

Millennials spend \$252 on an average date, BMO finds — and social media is spiraling over 'date-flation'



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Key Points

- The average date costs \$189 among Americans who spend money on dating, according to the BMO Real Financial Progress Index for 2026.
- That figure includes transportation, getting ready and the actual cost of the date, such as food, drinks or tickets.
- Millennials reported the highest average cost per date, at \$252, followed by Gen Z at \$205.
- Rising costs are changing dating behavior, with half of Americans who date saying they have gone on fewer dates or chosen less expensive activities.

[Inflation](#) concerns are spilling into “date-flation” discussions online, as social media users [react](#) to a surprising stat: Millennials spend \$252, on average, for a date.

The figure, which CNBC [reported on](#) in April, comes from BMO Financial Group’s 2026 [BMO Real Financial Progress Index](#). The average “all-in” spend on a date in America — including pre-date grooming and gas money, as well as the cost of the date itself — has climbed to \$189, up 12.5% from last year, BMO found. “Date-flation,” as the [report](#) dubbed it, far outpaced the 2.7% inflation rise over the same period.

Millennials reported the highest average cost per date and the largest year-over-year increase, according to BMO’s year-over-year generational data:

- Gen Z: \$205, up from \$194
- Millennials: \$252, up from \$191
- Gen X: \$173, up from \$172
- Baby boomers: \$126, down from \$127

The bank polled 2,501 adults in late December through January.

Inflation has worsened since then. The consumer price index [rose 3.8%](#) year over year in April 2026, according to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics reading.

Higher costs are having a ripple effect on dating habits, experts say.

“We’re seeing that there is this increased cost of living, and it’s lowering our dating frequency and how we’re seeing or perceiving dating,” Sabrina Romanoff, a clinical psychologist, told CNBC. “We’re seeing people have fewer dinners out and there’s a lower tolerance for higher-risk meetups.”

Half of Americans who date or are open to dating said they have gone on fewer dates or chosen less expensive activities because of inflation or the high cost of living, BMO found. More than four in 10, 44%, said they have changed or adjusted date plans for financial reasons.

The number of dates is falling, too. The average American who went on a date reported going out about 12 times in the past year, down from around 14 in 2025, BMO found.

Who pays when dates cost this much?

Janina Steinmetz | Digitalvision | Getty Images

Higher prices are also complicating one of dating's oldest questions: [Who pays?](#)

BMO found a significant gender split in expectations early in a relationship.

Nearly three in four men, 71%, said they expect to pay for everything on a date at first. Among women, 52% said they expect to split the cost relatively evenly, although 38% said they expect the other person to pay for everything.

Jess Carbino, a sociologist who worked for Tinder and Bumble, told CNBC that economic uncertainty can push people toward more traditional expectations.

“When we see times of uncertainty, particularly economic uncertainty, we tend to see people rely on more established traditional gender roles in order to buffer and to try to cope with the uncertainty that exists in a given time and moment,” Carbino said.

Romanoff said social media can make those expectations more extreme by feeding men and women different narratives about dating and money.

“Social media is creating these gendered echo chambers where men and women, they’re being fed completely different narratives about dating and money,” Romanoff said. “Algorithms, unfortunately, today they’re rewarding outrage. The very most polarizing extreme financial dating takes are rising to the top, and that’s what’s getting reinforced right now.”

On one side, Romanoff said, some women encounter advice to accept only expensive first dates as proof of value or interest. On the other, she said, some men are being told not to spend money on dates at all.

“The echo chambers, they’re villainizing the opposite sex, and they’re framing dating as this financial power struggle, rather than this relational process in which we’re both kind of meeting in the middle and getting to know each other,” Romanoff said.

“We’re really watching love shrink to fit people’s budget,” she added.