Dating Report 2024

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30 December 2024

1 Introduction

As is customary for each edition of the annual dating report, this report will begin with the words of a familiar carol:

> Should old acquaintance be forgot
> And never brought to mind?
> Should old acquaintance be forgot
> In the days of auld lang syne?

The year 2024 brought the close of one chapter and the start of another. Friends were made, hobbies were re-prioritized, new sights were seen, and of course, many dates were had. Some dates were great, some dates were fine, and some dates were... what is past is past. As the song says, some of these old acquantances will indeed be forgotten years from now. Along the way, some important and noteworthy milestones were met:

- Graduating to the older YSA ward (26 - 35)
- Breaking the previous personal record for most girls dated by going out with 38 different girls (previous record was 33)
- Going on date number 300 post mission (currently at 326)

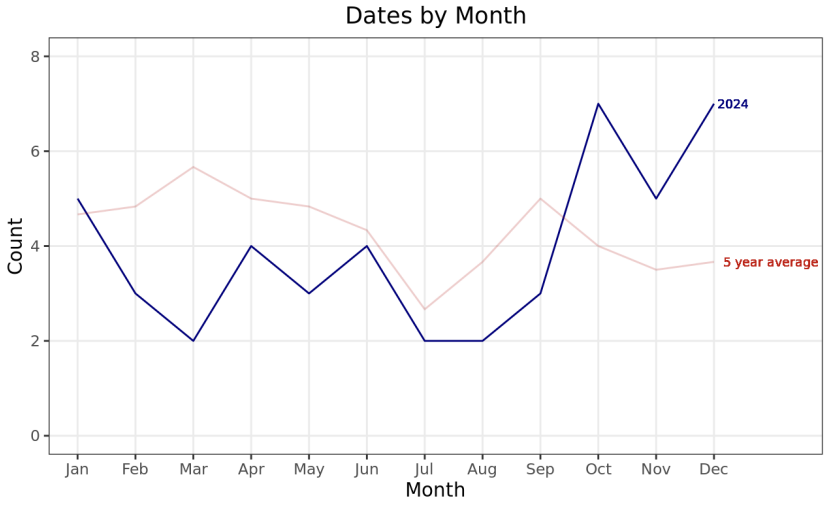

Figure 1: Average dates per month from 2019-2024. Note that 2018 not included in the monthly average as it was a partial year (post mission)

2 The Candidates

I was fortunate to go out with several different gals this year. Some of these I already knew, but most of them I had never met before. This year I went on 47 dates with 38 different girls whose ages span approximately 8 years. Here are a few fun facts about a few of the girls I went out with this year:

- Two are D1 athletes (soccer, track/XC). This brings the lifetime D1 athlete total to five (soccer (2), track (2), cross country), as well as one D2 athlete (volleyball)
- One is a former Cougarette
- One is of a different faith

2.1 Candidate Similarity

The more people the I date the more sure I am of the core principles that I'm looking for, but the less sure I am of anything beyond that. The core pillars are simple: solid in the gospel/high standards, fun to be around/easy to talk to, and fair to look upon. Beyond that is a lot of nice-to-haves, but not a lot of must-haves. Each girl that I have officially dated has differed quite a bit from the others, and those I went out this year differ from each other as well. In attempt to gain insights into the types of girls I am most interested in, we turn to a k-means cluster analysis on a selection of 10 candidates from this year (Figure 2).

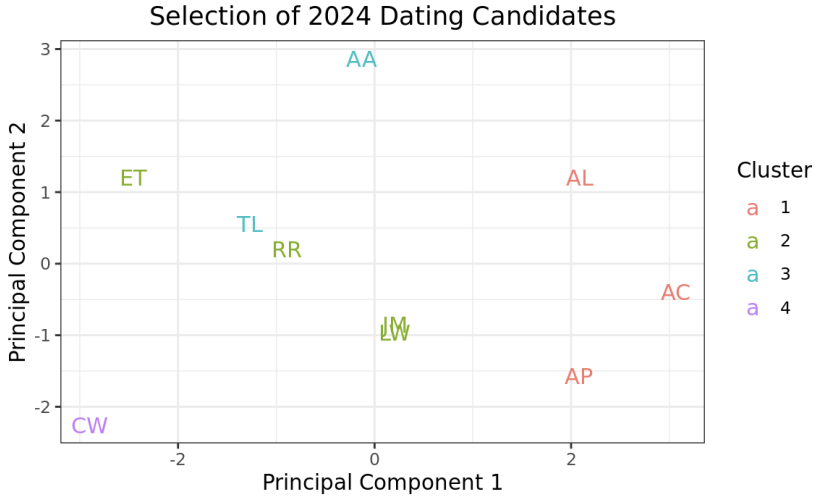

Figure 2: The four clusters are displayed along with the first two principal components, which together account for 56% of the total variance of the components.

Four clusters were selected, and principal components are used to display the data (see Appendix for more details on the clustering methodology, and for more information on PCA). How do we describe these clusters? Cluster 4 were brunettes who tended to be athletic and outdoorsy to some extent. Cluster 2 were girls who were blonde and perhaps older or more mature. Cluster 3 were girls who are fun and a little younger. Finally, Cluster 4 is comprised of one single candidate who apparently was different enough from the others to warrant her own cluster and also is the girl I know the least about of this selection. We note that the clusters are only somewhat distinct; if colors were removed there could probably be several different clusters of four created from the data. I think these different clusters represent different groups of girls who catch my eye, and collectively represent a lot of qualities of people I look for.

3 Finding Activities

The vast majority of dates this year came from setups. We will dive more into setup sources (and setup source quality) a little later on. Table 1 provides a breakdown of finding methods for first dates this year.

Finding Method	Count
Setup	19
Church	6
Networking	2
Social Gathering	2
Other	2

Living Situation	Count	Rate (dates/month)
Grad School in Provo	14	3.5
Remote Work in Provo	9	3*
Remote Work in American Fork	24	4.8

Table 1: Finding method breakdown and living situation breakdown

"Where is the column for Hinge or Mutual?" I am yet to dive into the world of dating apps. Perhaps one day that journey will be embarked upon, but for now I have had a sufficient number of people to go out with through more organic methods, which is what I prefer.

This year had three different sections, each of which presented different opportunities and challenges in finding:

- **Grad school in Provo**: campus interactions, BYU games, girls at the testing center vs. school, Master's project, and CHI practice/tournaments
- **Remote work in Provo**: free time and summer activities vs. young demographic and half of Provo leaving for the summer
- **Remote work in American Fork**: new ward with ideal age demographic vs. getting split into a 26-35 YSA ward

Table 1 provides a breakdown of dates by living situation. It is worth noting that three weeks during the Provo post-graduation chapter were spent in Europe. Taking those weeks into account we get a new monthly rate of 4.5, which seems a little more accurate than the current rate of 3. As a data scientist working in causal inference, I'd love to claim that moving to American Fork was a cause of increased numbers of dates. However, I can only point to one date that is directly tied to my living in AF (and two others that could be indirectly tied). Tuesday night pickleball and church were the most frequent finding activities in American Fork, but pickleball has resulted in zero dates, zero numbers, and just one LinkedIn exchange with a girl. Given these facts, the increased date rate in American Fork may be due to a shift in focus and effort rather than improvement of prospects.

3.1 Setups

Nearly two thirds of all first dates came from setups. In no other year has one finding method carried the weight of the team to this extent. Who is coming up with all these people for me to go out with? Table 2 reflects this data.

Source	Count
Friends	9
People from church	5
Aunt Margaret	3
Siblings	3

Table 2: Setup sources

Surprisingly, most of these setups were one-off deals; 16 different people set me up on dates this year, and those 16 people include siblings, friends, significant others of roommates, wives of YSA stake presidency members, and girls I went out with earlier in the year. Aunt Margaret also deserves a shout out for keeping a watchful eye on patrons and fellow temple workers at the Orem temple. Whose setups were the best? Only one setup this year made it beyond one date.

3.2 Rejection Tuesday

One of the most thrilling experiments of this year comes from the wisdom of good Brother Bryan Goodman, and that is rejection Tuesday. In his words, "that's what Tuesdays are for. Screw the foundation, we're taking a full court shot." Rejection Tuesday is where you shoot for the stars, and if you get shut down or ghosted you get points. If they say yes, you don't get points. Rejection Tuesday is all about resetting the baseline expectation to take the sting out of a rejection. If you never ask her out, you never go out with her. If you ask her and she says no or doesn't reply, you end up with the same end result and don't lose anything. On the off chance she does say yes, you end up on a date with someone you otherwise never would have. Who are some of the rejection Tuesday candidates from this year?

- A Cougarette (said yes and then no and then I followed up again 8 months later and she elected to not respond)
- A sister of two other girls I'd been out with (said no)
- A news anchor (ghosted)
- A girl we saw at a college graduation (said yes)
- A girl I saw on suggested connections on LinkedIn (said yes)

4 Conversion Rates

At last we arrive at the most highly anticipated feature of the dating report: the conversion funnel. Date quantity means nothing if they don't progress beyond the first date. The year 2024 brought with it the new motto of "no stone unturned," meaning finding out definitively if there is interest or not. Thus, there were several girls I took out this year who I had taken out in years prior but couldn't remember why pursuit had stopped. These were technically second dates (or even a fifth date), although in functionality they were more like first dates. We explore the conversion funnel of each categorization of revisits in Figure 3. There were seven revisits this year, but only one resulted in additional date(s) beyond the initial revisit. Revisiting former candidates may not have led to finding a candidate beyond three dates, but did result in closure on all revisited candidates. It only has to work once, and it may come down to the process of elimination to find her.

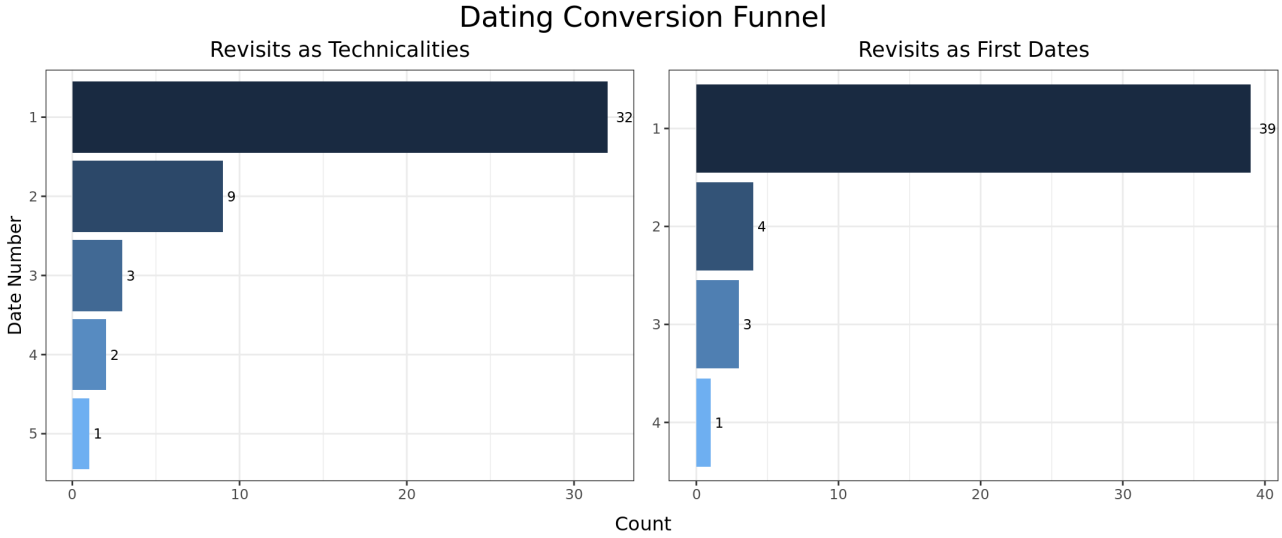

Figure 3: Revisits were a new occurrence this year. As such, additional exploration of the conversion funnel is needed.

5 Marriage Rates of Past Candidates

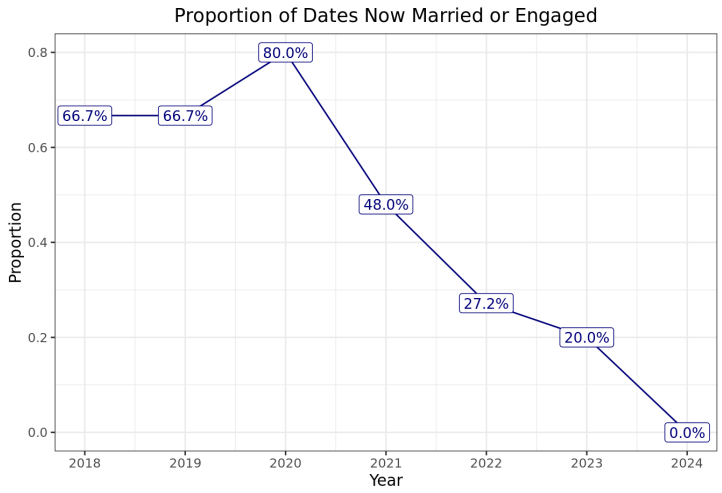

Figure 4: High marriage rates among candidates years removed from our date are not surprising, but perhaps more surprising is the quick turnaround of 2023 candidates who are already YSA graduates

I'm entering the twelfth year of my dating career. Surprisingly (at least for me), only 36.3% of the girls I have gone out with have ended their dating careers by being married or engaged. Figure 4 shows the percentage of engaged or married former dates by year. This figure represents the trend we'd expect to see (the further removed from our date the more time they've had to find a spouse). A few interesting shoutouts here:

- One gal got married this month...for the second time. She has lapped us now by getting engaged and married twice before we have managed to do so once
- My last date of 2023 will be married by the time you read this report
- Of those I went out with in 2020, only 3 remain single, and one has been seriously dating someone for most of this year
- Several have children, a child, or are pregnant, but I don't have an accurate count of this because I unfollowed most of them after they got married

6 Dating and Other Activities

Dating was one activity of note in 2024, but I also did have other pursuits this year, particularly fly fishing and trail running. How might these activities impact dating success, if at all? Is there any correlation between these activities and dating? We first turn to Figure 5 to see the same dating trendline as Figure 1, but in the context of other activities. Number of dates is dwarfed by the bigger players of miles run and fish caught, and I think that is proper balance. My life does not revolve around dating, nor should it. While I do hope to marry and have a family, I am blessed to be in a stage of life where I have time to pursue other hobbies!

Now to answer the question of how these hobbies correlate with each other, and most importantly with dating we turn to Figure 6. I hear of stories of running clubs becoming the new dating apps, but all I'm seeing is that 0.1 correlation between dates and miles ran. Seems like a scam to me! Perhaps most troubling is the *negative* correlation between dates and fish caught. As the number of fish caught per month increased, the number of dates tended to decrease. Not ideal. On the flip side, as number of dates per month increase, number of fish caught per month tended to decrease, and that sounds even worse to me! In an ideal world we would have more fraud (according to Dr. Jared Fisher), but in an ideal world we would also have success as a fisher of (wo)men and as a fisher of fish.

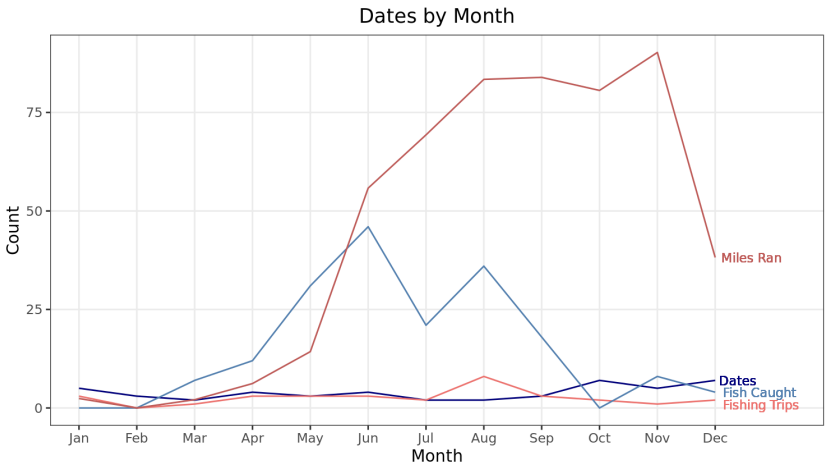

Figure 5: Dates, fish caught, fishing trips, and miles run by month. We note the introduction of running into the hobby mix around the time of the final closing of the ultimate frisbee chapter in the spring.

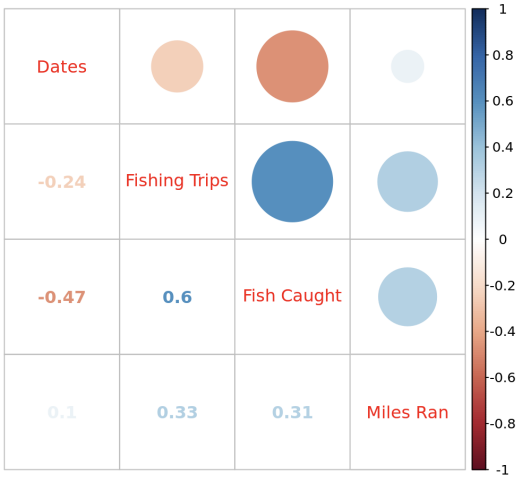

Figure 6: Correlation of dates, fish caught, fishing trips, and miles run

7 Next Steps

We've discussed dating rates, dating candidates, candidate similarity, finding methods, conversion rates, former candidates, and other activities. If I were a Frequentist I would say that the results of this analysis are statistically significant, but since I work at Recast in a Bayesian framework, I'll simply conclude that the posterior probability of me being single at the end of 2024 (in one day) is 1, with the associated credible interval of (0.99, 1). Stay tuned to see if this posterior probability changes come December 2025!

At this point in my dating career I'm less interested in finding the most creative date of all time (all about a simple first date), but I am becoming more interested in the most creative ways of *finding* people to go out with. In 2024, the long-standing bucket list item of "meet a girl on LinkedIn" and take her out was finally crossed off. Here are a few potential new finding methods that also happen to correspond to activities in which I frequently participate:

- Meet her on Strava
- Meet her in a grocery store
- Meet her on a run

- Meet her while fishing
- Meet her at the gym

I would love to hear any ideas for interesting/unique ways to meet someone! Thank you for diving into my world of statistics, dating, fishing, trail running, and other wholesome recreational activities. See you next year!

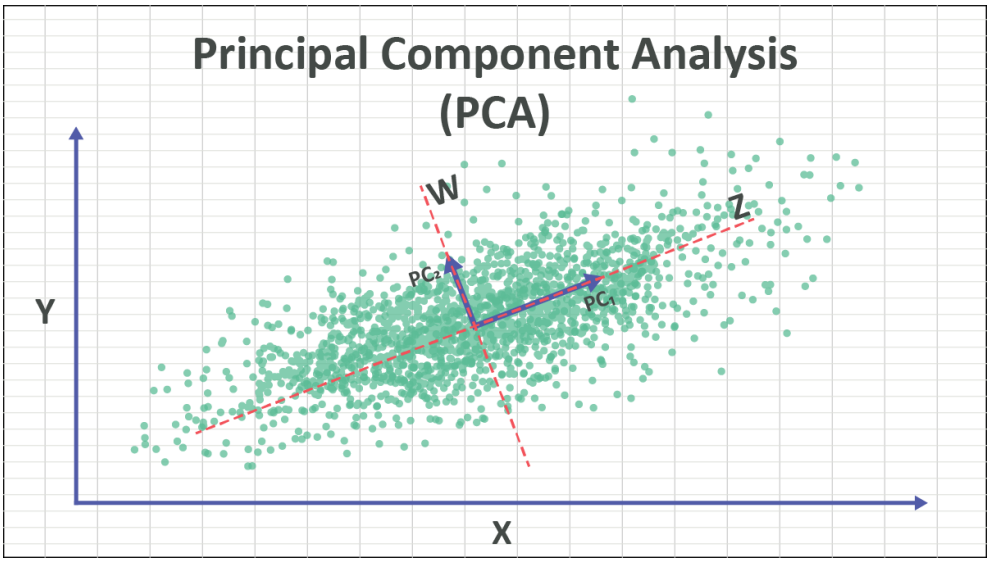

Figure 7: Caption

A Clustering Methodology

With any cluster analysis come choices in clustering methodology as well as number of clusters selected. In this case, an additional choice was made to include just a subset of all candidates. The clustering method of choice was k-means clustering, and there wasn't a scientific method to choose this one; I just chose one and moved on. For the number of clusters I Looked at clusters of 2, 3, 4, and 5. Two clusters seemed like too few, and more than five seemed excessive given that only ten candidates were in this study. Looking at the 3, 4, and 5 cluster setup, the grouping with 4 clusters seemed like it provided the most accurate results given the candidates and "the eye test," as the College Football Playoff Committee would say.

The data for the cluster analysis consists of 11 quantitative variables: Attractiveness, Hair color, Eye Color, Most fun, Athletic, Outdoorsy, Spiritual, Quiet/loud, Modesty, Age, and Hometown (distance from American Fork). I ranked each candidate 1-10 to place them on a spectrum (now you may see why I didn't want to do this for 38 people) and then standardized the data. I chose the 10 candidates who I had the most interest during the year, several of whom shut me down and several of which I lost interest in.

B Principal Component Analysis

Say we have two variables and plot our observations to form a scatterplot. From the cloud of data, the first principal component is the line that represents the greatest spread (maximizes the variance of the data). Figure 7 demonstrates how this method works. Expanding this to our case where we have 11 variables, the first principal component maximizes the variance of our 11 variables. In other words, if we had to explain the data with one line through space, we would use the first principal component. The second component is the next best line through our data. By plotting our observations based on their values from the first two components, we can see through the noise of our data and see where our observations (girls) and clusterings of our data fall. While we lose interpretability of our variables (neither component will be one of our current variables), we are able to see which observations are most similar to each other.