

The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews Part II

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The Center for Communal Research, founded in 2018, advances the Orthodox Union's obligation to better understand and serve the Jewish community. The Center is dedicated to the pursuit of a rigorous, responsive, and responsible research and evaluation agenda.

This report is dedicated to the single men and women who let us into their lives — who completed our survey and participated in interviews. We were humbled by their openness and insights, and we hope this report does justice to their trust in us.

Acknowledgement of Authorship

The OU's Center for Communal Research would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their authorship on this report:

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These individuals were responsible for the conception of the study, the research design, the collection and analysis of the data, and the drafting and revision of initial publication materials. Their expertise and efforts remain the backbone of this research study, and serve as an example of rigor, responsiveness, and responsibility as it relates to a research endeavor.

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Foreword by Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union

Building the *Even HaTo'ein*

It is a privilege to introduce the second part of the OU-CCR's study on the Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews.

We are blessed with a population of remarkable men and women who are not yet married and are ready, willing, and able to serve as respected and contributing members of our communities. They wish to be valued by their *kehilla* in the same way they are in their workplaces and other arenas of activity. Part I of this study focused on educating ourselves about what we can do to remedy those aspects of the single experience, as many single men and women report feeling blamed and judged by others and struggle to fully participate and feel a true sense of communal belonging.

The current report focuses on enhancing the process of finding a spouse, addressing the other challenge of singlehood. As this study confirms, most single Orthodox men and women want to get married and build a family, with close to nine out of ten respondents believing their lives will be fuller and happier if they are married. Even those professionally fulfilled and embraced by their community express the feeling of missing something essential. The current report is focused on what we as individuals and as a community can do to help them find it.

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. The *mitzvah* of *hashavat aveidah*, returning lost items, promotes our mutual responsibility to look out for each other in every way, obliging us not only to restore another's lost property but to save their lives when they are endangered (Sanhedrin 73a), to support their religious and moral wellbeing, and to reconnect them to our shared Torah heritage (see *Minchat Chinuch* 239:4). Our responsibility as brothers and sisters is to be proactively engaged in making sure the other is whole in every way, that they are not left lacking anything which is rightfully theirs.

It is therefore instructive that the Talmud (Kiddushin 2b) chooses to describe the search for a mate by using the metaphor of someone seeking out a lost object. Building upon the biblical account of the first marriage, every individual's pursuit of their *bashert* is seen as their personal hunt for their lost rib, for a missing part of themselves. That image frames both their challenge and our responsibility.

We must extend that metaphor further. The Talmud (Bava Metzia 28b) describes a central and prominent location in Yerushalayim known as the *Even HaToein* that served as the central lost-and-found, a place where finders and seekers would convene to reconnect people to what they were missing. The prominence of its location was both practical and symbolic. Yerushalayim could only serve as the place where Jews come together for divine worship if it was built to enable our caring for each other, providing both the systems and the awareness to ensure the wholeness of our brothers and sisters and to help them find whatever they may be missing.

Our intention in publishing this study is the same, to lend substance and prominence to our critical responsibility to help the single men and women of our community in their quest to find what they are seeking and to achieve even greater personal strength and fulfillment through marriage.

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On behalf of the Orthodox Union, I would like to express our thanks to the past and current researchers of the OU-CCR, to the broader OU team, to our partners in completing this study, and to all the study participants, both interviewees and survey respondents. We sincerely hope and pray to *HKBH* that this effort succeeds in delivering respect and support to the men and women of our community and enables them to fulfill their deepest hopes and dreams. *Kein yehi ratzon.*

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Executive Summary

This report describes what single men and women in the Orthodox Jewish community in the United States are looking for in a spouse, what systems and processes they use to find potential matches, and what dynamics define the different systems and methods they engage with during the dating process. It is a follow-up to our previously released report on how single, Orthodox Jewish men and women feel and what they want from the community.¹ Together, these reports deepen and enrich our understanding of the experiences of single men and women, equipping the Orthodox community with insights to inform a comprehensive approach to supporting this important population.

Method

This research study took a mixed methods approach, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. We conducted a survey of single, Orthodox Jews, which allows us to broadly describe the Orthodox single community as well as their dating behaviors, preferences, and experiences. The qualitative data consists of interviews with single, Orthodox Jews, matchmakers, rabbis, rebbetzins, and community leaders. This data provides us with a more granular understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and opinions individuals have and hold about the dating experience. The two data sets serve to further validate the conclusions, increasing the rigor and robust nature of the study.

Overall Findings

What are single, Orthodox men and women seeking in a spouse?

- Most single, Orthodox men and women want to get married and build a family. Close to nine out of ten respondents believe their lives will be fuller and happier if they are married.
- Women are seeking kindness, religiosity, and socioeconomic status—the majority want a relationship where the man will be the primary breadwinner. In contrast, men care about authenticity, open-mindedness, a growth mindset, and physical attractiveness.
- Most men and women are looking to marry someone who was raised in an Orthodox home. This is true even for those who were not raised in this kind of home. *Ba'alei teshuva* and converts are hurt to find that their status is a challenge to their efforts of finding a spouse.
- Most matchmakers and communal leaders feel that single men and women have unreasonable expectations. Our data suggests that women have slightly higher levels of selectivity than men.

How do single, Orthodox men and women date?

- Many do not feel they can find a partner on their own. Men rely more on matchmakers to help them find dates, while more women rely on friends and family.
- The more avenues of 'finders' one uses, the more dating one does. Working with a matchmaker is associated with going on more dates and meeting more eligible people who would make good partners.
- Qualitatively, however, some men and women are critical of their interactions with matchmakers and say the experience of working with a matchmaker can be negative, and at times, hurtful.
- Matchmakers, for their part, feel a true sense of calling and vocation, but they also feel overwhelmed and unappreciated.

Are single men and women's expectations appropriate and reasonable?

- Single women appear to be slightly more selective than single men.
- Single men are focused on physical appearance more than single women.
- The importance of physical appearance gets reinforced at times through interactions with matchmakers.
- The term women frequently use to describe what is lacking in the male population is "a good man," however, this term's meaning varies. When women use this term, they can be referring to a set of specific characteristics, specific behaviors, or specific social and emotional capabilities.

Next steps

We pose five key questions for Orthodox Jewish communities and their leaders that relate to singlehood, dating, and the shidduch system for single, Orthodox men and women.

- ➊ How can the community engage single men and women in productive conversations to develop an understanding of appropriate levels of selectivity and meaningful expectations of each gender? How can these conversations impart wisdom without being condescending and help build stronger, healthier relationships? How can we help family members, matchmakers, and communal leaders understand and respect the need for appropriate discernment and selectivity during the search for a spouse?
- ➋ How do we support men and women in their efforts to understand and demonstrate the values and qualities that others find most attractive in a spouse?
- ➌ How can single, Orthodox men and women establish ownership over their dating lives? What avenues could be created for them to find quality matches more independently and effectively?
- ➍ How can we educate and empower all 'finders' in the system to maximize their effectiveness?
 - What professional development programs can be offered for matchmakers?
 - How can we cultivate healthy and productive boundaries and expectations within the single/matchmaker relationship and with the community at large?
 - How can family, friends, and community leaders help make matches more efficiently and effectively?
- ➎ How can we improve the experience of *ba'alei teshuva* and converts in the dating system and reduce the negative bias some experience? What educational programs or changes to communal discourse might improve the lives of single men and women who were not raised in the Orthodox community?

We hope that these questions will lead to larger communal conversations and change.

Introduction

This report describes what single men and women in the Orthodox Jewish community in the United States are looking for in a spouse and what systems and processes they use to find potential matches. In this study, the focus was upon the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of single men and women currently looking for a spouse, not on the larger theories of whether there is or is not currently a “shidduch crisis,” how that crisis might be defined, and what reasons might be behind it. This is the second report in a two-part series on the challenges single, Orthodox men and women experience as they look for suitable partners.

For some, trying to find a shidduch, a match or partner, is a significant challenge. Finding a potential partner occurs in a variety of ways – through friends, sitting around informal Shabbat tables, or through dating websites. For others, the dating process is through the shidduch system or with the help of community members. Study participants and respondents generously shared their varied dating experiences and perspectives, allowing us to identify the qualities and demographic details they are looking for in a spouse and understand the dynamics of the different systems and methods they engage with during the dating process.

No single study can solve complex issues in an instant. Our goal in this study, then, is to provide a foundation of facts about Orthodox Jewish single life that we hope will help single people make better informed decisions about dating and help stakeholders and communal leaders make knowledgeable decisions about policies that will improve the experience of finding a spouse in the Orthodox Jewish community.

Questions this report answers—and questions it does not

This report addresses the following questions:

- What are single men and women in the Orthodox Jewish community looking for in potential partners?
- What are the processes, systems, and procedures single men and women use or work through to find eligible people to date and what are the defining features of those experiences?

Topics this report does not address:

- This study cannot definitively assess the validity of one popular theory of the shidduch crisis: the “age gap” theory.² Currently, there is no existing data or studies there are representative, population-based studies of American Orthodox Jews that can provide precise, valid estimates of the number of unmarried men and women in each age cohort.
- This study is a needs assessment, not an impact study. Our research design does not support causal inferences, such as which dating methods or approaches best lead to marriage.

What did we do?

This research project took a mixed methods approach, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. We conducted a survey of single Orthodox Jews, which allows us to broadly describe the Orthodox single community as well as their dating behaviors, preferences, and experiences. The qualitative data we drew from consists of interviews with single, Orthodox Jews, matchmakers, rabbis, rebbetzins, and community leaders. This data provides us with a more granular understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and opinions individuals have and hold about the dating experience. The two data sets serve to further validate the conclusions, increasing the rigor and robust nature of the study.

Full details of our study’s methodology can be found in the [Methodological Appendix](#), available on the OU Center for Communal Research’s website. What follows here is a brief summary.

Survey

We surveyed more than 2,300 single Orthodox Jews who were users of eight Jewish dating applications or singles’ groups. The survey asked about such topics as dating, religion, socioeconomic status, and health. The survey data was collected between February 5, 2020 and March 6, 2020. The overall response rate was 12% (which is double a typical telephone survey response rate obtained by the Pew Research Center). Our sample was drawn from those who engage in online dating sites and as such, reflects the dating habits and perspectives of this subset of the single, Orthodox Jewish population seeking a spouse.

Interviews

We conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 41 single Orthodox Jews, 25 shadchanim, or matchmakers, and 21 communal leaders. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow for organic and fluid conversation about singlehood and dating. In this report, ‘respondents’ refers to the single men and women we surveyed, while ‘participants’ refers to the single men and women we interviewed.

Table 1. Number of survey respondents and interviews, by sex

Method	Men (Pct.)	Women (Pct.)	Total (Pct.)
Survey respondents	845 (36%)	1,524 (64%)	2,369 (100%)
Interviews with unmarried participants	18 (44%)	23 (56%)	41 (100%)
Interviews with matchmakers	3 (12%)	22 (88%)	25 (100%)
Interviews with communal leaders	16 (76%)	5 (24%)	21 (100%)

We recruited participants using a referral (“snowball”) sampling approach. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. For single Orthodox Jews, transcripts were coded using an “open coding” approach that allowed for the emergent development of themes and trends across the interviews.³ For matchmakers, rabbis, rebbetzins, and communal leaders, interviews were coded thematically, based on approaches that cut across the majority of interviews, or were otherwise found significant.

Who are the single, Orthodox Jews we surveyed?

To understand our sample, we focus on four characteristics that likely play a large role in shaping experiences in finding a spouse:⁴ sex, age, geographic location, and type of Orthodox community the respondent identifies with.

Sex and age

More women responded to our survey than men, which is common in survey research.⁵ Survey respondents range in age from 18 to 82 years. Overall, 45% of respondents are between 25 to 34 years old. There are comparatively few men between the ages of 18 to 24 years old in the sample, perhaps because men enter the Orthodox marriage market at an older age than women, or that the youngest men are less likely to use the dating websites, applications, and organizations from which survey respondents were recruited (Table 2).

Geographic location

The majority of our survey respondents live in Greater New York, with slightly more women likely to live in Greater New York (67%) compared to men (61%) (Not shown in Table 3).

Orthodox subculture

Defining Orthodox Jewry is a challenge. Survey researchers generally and uneasily group these communities under the labels “Modern Orthodox,” “Hasidic,” and “Yeshivish.”⁷ Nationally, each of these three communities constitutes about one third of the adult Orthodox population.⁸ Dating applications and websites frequently have their own categorizations.⁹

Our survey follows this research convention by asking individuals whether they consider themselves to be Modern or Centrist Orthodox, Hasidic or Chabad, Yeshivish, or some other type of Orthodox. Most survey respondents (58%) identify as Modern or Centrist Orthodox, indicating that the survey’s coverage of the Hasidic and Yeshivish communities was more limited (Table 4).

Table 2. Sex of survey respondent by age

Age	Female	Male	Total
18-24	16%	5%	21%
25-34	29%	16%	45%
35-44	11%	8%	19%
45+	8%	7%	15%
Total	64%	36%	100%

Table 3. Geographic location

Location	Respondents
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA ⁶	65%
Baltimore-Towson, MD	7%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	6%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL	4%
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	3%
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	2%
Other	13%
Total	100%

Table 4. Self-selected Orthodox identity

Group	Respondents
Modern or Centrist Orthodox	58%
Yeshivish	15%
Hasidic or Chabad	6%
Modern Yeshivish (vol.)	6%
Modern Orthodox Machmir (vol.)	4%
Liberal Modern Orthodox, Open Orthodox, Conservadox (vol.)	3%
Some other type of Orthodox	8%
Total	100%

What are Single, Orthodox Men and Women Seeking in a Spouse?

Respondents and participants express a profound desire to find a partner, in most cases, to build a family, and to find meaningful companionship and compatibility. They tell us about what they look for in someone they are dating. They indicate what specific characteristics in a potential partner matter to them, including age, attraction, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs and practices, and family background. There are several differences between what men and women are looking for in a marriage partner.

Despite concerns, single men and women want to marry

In some interviews, Orthodox rabbis, rebbetzins, and community leaders express concern that broader U.S. trends of later marriage and nonmarriage are affecting the Orthodox world. They assert these norms “trickle in” or “filter down” into the current population of Orthodox single men and women, who they feel are choosing to remain single. One rabbi shares, “And you see today, singles are getting married later and later and later, in many cases by choice.”

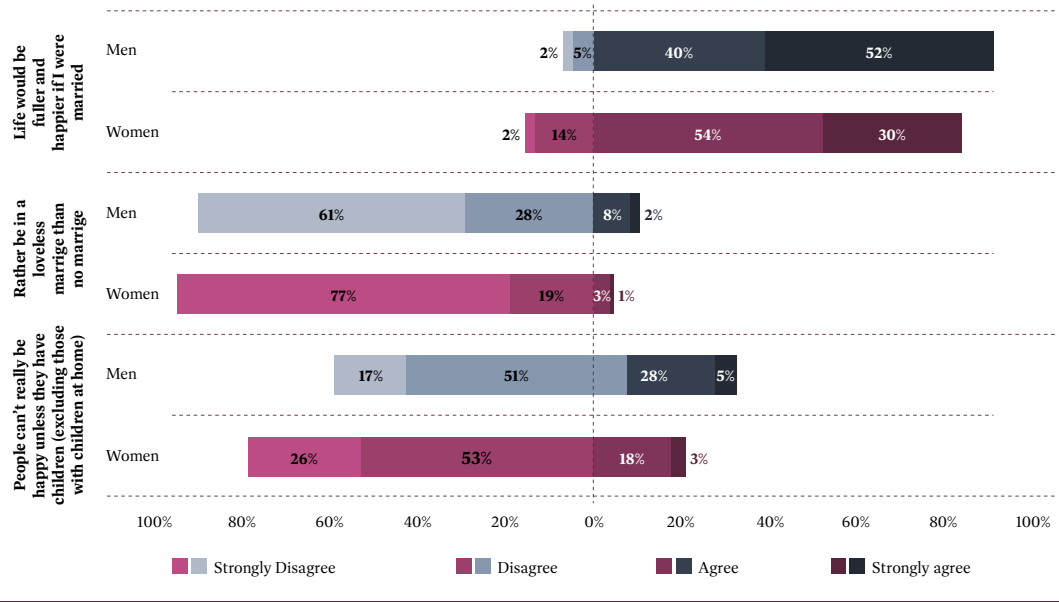
We find little evidence for this claim among the single participants in our study. Rather, the single men and women interviewees and those who responded to the survey express that they are putting every effort into the search for a spouse, are as open-minded as possible, and learn from previous experiences.

Desire for marriage, love, and companionship

Most men and women we surveyed want to marry and be in a loving marriage (Figure 1). Men are more likely than women to believe that their lives would be fuller and happier if they were to be married (92% to 84%). One interview participant speaks about his and his friends’ fear “of being alone.” He explains that “it’s not just girls that feel like they need a sense of companionship and marriage.”

Very few respondents of either sex would prefer a loveless marriage to singlehood. Interview participants speak about a deep desire for marriage to the right person. Companionship is a theme in the kinds of relationships they seek. As one woman notes, “It’s not just about marriage. It’s about a relationship and a partner in life.”

Figure 1. Desire for marriage and children



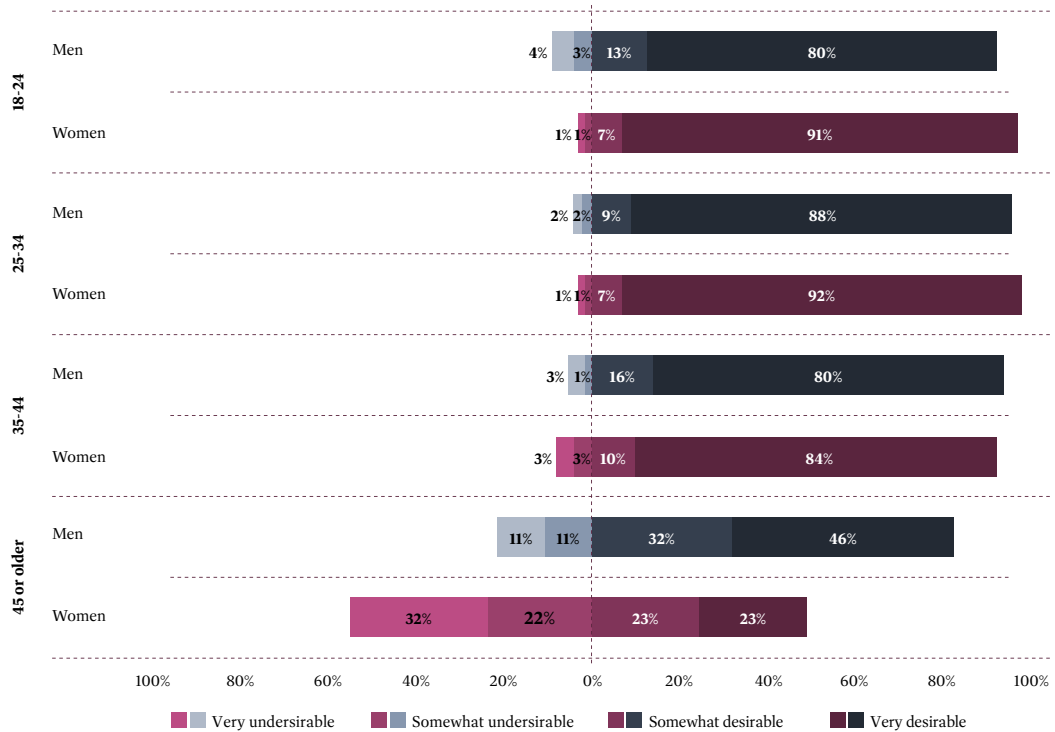
Desire for children

Most respondents (92%) do not have children at home (not shown). Fewer than one third of these respondents feel that children are necessary to be really happy, with men more likely than women to believe children are key to happiness.

At the same time, the vast majority of respondents still want a spouse who is interested in having a family or caring for children. In most age groups, men and women are equally likely to desire a spouse who is interested in having a family or caring for children. However, among those age 45 and older, men are far more likely than women to remain interested in having a family which is understandable given biological factors (Figure 2).

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Figure 2. Desire for spouse who wants children, among those who don't live with children



Desired traits of a potential spouse

Survey respondents are asked how desirable they considered each of ten traits in a potential spouse (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Survey question about desired traits, as presented to respondents

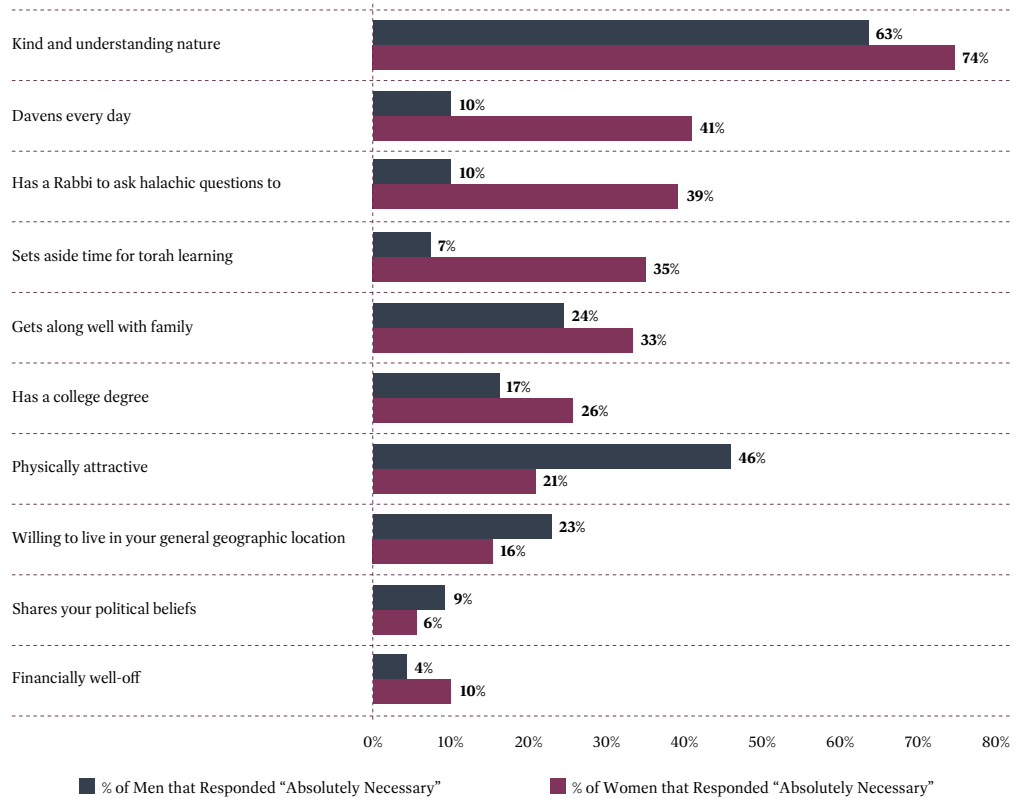
Thinking about a potential husband/wife, how desirable do you consider each of the following

	Not important	Somewhat desirable	Very desirable	Absolutely necessary
Gets along well with family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is physically attractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has a kind and understanding nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has a college degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is financially well of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is willing to live in your general geographic location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shares your political beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Husband/wife prays every day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sets aside time for Torah learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has a rabbi who husband/wife asks halachic (Jewish legal) questions to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Men and women differ in how desirable (ranging from “not important” to “absolutely necessary”) they consider each trait. Women place greater value on almost every trait, with the exceptions of physical attractiveness, shared political beliefs, and willingness to live in the respondent’s location (Figure 4).

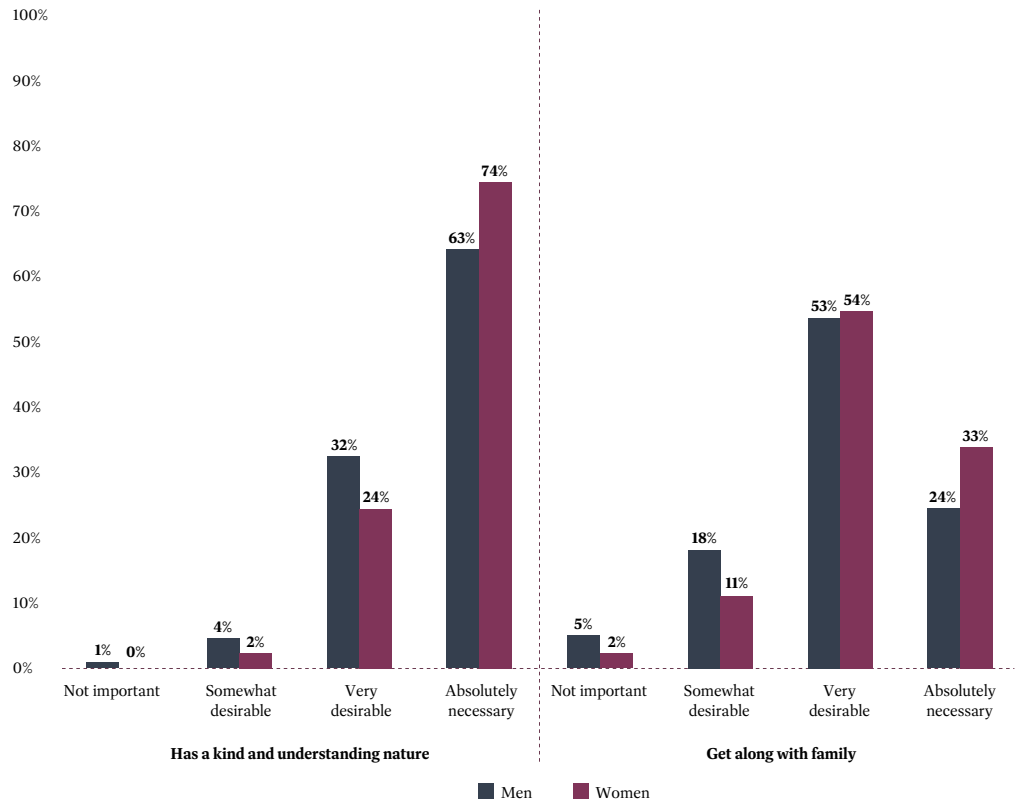
Figure 4. Desirability of traits, “absolutely necessary,” by sex



The vast majority are looking for kindness and understanding

According to both men and women, having a “kind and understanding nature” is, by far, the most desirable trait in a potential partner. Women, however, are more likely to consider this trait “absolutely necessary” (74%) as compared to men (63%). Women are also more likely to value how a potential partner gets along with his family, with 33% of women saying it is “absolutely necessary” as compared to 24% of men (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Desirability of a "kind and understanding nature" and "gets along with family," by sex



Women are looking for a mensch

In-depth interviews gave participants the opportunity to share more detail about the kind of characteristics they were looking for in a partner. As noted above, kindness and understanding are the traits most often desired in a partner, with more women considering this trait “absolutely necessary” than men. Similarly, when interviewed, women consistently express wanting a “good man.” Women say they are searching for someone kind, respectful, honest, generous, and family-oriented. Some women speak about these traits under the umbrella of *menschlichkeit* [goodness] and describe a mensch as a “good person” or “a nice, good, honest, *yashar* [upstanding] guy that’s responsible.”

Women also speak about a lack of *menschlichkeit*, especially as it relates to negative dating experiences. Every woman interviewed refers to at least one dating story in which their date did not behave in ways that are aligned with *menschlichkeit*. They tell stories about men asking rude questions on first dates, making fun of others, or behaving inappropriately.¹⁰

This prioritization of *menschlichkeit*, in large part, reflects a portrait of what women value about themselves. In the interviews, women are more likely than men to describe themselves as kind, devoted to their families and friends, loyal, and caring. Almost all of the women interviewees relate dimensions of social characteristics like kindness, community-orientation, and being a good communicator as qualities that they look for in potential partners, as well as personal character traits like integrity and honesty.

Communal leaders note an increase in the standards regarding what makes a “good man” in recent decades. One rabbi compares the simplicity of what women sought generations ago to the many different attributes and attainments women seek today. He says that, today, a “good man” must “have a fantastic job, and great earning potential, and be a talmid chacham [learned man or Torah scholar], and be athletic, and be cultured, and be well-traveled, and just so many, so many things.”

Men seek open-mindedness, authenticity, a growth mindset

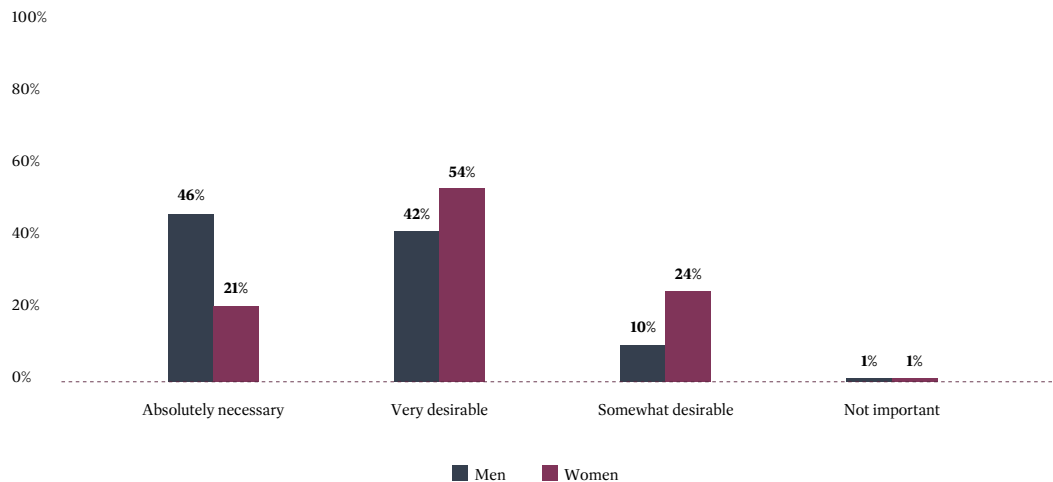
While women place more value on *menschlichkeit* and webs of caring or responsibility – for family, friends and community – men place more value on a prospective partner’s depth of character and capacity for personal growth. Men describe wanting to marry women with the following character traits:

- ***Open-minded.*** Men want to marry women who are curious about the world, receptive to new ideas, independent-minded, and positive. Some men speak about valuing someone who values “all kinds of people, cultures, perspectives” and who has a “sense of curiosity about the world.”
- ***Authentic.*** Men want to marry women who are genuine and real, who know who they are, and who can be both vulnerable and confident. One male participant describes these traits by referring to Brené Brown’s popular work on courage and vulnerability.¹¹ In talking about his search for an authentic woman, one participant notes, “some people are not that deep, kind of more shallow in their thinking and in their lives.”
- ***Growth mindset.*** Men want to marry women who are motivated to learn and grow, who take initiative, and who are resilient. Popular terms for this include having “grit”¹² and a “growth mindset.”¹³ One man shares that the “primary thing” he values in someone else is “how much they want to grow... I don’t think without that I could really have a real connection with another person.”

For single men and women who are currently looking for a spouse, understanding what each sex seeks in a partner could better prepare individuals for dating, demystify certain expectations of the opposite sex, and be a valuable tool in the dating process.

Physical attractiveness

Both men and women desire a mate who is physically attractive, however, men rate this trait as more necessary than women (Figure 6). The percentages of male respondents who say physical attractiveness is absolutely necessary makes this the second most desirable trait, while it is the seventh most necessary trait among women. Almost half of men surveyed (46%) say physical attractiveness was “absolutely necessary,” compared to 21% of women who say the same.

Figure 6. Desirability of “physical attractiveness,” by sex

For male survey respondents and interviewees, attraction to a potential partner is considered critical. One participant explains, “It’s like night and day, the difference in going out with someone you’re really attracted to and going out with someone you’re not.” He shares that attraction adds excitement to dating and adds that some men “don’t like to admit it because it makes them look shallow.” Some men speak about using the photographs they see of women before they date them to gauge their attraction.

Although physical attraction is important to men, many male participants stress they are attracted to personality as much as physical appearance. One explains that attraction is related to whether a woman was positive or negative saying, “If you’re going to be negative in the beginning, then I’m not going to find you attractive at all...And even if you are attractive, I’m probably going to be turned off.” Others speak about times where they were initially attracted to a woman they were dating, but that changed over time. Another describes initially not finding someone attractive “right away,” but as they dated, it changed and “it opened up a whole new door.” Like some of the men, some women discussed attraction as being about more than just physical elements and said that attraction could grow over time.

Some rabbis, rebbetzins, and matchmakers criticize “pickiness” about physical appearance. These individuals express concern over single men’s superficiality, as well as over the unhealthy extremes to which single women will go to meet those expectations. One rebbetzin expresses surprise for the way men talk about appearance and shares, “The questions that we are getting from young men, modern young men, who I would say are very frum, want their wives to cover their hair, let’s say, but she has to be stunning. What is that?”

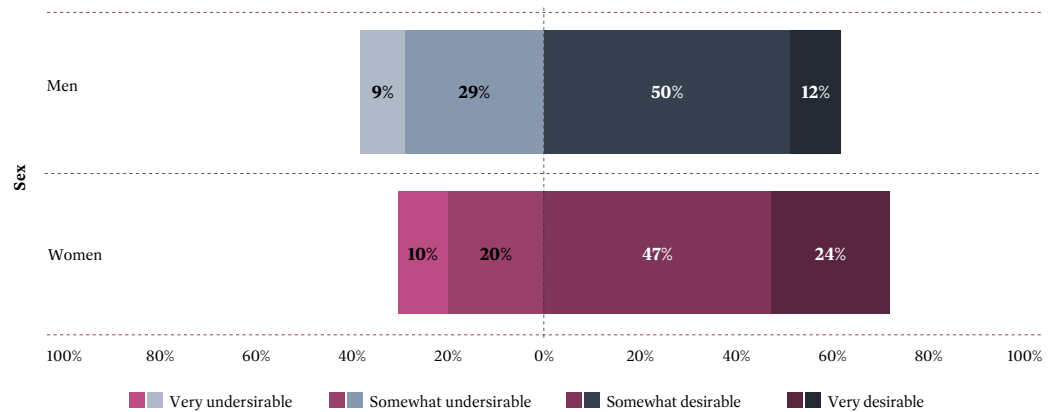
In contrast, some of the matchmakers we interviewed comment that appearance or looks are a part of the way they suggest matches. Some attribute this practice to the preferences and high standards of the men and women they set up. Most of these matchmakers accept the high priority placed on looks and make looks part of the way they evaluate their clients and suggest matches. They speak about telling men and women to buy new clothes or cut their hair and advise women to wear makeup and wax facial hair. Thus, some matchmakers both reflect and reinforce the importance of physical appearance in the Orthodox dating process.

Socioeconomic status

A person’s socioeconomic status is made up of education, income, wealth, and occupational prestige. Men and women have similar levels of employment and make similar claims about their ability to live on their income. Women are somewhat more educated (42% with an advanced degree compared to 35% of men) and are more likely than men to desire a spouse who has a college degree (91% to 78%) and is financially well-off (92% to 72%).¹⁴

A majority of respondents indicate a preference for a relationship in which the man is the primary breadwinner, and the woman is the primary caregiver (Figure 7). Women are more likely than men to prefer this arrangement (71% to 61%). Given the sociodemographic reality that women have somewhat higher levels of education, are equally employed, and prefer a male breadwinner/female caregiver relationship, it may be more difficult for a woman who seeks a partner with a higher socioeconomic level to find a spouse that meets that criterion as compared to a woman who seeks a partner with an equivalent socioeconomic level to herself.¹⁵

Figure 7. Preference for male breadwinner - female caregiver marriage, by sex



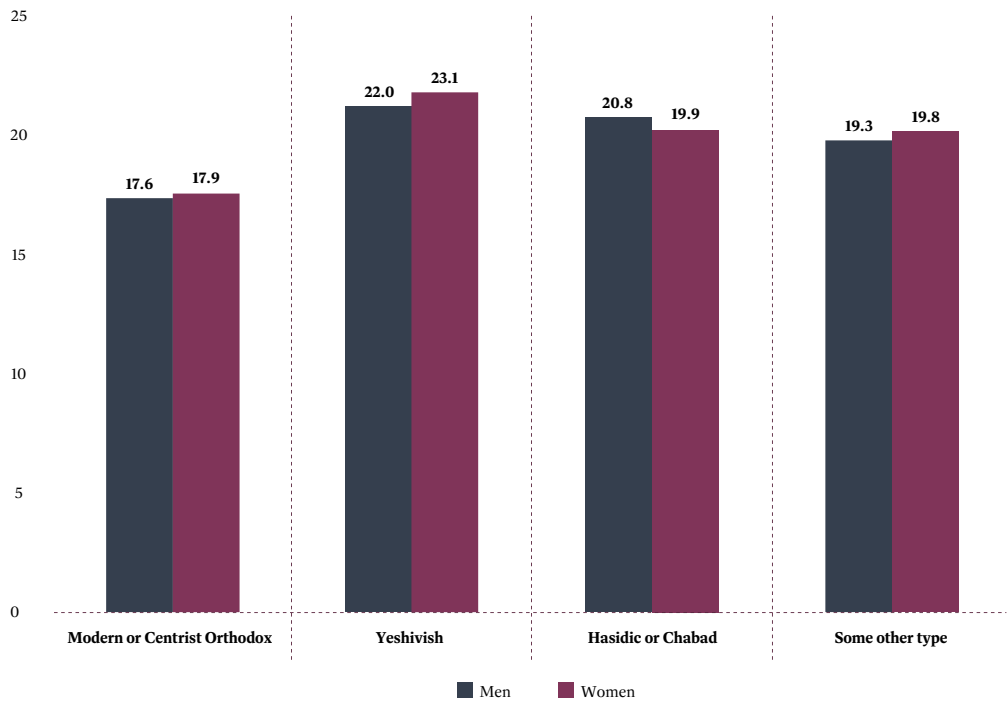
Religion

Religious observance plays a role in what men and women seek in potential partners. Some behaviors, such as daily davening, may be viewed as proxies for a certain level of commitment or adherence to Orthodox traditions. Our survey data highlights the similarities and differences between men and women’s religious beliefs and behaviors, and their religious expectations for a potential partner.

Religious beliefs

Respondents rate how important six tenets of Orthodoxy are to them. The tenets include – God created the world, God is involved in day-to-day activities, God loves me and everything that happens is for the best, God gave the written Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, God transmitted the oral Torah to Moses, God rewards those who follow commandments and punishes those that don’t. Their responses are combined into a composite score to arrive at a faith index. Men (18.8) and women (19.2) generally score equally high on the index (Figure 8) of these theological tenets of Orthodoxy, with no statistically significant differences beyond Yeshivish women (23.1) scoring statistically higher than Yeshivish men (22.0).

Figure 8. Average Composite Faith Index score, by sex and hashkafa

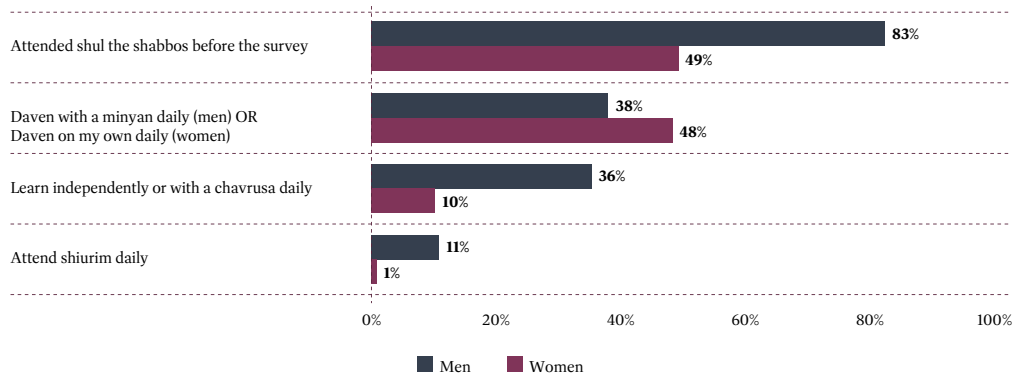


Religious behaviors

Survey respondents were asked about some of their current religious behaviors and practices. Although not directly comparable, women report daily davening [praying] on their own at a rate of 48% while 38% of men say they daven or pray in a minyan every day.

When asked about attending shul on Shabbos [Sabbath], men report higher rates (83%) of attendance than women (49%), however, shul attendance is a gendered norm in the context of Orthodoxy, meaning there are different religious expectations for each gender.¹⁶ Additionally, men learn on their own or with a chavrusa and attend shiurim [Torah classes] at higher rates than women. Expectations for these behaviors are also gendered within the Orthodox community.

Figure 9. Religious behaviors, by sex



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Modern Orthodox (89%) and Yeshivish women (97%) report not using a cell phone during the Shabbos before taking the survey at slightly higher rates than Modern Orthodox (85%) and Yeshivish men (90%) while Hasidic and Chabad men and women report not using a cell phone at similar rates.¹⁷

Religious desirability and expectations

Across all hashkafot, women are more likely than men to desire a spouse who davens every day, sets aside time for Torah learning, and has a rabbi for halachic [of or relating to Jewish religious law or legal traditions] questions. Because men are expected to engage in these behaviors at higher rates than women, it follows that women desire these behaviors at higher rates than men.

Modern Orthodox and Hasidic or Chabad men and women report similar rates of desiring a spouse who only eats in certified Kosher restaurants. Yeshivish women (99%) are more likely to find this behavior desirable compared to Yeshivish men (89%).

Modern Orthodox women are more likely than Modern Orthodox men to strongly agree that they want to live in a Jewish community where people have Wi-Fi, go to the movie theater, have mixed seating at weddings, and participate in Israel activism and advocacy (Table 5). Yeshivish and Hasidic or Chabad men and women reported desiring the above communal characteristics at similar rates.

Table 5. Percent of Modern Orthodox respondents who strongly agree that they want to live in a Jewish community where people...

Behavior	Men	Women
Have Wi-Fi at home	53%	68%
Go to the movie theatre	33%	44%
Have mixed seating at weddings	23%	32%
Participate in Israel activism and advocacy	24%	36%

Finding religious compatibility

The qualitative data provides some evidence that a portion of women lament the lack of men who meet their religious expectations. One rabbi shares that issues surrounding religion and the decisions women make about their religious expectations in a partner is an “excruciating conversation that I’ve been in with many.” He shares that some single women are prepared to lower their religious expectations of what they are looking for in a spouse to find a partner. He explains that “we have raised them with the expectation that their homes will be permeated with Torah, and learning, and davening, and spirituality, and when they begin to realize that finding a guy that has all of those priorities, and who is well-balanced emotionally, and who checks all the other boxes that they’re looking for...and they realize that it’s very, very hard.” He continues, “they do come to rabbis about that because they’re looking for validation. They’re looking for almost a representative of G-d to tell them that this calculation is okay.”

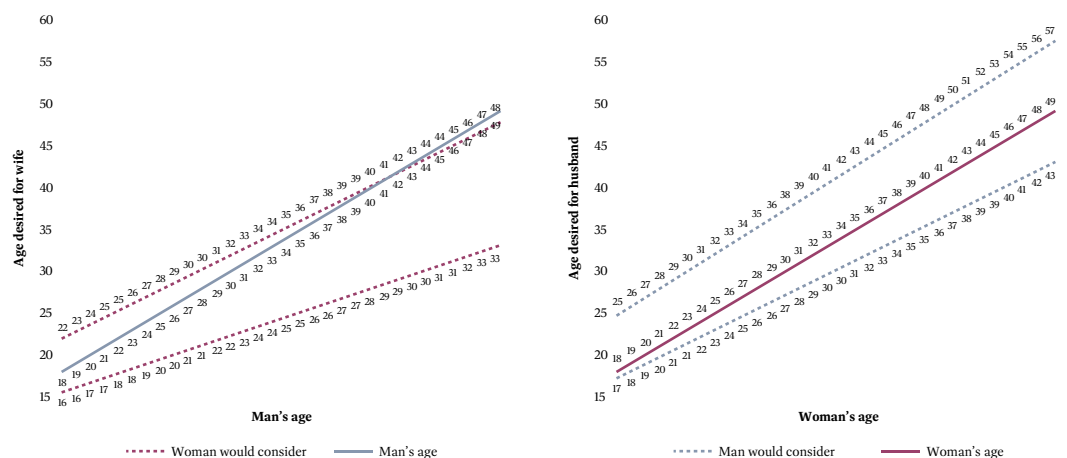
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In summary, men and women have similar scores on the faith index, with only Yeshivish women scoring higher than men. Survey respondents' behaviors and desires follow the patterns of the gendered norms in the Orthodox community - men report attending minyan daily and on Shabbos as well as learning Torah more often than women, and women desire these behaviors more often than men. Respondents report desiring similar types of communities, with only Modern Orthodox women more likely than men to want to live in communities where people have Wi-Fi in the house, go to the movies, have mixed seating at weddings, and engage in Israel advocacy. More research is needed to parse religious behaviors and expectations among single men and women to gain a better understanding of how religiosity impacts dating and finding a spouse.

Age

Men prefer younger women, while women prefer older men. On average, a man will consider dating women from about 10 years younger to 1 year older than himself—for example, a 35-year-old man will consider dating women from ages 25 to 36. Crucially, the older men become, the less willing they are to date women older than themselves. Women will consider dating men from about 3 years younger to 8 years older than themselves—for example, a 35-year-old woman will consider dating men from ages 31 to 43. Unlike men, a typical single woman will consider men both older and younger than she is, regardless of her age.

Figure 10. Age range of desired partner, by respondent age

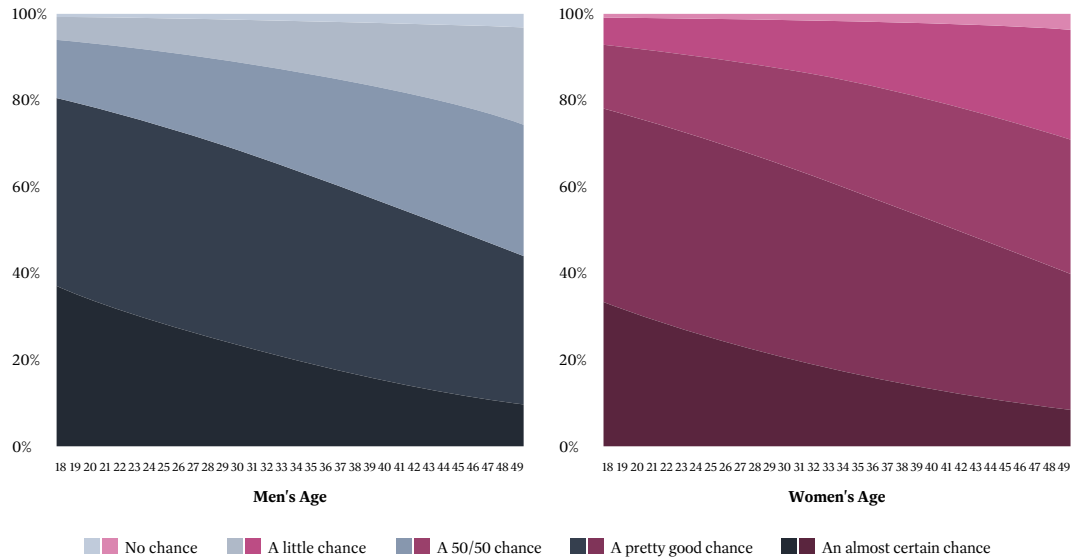


Among survey respondents who had been married previously, men's average age at first marriage is 27, compared to 24 for women. This is further evidence of men's preference for younger women, and women's preference for older men.

Both men and women aged 35 and older date less (Figure 12) and are less confident in their chances of finding a suitable partner. Both men and women perceive that, as age increases, their chances of finding a suitable partner to marry decrease (Figure 11). One participant in his early thirties discussed the challenges that "frum [observant] older singles" face, saying that there is "a certain amount of hopelessness that develops as a result."

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Figure 11. Perceived chance of finding a suitable partner to marry, by sex and age



Those the system may disadvantage

***Ba'alei teshuva*, converts, and family background**

Most single men and women want a spouse who grew up Orthodox, regardless of their own religious background. In every age group, the proportion of those who want a spouse who grew up Orthodox is larger than the proportion of those who actually grew up Orthodox (Table 6). This creates an obvious misalignment in the Orthodox dating system. The preference for a certain pedigree puts *ba'alei teshuva* and converts at a disadvantage.

Table 6. Desire for spouse who grew up Orthodox, by age and personal background

Age	Grew Up in Orthodox Household	Desire Partner Who Grew Up in Orthodox Household (Very/ Somewhat)
18-24	84%	93%
25-29	83%	93%
30-34	73%	91%
35-39	68%	89%
40-44	66%	87%
45 or older	42%	86%
All	72%	91%

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Ba'alei teshuva and converts are hurt to find that their status is an obstacle to marriage. In interviews, some *ba'alei teshuva* and converts discuss actively hiding their background and their confusion around how and when to bring it up. One participant says that she keeps her conversion “really, really private” and that “nobody knows.” Another woman laments that no matter how halachically stringent she is and how hard she works on her *middos* [attributes or characteristics], “I will always be considered a *shiksa* [non-Jewish woman (used in a derogatory way)].” Another woman, whose parents are *ba'alei teshuva*, thinks she “would have gotten better opportunities or suggestions [from matchmakers] if they viewed my family as someone with more *yichus*.”

Many matchmakers make a concerted effort to pair individuals with similar family backgrounds. They give two reasons: first, that relationships are easier to navigate if the partners have been socialized similarly; and second, that some single men and women, and their families, care more about *yichus*, lineage or pedigree. One matchmaker explains:

I found it's very, very hard to set up two people from two very different backgrounds. I'm in the middle of one of those right now. I always try to stick to family lines, keeping it as similar as possible. You're bringing two families together. When they're not on the same page in so many ways it makes it that much more challenging.

The idea of pedigree also extends to Jewish educational institutions, including high schools, yeshivas and seminaries, colleges, and summer camps. These institutions serve a signaling function, especially for the parents of young, single men and women, who are involved in vetting matches for their children. A matchmaker shares:

I most recently suggested a fantastic boy to a girl, and the parents said they didn't like the yeshiva that he went to, and that they felt that that yeshiva was primarily comprised of boys that were weaker or in some way compromised. And I said, 'First of all, that's not the case. And second of all, that is not the case with this young man. So at least investigate and you'll hear.' But they were very adamant.

This preference for a certain pedigree, and for being raised and educated in a particular religious environment, puts *ba'alei teshuva* and converts at a disadvantage. This is evident in our data for *ba'alei teshuva* ages twenty-five to twenty-nine, who spent less time dating in the past seven days before the survey (1.2 vs. 2.6 hours) and dated less people in the past six months (3.3 vs. 4.6 people) than those raised in an Orthodox home. However, *ba'alei teshuva* of all ages remain equally confident about their chances of finding a suitable partner.

The previously married

In our sample, 20% of survey respondents had been married before, including two-thirds of respondents ages forty-five or older. Respondents who have never been married are more likely to report “an almost certain chance” of finding a suitable partner (22%) as compared to divorcés and divorcées (12%), and widows and widowers (9%).

More than half of respondents (54%) find a spouse with kids from a previous relationship very undesirable. Men (58%) find a potential partner with children less desirable than women (48%). As respondents age, their willingness to consider a spouse with children increases, particularly at age 35 and older.

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One matchmaker, who deals primarily with individuals who have been previously married, describes a “pecking order” where divorced men, with or without children, marry single women or divorced women with no children. This leaves divorced women with children “up a creek with no paddle” and that while “some of them get married, for the most part, most do not.” This was confirmed by a participant who was previously married and has children. She sees it as barrier to finding a partner and notes that she found single fathers to be more attractive than bachelors.

Those who struggle financially

Respondents who could not make ends meet rate their chances of finding a suitable marriage partner lower than those with more financial security. Those who say they cannot make ends meet are more likely to report “no chance” of finding a suitable partner (6%) than those who say they have money left over (2%). Additionally, the 5% of survey respondents who cannot make ends meet are less likely to have a matchmaker ‘very involved’ in finding them dates (18%), compared to those who do not struggle financially (29%).

Those struggling with mental health

In interviews, matchmakers made clear that mental health conditions are stigmatized in the Orthodox community. A mental health diagnosis for a single man or woman, or even a mental health diagnosis in their family, disadvantages those who are looking for a partner. In general, matchmakers try to fight this stigma. A matchmaker shares:

I had this couple dating. This girl, I knew her very, very well. She came from a wonderful family but there are family issues...She went onto antidepressants just to be able to get her to function in life. The boy’s family found out about it...The boy’s parents freaked out. They wouldn’t listen to reason...The parents of the boy just totally shut it down. The boy was heartsick. They made him go out with like one or two girls then he called me up one night and said, ‘I don’t know what to do. She’s my besheret. I don’t want to go out with any more girls.’... Finally, finally, I’ll never forget, I was in a busy grocery store. I got a call from the boy’s mother. She was half in tears and she’s like, ‘Okay, we’re ready to let them continue.’ Which meant they were going to get engaged probably in a week or two. They restarted it up and they are so happy. Every time I see her in the street, she literally runs over to me and gives me a hug.

It is unknown to what extent stigmatization discourages single men and women from seeking treatment.

Summary and questions for policymakers

In sum, most single, Orthodox men and women want to marry and create families of their own. As a group, women are seeking kindness, religiosity, and high levels of socioeconomic status. Men care about these traits too, but to a lesser degree, caring more about authenticity, open-mindedness, a growth mindset and physical attractiveness. Both men and women perceive a decrease in the likelihood of finding a suitable spouse as they age. Orthodox women are slightly more likely than men to have graduated from college, have earned an advanced degree, and are significantly more likely to prefer a male breadwinner/female caregiver relationship. Taken together, women who seek a partner with a higher socioeconomic level than themselves may have a harder time finding a suitable match.

Some single men and women may find they are disadvantaged in the current marriage system. Single men and women prefer a potential spouse who grew up in an Orthodox household over *Ba’alei teshuva*, converts, and those previously married. However, this lack of desirability does not influence their confidence in finding a partner. Struggles with mental health continue to be stigmatized in the Orthodox community and disadvantage those who had or have a family history of mental health issues.

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Questions for policymakers

- ① How do we support men and women in their efforts to understand and demonstrate the values and qualities that others find most attractive in a spouse?
- ② How can we improve the experience of *ba'alei teshuva* and converts in the dating system and reduce the negative bias some experience? What educational programs or changes to communal discourse might improve the lives of single men and women who were not raised in the Orthodox community?

How Do Single, Orthodox Men and Women Date?

Functioning of the marriage market

In addition to understanding what men and women are looking for, we sought to understand their dating process. We explore when men and women begin dating and how often they date. We also wanted to know whether where they live impacts how often they date, how they go about looking for people to date, and what they thought about those various avenues. As our sample was drawn from a subset of the community - those who engage with online dating sites - the results reflect the dating habits and perspectives of this portion of the single, Orthodox Jewish population seeking a spouse.

Time spent dating and contact with eligible partners

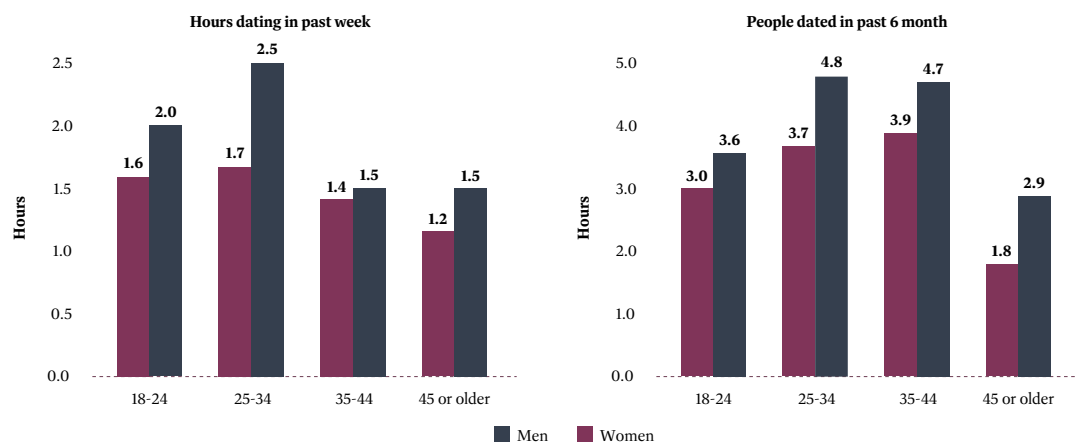
In this section, we provide details and statistics on the dating practices and experiences of single men and women.

Among our respondents, women begin dating 2.4 years earlier than men, at an average of 21.2 years old, compared to 23.6 years old for men. Overall, men spend more hours on dates and date more people than women.

In the seven days before taking the survey, men report they spent more hours on dates than women. On average, men spent close to two hours on dates in the past week, whereas women spent an hour and a half. Both men and women ages thirty-five and older spent fewer hours dating in the week before taking the survey than men and women under age thirty-five.

Male survey respondents also dated more people in the last six months than female respondents. On average, men dated four people in the past six months, while women dated three. Both men and women ages thirty-five and older dated fewer people in the six months leading up to the survey than men and women under age thirty-five.

Figure 12. Hours spent dating in past week & number of people dated in past 6 months, by age and sex

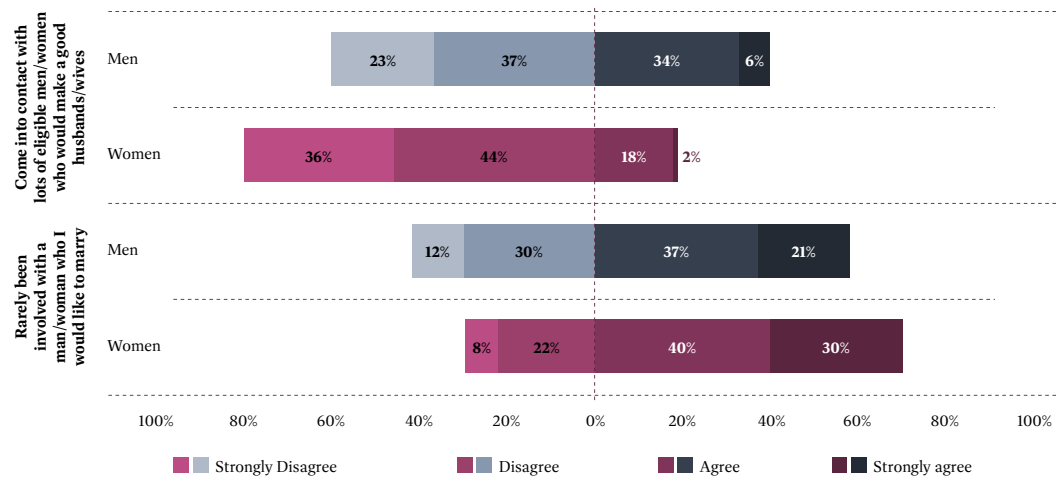


Men spent substantially more money dating than women. For example, a typical man who spent two hours dating in the past seven days spent \$88 preparing for and going on dates, compared to \$15 for a woman who spent the same number of hours dating.

As indicated above in the *Desire for marriage, love, and companionship* section, men and women are looking to date individuals who are compatible with what they seek in a partner. Most women (80%) and men (60%) feel they do not often come into contact with eligible partners. For the relatively few who do, men (40%) report twice as much contact with eligible partners as women (20%).

Most respondents say they are rarely involved with someone they would like to marry, with 58% of men and 70% of women reporting this experience. Men are more likely than women to have been involved with someone they would like to marry (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Contact and involvement with potential partners, by sex



Dating in and outside of New York

About two-thirds of our respondents live in Greater New York. Participants speak about being encouraged to move to New York for dating purposes, their experiences dating in New York, as well as leaving New York to date elsewhere.

Dating in New York

Men and women living in New York dated more people in the six months before taking the survey. They also report spending more hours dating in the week before taking the survey. One woman moved to New York because she was turning twenty-six and had to make dating “the priority in my life because I really value getting married.” She says that everyone advises “don’t leave Greater New York.”

Yet, men and women in Greater New York are not more confident that they will find a spouse, nor are they more likely to have been involved with someone they would be willing to marry. A woman who moved to New York said being in New York allows her to date “a lot of people,” but “she became jaded because of it.” She refers to dating in New York as “a dating game ... a meat market.”¹⁸

Dating outside of New York

Some participants believe it is better to date outside of New York. After commuting to New York to date, which was “terrible,” “exhausting,” and “expensive,” one participant eventually left for the West coast to get away from the “societal construct that is the Upper West Side.”

A female participant sees the pressure outside of New York, to marry, settle down, and fully integrate into the community, as a positive aspect of dating outside of New York. She feels that the men in other geographical locations “were a lot more invested” than those in New York. “You’re getting more of a shot when you’re in an out-of-town place,” she adds.

Making the choice to date in or outside of New York requires an understanding of these two perspectives, the nuances encountered in each location, and the ability to manage different expectations and contexts. There is no right or wrong decision when thinking about where to live while dating, rather the choice rests on the best strategy for each individual.

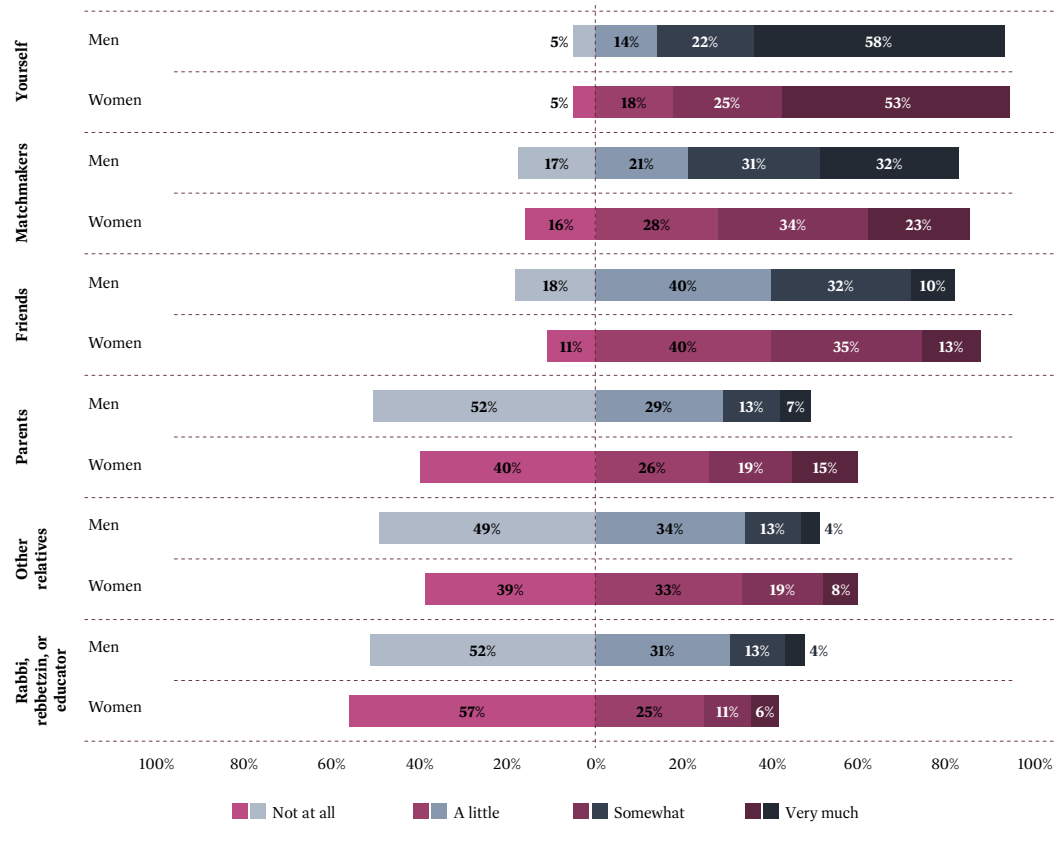
Engaging different stakeholders to find dates

The dating system includes individuals who act as ‘finders’ on behalf of single people in the Orthodox community. Men and women report their experiences trying to find dates through various avenues, stakeholders, and finders. Respondents were asked to what extent the following types of people are involved in their search for dates:

- 1 Themselves
- 2 Matchmaker
- 3 Friends
- 4 Parents
- 5 Other relatives
- 6 Rabbis, rebbetzins, or other educators

Most respondents, 95%, rely on themselves to find dates. Matchmakers and friends are the next most used resources. Parents, other relatives, and educators are far less likely to be used. Many men and women do not involve their parents in their dating lives, with the same holding true for extended family. Men (52%) are more likely than women (40%) to say that their parents are “not at all involved” in finding them dates. Furthermore, more than half of survey respondents (52% men, 57% women) say that rabbis, rebbetzins, and other educators are “not at all involved” in helping them find dates (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Involvement of others in looking for dates, by sex



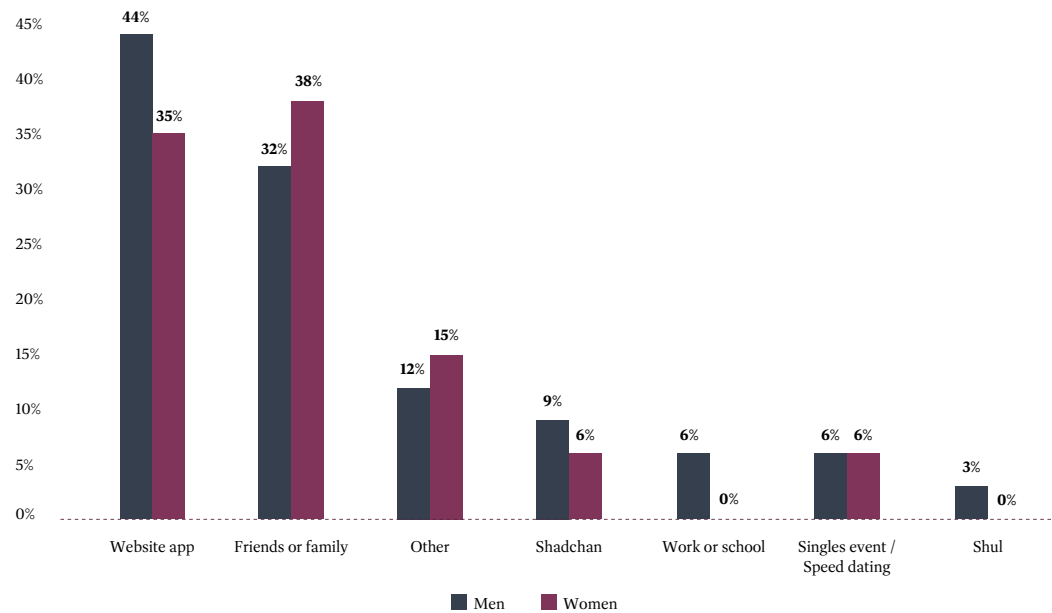
The more avenues people use to look for dates, the more likely they are to have gone on a date in the past six months, and the more people they are likely to have dated (Table 7).

Table 7. People dated in past 6 months, by number avenues used to look for dates

Number of avenues 'very much' used to look for dates	Mean number of people dated in the past 6 months
None	1.0
One	2.1
Two	2.9
Three	3.2
Four	3.5
Five	4.1
All six avenues	4.3

Around 70% of respondents use four or more avenues to find dates. When asked how they met someone they dated in the last six months, the two most common responses are through a dating website or app (male 44%, female 35%) and friends and family (male 32%, female, 38%). About 20% of men and women met a person they dated in the past six month through a matchmaker. Few respondents met people they dated at work, school, singles events, and shul.

Figure 15: Ways they met someone they dated in the last six months, by gender



While there is an assumption among participants for the need to use different avenues to help them find suitable matches, some participants resent being “forced to rely on people” to find dates and are worried about finders who “are not really fully devoted to what they are doing.” One also wonders, “if you’re relying on third parties to set you up, what happens when the third parties aren’t doing it?” Some participants call for more “natural, organic ways of meeting” compatible, single people.

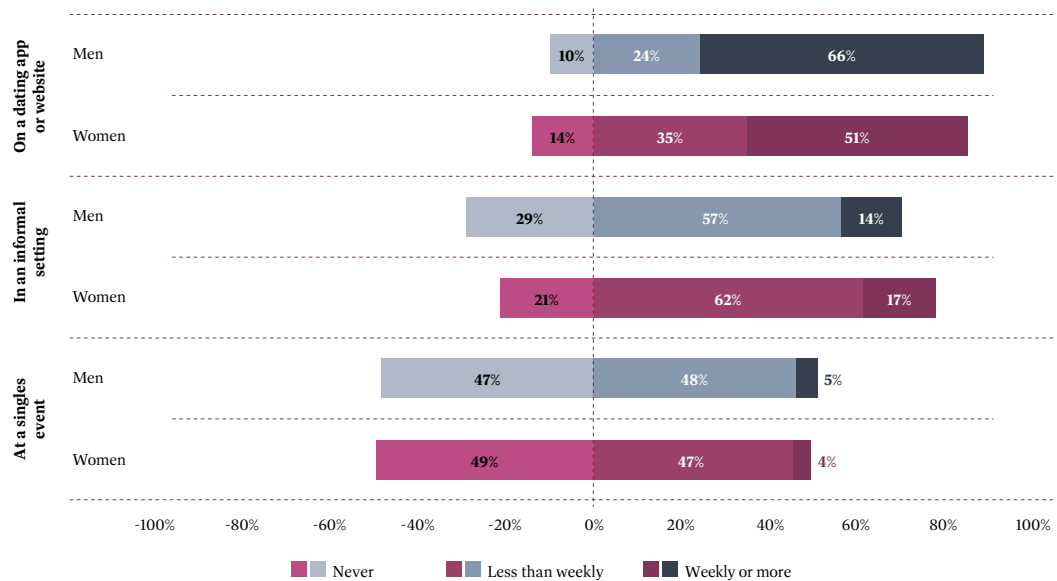
Matchmakers and communal leaders also reflect that “men and women used to meet in normal ways” and that they wish we could be “normalizing it again.” Some suggest creating ways for single people to “meet each other under casual circumstances” while several rabbis lament the lack of unpressured “opportunities to meet” those who are “friends of friends.” None of the matchmakers, and only one of the communal leaders, feel that the current norm of separation between the sexes is beneficial to dating. However, they acknowledge that this is the current cultural norm, saying that finding places for natural interaction between the sexes is “not so popular, obviously, in the frum world.”

Finding matches for oneself

Most respondents spent at least some time looking for dates in the seven days before taking the survey, but 27% of respondents did not spend any time looking for dates. The average number of hours spent looking for dates (among all respondents) in the seven-day period was about four, and the median number of hours spent was one. Time spent looking for dates does not vary by sex, age, or geographic location.

Among those who say they are involved in looking for dates directly for themselves, they most often use a dating app or website, with men being more likely to use this approach on a weekly basis than women (66% for men, compared to 51% for women). Although one participant describes these tools as “the easiest, most accessible way” to find dates, most women we interviewed did not find them to be helpful or effective. The second most used resource, informal settings (such as social gatherings), is more popular among women. Singles events are the least popular of the three we asked about, with around half of men and women reporting they never attend, which is an important insight for communities who want to support and help single men and women find a match (Figure 15).

Figure 16: Ways look for dates for self (in the past 6 months), by sex (if self at least “a little” involved)



Some dating apps and websites are designed to give users unmoderated access to others’ profiles. A few participants explain their primary reason for using these types of dating websites is because it is the closest they can get to finding matches on their own. One shares, “I don’t think that dating through dating apps is more accurate or more on target. I just feel like I’m in more control that way.”

Other dating apps and websites single men and women use rely on matchmakers to suggest matches. A man describes his experience on dating websites that use matchmakers to facilitate matches as overwhelming and gave the analogy of “the shotgun effect. It’s like, we’re going to spray 10 matches a week at you and hope that you accept one.” Some participants also refer to these websites as “morally bankrupt,” “horrible,” or “absolutely insult[ing]” because of the lack of thought put into suggested matches. Other participants wonder whether it would be more effective to give them “access to the database” of other users instead of having to “rely on shadchanim” the app or website employs.

Using ‘finders’ to identify suitable matches

In addition to looking for matches for themselves, many single men and women use matchmakers, family, friends, and communal leaders to assist in finding potential partners. We refer to those who support single men and women in locating possible matches as ‘finders.’

Resumés

Many men and women create a shidduch resumé to give to finders in hopes that it will help them find a suitable match. A shidduch resumé is a profile describing some details about the person, often including their family background and education. Overall, 69% of respondents had shidduch resumés.

Participants speak about the impersonal and sometimes unrealistic nature of these resumés. One male participant believes that “what the girls write [on their resumés] really has no relation to anything that they’re actually looking for.” Therefore, to him, it did not matter that he received “tons of resumés because most of them have no relevance.” He keeps his resumé “deliberately vague because people over-read things.” Another participant expresses surprise when a resumé “actually has a profile that, like, tells me something about them” and adds that women he dated were advised that “the more you write, the more reasons somebody has to reject you.”

Some women speak about the “headshots” that are included with resumés and the pressure to capture the perfect picture or “to be a size zero.” A man remarks that “no one had pushed me to take a picture of myself” but that he receives many women’s pictures with their resumés. “I’m flipping through pictures like I’m *Achashversoh* (Ahasuerus) and I have just this pile of resumés,” calling it “one-sided.”¹⁹

A woman says that the deluge of resumés men receive allows them to be as “picky” as they want. Some women complain about the practice of sending women’s resumés to men first and the pressure this creates on women to say yes to a date as soon as a man approves of their resumé. These systematic practices around resumés highlights some of the ways men may be advantaged in the system. Being presented with many resumé options may be a reason men date more than women. The male control over agreeing to a date, and the subsequent female sense of urgency to say yes, may create an uneven power dynamic in the dating system.

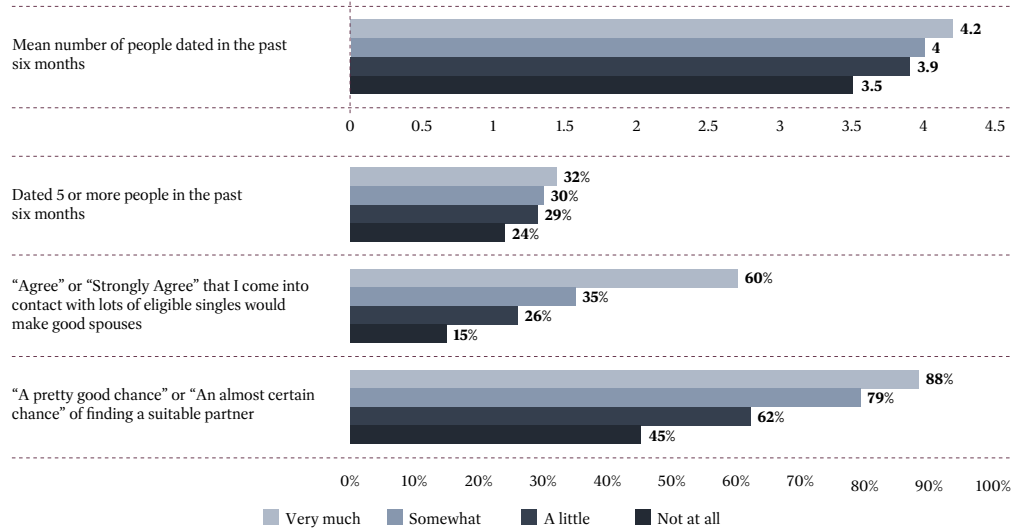
Matchmakers as finders - an important note

The matchmakers we spoke with are a passionate, dedicated, and hardworking group of individuals who seek to help *Klal Yisrael*. The role they play in helping many Orthodox men and women find suitable spouses is invaluable and much *Hakarat Hatov* should be afforded the matchmakers in our communities.

In this section, we describe the perceptions of single men and women who have not yet been successful in finding a spouse with the help of a matchmaker and understandably, the perceptions they share skew towards the negative. It is reasonable to consider that after finding a spouse through a shadchan, attitudes may improve. Further research should be conducted with married individuals who experienced success finding their spouse with a matchmaker to understand their experience and perceptions and compare the two groups.

Our survey findings indicate that working with a matchmaker is associated with going on more dates. Those who engage the help of matchmakers dated more people in the past six months. Additionally, they are more likely to say they dated more than five people and report meeting more eligible partners. They are also more optimistic about their chances of getting married.

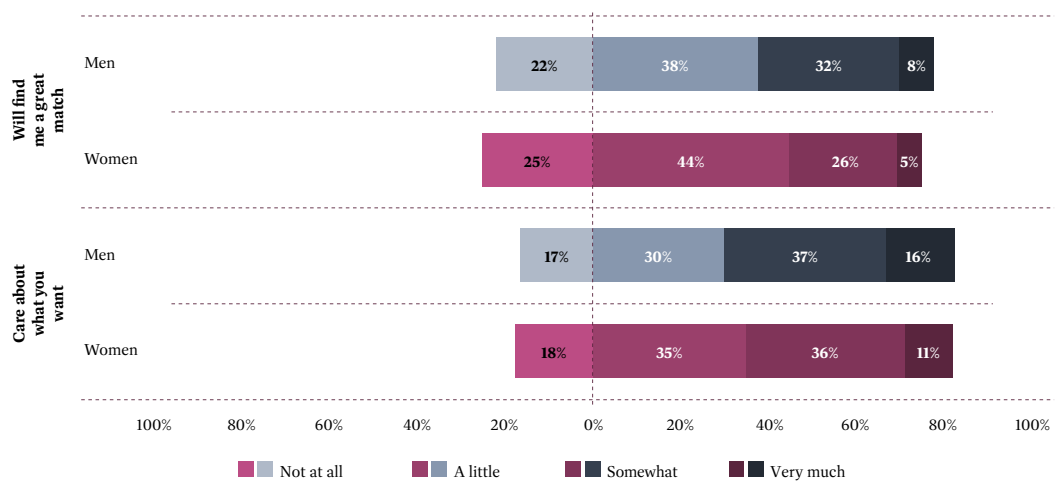
Figure 17. Dating experience in past 6 months, by matchmaker involvement



Perception and concerns about matchmakers

At the same time, many respondents are concerned about their involvement with matchmakers. When asked how confident they are that a matchmaker will find them a great match, 60% of men and 69% of women respond, "not at all" or "a little." When respondents are asked how confident they are that matchmakers care about what they want, 47% of men and 53% of women respond, "not at all" or "a little." Men are somewhat more likely than women to feel confident in matchmakers' ability to find them a suitable match and care about what they wanted in a spouse (Figure 17).

Figure 18. Feelings towards matchmakers, by sex



Several participants recall matchmakers who dismissed their opinions, telling them to “change” what they were looking for, that what they were looking for was not what they needed, or that what they were looking for was not important. One man says he felt the preferences he told a matchmaker “disappeared into the ether” and another felt like talking to matchmakers was like “talking to a wall.”

Participants explain that matchmakers offer advice based on their own assumptions and values of what is important, rather than understanding the preferences of the people they are trying to set up. A female participant expresses that it sometimes feels like matchmakers think they “know you before you can even explain yourself,” and they make matches based on their belief that they know what they are doing because of past *shidduchim* [matches] they have made.

The female interviewees, in particular, use negative emotional terminology in talking about their experiences with matchmakers. They described their interactions with matchmakers as “demeaning,” “hurtful,” and “degrading.” They share that they felt “judged,” “abused,” and “offended” by matchmakers they met and that many are only catering to the single men they work with, “they sell you what they have. They don’t sell you what you want.”

In short, working with a personal matchmaker, as opposed to a matchmaker on a dating app or website, is effective in terms of going out on more dates and meeting eligible potential partners. However, the quality of the experience of working with personal matchmakers appears to be more negative. Male interviewees are more likely to say that matchmakers did not listen to or understand them, while the women are more likely to say that matchmakers were demeaning, offered critical, unsolicited advice, and prioritized their male clients. In essence, what matchmakers are doing is working; how they are doing it is not.

Critique of the matchmaker system

Some single men and women interviewed describe what they feel is the limited utility of matchmakers. They do not want enhancements of the matchmaker system; rather, they want support of the community to create more opportunities to take control of their own dating lives.

One respondent is critical of the suggestion to increase the number of matchmakers or to offer training to increase effectiveness. Instead, he feels, “Maybe what’s more effective is you just create more circumstances where singles can do everything themselves, and that would, of course, empower them and they could take care of themselves.” Another participant asks, “When people have suggestions, why exactly do you need all these intermediaries?” And finally, one participant speaks about the need for innovation to the current dating system and to the “same old” attempts at helping single people find matches, like shul initiatives and shabbatons.

The rabbis, rebbetzins, and community leaders interviewed note problems with the matchmaker system, as well. A few advocate for professionalization, some type of training and certification for matchmakers. Others agree with the single men and women who feel that the “shadchan” system is ineffective and that the matchmaker initiatives of the past were “total failures.”

Matchmakers’ perceptions of themselves

Matchmakers share a narrative that runs counter to the negative stories single men and women share about them. A hallmark of most matchmakers’ experiences is the tension between passion for and fulfillment in making matches and feeling overwhelmed and unappreciated. None of the matchmakers chose to set people up because of financial incentives. Rather, they describe how acting as a matchmaker was a huge time commitment without assured or fair financial compensation. They are committed to matchmaking because they perceive a communal need for someone to devote time and energy to help single men and women date.

Matchmakers believe single men and women need someone “in the middle” to coach or guide them through the dating process. Some matchmakers see it as their role to help single individuals understand what compatibility looks like in a partner and that some single individuals’ expectations are “very unrealistic.” They express “trying to change the mindset” of the people they try to set up. Because some matchmakers feel that single people are inflexible about their “list” and are “looking for people they cannot have,” they may offer “a little bit of tweaking” or “point certain things out” to single men and women about their dating choices. One matchmaker describes her work as “1% idea, 99% counseling, guiding, phone calls.”

The matchmakers interviewed are very aware of the negative public rhetoric about what they do and how they do it. They describe experiences of being avoided in public, being blamed for relationships that did not work out, being lambasted for being incompetent or uncaring, and single people retaining grudges against them for what was genuine, well-intentioned advice.

Friends as finders

Regarding friends acting as finders, the majority of interviewees feel they are the most likely to suggest compatible people to date. While men mention friends less often than women, more men say friends are helpful in suggesting eligible matches. Women, however, mention a close network of friends as having the most positive impact on their dating life because they act as a source of emotional support, rather than as significant finders. Women’s friends are essential to helping them maintain resilience and humor through the challenges of dating, which is something men do not discuss.

Family as finders

There are a wide range of opinions among interview participants about the role of family members in finding matches. While some relate that family has been important in offering advice and support throughout the dating process, many intentionally kept family members at arms’ length, feeling that it is healthier and more productive to do so. At times, it is because family members offer unhelpful advice or make assumptions. A few matchmakers recount that family members can “mess up” what the matchmaker feel could be a “good shidduch” by interfering with the matchmaker’s suggestion or a couple’s dating relationship. Other single people purposely keep family out of the process because they seek autonomy and independence in their dating lives.

Rabbis, rebbetzins, and communal leaders as finders

Rabbis, rebbetzins and communal leaders are significantly less likely than matchmakers, family, and friends to be involved in making matches for single men and women in our survey. Additionally, most of those interviewed feel that rabbis and community leaders do not do enough to support single people in finding and maintaining healthy relationships. One man suggests it is because rabbis “have no idea what’s really going on” and because “they have no time” since “they are so busy.” Another feels community leaders “have taken zero role in any of this.” Another shares communal leaders “have trouble relating to the problem” because “they have no trouble marrying off their own children.” One woman says community leaders are missing out on “opportunities to set people up and really get to know them...You can lament the plight of the singles, but if you’re not actually doing anything, then why are you there?”

In contrast, during interviews, communal leaders discuss several ways they try to be involved in the lives of single men and women in their communities. Overall, they feel a responsibility to create what one called “support and programming” for single people, so they feel welcome and involved. One rabbi describes what he feels is each rabbi’s “*chashuva achrayus* [important responsibility]” to “take care of them, to see to it that they feel comfortable, they feel part of the *kehillah* [congregation], and they feel that they’re being serviced by the *kehillah* just like anybody else.”

Summary and questions for policymakers

In summary, the single men and women interviewed and surveyed rarely feel they can successfully find a spouse on their own. Based on the survey findings, they are correct—the more one diversifies the types of finders they use, the more likely they are to meet eligible dates.

At the same time, single men and women express frustration at the difficulty of accessing relevant potential partners. Few women and less than half of men feel they are frequently exposed to quality potential matches.

Within our sample, more than a third (male 35%, female, 36%) of respondents met someone they dated in the last six months through friends and family, well over the 20% who met through a matchmaker. Friends and family play a key role in helping single men and women find a suitable partner as they are the ones who know them best and can suggest compatible people to date. This finding is echoed in the forthcoming OU study on the shidduch system in the Yeshivish community. Perhaps because it is not formalized like matchmakers, the role friends and family play is often overlooked, but it is a very effective way to meet potential dates.

Questions for policymakers

- ❶ How can we educate and empower all ‘finders’ in the system to maximize their effectiveness?
 - What professional development programs can be offered for matchmakers?
 - How can we cultivate healthy and productive boundaries and expectations within the single/matchmaker relationship and with the community at large?
 - How can family, friends, and community leaders help make matches more efficiently and effectively?
- ❷ How can single, Orthodox men and women establish ownership over their dating lives? What avenues could be created for them to find quality matches independently and effectively?
- ❸ How can we empower and encourage friends and family members to become more involved in supporting those looking for a spouse? How can friends and family members develop the skills and understanding needed to actively and productively help single people in their lives find dates?

Are Single Men and Women's Expectations Appropriate and Reasonable?

Men and women are critical of each other's roles in the dating landscape. Based on open-ended responses to the survey, men perceive women to be overly selective or picky, materialistic, and unreasonable. Women feel that there are few "good men" available and that men are overly concerned with physical appearance. Data from matchmakers and communal leaders serves to confirm, and at times complicate these critiques.

Male perception of the dating landscape

At the end of the survey, respondents are asked, "Do you believe there is a 'shidduch crisis' in American Orthodoxy? Why or why not?" Ten percent of male responses to this question critique single women and blame them for the shidduch crisis. The most common complaints are that single women are materialistic, unreasonable, and overly picky. One man responds:

If there really is a shidduch crisis it totally is the girls' fault... Most single girls over age thirty-five have probably gotten plenty of good offers for marriage. If they didn't choose someone it's their fault for being so stuck up.

Men base their responses on their experiences dating, with one writing that the women he has dated "will not stray an inch from what they are looking for." Another writes:

Girls only seem to be interested in people who project the 'perfect' image. You gotta come from a wealthy family, be on your way to be[ing] independently wealthy, be ambitious. There is barely any room for honest, easygoing, non-materialistic people.

Female perception of the dating landscape

In answering our question about the causes of a "shidduch crisis" in American Orthodoxy, fully one-third of women wrote that there are not enough single men or not enough "good" single men. Their most common complaints are that single men are entitled, unkind, or overly hung-up on physical appearance, or that they have poor mental or emotional health. One participant explains:

Based on my experience, it simply seems that there are not nearly as many eligible guys to go around as there are girls. I frequently meet lovely, bright, kind, capable young ladies who would make the most excellent wives and mothers, and there seem to be so few quality guys for all these ladies to be matched up with.

Another shares:

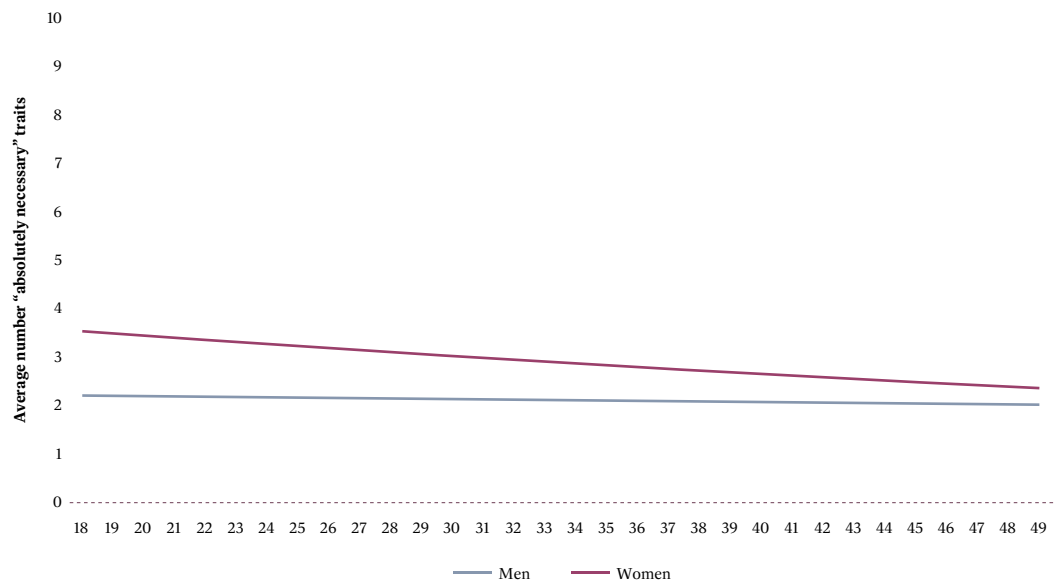
I've gone on at least one-hundred dates looking for my shidduch and ended up with men who don't have jobs, don't have personal hygiene, don't have degrees or manners, and I'm still told by matchmakers and websites that I'm too picky.

These complaints cut across the single, female population: Women in all age groups, living in and outside of Greater New York, in all Orthodox affiliations are equally likely to offer them.

What we know about selectivity from our data

In terms of traits desired in a spouse, women do appear to be more selective than men. When asked how desirable they considered each of ten traits in a potential spouse, survey respondents show differences in how many they see as “absolutely necessary.” Men rank an average of 2.1 traits as “absolutely necessary,” whereas women rank an average of 3.0 traits as “absolutely necessary,” indicating somewhat higher levels of selectivity than men.²⁰ However, women’s number of desired traits declines as they get older, whereas men’s do not (Figure 18). Note, women and men are responding to traits listed for them on the survey. It is possible that we did not ask about some traits that were important to them and that, if given other traits to choose from, these results would have been different.

Figure 19. Average number “absolutely necessary” traits, by age and sex



Most of the matchmakers and communal leaders interviewed indicate that single men and women have unreasonable expectations about what they are looking for in a spouse. They are critical of what they called “pickiness,” the “shopping list” of criteria, and the search for perfection. Communal leaders and matchmakers are more critical of women when they speak about pickiness, which aligns with survey data on women’s higher levels of selectivity at younger ages and men’s consistent levels of selectivity.

The above appears to be a commonly accepted communal viewpoint on levels of selectivity among single men and women in the Orthodox community. This perspective is corroborated in a forthcoming OU study on the shidduch process in the Yeshivish community. However, choosing a spouse is arguably one of the most important decisions an individual can make and warrants careful consideration and discernment. Matchmakers, family members, and communal leaders may be interpreting discernment as “pickiness,” but single men and women should be afforded the space to carefully consider this life decision without being labeled too selective or unreasonable. All stakeholders would benefit from reevaluating their assumptions on levels of selectivity, and consider what levels are appropriate and what levels are harmful.

Summary and questions for policymakers

The question of appropriate and reasonable expectations is a fraught one in the single, Orthodox Jewish community. Single women may be somewhat more selective or “picky” than single men and single men are focused on physical appearance more than single women. This leaves us asking several questions: Are female and male levels of selectivity reasonable or inappropriate and extreme? Is it realistic to expect single men and women to eliminate a focus on physical appearance from their search for a partner? What levels of discernment are appropriate and reasonable?

Questions for policymakers

- ➊ How can the community engage single men and women in productive conversations about appropriate levels of selectivity and meaningful expectations of each gender?
- ➋ How can these conversations impart wisdom without being condescending and help build stronger, healthier relationships?
- ➌ How can we help family members, matchmakers, and communal leaders understand and respect the need for appropriate discernment and selectivity during the search for a spouse?

What We Still Do Not Know

A good piece of research answers some questions and spurs still more. Despite the robust data collected and numerous questions addressed, this research leaves us with three questions for future research and communal discussion.

1 What are the basic sociodemographic contours of the U.S. Orthodox community—including the single population?

There have been no probability surveys that can provide reliable, valid estimates of the characteristics of American Orthodox Jews.²¹ Despite our high response rate and number of respondents, we do not know if our survey sample of unmarried Orthodox Jews is representative—because no one knows the characteristics of all unmarried Orthodox Jews.

Mindful of this limitation, this study focuses on comparisons within our dataset—between age cohorts, sexes, and geographic areas for example—rather than on the overall prevalence of attitudes and behaviors.²²

The lack of representative data on Orthodox Jews also prevents us from calculating the sex ratio in the single, Orthodox population. We cannot say definitively whether there are more women than men in the single, Orthodox Jewish population, nor can we definitively prove or disprove the “age gap” theory.

A survey of a representative group of Orthodox Jewish adults would allow us to describe the Orthodox community: its size, sociodemographic characteristics, religious and spiritual realities, political views, and other critical features. We could answer questions like, “What proportion of Orthodox Jews think X?” or “What proportion of Orthodox Jews do Y?” We could also study rare and potentially vulnerable populations, such as Hispanic or non-White Orthodox Jews. Such data would be invaluable to communal policymakers and practitioners, as it would identify both the vulnerabilities and vitalities within the Orthodox community and its subpopulations, as well as possible intervention points in the lives of Orthodox Jews. The old adage is true — designing a good study can be either fast or cheap, but not both. We are in the process of constructing a probability study of Orthodox Jews throughout North America, but we still have a distance to go.

2 What factors cause change in the lives of Orthodox men and women?

This study was “cross-sectional,” a single snapshot of a moving stream. We learn about correlations between particular characteristics and behaviors, but we cannot determine causal direction. We do not know what our research participants’ lives were like in the months and years before the study or how they will change in the future. Who will get married? For that matter, who are the Orthodox Jews whose voices are not heard in this study? There may be some for whom the dating system works well. What are the causal links between personal characteristics, social environment, and life outcomes?

A longitudinal research study—a study that follows the same individuals over time, taking measurements at regular intervals—can support causal inferences, by showing how the effects of a particular characteristic or experience change over time. We propose creating a panel consisting of day school graduates, surveying them during the spring of their senior year of high school to collect baseline data, and annually thereafter. Such a study would gather invaluable information on their Jewish trajectories after they leave their parents' homes, as they live through the “emerging adulthood” stage of life.²³ Both family formation and religious trajectories would be key components of the study.

3 What does the term, “a good man” really mean?

Our data cannot fully speak to the claim made by several women that there is a lack of “good men.” At the conclusion of our analysis, the term “good man” is left undefined. When women use this term, it is unclear if they are referring to a set of specific characteristics, a specific set of behaviors, or specific emotional capabilities. Because this term remains undefined, and likely defined differently by most who use it, it is impossible to measure. Thus, the discourse surrounding dating in Orthodox Jewish communities would benefit from a more articulate set of expectations for men surrounding character traits, dispositions, and social and emotional capacity.

What is Next?

We began this research project asking what we can understand about the “shidduch crisis” in American Orthodoxy by speaking to single men and women primarily, and to others who are involved in the experiences of Jewish, single men and women looking for a spouse. Through sensitivity, awareness, and understanding of all the elements of the “shidduch system,” the larger Orthodox Jewish community, informed by evidence, can reshape the conversation about what comes next. We present the below questions that we believe will enrich the communal conversation and help policymakers improve life for single, Orthodox men and women.

The questions that should inform how we move forward

- ❶ How can the community engage single men and women in productive conversations to develop an understanding of appropriate levels of selectivity and meaningful expectations of each gender? How can these conversations impart wisdom without being condescending and help build stronger, healthier relationships? How can we help family members, matchmakers, and communal leaders understand and respect the need for appropriate discernment and selectivity during the search for a spouse?
- ❷ How do we support men and women in their efforts to understand and demonstrate the values and qualities that others find most attractive in a spouse?
- ❸ How can single, Orthodox men and women establish ownership over their dating lives? What avenues could be created for them to find quality matches more independently and effectively?
- ❹ How can we educate and empower all ‘finders’ in the system to maximize their effectiveness?
 - What professional development programs can be offered for matchmakers?
 - How can we cultivate healthy and productive boundaries and expectations within the single/matchmaker relationship and with the community at large?
 - How can family, friends, and community leaders help make matches more efficiently and effectively?
- ❺ How can we improve the experience of *ba’alei teshuva* and converts in the dating system and reduce the negative bias some experience? What educational programs or changes to communal discourse might improve the lives of single men and women who were not raised in the Orthodox community?

These questions and recommendations flow from our belief that the Orthodox community and its leaders can and should be responsive to the needs of its members. In developing them, we gave extra weight to the solutions offered by the single men and women who participated in our interviews and completed our survey. We hope that their words will be the beginning of larger communal conversations and change.

Guidelines for Individual Daters and the ‘Finders’ They Engage

Our study unearths several insights that might be used to help the conscientious, single dater and those that work to help them find potential mates. The below guidelines are based on the findings in this report as well as the findings presented in the *Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews*.

Guidelines for individual daters

The practical advice detailed below answers the unasked question: “*What did your study find that can help me, a single man or woman, date more effectively and successfully?*”

1 Personality matters most.

We showed survey respondents a list of ten traits and asked them to rank how important each one is in a potential spouse. *We find the one trait that matters most to both single men and women is that the person they date “has a kind and understanding nature.”* The implication of this description is further explained by our interview participants.

- Women describe someone who is kind, family-oriented, honest, and a “*mensch*.”
- Men describe someone open-minded, curious about the world, and receptive to new ideas, someone “*authentic*.”

Practical Takeaway: *Be your authentic self, share your curiosities, and develop your relationships.*

Women who want to put their best foot forward in the dating world might focus on being confident in who they are, showing up authentically to a date, and sharing their curiosities and interests.

Men who want to make a good impression might work on developing and speaking about their networks and connections to family and friends.

2 “Hashkafa” is ambiguous and at times, aspirational.

Our survey asks people two questions. The first is to label their *hashkafa* as Modern or Centrist Orthodox, Yeshivish, Chassidic or Chabad, or some other subset. The second is a set of six questions about their affiliation with certain norms of cultural Judaism and social embeddedness—such as whether they want to live in a community where people have Wi-Fi at home, or go to movie theatres, and whether their friends were mostly shabbat-observant. *Interestingly, we find that the label someone affixes to themselves is not always correlated with what they actually believe and want to practice.*

Practical Takeaway: *Look beyond the label, ask about behaviors and aspirations.*

Since different people define their *hashkafa* in different ways, it might behoove individual daters not to make decisions about whom to date based only upon which *hashkafic* subset they have self-labeled. Instead, asking after a particular set of beliefs and intentions that matter to the individual dater might be a better way to decide whether a date is *hashkafically* relevant.

Additionally, some affix to themselves a hashkafa they aspire to be or are working towards. It can be a statement of where they ultimately want to belong or feel a sense of belonging to. Asking about religious aspirations, about ways in which one wants to grow and evolve religiously, can be an important metric as well.

3 Take the time to find your voice, and your clarity.

When reflecting on their dating experiences, older single men and women describe two types of regrets. They feel *either* they were too picky and should have been more flexible around anything that was not of utmost importance to them, or they feel they accepted too much bad advice, the voices of others, and should have been more selective about saying “no.” They tend to feel that either they had said “no” too often, or too seldom.

Practical Takeaway: *Know what is most and least important to you.*

Single people looking for a potential spouse might work on finding the support and resources they need to discover their inner voice; to articulate and advocate for what is important to them, and to prioritize what is most crucial. It may be worthwhile to invest in coaching or mentorship to reach this clarity as early in the dating process as possible.

4 Be cautious if looking for “more.”

Our findings suggest that women may be stronger in defining their expectations of a spouse. They may expect more from them in terms of religious observance or commitment, they may expect them to have a higher socioeconomic status or educational attainment. But our findings also suggest that women are performing very strongly in these areas, either at the same levels or more strongly than their male peers. This may lead to women seeking men that are ‘more’ than them, but only finding those who are the same, or even slightly less on these attributes.

Practical Takeaway: *Understand the dating demographics.*

It might be useful for women to understand the limitations they place upon the availability of potential matches if they are only willing to date someone who is “stronger” than they are, both religiously and financially. Women who aim for or expect men to be on equal footing to them and anticipate growing and developing with their spouse might find a new landscape of “good men” open to them.

5 Keep yourself happy.

Single men and women in our survey who have good social connectedness, who were less lonely, and who had better mental health are also more confident about finding a spouse.²⁴ Many participants mention poor emotional health or mental/spiritual well-being as a big turnoff in a potential partner. Several interviewed are vocal about how much they do not enjoy going out with others who were jaded or negative, even if they are physically attractive or had other attractive qualities.

Practical Takeaway: *Prioritize and pursue your personal happiness.*

Since singlehood can be a lonely and trying experience, it is important for individual daters to figure out and pursue what makes them happy. This will benefit not only the quality of life of the individual dater but is also likely to lead to more successful dating experiences.

6 Use all available resources.

Our study finds *the more avenues people used to find dates—including websites, matchmakers, friends and family, and social events—the more dates they had gone on in the previous six months, and the more people they are likely to have dated.* Women are more likely than men to look for people to date in informal settings, like social gatherings, while men are more likely than women to use a dating app or website. A greater proportion of men than women rely on matchmakers, rabbis, rebbetzins, and other educators, while women rely on their own families and social networks.

Practical Takeaway: *Engage with all available ways to find dates.*

Use as many of the available avenues for finding matches as possible, especially those you have not yet tapped into.

7 New York may not be the answer.

Our survey finds that single men and women living in the New York area date more frequently than those living elsewhere. They dated more people in the last six months, spent more hours dating in the last week (prior to the survey), and report more contact with eligible partners. But they are not more likely to say they had dated someone they would have been willing to marry, and they are not more confident they will find a spouse.

On the other hand, we learned from our previous report, *The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews*, that single men and women in New York are more negative about their communities than single people elsewhere. Synagogues in New York are described as less friendly and less inclusive than shuls in other places, and single men and women in New York are less likely to be invited out for meals than single people living in other places. Furthermore, single men and women living in the New York area are more likely to report negative experiences at shul and problems with their Orthodox communities more generally.

Practical Takeaway: *Understand the pros and cons of living in or outside of New York, and choose what is right for you.*

Single men and women should understand that moving to New York from elsewhere in the country is very likely to produce more opportunities for dating. At the same time, living in New York may come with the risk of exacerbating other issues related to communal belonging as a single individual.

8 Plug the gaps.

Several of the single individuals interviewed say they feel unequipped to develop a healthy relationship (reported on in the first singlehood report). They describe how they are unsure how to decipher if a relationship is developing appropriately, and whether their partner is engaging with them in a healthy way. Many share they have never had any formal or informal education about marriage or relationships.

Practical Takeaway: *Pursue educational experiences related to healthy relationships.*

Almost everyone can benefit from education about relationships: If a person feels that there are gaps in his or her understanding of relationships and healthy marriages, they are certainly not alone! And it would benefit them to find a way to learn what they need to feel equipped to date with confidence.

Guidelines for ‘finders:’ Matchmakers, family, friends, and communal leaders

The practical advice we detail below answers the unasked question: “*What did your study find that can help me, a matchmaker, family member, friend, or communal leader, help single men and women find potential matches more effectively and successfully?*”

- 1 *Invite single men and women to your shabbat meals.* Create natural social opportunities for single men and women to meet during shabbat meals. Shabbat meals are a low-stakes way for single people to meet, with the added benefit of increasing inclusivity and belonging in our community.
- 2 *Only offer advice when solicited by the single man or woman.* Single people almost never take kindly to unsolicited advice: Only weigh in on decisions when prompted by the individual dater.
- 3 *Search for what the individual relates they are seeking.* A finder should see their job as searching on a single person’s behalf; if you cannot find someone within those parameters, describe your predicament honestly but kindly and explain why not.
- 4 *Be thoughtful in match suggestions.* Single men and women feel burnt out by going out with, and getting suggestions of, people who do not align with what they are seeking. Make sure suggestions align with what the single person asked for.
- 5 *Ask if the person is busy or has suggestions before offering your own.* Single men and women relate feeling overwhelmed at times with the myriads of suggestions presented. Before describing a match, ask if the single person already has suggestions and if so, ask to call back when the person is available.
- 6 *Be trained in coaching before engaging in coaching.* Once this is true, then your coaching services should be offered at a fair charge.

- 7 *For Matchmakers:* Commit practically to each person you meet; ask for fair compensation upfront for a positive end result. Single men and women deserve accountability in return for their “business,” and matchmakers deserve compensation for their time and skill. Discussing the specifics of this partnership, as applicable, would be best done at the onset of a relationship between a single person and a matchmaker.

Conclusion

Until we know the exact sociodemographic contours of the American population of single, Orthodox Jews, and without a longitudinal study that can claim causal relationship between marriage and a variety of factors, there are many questions about the “shidduch crisis” that will remain unanswered. However, from this large-scale research endeavor, there is still a treasure-trove of grounded, useful take-aways for policymakers, philanthropists, community leaders, matchmakers, and most saliently, for single men and women themselves. It is our hope and prayer that those with an interest in improving the welfare of American, Jewish single men and women and the current “shidduch system” will find the data enumerated here enlightening, challenging, and useful in paving the way towards the next steps for the American Orthodox community at large.

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Our gratitude notwithstanding, the authors of this report take full responsibility for its contents.

Notes

- 1 See “The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews”
<https://research.ou.org/content/uploads/2023/07/the-challenges-of-singlehood.pdf>
- 2 The “age gap” theory rests on two premises: (1) the Orthodox community is growing and thus, there are more Orthodox Jews in each successive age cohort; and (2) Orthodox men marry younger women. Taken together, these two realities would mean that men are perpetually drawing from a larger pool of women, leaving an ever-increasing number of women without partners. See *The Voice of Lakewood* (2012); Cohen and Friedman, *Ami Magazine* (2023). The OU’s CCR will be publishing a study in the coming months with relevant data on the “age gap” theory.
- 3 Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 151.
- 4 For examples, see: Monica Anderson, Emily A. Vogels, and Erica Turner, “The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating” (Pew Research Center, February 6, 2020); Nishma Research, “The Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews,” September 28, 2017; Charles Kadushin, Benjamin T. Phillips, and Leonard Saxe, “National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Contemporary Jewry* 25, no. 1 (October 2005): 1-32, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02965418>.
- 5 See Curtin, Presser, and Singer. “The Effects of Response Rate Changes on the Index of Consumer Sentiment.”
- 6 The U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA core based statistical area as including the following counties: Kings County, NY (Brooklyn), Queens County, NY (Queens), New York County, NY (Manhattan), Bronx County, NY (The Bronx), Richmond County, NY (Staten Island), Westchester County, NY, Bergen County, NJ, Hudson County, NJ, Passaic County, NJ, Putnam County, NY, Rockland County, NY, Suffolk County, NY, Nassau County, NY, Middlesex County, NJ, Monmouth County, NJ, Ocean County, NJ, Somerset County, NJ, Essex County, NJ, Union County, NJ, Morris County, NJ, Sussex County, NJ, Hunterdon County, NJ, and Pike County, PA.
- 7 Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews”; Steven M. Cohen, Jacob B. Ukeles, and Ron Miller, “Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011.”
- 8 Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews.”
- 9 For example, *SawYouAtSinai.com* uses Chassidish, Conservative, Conservadox, Just Jewish, Lubavitch, Modern Orthodox (Liberal), Modern Orthodox (Machmir), Modern Orthodox (middle of the road), Modern Yeshivish, Spiritual but not religious, Traditional, and Yeshivish.
- 10 Of the men interviewed, only one shares a dating story in which a woman was rude or inappropriate on a date. Instead, a few men recount stories of women being unresponsive or overly negative on dates.
- 11 See Brown. “Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead.”
- 12 See Duckworth. “Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverence.”
- 13 See Dweck. “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.”
- 14 These totals include anyone indicating these attributes are at least “somewhat desirable.”

Notes

- 15 Economists remark on the “grand gender convergence” of the last century, during which U.S. women have approached parity with men in labor force participation and wages, and surpassed men in college attendance and graduation (DiPrete and Buchmann 2013; Goldin 2014; Goldin, Katz, and Kuziemko 2006). Since World War II, women have made advances in the workplace, in education, and more. At the same time, traditionally masculine enterprises, such as manufacturing, have been increasingly outsourced. There is now a shortage of single men with the demographic characteristics desired by single women: educated, employed, and earning high wages (Lichter, Price, and Swigert 2020). American journalist Hanna Rosin (2010, 2012) provocatively declared “The End of Men,” arguing that women’s innate strengths, especially social intelligence, are better suited to the modern, postindustrial economy.
- 16 For example, both Jewish women and men are obligated in prayer, but most Orthodox rabbinic authorities rule women are obligated to pray once a day while men are obligated to pray three times and with a minyan (Weiss 2001).
- 17 These numbers may include individuals who used a cell phone for emergencies or those whose profession require cell phone use on Shabbos, such as a doctor.
- 18 More detailed data on the experiences of single men and women dating in New York can be found in “The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews” <https://research.ou.org/content/uploads/2023/07/the-challenges-of-singlehood.pdf>
- 19 See Book of Esther, chapter 2.
- 20 Research shows that people marry when they perceive that the rewards of being married outweigh the costs, and that the net gain in a particular relationship is higher than the net gain expected in other relationships (Blau 1964; Homans 1961; Nye 1978, 1979; Thibaut 1959). Across cultures, women require more from a potential partner in order to reach that point—that is, women are more selective than men in their choice of marriage partners (Geary, Vigil, and Byrd-Craven 2004). The same was true for the women in our sample. Note there is some evidence from Israel that women’s mate selectivity remains stricter than men’s even in an environment where single women outnumber single men and selectivity may substantially reduce women’s odds of finding a partner (Bokek-Cohen and Peres 2006).
- 21 The Pew Research Center’s (2020) survey of U.S. Jews was the most recent representative survey of all U.S. Jews, but it was not designed to provide estimates of subgroups of Orthodox Jews. Other recent surveys of Orthodox Jews are not representative, because they are based on convenience samples instead of probability samples—e.g., Nishma Research (2017).
- 22 For more on the utility of non-representative surveys of U.S. Jews, see Kadushin, Phillips, and Saxe (2005).
- 23 The term “emerging adulthood” was coined by Arnett (2000, 2004) to refer to the period of identity development that happens between the ages of 18 and 25.
- 24 See The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews (pg.11) <https://research.ou.org/content/uploads/2023/07/the-challenges-of-singlehood.pdf>