

2025 Pause, *Fast Forward,* Rebound?

Crowd DNA look at what trends will take their place in culture in 2025 (and beyond)



Introduction

Welcome to the second drop of our Trends Report 2025 (and beyond). Last month we looked at five trends developed and refined by a global team of futurists and strategists across our five offices. Now here's the next five, to leave you – like us – with even more enthusiasm for 2025, to act on culture and help shape the future you want to see.

As with all our client projects, nothing at Crowd is off the shelf – we believe the future is best co-created. These are starting blocks to inspire you and get you thinking. And if you want to work out how we can help you find genuinely future facing, strategic opportunities, drop us a line at hello@crowdDNA.com.

Drop Two

Our report delivers two punchy drops of five trends each. Here's the second.

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We are Crowd DNA. An insights and strategy consultancy with offices in Sydney, Singapore, London, Amsterdam, New York, Stockholm and Los Angeles. Formed in 2008, operating across 70+ markets, we bring together trend specialists, researchers, strategists, data analysts, designers, writers and film-makers to create culturally charged commercial advantage for the world's most exciting brands.

Contributors: Amy Nicholson, Olivia Anderson, Lailáfi Choudhry, Teresa Yong, Isabelle Reman, Céline Longden-Naufal, Dan Steward, Rachel Rapp, Jennifer Robinson, Clóe Swayne, Stephanie Winkler.



Enchanting AI

We've all felt the growing acceptance of AI in our daily lives over **the last five years**. AI can be a welcome companion on so many jobs to be done. **But how will we feel when Artificial Intelligence is not just showing emotion or empathy but behaving like a human with feelings?**

We may be some way off, but new platforms and apps are working to make sure this is something to enchant, not fear. The emerging trend of AI-generated creativity, spirituality and thoughtfulness takes the narrative away from humans replaced, to machine learning for our well-being.

We already see this in products in development that enable flights of amazing fancy, like The Halo, an AI headband that will use a combination of ultrasound and machine learning models to allow users to control their own dreams. "Together we will pursue the answers to life's biggest questions," it teases. Or brands who are employing pseudo-religious language in their AI product comms to represent an omnipresent power. It is all leading to AI becoming enchanting and wonderful...

The next five years will continue to see the value pivot in consumer tech, such as products and services using AI to highlight all the myriad ways to actually have... whisper it... tech for good.

The Rebound Risk is that from the top-down there's the continued push around innovation for efficiency, commercialisation and not enough attention paid to the needs and desires of creatives, dreamers and mind-bogglers - who currently fear AI and its threats to their livelihoods and happiness.



Empathy AI. An AI menu/recipe generator, this is an interactive experience where you get inspired for your next meal, and perhaps discover the inner dialogue of others, from the [Board of Dinner \(XAI\)](#).

Brands. *Fast Forward.*

Don't just harness AI for efficiency. Be inspired to find ways data and technology can be used in your product or service offering as a force for good – eg, make it conducive to wellbeing and creativity.

CROWD EXPLORES

At Crowd, we keep our clients informed with regular content from our **Crowd DNA Studio** team. Recently we explored how Big Tech is wanting to stake a claim to our subconscious in the trend series, **Shortcuts: Dream Frontiers** [here](#).



Nourishing AI. The *Cyber Serenity Manifesto* by [Pitch Studios](#) is a call to arms to “reclaim your digital life. It explores how we can create virtual spaces that nourish our souls and connect us to our deeper humanity.”

Messy Masculinity

Against the global cult of hyper male personality that has dominated over **the last five years**, we're seeing a game-changing counter trend. Men are exploring self-expression, and the nuances of their relationships as truly new modes of masculinity.

Traditionally, the best way to be masculine is to not be feminine – today, we see this in the 'Hyper/ Alpha/ Sigma/ Toxic' pre-fixes to masculinity. But emergently masculinity is about finding alternative behaviours that aren't about fear of feminine traits. 'Messy Masculinity' is a celebration of finding out what else masculinity might be...

There's no denying that 'Toxic Masculinity' still strikes a chord: think influencers like Andrew Tate's power over young men or Meta's Mark Zuckerberg's call to unleash "masculine energy". But popular culture is increasingly playing back stories and personalities that offer an antidote.

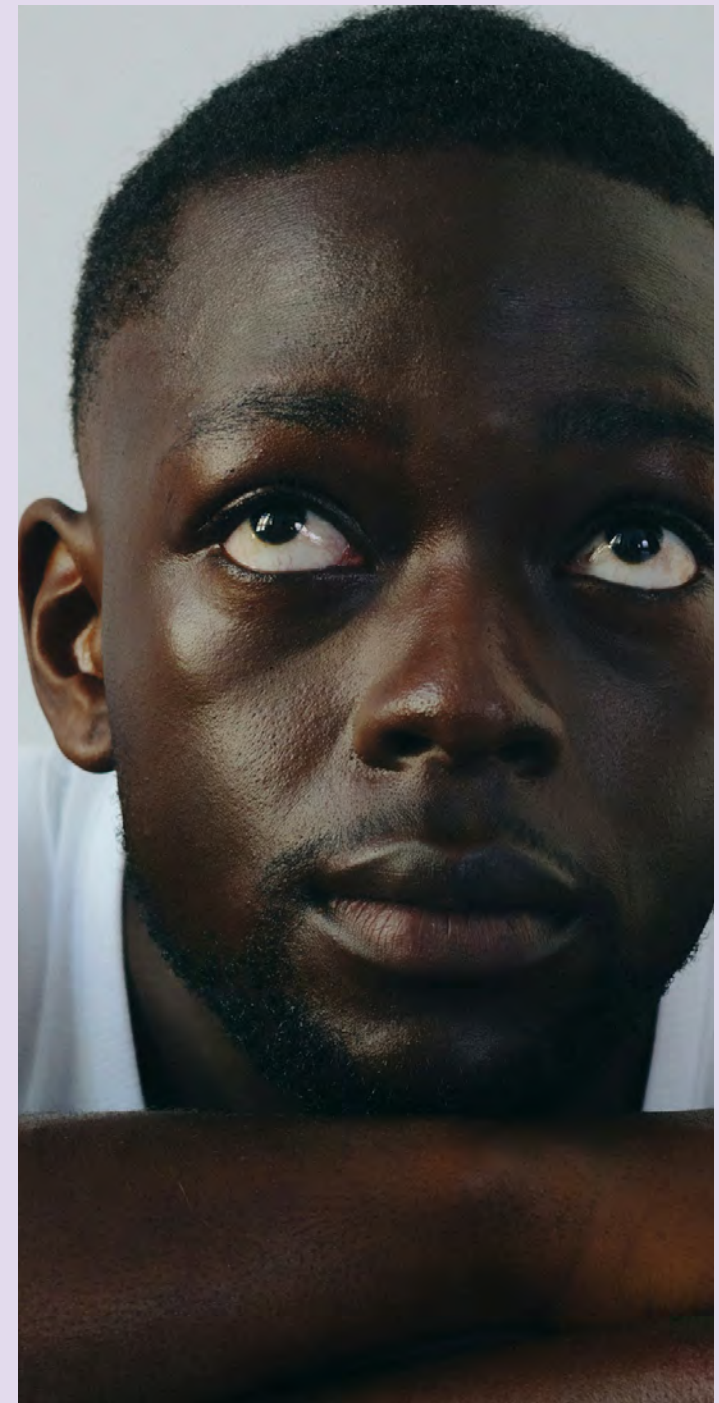
"In patriarchal culture males aren't allowed simply to be who they are and to glory in their unique identity. Their value is always determined by what they do. In an antipatriarchal culture males don't have to prove their value and worth. They know from birth that simply being, gives them value, the right to be cherished and loved."

Bell Hooks, Social Critic and author

37% of men aged 16 to 29 say "toxic masculinity" is an unhelpful phrase, roughly double the 19% of young women who feel this way.

KCL, 2024

We see hyper masculinity showing up with softer edges, as in the movie *Gladiator II* (spoiler alert) when war is resolved with emotionally-charged words, or 'South African Crying Men Awareness Day' to mark the release of rugby documentary *Chasing the Sun*.



The next five years could get us moving past old binaries of tough vs. tender as masculinity is carved into the 'messy middle'. This is where real change could happen, where role models can embrace both strength and vulnerability, and show a pathway for young men to be less fearful.

The Rebound Risk is that young men grappling with their place in the world will need role models, and other than controversial figures, where are they? Fans will praise the latest reality TV contestant for crying on national television, that same contestant will still ask his family if the boys back home are 'ripping' him for doing so.

Brands. *Fast Forward.*

Campaigns can push for storytelling that shows the full spectrum of masculinity (from protectors to caregivers, leaders to collaborators). So, help us all step away from outdated stereotypes and push the next generation – or iterations, in progress – of positive role models to the fore.

CROWD EXPLORES

One of our longest running editorials we share with clients that showcases this is **City Limits**, our zine exploring what's new in cities around the world, and now on its 11th issue. Read them [here](#).



We are already seeing interesting examples of how a very sports centric (jock) culture is shifting - especially in the NBA like Jaylen Brown who openly declares his love for ancient history and philosophy or Jarred McCain who paints his nails. These players really embody this newer form of masculinity that isn't so binary."

DAN, US, SENIOR CULTURAL STRATEGIST



I think the evolution of masculinity is complex but interesting in Asia. Expectations for masculinity (ie, strong men) is still quite persistent, but there's also already a lot of room created and open-mindedness towards alternative expressions of masculinity."

TERESA, APAC, SENIOR CULTURAL STRATEGIST



'Soft Androgyny'. The clothing brand Anaabu based in Malaysia designs unisex clothes to express "emboldened individuality."



Challenging the male athlete stereotype. Basketball player Jared McCain ushers in a new model for masculinity by painting his nails and singing Sam Smith covers on TikTok.



Dys / Utopian Bodies

Our obsessions with wellness (especially among the privileged) have been fired up to another level in **the last five years**. But this collective preoccupation, supercharged by the pandemic, has morphed into something extreme, as individuals do more radical things to their bodies to achieve ultimate health.

It's flirting with a dystopian attitude to the body. The way we exist in our bodies has become a quest for augmentation at any cost – from breakthroughs like artificial wombs to psychoactive therapies to hacking our subconscious.

Health is fast evolving from a constant state of effort (eg eat, exercise, and love well) to a series of problems an individual has the agency to 'fix' – and crucially it's becoming available to all budgets, whether that's GLP-1 synthetic pretenders' mass availability or the one percenters using their wealth to seek longevity.

12% of US adults has used or is using GLP-1.

KFF Health Tracking

But it's not all doom, gloom and Neuralink implants. We've started to see another trend rise in tandem with Dystopian Bodies – one that focuses on the interconnectivity of humans, nature and technology as a force for good.

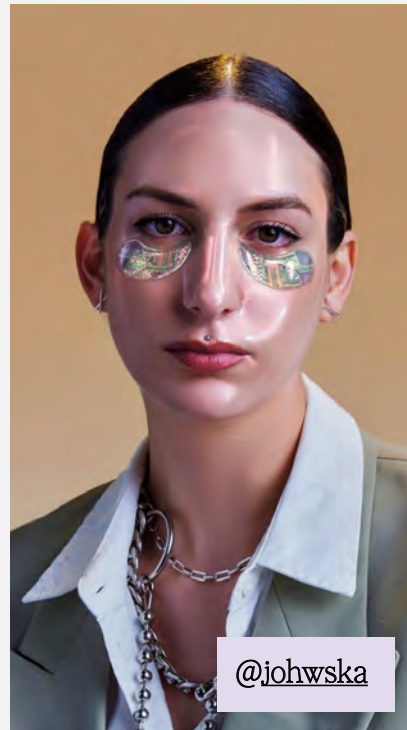
Utopian Bodies explores the potential for us to foster a more symbiotic relationship between biology and technology. Here, tech will supercharge – not eclipse – human capabilities. And one that doesn't compromise our selfhood.

Scientists are mastering connections between hardware and the human nervous system, allowing them to speak the language of our own internal wiring via carefully honed algorithms. For example, an artificial limb that uses electrical impulses fed into the nerves of an amputee to make the limb feel lighter and more comfortable.



@bryan.johnson_

Body Hacking Goes Mainstream. *Don't Die Summit* is an annual event to promote longevity guru Bryan Johnson's "war with death".



@johwska

Cyber Skincare. Digital artist Joliana Jaskowska asks *WTF is real anymore?*



Body Interface. This *Humane AI* device can be projected on to the body, closing the gap between tech and body and turning the human body into an interface.

The next five years will certainly see people with the resources continue this mission to outrun biology and reframe the limits of the human condition – in body, in mind – as frontiers to be conquered whether they turn Utopian or Dystopian.

And either direction will see the gap between the Haves and the Have-nots, between what is real and what is artificial/augmented, widen even more as technology becomes more and more embodied in our lives, and our bodies.

The Rebound Risk is that we don't know the impact on living cells of the engineered/augmented perfection. Health repercussions could see a return to simpler health regimes. And this could in turn cause a swing back to more conventional medicine.

Brands. *Fast Forward.*

This is a watershed moment, and an opportunity for brands to lead the way in responsibility and responsible marketing. It's more important than ever to champion what makes us human, and the value inherent in the imperfections and fallibilities in what it means to be a human.

“On one hand, it feels like we're outsourcing our wellbeing and using tech to rewrite the rules of biology and take us further away from our evolutionary intuition. But the other rising narrative embodies tech as an agent of positive change in service of humanity and human creativity.”

OLIVIA, EMEA, CULTURAL STRATEGIST

Sacred Solitude

Bye bye the lonely, singledom narrative, it hasn't been nice knowing you. In **the last five years**, one-person households have steadily been on the rise in Europe and have doubled over the last 50 years in the US. In many of the Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden), almost every other house is a solo household.

But this is not about solving the loneliness crisis. Instead, it's about sanctifying solitude as a celebration of one of the most important relationships you'll ever have: the one to yourself.

Around the world, many are considering deep kinship over romantic, as we experience what the Financial Times calls a 'relationship recession'.

83% Of young asians prioritise friendships over romance.

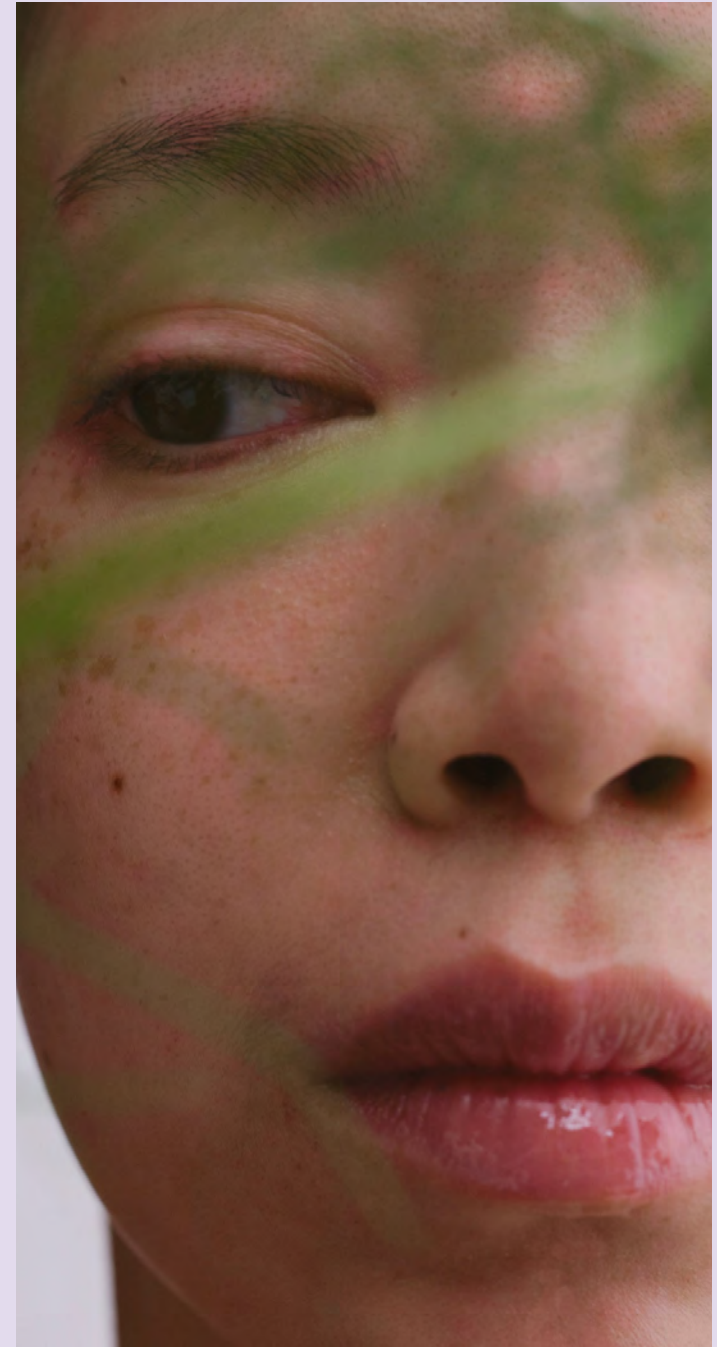
Yuzu, community + dating app, 2024

The rate of marriages hit a record low in China last year as they dropped by one-fifth - the steepest fall since records began.

This celebration of singledom has led to a variety of new products, services and experiences that are catered to numero uno. Smaller home appliances, single serve food-formats and apps to connect likeminded solo diners and travellers have proliferated (Google searches for solo travel have quadrupled since 2020, source: Solo Traveler).

The next five years in popular culture will show more love stories that are about the relationship to oneself. And products and services will focus on creating single sanctuaries and solo recharge spaces, centered around the individual.

The Rebound Risk is that 'main character energy' will cause more people to exist in uncompromising solitary spaces. And the elevation of the self will come at the cost of social connections and social skills which are so key to wellbeing. Screen kids, we're looking at you.



Brands. *Fast Forward.*

Hit reset on tired tropes of singledom and celebrate finding sanctuary in solitude. This includes atypical storytelling that celebrates the self, regardless of relationship status, and will signal to your consumers that you have their best interests at heart. Meanwhile, safety will also be high on the agenda; as we navigate more experiences alone, implement safeguards – both online and offline – that make the individual feel secure.

“*Aloneness in couples is also happening - couples are looking for properties where they can even have their own sleeping arrangements in the name of comfort.*”

CELINE, EMEA, CULTURAL STRATEGIST

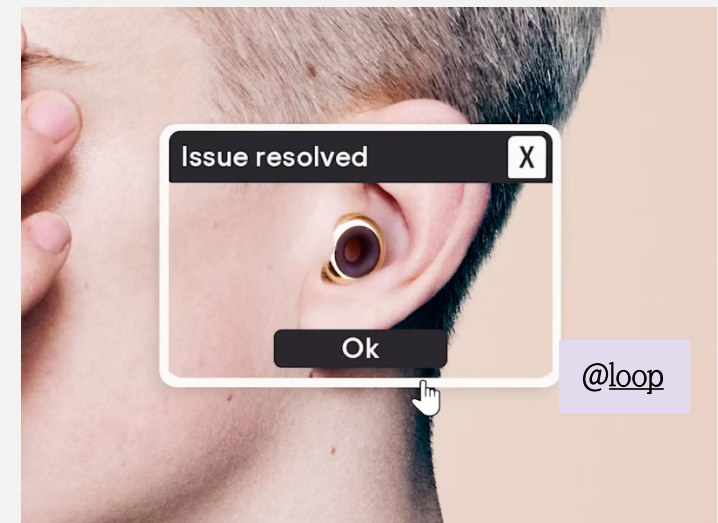
CROWD EXPLORES

Our editorial team have been tracking the shifting dynamics of chosen family for some time.

The Un-Dependents looked at how it's time to celebrate people who have consciously chosen to remain child-free. **Club Free** explores groups of people living outside neat segmentation boxes. Read [here](#).



Ditching Dependents. *Declining global fertility rates are being driven by a combination of socioeconomic factors as more individuals are choosing to remain child-free.*



Solitary Crowds. *People are dialling out the noise of others by using Loop earphones. It's a case of: 'Your life, your volume.'*



Friendship Living. *From communes filled with older women to the [Fractal Community](#) in New York City, where people are living within the same apartment blocks and open up their communal spaces to one another.*



The Roaring 50s

In the last five years, there hasn't been enough noise about the roaring 50s. Not old, not young, the over 50s are a cohort of multiple dualities and tensions – growing in diversity, some relaxing into a well planned retirement while others work on, some with young teenagers and children still at home while others are empty nesters. They've also gone through massive digital transformation, redefined the workplace, influenced media and changed the narrative on aging so that 50 is the new 40...

... and yet, there's a catch-up still going on. Yes, there is the knowledge that they are a hugely influential consumer group, but still a lot more to be done to engage their brand loyalty and impressive spending power.

Gen X account for more than a quarter of global spending.

But only 4% of the ad industry's research into different generations includes Gen X.

Wavemaker, 2023

The next five years will see deeper, more thoughtful attention on these mid-lifers, a cohort ready for reinvention, and affirmation, both little and large. Engaging them needs to be not so much about narratives around age, but attitudes.

Brands can represent how this group has both fearlessness and free time, and for some this also means secured assets and optimistic mindsets gained before the world hit permacrisis.

The Rebound Risk is that with so much more innovation in looking young and good forever, aging isn't embraced and the positive narratives and strides around moving into your post-50 era is lost, returning to a regressive attitude of young = beautiful, and a roll back of attentive given to these energetic mid-lifers.



@greceghanem

Influencing For All Ages. From older models on the catwalk to China's 'Glammas' and your favourite +50 social page like 59 year-old Grace Ghanem - a microbiologist-turned-fashion-influencer with over 1.9m followers on Instagram, who is defining tastes for audiences old - and young.



@mothdrinks

Boozing For All Ages. Moth cocktails has consistently been using older models to market their drinks, showing that class and coolness is not bound by age.



Marketing For All Ages. Mid-life *Sober DJ Luke Una* partnered with Cloudwater to promote a new 0.5% IPA in line with the release of his new album. This simple and localised campaign directly tied into Luke's interests, keeping it authentic for someone who is generally anti-marketing.

Brands. *Fast Forward.*

Don't miss out. Mid-lifers have a zest for life which has been overlooked. For them, experience is everything, including travel, new hobbies, extreme activities, or daring to date again. Exclude them at your own risk.

“Continuously learning has always been a huge ethos especially in the Chinese community, so Intergenerational messaging could potentially tie in really well in Asia - helping brands to target multiple generations of audiences and also championing values of unity and family.”

TERESA, APAC, SENIOR CULTURAL STRATEGIST

CROWD EXPLORES

Check out **Reframing Ageing** from our **Crowd DNA Studio** team around work done in APAC and US about how to get in step with today's 50+ people. Read [here](#).

Meanwhile, our eyes and ears are of course trained on other generations too (and our minds constantly questioning whether generational analysis is the right way to go)... Stay tuned for our deeper exploration of Gen Alpha throughout 2025 and enjoy our recent video series on youth in the US for our **Crowd Voices** series [here](#).

Come to Crowd in 2025 for strategy rooted in cultural foresight.

We're experts in making sense of what's next. Whether it's two years or twenty, we help clients envisage tomorrow for better strategic planning today.

Since 2008 we've helped some of the world's biggest brands chart and shape their future direction, unpacking the potential impact of emergent culture on products, comms, services, consumers and much, much more. This has taken us across all sectors and audience types, from payments to pet food, scotch whisky to snacking, TV to travel.

Some highlights from 2024 include:

- + Working with a global jewellery brand to create a cultural foresight programme to maintain future relevancy
- + Delivering 2050 scenario planning for a major pet care brand to build their future business pipeline
- + Forecasting 10 year health and wellbeing horizons and potential product, channel, comms and innovation implications for a world-wide insurer with over 90 million customers
- + Touching down in India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Mainland China and beyond, delivering strategies for tech brands, tourism boards, gallery groups and beyond in multiple regions, languages and methodologies.

CROWD EXPLORES

Take a quick visit to the very recent past with **Last Year At Crowd** [film](#) (produced by **Crowd DNA Studio**) to see some of our 2024 highlights from 135 projects completed.

If you want to paint a picture of what the near, or far, future might look like, and how YOUR brand could thrive in it, contact hello@crowdDNA.com

Thanks for
reading!