Lovers are “guilty” of being the jealous type, and 56 percent of Bitters say the same.

At the end of a relationship, Bitters and Lovers are equally likely to be the person doing the dumping.

Self and Social Relationships

Geeks need love too—or do they?

Ask a Bitter to do your taxes, but get your art from a Lover

Bitters are more likely to report that their EQ (Emotional Quotient) is lower than their IQ.

Out of all Hunch.com users who responded that their EQ is lower than their IQ and played Hunch’s professions topic, 75 percent agree that being a scientist is a good profession for them. Science-related professions traditionally require a high IQ and aren’t as dependent on the social skills related to EQ. Scientific pursuits also appeal to the skepticism embraced by Bitters (which, as we’ll see, extends beyond attitudes about love). The “lower EQ than IQ” users are also less likely to agree that events planner or artist are appropriate professions for them. Both of these professions emphasize EQ-related skills such as networking and self-expression. Bitters are also stronger in mathematical aptitude than lovers.

Lovers are more prototypical extroverts—they’re more likely to self-describe as an extrovert or “people person” and more likely to entertain guests more often. Bitters are more likely to be introverted and don’t interact as much with others they don’t know.

Bitters are relatively lacking in self-esteem and self-knowledge.

Lovers consider themselves more compassionate and sympathetic, and are also more likely to perform random acts of kindness.

All work and no play make Jack a bitter boy. Bitters are more likely to be focused on their careers and family instead of friends and relationships. It’s also possible that due to their perceived failings in relationships, they instead choose to focus on their career. Considering that many aren’t established in their career yet, it makes sense that this is more important to them than social relationships.

Bitters are less likely to be interested in having kids, but they likely aren’t a major consideration at this point in their lives.

Bitter about VDay? You’re probably pretty unhappy in general

Bitter today, but not better tomorrow! Bitter people are less likely to consider themselves happy people. In a THAY question asking “When will you be happy?”, Bitters were 79 percent more likely to say that they didn’t know when they’d be happy (25% versus 14% of Lovers), and Lovers were 76 percent more likely to say they were “already there” (44% versus 25% of Bitters).

Category	How do you feel about Valentine's Day?	
	Love it	Bitter about it
EQ (Emotional Quotient)	<u>54% more likely to say their EQ is the same or higher as IQ</u>	<u>Almost three times more likely to say their IQ is higher than their EQ</u>
Aptitudes	<u>37% more likely to be stronger in verbal concepts and language</u>	<u>Almost three times as likely to be stronger in mathematical concepts</u>
Introversion/Extroversion	<u>54% more likely to describe self as an extrovert</u>	<u>38% more likely to describe self as an introvert</u>
Are you a "people person"?	<u>58% say yes</u>	<u>60% say no</u>
Mingling at parties	<u>59% more likely to interact with many, including strangers</u>	<u>30% more likely to interact with a few, known to them</u>
Entertaining guests at home	<u>26% more likely to entertain guests at least once a month</u>	<u>24% more likely to entertain less often than once a month</u>
Self-esteem	<u>23% more likely to say they like themselves most of the time</u>	<u>Twice as likely to say they don't like themselves most of the time</u>
Self-knowledge	<u>21% more likely to know who they are</u>	<u>46% more likely to say they don't know who they are yet</u>
Impartial or compassionate?	<u>37% more likely to be compassionate</u>	<u>61% more likely to be impartial</u>
Fair-minded or sympathetic?	<u>45% more likely to be sympathetic</u>	<u>24% more likely to be fair-minded</u>
Random acts of kindness	<u>26% more likely to practice them</u>	<u>Two and a half times more likely to not do them</u>
Optimist or pessimist?	<u>73% say they're an optimist</u>	<u>50% say they're a pessimist</u>
Most important thing in your life right now	<u>39% say family; 32% say relationship</u>	<u>30% say career; 25% say family</u>
Where are you in your career?	<u>51% have at least a few years of experience</u>	<u>45% haven't really started it yet</u>
Are you a "baby person"?	<u>55% say yes</u>	<u>63% say no</u>
As far as children are concerned...	<u>49% want two or three</u>	<u>41% want two or three; 30% want none</u>
Do you consider yourself a happy person?	<u>31% more likely to say yes</u>	<u>73% more likely to say "Whatever, shove off!"</u>

Personal Beliefs

Can it be true that non-believers don't like Valentine's Day? It is a day named for a saint, after all...

Bitters tend to be skeptical regarding topics such as religion or the supernatural. This fits with their skepticism regarding conventional wisdom in love and their focus on science over arts and humanities.

Bitters' pessimism extends to the nature of mankind, which, in turn, likely has effects on their perception of trust and success in relationships.

Lovers tend to be more optimistic and have faith in religion and tradition.

Lovers also hold more positive opinions of the nature of the human race.

Category	How do you feel about Valentine's Day?	
	Love it	Bitter about it
If you had a new baby would you have it christened or baptized?	<u>50% say probably</u>	<u>66% say unlikely</u>
Tradition	<u>53% more likely to value tradition</u>	<u>Twice as likely to say it's outdated</u>
Religion	<u>Twice as likely to describe self as religious</u>	<u>42% more likely to say not religious</u>
Attending religious services	<u>47% go at least once a year</u>	<u>62% never go</u>
Religion has brought mankind more...	<u>48% say "hope"</u>	<u>73% say "suffering"</u>
Coincidences—Fate in disguise?	<u>52% say "Yes, everything happens for a reason"</u>	<u>58% say "No, I have free will"</u>
Psychic or tarot card readings	<u>Twice as likely to have paid for one in the past</u>	<u>18% more likely to have never paid for one</u>
Luck	<u>19% more likely to believe in it</u>	<u>54% more likely to be skeptical</u>
Feng shui	<u>Twice as likely to believe in it</u>	<u>67% more likely to not know what it is</u>
Ghosts and the supernatural	<u>56% believe</u>	<u>58% don't believe</u>
Humans are naturally...	<u>78% more likely to believe humans are good</u>	<u>86% more likely to believe humans are evil</u>



Conclusion

The Bitter group tends to live up to its name. They are more likely to be pessimists, skeptics, and less concerned with emotion and feelings. They are introverted, interact less with others, and are potentially less emotionally connected with their romantic partners.

A holiday like Valentine's Day doesn't speak to them as it does to the Lovers, who are optimistic, emotionally connected with others, and are more positive when it comes to themselves and interacting with others. Lovers are more likely to participate in celebrating other secular holidays, such as Halloween (42% more likely than Bitters to dress up). Lovers are also 47% more likely to say that it's important for others to remember their birthday.

Lovers seem to like special days and enjoy showing their feelings for other people through romantic gestures and words. Valentine's Day was made for people like them, but from their responses, it appears that it's likely not the only day they show their love for the people in their lives.

Appendix

How Hunch Works

Using Hunch, Mary gets a recommendation (in this example, about cookbooks) and also answers some THAY questions.

Hunch learns:

Whether Mary likes each proposed recommendation

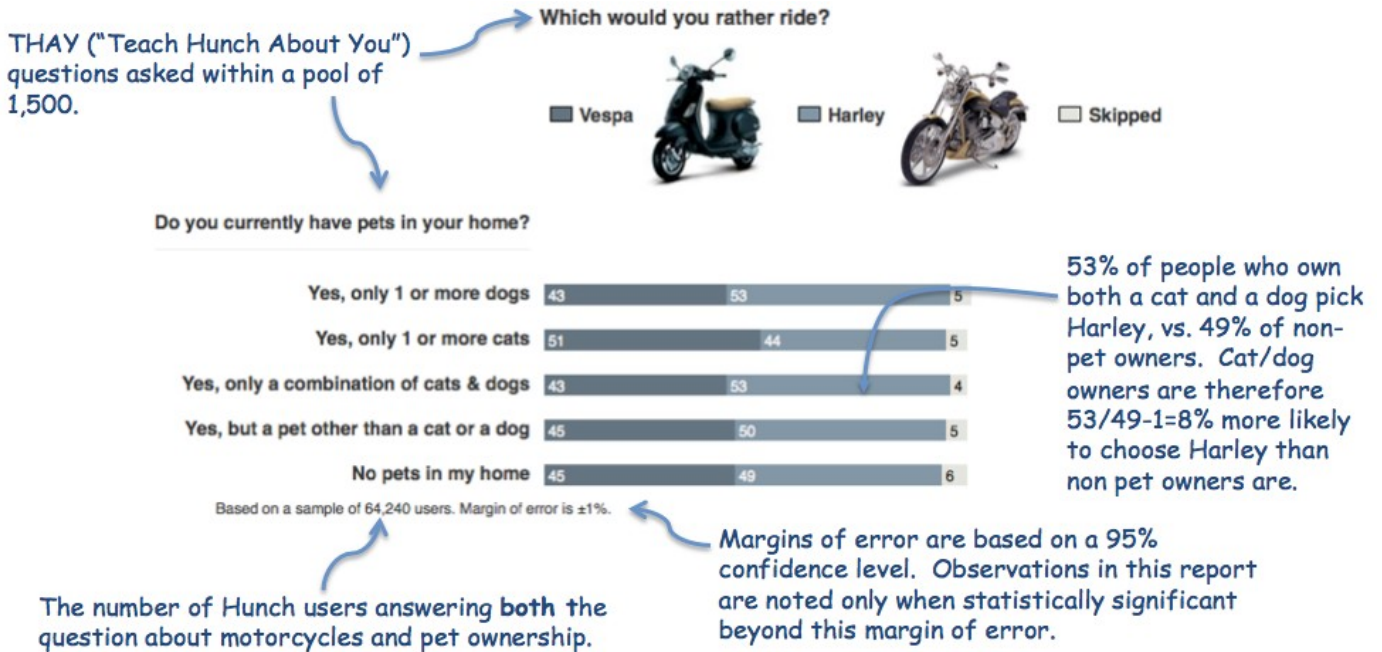
How Mary's THAY answers correlate with her recommendation feedback



Understanding the supporting graphs in this report

Most observations in the primary data table provide a link to a supporting graph in one of two formats. The following explains how to interpret each respective graph's information.

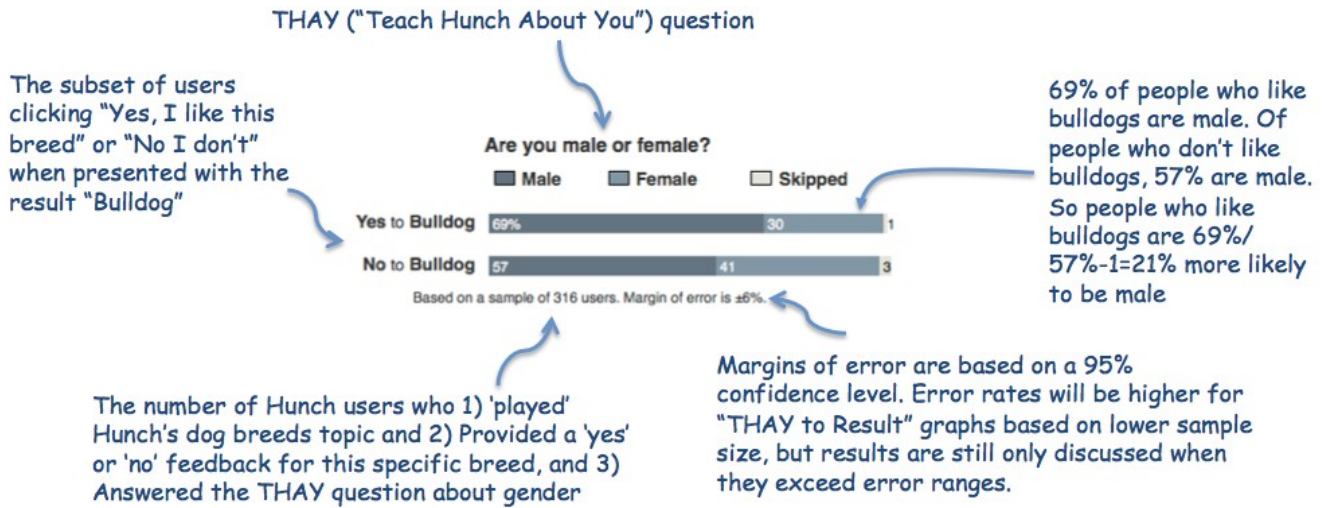
A "THAY to THAY" cross-tabulation graph:



A "THAY to Result" cross-tabulation graph:

When Hunch users 'play' a specific topic to get a recommendation, they can also rate the recommendation proposed to them. This aggregate feedback can then be compared to other results or THAY questions on Hunch to explore correlations.





Methodology and disclaimers

Hunch was publicly launched in June 2009 and since then millions of people have used the site. More than 41 million THAY ("Teach Hunch About You") questions have been answered since that time. The motivation for people to answer Hunch questions is simply to receive better and more customized recommendations. For example, for the decision "Which magazine would I like?", Hunch would suggest a different answer to a "suburban working mom" than to a "college student in an urban area."

Hunch's THAY questions are designed to be engaging, innocuous and fun, and they are interspersed throughout the site so that they can be answered at a user's leisure. Questions are not grouped by any sort of theme; a common sequence of 3 might include: "How old are you?", "Can you juggle?", and "What's your opinion of stem cell research?" As a result, the Hunch team has found that users enjoy answering the questions and do so honestly and consistently. There is little reason to answer dishonestly or attempt to "game" the system, since answers are solely designed to help the user get better recommendations. This research data is a by-product of Hunch's core business and mission, which is to provide smart recommendations to users. (a similar analogy might be the way search engines release data on popular searches. That data is a by-product of their core mission to help people find what they are looking for online).

Summary findings in this report are generally noted only when there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of the two subsets being compared. Links are always provided to graph data, which also includes the sample size used for the question and error ranges based on a 95% statistical confidence level. Occasionally, observations include qualifiers like "directionally", which indicate that an outcome is trending towards a direction, but that the absolute number remains within the margin of error range.

Hunch strives to uncover insights which are interesting, provocative, and which will stimulate discussion and debate. Hunch does not endorse or favor particular ideological points of view, and the



contents of Hunch reports do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Hunch as an entity or its staff or directors.

It should be noted that Hunch is not a professional research organization and this data was not collected in a perfectly controlled way. For example, Hunch data is based on 1) a group of individuals who are by definition all users of the Hunch website; these users are likely more internet-savvy than the general population, more open to new technologies, and more interested in social media. The group, while large at millions of users, has not been weighted to reflect actual demographic segmentation, and is not necessarily representative of general populations. 2) Questions on Hunch are voluntarily answered by users who choose to answer them, and any question can be selectively skipped. Therefore it's possible that those users who skipped a question might have different views than those who chose to answer a question.

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