

Mankeeping: why single women are giving up dating

As the male social circle continues to shrink, their partners have to take on much more emotional labour – and many are opting to spend their lives alone instead

Name: Mankeeping.

Age: Semantically, about a year old.

Appearance: Needy and exhausting.

Oh God, a new term with the word “man” as a prefix. These are always tedious. Go and cry about it in your man cave, you manspreading mansplainer.

See? It’s a cheap and lazy rhetorical device. Yes, but mankeeping is a real thing: men don’t mankeep; women mankeep.

How so? Increasingly, the dynamic in a heterosexual relationship seems to be that a woman is tasked with coaching her partner through his problems.

I don’t understand. A whole generation of men don’t feel comfortable opening up to their male friends, which means some of them dump their worries on their female partner. It’s an extension of emotional labour – remembering birthdays, organising social calendars – but effectively it requires the partner to act as an unpaid therapist.

Why? The [Stanford researchers](#) who coined the term think it’s a result of the so-called [male loneliness epidemic](#). As the social circle of men continues to shrink, their partners bear the brunt of everything that has historically been shared among friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

It's sweet that you think this is a new phenomenon. OK, fine, some men have always been lousy at this sort of thing. But this is the first time that women are starting to unionise against it.

How? Many of them have stopped dating. In the US, only 38% of single women are on the dating market, compared with 61% of single men, according to the [Pew Research Center](#).

But that will just make men more lonely, which will only exacerbate the problem. Right. The only way to solve this problem is to make women have sex with undesirable men. [Way to go, Gilead](#).

So, what, men should work on themselves instead? Bingo. Perhaps if men weren't so beholden to ridiculous masculine archetypes and developed a toolkit for processing their emotions, some of this discrepancy would disappear.

And then men would be so desirable that they could go out and pull a load of 10s. I don't think you've got this quite right.

I have. It's brilliant! If we can convincingly fake emotional regularity, we can have more sex. I think that number just went down to 37%.

Oh fine, you're right. I am. You shouldn't need to rely on women to shoulder the burden of your emotional constipation. Get a therapist. Join some clubs. Develop a well-rounded social circle. It will enrich you beyond words.

And then you will have sex with me? Er, 36% and falling.

Do say: "It's not my job to carry your entire emotional burden."

Don't say: "This is exactly why I don't open up to women."