

**MSNBC, Lester Holt Live, July 14, 2004 (Transcript)**  
“Interview about True.com”

LESTER HOLT, anchor:

Technology has revolutionized how people meet and fall in love with the burst of online dating sites. With that technology comes danger, like criminals working for their next victim. One online dating service is now conducting background checks on all prospective members as a way to keep out swindlers. MSNBC.com's Bob Sullivan is following this story for us.

I guess it is a more dangerous playing field than I remember from my days out there. We are talking about a Web site or dating service that allows criminal background checks?

BOB SULLIVAN reporting:

It insists on criminal background checks for all its members. Remember, 30 million people are now at least browsing these Internet dating sites. So this is hardly a small niche any more. Many, many people are meeting this way. There are lots of stories, individual stories you can find of people who have--people who lie about who they are, people lie about their marital status, of course, people who lie about how good-looking that they are. There's nothing new about that, I don't think.

HOLT: That's been around for ages.

SULLIVAN: So is the rest of this actually. It's just kind of moved online.

HOLT: What's the name of the service?

SULLIVAN: It's true.com. Used to be called True Beginnings. It's been around for about six months. They claim about half a million members and they say about 10 percent of the people are turned away because they have some kind of a felony record in their background.

HOLT: Do they share the information or simply not list that person? In other words do you see someone and find

out their background?

SULLIVAN: No, the person is turned away from the bar. You are not allowed in.

HOLT: OK.

SULLIVAN: There is a metal detector at the door.

HOLT: So, I sign up, I have to submit to this background check and they can reject me. So in theory everybody on there is...

SULLIVAN: Is felony free, but that is one of the problems that their competitors say, it's not true. Only about 95 percent of the felonies that are felony convictions in the country are in the database that they are checking out of.

HOLT: Where did this information--I don't know how much of this is public. How much of it?

SULLIVAN: That's a long story. But the short story is 95 percent of it is public. You could go down to the courthouse now and ask about your neighbor. The thing here is this is a nationwide search. So a lot of the times people, who have felony convictions, they move to evade local records or what not. They find a lot of people with records, but they won't find everybody.

HOLT: Now, are they digging up other personal information about previous marriages or mortgages?

SULLIVAN: They're trying to. They also promised they will keep out married people, which is another big complaint about dating sites, that not everybody is honest about their status. But that is another really difficult proposition. The bottom line is, if you are a felon, and you know you are a felon, you can steal someone's identity and sign up for true.com and they won't find that way either. It's certainly not a sure-fire way to keep yourself from dating someone who has a bad background.

HOLT: Just a sign of the times.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, it is.

HOLT: Bob Sullivan, thank you. Nice to see you in person by the way. You are always out in Seattle, when I talk to you.

SULLIVAN: It's nice here in New Jersey in July.

HOLT: OK, yeah. To read more about Bob Sullivan's report on background checks and the latest technology news, log onto our Web site, [tech.msnbc.com](http://tech.msnbc.com).

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