ORTHODOX UNION
CENTER FOR COMMUNAL RESEARCH

L'ZAVGAN
MAKING MATCHES

Evaluating Challenges in the Orthodox Mainstream Yeshivish Shidduch System

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In partnership with *The Shidduch Institute*

THE CENTER FOR COMMUNAL RESEARCH provides the Orthodox Union with data and insights to inform decisions and communal engagement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

BY RABBI MOSHE HAUER

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ORTHODOX UNION

The so-called "shidduch crisis" has been the subject of much debate, discussion, and 'solutionizing,' and it indeed deserves our attention. Our Sages taught us that the same G-d who created Chava as a mate for Adam because "it is not good … to be alone," continued post-creation to bring His children together, serving as the ultimate shadchan, *yosheiv um'zaveig zivvugim*. Following in Hashem's ways, we as a community need to similarly prioritize efforts at enabling single men and women to find suitable marriage partners.

There are many exceptional individuals who have undertaken this responsibility, dedicating themselves to addressing this need. At the top of the list are the shadchanim who engage in their work of supporting single men and women with a clear sense of mission, committing to it endless hours for which they receive inadequate appreciation or compensation. One of this study's most valuable contributions is the information gleaned from the interviews with thirty-eight shadchanim, highlighting their challenges and identifying possible pathways to increase their numbers and enhance their capacity and skills.

At the same time, this study (Tables 13 to 16) demonstrates the critical role that family and friends play in the shidduch system. Even in recent years when full-time shadchanim and their organized networks have become more commonplace and sought after, a significant majority of matches are made by family and friends. While professional shadchanim will likely play an increasingly important role in servicing and supporting those pursuing marriage, the data reminds us that we must dedicate meaningful efforts towards encouraging and equipping family members and friends to actively participate in suggesting matches, as it is they who will continue to make the majority of shidduchim.

The current study was commissioned by another group of exceptional individuals, the volunteers and supporters of The Shidduch Institute. Keenly aware of how the shidduch process is being experienced, they have chosen to address it in a thoughtful manner. Instead of speculating on the causes of the crisis, they sought to research and identify them and turned to the OU's Center for Communal Research for help. This study is theirs, and it therefore focuses specifically on the responses of the "mainstream yeshivish" community that The Shidduch Institute seeks to service. Its findings, however, are instructive for all segments of Orthodoxy and provide a meaningful contribution to the growing body of research addressing different aspects of Orthodox singlehood. A subsequent report will reflect specific variations evidenced in the broader set of responses.

The Orthodox Union established the Center for Communal Research in 2018 to help both the OU and the Orthodox community harness the power of data to drive evaluation of existing programs and inform strategies on communal issues. Research is an ongoing process, producing both immediate recommendations and further questions. In this case, the study produces several

points of immediate direction, including clear data on the so-called "age-gap" issue and the positive impact of achieving even a minor adjustment to that gap. It also provides guidance that can help those pursuing shidduchim set healthy expectations that will reduce the challenges of selectivity, and as noted, contains a trove of valuable information to guide needed efforts to enhance the role of shadchanim. The ultimate impact of this study will be measured by the actions taken by communal stakeholders working both separately and together in response to the data.

There is a significant and pertinent issue that this study leaves unresolved, a question that impacts shidduchim and much more. As a community, we need to understand the differential between the number of men vs. women who leave this shidduch pool by moving out of the community of observance. This is a key question impacting the imbalances between men and women seeking shidduchim but is also a core issue for our *chinuch* (educational) and societal systems. The OU-CCR is currently studying this issue in a broader study of attrition and connection across the Orthodox community.

On behalf of the Orthodox Union, I would like to express genuine gratitude to those directly involved in generating this study, including the researchers of the OU-CCR, the broader OU team, our partners at The Shidduch Institute, and all the study participants, both interviewees and survey respondents. We look forward to seeing your efforts stimulate real change.

Over the years, we have had the privilege of hearing from many people – communal leaders and changemakers, caring individuals, shadchanim, and hundreds of single men and women – who have provided thoughtful and often painfully personal insights on this issue. As we continue to publish their input in our ongoing studies and findings, we hope and pray to HKBH that He enable us and all those engaging in this work to deliver respect and support to the men and women of our community and enable them to fulfill their hopes and dreams.

Kein yehi ratzon.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

The term "shidduch crisis" is most often used to refer to a large and growing population of single, Orthodox Jews who would like to marry and are unable to find partners. This report seeks to answer the question: *What are the root causes of the shidduch crisis?* Specifically, this study explores the experiences of Mainstream Yeshivish (a mode of Orthodox culture and ideology, originating in the great Lithuanian yeshivas of the nineteenth century, that emphasizes Talmudic learning) single and married men and women in the shidduch system. We examine the population demographics and experiences of married men and women, what single men and women are looking for in a partner, availability of potential matches, and the shadchan system.

Brief Sample and Methodology Overview

An online opt-in survey sampled Jewish Orthodox individuals, eighteen years of age or older, throughout the US and Canada, using an anonymous link. Respondents were recruited through print and online advertisement in publications, podcasts, and websites that service the Orthodox Jewish community. Twenty schools with Yeshivish affiliations were also enlisted to promote and share the survey with alumni and parents.

Findings are based on survey data collected from 5,701 respondents, of which 68% self-identified as Mainstream Yeshiva and 32% self-identified as other hashkafos (religious worldview and guiding philosophies)[1]. Survey respondents are a diverse group in terms of gender, age, marital status, and location (across the US and Canada). Married respondents answered questions about themselves and, if applicable, one of their children over eighteen who is looking to get married (randomly selected). Single respondents answered questions about themselves.

Additionally, thirty-eight in-depth interviews were conducted with full and part-time shadchanim. Interviewees vary by age, location, and length of years as a shadchan, with most interviewees being female.

A full description of the sample and complete methodology can be found in Appendix B and C on page 49.

This study was commissioned by our client, The Shidduch Institute. The report focuses on respondents who self-identified in the survey as "Mainstream Yeshiva", as per our clients' specifications. The CCR conducted additional analysis of the survey data using a broader population view, which can be found on the CCR website.

Key Findings

Age Gap Hypothesis – Are there more women than men in the market?

> Using mean and median as different measures of central tendency, our models of the percentage of women who will not find a partner within the population we sampled range from a low of 2.5% to a high of 6.2%.

Model Inputs

- Sex ratio of males to females at birth (universal sex ratio: 105.0, Sample sex ratio: 103.1)
- Female age at first birth[2] (Mean: 23.9, Median: 22)
- Span of childbearing years (Mean: 13.2, Median: 14)
- Number of children per family (Mean: 6.5, Median: 6)
- Annual growth rate of the Yeshivish population (Using means: 3.9%, Using Medians: 3.8)
- Age gap between husbands and wives in Yeshivish couples (Mean: 2.5, Median: 2)

While our model is consistent, the inputs vary in two respects, the sex ratio used (universal vs. sample-specific) and measures of central tendency, or the center point of the data set (Mean vs. Median). Given that each of these issues has two alternatives, we have four possible model solutions (see Table 3).

The lowest estimate, 2.5% is modeled using medians and the universal sex ratio, while the highest, 6.2% uses means and the sample sex ratio.

Scarcity – Are there too few acceptable men in the marriage market?

> Overall, the supply of single men with the characteristics desired by single women and their families is sufficient in our sample, however, additional research to explore alternative measures of religiosity or sophistication should be explored to uncover potential areas of scarcity.

- Overall, within our sample, there are sufficient men whose learning aspirations match those of the men sought by women in the market. However, if women who say they consider both a worker and a learner marry men who learn, this may create a scarcity for women who will only consider a full-time learner.

- An existing hypothesis is that more men than women leave the religious community of the shidduch market. This would be consistent with patterns in other locales and faith communities.[3] This trend is not visible among the single respondents in this research, as those who have left the community either did not respond or did not identify as part of our Yeshivish sample. This hypothesis requires further exploration and is being studied by the CCR in a broader study on religious switching among yeshiva and day school graduates.

- Findings suggest that women are not seeking men with high levels of secular education, sophistication, and cultural competency.

- Within our pool of respondents, there is little evidence to suggest that Yeshivish men are behaviorally less religiously conservative than women. Furthermore, when looking at parent responses for their children, which may capture a more insular section of the population that would not have responded to an online survey on their own, there is even a lower level of scarcity related to men who are religiously conservative.

Selectivity – Are people so selective that they end up unmarried?

There is conflicting data concerning whether men and women are so selective in their choice of partners that they remain single. Survey data indicates that men and women hold reasonable and appropriate levels of selectivity, while shadchan interviews and open-ended response data point to a highly selective population of single men and women.

- Women are somewhat more selective than men, potentially contributing to the perception that women have a harder time finding a spouse in the current shidduch system.

- Willingness to compromise does not appear to be a function of wealth or age.

- Levels of selectivity are equal among men and women for middos, desires related to physical appearance, and lack of acceptance of health conditions or a spouse who grew up in a Ba'al Teshuva household.

- Many shadchanim and survey respondents believe that the shidduch system structure, which typically presents men with more choices and options than women, exacerbates male selectivity.

- There is a balance to be struck between respecting the feelings and opinions of single men and women regarding which potential spouse is right for them and interpreting their discernment as extreme pickiness or selectivity.

Limited Capacity – Are shadchanim unable to service the demands of the marriage market?

Shadchanim lack the capacity to effectively meet the demands of the market, which is particularly true for more challenging clients, such as older single men and women or those with complicated family backgrounds.

- There is an insufficient supply of shadchanim, creating a dynamic where the shadchanim are altogether unavailable or, even when available, unable to give adequate time, attention, and service to all who seek their help.

- Shadchanim are not compensated well enough to establish a reliable source of income and do not have enough time to get to know their clients and fully understand what they are looking for in a spouse.

- There is a lack of adequate training for becoming a shadchan and no clear path to professional development beyond experience. Most shadchanim use outdated modes of tracking clients, and most do not use databases or organizational tools and platforms, which creates gaps in their knowledge of the market.

- Female shadchanim do not have enough direct access to single men who are learning in yeshivas, which limits their capacity to make matches and develop a robust and comprehensive knowledge of the marriage market.

CRITICAL FINDING:

Most marriages are suggested by a friend or family member.

- Among married respondents, 68% report their spouse was suggested by friends and family and 6% by community leaders. Only 22% were suggested by shadchanim.

- A full-time shadchan was not involved in most married respondents' matches (80%), however, the use of shadchanim among those married within the last decade has increased to approximately 40%.

Recommendations

Creating Systemic Change

1. **ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS** in thoughtful discussion around what process changes can lead to an increased flow of suggestions for women, thereby reducing the uncertainty and pressure they experience to agree to a suggestion.

2. **CREATE MORE ACCESS** to the pool of eligible men through the creation of a comprehensive database of eligible men and women that can be accessed by all shadchanim, normalize female shadchanim working with men who are currently learning in yeshiva, and hire more male shadchanim who have access and relationships with men currently learning in yeshiva.

3. **UNDERSTAND RETENTION RATES** in the Orthodox community and incorporate reliable rates to improve accuracy and rigor in the actuarial models.

4. **ENCOURAGING** men and women to marry individuals closer to their age could alleviate some of the perception of a shidduch crisis for women and would likely have a minimal effect on men. As we suspect male attrition to be greater than female attrition, the female surplus is likely to be larger than the actuarial models indicate, thus a reduction in the gap between ages when men and women marry could positively impact women's experience in shidduchim.

Increasing Resources for Those Making Matches

5. **HELP FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS** understand how impactful their involvement in the shidduch process is and encourage, equip, and motivate them to become actively engaged in suggesting and supporting shidduchim.

6. **ESTABLISH** standardized levels of compensation, offer financial incentives to shadchanim who work with harder to match clientele, and identify tasks, such as managing date logistics and conducting client intake, which can be offloaded to free up shadchanims' time for higher-skilled tasks.

7. **CREATE SOME LEVEL OF VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION** and initial shadchan training, develop high-quality professional development opportunities, and help support shadchanim in developing skills to use more advanced tracking systems to monitor the market more efficiently and effectively.

Adjusting Communal Expectations

8. **CREATE MORE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS** for women by sharing and familiarizing the community with typical patterns by age of men learning in yeshiva.

9. **USING COMMUNAL COMMUNICATION**, debate, and discourse, adjust expectations of single men and women, community, and shadchanim regarding appropriate levels of selectivity and discernment during the process of finding a spouse.

Introduction

Research Questions

There is a perception of a shidduch crisis among many in the Orthodox Jewish population. More than half (65%) of respondents answered yes when asked if they believe there is a shidduch crisis. Given that perception, we set out to gain a more accurate understanding of several possible causes of the challenges men and women face as they look for a spouse in the Orthodox Mainstream Yeshivish community. Our aim was to systematically collect and analyze data to better understand what factors contribute to the current situation and the way it is perceived.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What factors contribute to the proportion of unmarried men and women in the current shidduch system?
2. What is the role of shadchanim in the current marriage system? What challenges do shadchanim face?
3. Are there parts of the population whose shidduch needs are less likely to be met by the current system?
4. What are some suggested improvements for the current shidduch system?

Sample and Methodology

This study was designed by the Center for Communal Research and modified and approved by the representatives of The Shidduch Institute. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through an online survey of Orthodox Jews and in-depth interviews with shadchanim that work in the Orthodox community. These two data sources served to confirm, strengthen, and at times complicate, the study's conclusions.

SURVEY

Recruitment

An online opt-in survey sampled Jewish Orthodox individuals, eighteen years of age or older, throughout the US and Canada, using an anonymous link. The Shidduch Institute was our partner in recruitment for the online survey. The survey was distributed through multiple channels to minimize noncoverage bias and reach the Yeshivish population our client sought to study. The anonymous link to the survey was published in *Mishpacha Magazine and the Voice of Lakewood*. Advertisements promoting the survey were placed on the podcasts *Matzav.com* and *Inspiration for the Nation*. An anonymous link to the survey was shared on WhatsApp groups for shadchanim to forward to single men and women and families. Additionally, The Shidduch Institute partnered with twenty schools across the US with Yeshivish affiliations to send out emails to families and alumni explaining and promoting the survey. See Table 25 in the Methodology section for responses by distribution channel and text of the recruitment email. To ensure the safety and protection of our research participants, we obtained IRB approval from WCG (Wirb-Copernicus Group) IRB evaluators.

Total Respondent Demographics

The overall survey response is made up of a diverse set of Orthodox men and women in terms of location, age, and marital status.

There are 5,701 responses, of which most are female.[4] Most respondents are married (69%) or previously married (4%), allowing them to report on their experience finding a spouse. One quarter are not yet married (27%), allowing them to talk about their preferences in a spouse.

Religious affiliation of respondents in our sample, or hashkafa, is not diverse with 70%, or 3,813 respondents, self-identifying as a member of the "Mainstream Yeshiva" community.

TABLE 1 | **TOTAL RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

TOTAL RESPONDENTS (excludes non-response)

Gender	Count	%	Marital Status	Count	%
Female	4,002	70%	Married	3,936	69%
Male	1,664	29%	Never Married	1,548	27%
Not Disclosed	35	1%	Separated or Divorced	160	3%
Total	5,701	100%	Widowed	32	0.6%
			Total	5,676	100%

Hashkafa	Count	%	Age	Count	%
Mainstream Yeshiva	3,813	70%	18 to 23	1,043	19%
Modern Orthodox - Machmir	507	9%	24 to 32	1,739	32%
Heimish	374	7%	33 to 44	1,130	21%
Chassidish	267	5%	45 to 59	1,211	22%
Modern Orthodox	107	2%	60 or older	317	6%
Other	403	6%	Total	5,440	100%
Total	5471	100%			

The study was commisioned by The Shidduch Institute, whose work is situated in the Yeshivish community. As such, the remainder of the report focuses exclusively on respondents who self-identify in the survey as "Mainstream Yeshiva". The terms Yeshivish and Mainstream Yeshiva are used interchangeably throughout the report.

Additionally, the CCR conducted analyses of communities outside of Mainstream Yeshiva to examine how their views of the shidduch landscape may differ. A summary of these results can be found on the CCR website.

Yeshivish Respondents Demographics

Within the Yeshivish population, most survey respondents are female (72%), married (73%), and living in New York (48%) and New Jersey (30%).

MAINSTREAM YESHIVA RESPONDENTS

Gender	Count	%
Female	2,729	72%
Male	1,067	28%
Not Disclosed	17	0.4%
Total	3,813	100%

Marital Status	Count	%
Married	2,762	73%
Never Married	970	25%
Separated or Divorced	59	2%
Widowed	16	0.4%
Total	3,807	100%

Hashkafa	Count	%
18 to 23	751	20%
24 to 32	1,201	33%
33 to 44	735	20%
45 to 59	819	22%
60 or older	190	5%
Total	3,696	100%

Location	Count	%
New York	1,756	48%
New Jersey	1,075	30%
Other States & Canada	808	22%
Total	3,639	100%

Survey Structure

Married respondents answered questions about themselves, their experience finding a spouse, about their children's age and marital status, and, if applicable, answered detailed questions about one of their non-married children over eighteen currently looking to get married (randomly selected). Single respondents answered questions about themselves. The online survey, composed of open and closed-ended questions, gathered data on population demographics, details about what qualities single men and women desire in a spouse, how selective or flexible single men and women are in their shidduch choices, and their experience with shadchanim.

Since there is no available census data of the Orthodox Jewish population, it is not possible to create a representative sample, thus respondents were asked to opt-in to the survey. Analysis focuses on understanding ratios and relationships between variables. The statistical associations between variables are reliable, even if the demographic breakdown of survey respondents does not perfectly represent that of the target population. A detailed description of the sample can be found in Appendix B on page 49 and a detailed methodology can be found in Appendix C on page 54.

Interviews

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with thirty-eight shadchanim from across the US and Canada to understand what training they receive, how they gain and utilize knowledge of the shidduch market, and what limits their capacity as a shadchan. Based on their knowledge of the Orthodox Jewish community, The Shidduch Institute identified five shadchanim to be interviewed. Participants were then recruited through a referral, or snowball, sampling approach. We used a semi-structured interview protocol to give some uniformity to the interviews while allowing them to proceed naturally. The average interview, which was conducted via Zoom conferencing, lasted fifty-nine minutes. We interviewed fifteen full-time shadchanim, of which four were male and eleven were female. The twenty-three part-time shadchanim interviewed were all female. There was a wide range in years of experience as a shadchan, with nineteen shadchanim having over fifteen years of experience, eleven having between five and fifteen years of experience, and eight having less than five years of experience.

Four Main Hypotheses

TO HELP US IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT SHIDDUCH SYSTEM, WE FOCUS ON FOUR MAIN HYPOTHESES.

Age Gap Hypothesis

This hypothesis rests on two premises. First, the Orthodox community is experiencing a year-over-year increase in the number of babies born and, thus, there are more Orthodox Jews in each successive age cohort. Second, Orthodox men marry younger women. Taken together, these two phenomena would lead to a marriage market with more women than men. Aside from the obvious consequence that some women would be unable to find partners, a secondary social consequence would be that men have more choices and more bargaining power than women.

Scarcity Hypothesis

This hypothesis asserts that there is a limited supply of single men with the characteristics desired by single women and their families. The two primary hypothesized contributors are male attrition, whereby single men may be less religiously conservative than single women desire, and female advancement, whereby women may have higher levels of secular education and sophistication than single men and may desire a high level of socioeconomic status and cultural fluency. Either of these contributors would result in a scarcity of single men with the characteristics desired by single women and their families.

Limited Capacity Hypothesis

This hypothesis asserts that the existing pool of shadchanim do not have the capacity to ensure that most men and women in the marriage market can be matched with someone they want to marry. There is a relatively small number of shadchanim, who in turn, have limited information processing power and resources, perhaps because of the increasing size and geographic spread of the target population, an outdated process, and limited training.

Selectivity Hypothesis

This hypothesis asserts that some individuals are highly selective in their choice of marriage partners, to the point that they remain single.

Age Gap Hypothesis

There is and will be an annual shortage of eligible marriageable males within this population for the eligible marriageable females. Between 2.5%-6.2% of females will not find a match within this sample population.

The age-gap hypothesis suggests that the demographics of the population contribute an unequal number of marriageable men compared with marriageable women, meaning there will not be an adequate supply of available males to satisfy female demand in the desired age range. This hypothesis rests on two premises. First, the Orthodox community is experiencing a year-over-year increase in the number of babies born and, thus, there are more Orthodox Jews in each successive age cohort. Further, slightly more males are born in every cohort than are females. Second, Orthodox men marry younger women. Taken together, these two phenomena would lead to a marriage market with more women than men.

To research this hypothesis, actuarial models were developed to describe the present and predict the future trajectory of the marriage market, based on data from the Mainstream Yeshiva population in our sample.

The following data points were used as inputs in the actuarial model:

- Sex ratio of males to females at birth (universal sex ratio: 105.0,[5] Sample sex ratio: 103.1)
- Female age at first birth (Mean: 23.9, Median: 22)
- Span of childbearing years (Mean: 13.2, Median: 14)
- Number of children per family[6] (Mean: 6.5, Median: 6)
- Annual growth rate of the Yeshivish population[7] (Using means: 3.9%, Using Medians: 3.8)
- Age gap between husbands and wives in Yeshivish couples[8] (Mean: 2.5, Median: 2)

The age gap between husbands and wives has been rather stable since 1995 (2.4-2.6). It is higher for marriages made earlier, especially prior to 1990 (3+).[9]

FIGURE 1 | **HUSBAND-WIFE AGE GAP BY YEAR OF MARRIAGE**

HUSBAND-WIFE AGE GAP BY YEAR OF MARRIAGE
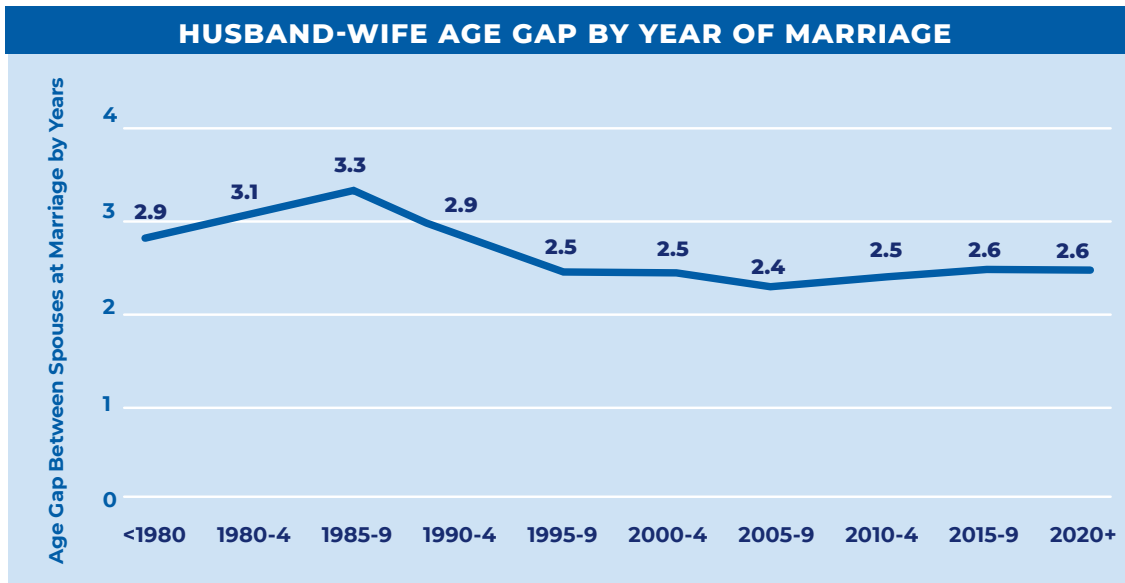
We considered various inputs and their strengths and drawbacks. Using means accounts for the variability in the data, while using medians reduces the effect of extreme outliers or non-symmetric distributions of scores. Using the sample sex ratio (103.1) allows for the specific sex ratio in this sampled population, while using the universal sex ratio (105.0) addresses the issue of using a non-representative sample to arrive at this ratio.

Because there are valid reasons to use each input, we ran the model multiple ways, using both means and medians and universal and sample sex ratio.

TABLE 3

4 POSSIBLE MODELS FOR AGE GAP		
Inputs	**Mean**	**Median**
103.1%	**Model #1** 6.2% female surplus	**Model #3** 4.3 % female surplus
105%	**Model #2** 4.5% female surplus	**Model #4** 2.5% female surplus

Results of the Model

Taken together, the models predict a range of female surplus in the marriage market. In all four models, all men are predicted to find a wife in the current population.

The size of the surplus of women who will not find a husband in this population is estimated, by these models, to be between 2.5% and 6.2% (Table 3).[10]

Hypothetical Lower Age Gap

If the age-gap between husbands and wives were hypothetically narrowed to one year, using Model #1 (Table 3), the estimated surplus of women in the marriage market would decrease from 6.2% to 0.7%.[10]

If the age-gap between husbands and wives were hypothetically narrowed to one year, using Model #4 (Table 3), the surplus of women in the marriage market would decrease from 2.5% to none (0.0%). In this scenario, the expected proportion of men who will not find a partner within our Yeshivish sample to marry would be 1.1%.

A Note on Retention Rates

We believe retention rates (prevalence of those who remain in the community in which they were raised) in the Orthodox Jewish community influence the above actuarial models. There is evidence to suggest that typically men are less religious than women[11] which further reduces the pool of marriageable men and likely makes the surplus even greater than our models suggest.

Understanding the trends of those who have left the Orthodox community is critical to fully understanding the challenges of the current shidduch system. We do not have reliable retention rates for the American Yeshivish Jewish community. Retention rates are available from the Pew 2020 Survey of American Jews for those raised Yeshivish/Litvish/Aguda, which is based on a representative sample of American Jews; however, those numbers are based on a sample of only ninety-eight Yeshivish respondents in the national sample, which is a very small sample size to rely on.[12] Australia and the UK collect census-like information that includes information on the streams of Judaism of the population, however, retention rates by gender are not available. Unpublished data from Israel for 2019 find that 9% of the Yeshivish sector don't define themselves as Haredim when they are above twenty-five (most of them are Dati but not Haredi). This rate has been stable for the last fifteen years, and there is no real difference between male and females (personal communication, Gilad Malach, Israel Democracy Institute, November 28, 2023). The Australian data do not differentiate between Yeshivish and other strictly Orthodox/Haredi.

Neither can we observe these trends from our current data, as the target population is defined as those who are, or will be, part of the shidduch system, excluding people who are no longer Orthodox. Additionally, those who have left the Orthodox community would not have opted into this type of survey. We have some data for randomly selected adult children from parent responses who said their child was not currently looking for a shidduch, a possible indicator of having dropped out of the Orthodox community. Of the 741 children parents reported about, 406 said their child is "not looking to get married." The vast majority of these 406 adult children are under the age of twenty and have not entered the shidduch system yet. There are only twenty-seven children over the age of twenty-three not looking to get married, which is not a large enough sample size to determine retention rates in our sample.

The next step in research related to the age gap and the challenges associated with shidduchim is to obtain a reliable source of retention rates. Including retention rates will serve to further refine and improve the accuracy of our models. Findings from an ongoing study by the CCR on religious switching among yeshiva and day school graduates should provide current retention rates that can be used to inform the above models.

Considering Retention Rates in Our Model

Although we do not know retention rates for the Yeshivish community, we wanted to create a view that allows us to consider how retention rates could potentially impact the number of unmarried females.

Below is a table showing female surplus in the marriage market using Model #1. We used several theoretical attrition rates to understand the effect male attrition would have on the surplus of women. (Although we do not believe it to be accurate, we assumed an attrition rate, meaning the rate at which people leave Orthodoxy or the inverse of retention rates, of 0% for women to identify the gap in attrition rates between genders.) We include views using the universal sex ratio of 105.0 with a two-year age gap and a hypothetically lowered one-year age gap. As male attrition rates increase, so does the surplus of women in the marriage market. Even with the lowest hypothesized attrition rate (3%) and a hypothesized lower age gap of one year, a 1.9% surplus of women would remain.

TABLE 4 **FEMALE SURPLUS IN THE MARRIAGE MARKET CONSIDERING HYPOTHETICAL ATTRITION RATES**

FEMALE SURPLUS IN THE MARRIAGE MARKET *(using medians and a 105.0 sex ratio)*		
Hypothesized Attrition Rates	**Female Surplus with a 2-year age gap**	**Female Surplus with a 1-year age gap**
0% (M) – 0% (F) Attrition	2.5%	0% (1.1% male surplus)
3% (M) – 0% (F) Attrition	5.3%	1.9%
5% (M) – 0% (F) Attrition	7.2%	3.9%
8% (M) – 0% (F) Attrition	10.1%	6.9%
10% (M) – 0% (F) Attrition	12.0%	8.8%

Fixes from Survey Respondents

Many who point to the age gap as a cause of the perceived shidduch crisis also spoke about ways to address it. Respondents want to see women start dating later, as women finish high school ready to marry while men are more likely to learn at least a few years in yeshiva before wanting to marry. They also suggest that women attend two years of seminary or that more post-seminary programs be developed "that are unique and different from the rest of the school years." Others want to see men start dating earlier, with the need for Rabbanim to change the system and prepare men "for marriage at a younger age." Respondents also seek to normalize men dating women their age, or even older, and to work to eliminate the stigma associated with men dating older women.

Scarcity Hypothesis

Overall, within our sample, there are sufficient men whose learning aspirations match those of the women in the market. However, if women who say they consider both a worker and a learner marry men who learn, this may create a scarcity for women who will only consider a full-time learner. Within our pool of respondents, there is little evidence to suggest that men are behaviorally less religiously conservative than women. Findings suggest that women are not seeking men with high levels of secular education, sophistication, and cultural competency.

The scarcity hypothesis asserts that there is a limited supply of single men with the characteristics desired by single women and their families. The two primary hypothesized contributors are male attrition, whereby single men are less religiously conservative than single women desire, and female advancement, whereby women may have higher levels of secular education and sophistication than single men and may desire a high level of socioeconomic status and cultural fluency.

To research this hypothesis, we look at men's commitment to learning and women's preferred level of commitment, respondent levels of secular behavior, and attained levels of higher education.

Commitment to Learning After Marriage

To understand levels of scarcity related to men who learn after marriage, we compare women's learning preferences in a spouse to the availability of men who plan on learning after marriage or men who currently work and learn.

In the survey, men currently learning in yeshiva are asked how long they plan to learn after marriage. Men currently working are asked if they currently attend a daily seder (a set time to engage in text-based Torah study).

Patterns of Learning and Working for Single Men

Within our sample, 67% of all single men learn full time and 33% work. As men age, there is a shift toward men working. Nearly all men ages eighteen to twenty (96%) and ages twenty-one to twenty-three (83%) learn full time. At ages twenty-four to twenty-six the shift begins, with most (72%) still learning full time, but 28% working. The trend continues with a minority of men learning between ages twenty-seven and twenty-nine (41%) and few thirty years or older (17%).

Other than at ages eighteen to twenty (2%), most working men say they attend a daily seder.

Among single men learning in yeshiva, intent to learn full-time after marriage is strongest in younger men but slowly tapers off as they age into their late twenties and thirties, which mimics the overall learning trend above. Most young men plan to learn five or more years after marriage (51% eighteen to twenty, 45% twenty-one to twenty-three). Interest decreases as they age (25%

twenty-four to twenty-six, 17% twenty-seven to twenty-nine) and drops dramatically at ages thirty and above (4%) with a greater portion saying they are interested in three to four years.

Intent to learn for one to two years after marriage varies by age but is never selected as often as higher levels of learning.

TABLE 5 | **LEARNING COMMITMENT OF SINGLE WORKING MEN AND SINGLE LEARNING MEN INTENDING TO LEARN AFTER MARRIAGE**

Age of Men Responding	18-20	21-23	24-26	27-29	30+	Total
Working	**4%**	**17%**	**28%**	**59%**	**83%**	**33%**
Non-Yeshiva No Daily Seder	2%	1%	7%	7%	20%	7%
Non-Yeshiva Daily Seder	2%	16%	21%	52%	64%	27%
Learning (Not Working)	**96%**	**83%**	**72%**	**41%**	**17%**	**67%**
FT Yeshiva - 1-2 Post Marriage	17%	12%	19%	7%	2%	12%
FT Yeshiva - 3-4 Post Marriage	28%	26%	28%	17%	11%	23%
FT Yeshiva - 5+ Post Marriage	51%	45%	25%	17%	4%	31%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Parent Reporting for a Male Child and Men Reporting for Themselves

Some variability is observed between parents reporting for a male child and men reporting for themselves. Parents reporting on a randomly selected child are more likely to include a broader range of the male Yeshivish population, since it is more likely to include the population of men who access the survey through media and online sources, as well as more insulated men within the Yeshiva world who do not have access or interest in responding to the survey. This broader parental view may be more representative of Yeshivish men and worth analyzing independently; however, researchers are cautious about proxy reporting as a source of reliable data.[13] To balance these perspectives, we have identified important differences between these two views but have chosen to include self-reported results in our overall analysis.

In Table 6, "Self" refers to men reporting for themselves, and "Parent" refers to parents reporting on their randomly selected, unmarried son. When comparing data on commitment to learning between Self and Parents, higher levels of commitment to learning five or more years after marriage are observed from Parents (42% vs. 21%). Higher levels of working and learning are observed in Self (39%) than in Parents (15%). These data differences may point to an underrepresentation in our overall sample of men who are more committed to learning and religiously conservative, which points to even less scarcity than the total sample suggests.

TABLE 6 | **COMPARISON OF COMMITMENT TO LEARNING BY SELF AND PARENT REPORTING**

Commitment to Learning	Self	Parent	Total
Works And Attends No Daily Shiur/Seder	4%	9%	7%
Works And Attends a Daily Shiur/Seder	39%	15%	28%
Currently In Yeshiva, Intending to Learn 1-2 Years After Marriage	14%	10%	12%
Currently In Yeshiva, Intending to Learn 3-4 Years After Marriage	22%	24%	23%
Currently In Yeshiva, Intending to Learn 5+ Years After Marriage	21%	42%	30%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Patterns of Desired Learning for Women

Women were asked if they would consider a potential spouse who:

- Works and does not attend daily seder
- Works and attends daily seder
- Plans to learn for one to two years after marriage
- Plans to learn for three to four years after marriage
- Plans to learn for five or more years after marriage

Women could choose each category or timeline of learning they would consider.

Younger women, ages eighteen to twenty-three are most likely to consider a man who learns for five or more years after marriage. As women age, their interest in men who will learn more than five years after marriage slowly decreases, perhaps because women adjust desires and expectations to better align with the structure of the yeshiva system.

Women's interest in a potential spouse who intends to learn full-time for one to two years after marriage remains relatively constant, with a decline in interest after thirty. Women's interest in men who intend to learn three to four years after marriage remains constant as they age. Women's consideration of men who work and learn increase as they age.

TABLE 7 | **CONSIDERATION BY SINGLE WOMEN OF LEARNING COMMITMENT/ INTENT TO LEARN AFTER MARRIAGE BY SINGLE MEN**

Age of Women Responding	18-20	21-23	24-26	27-29	30+	Total
Working						
Non-Yeshiva No Daily Seder	0.9%	3%	6%	7%	18%	5%
Non-Yeshiva Daily Seder	20%	28%	45%	72%	84%	40%
Learning (Not Working)						
FT Yeshiva - 1-2 Post Marriage	31%	34%	48%	45%	28%	38%
FT Yeshiva - 3-4 Post Marriage	42%	35%	48%	42%	45%	39%
FT Yeshiva - 5+ Post Marriage	62%	53%	44%	38%	24%	49%

There is less variability between the data from parents reporting for their female child and women reporting for themselves, perhaps because most of the intended population of women have access to the distribution channels used in the survey. Results of consideration for levels of learning in a husband are very similar for parents and females self-reporting. However, more women reporting for themselves would consider a spouse who works and learns in a daily seder (43%) than was reported by parents (31%).

Of these women, both who reported for themselves and those whose parents reported for them, 30% will only consider a man who plans to learn three or more years after marriage. Given the total intent of our male sample to learn, that would not seem to indicate scarcity. However, if these men are paired with someone who is willing to consider a learner or a worker, the available supply of learners may be depleted to the extent that there are not enough to satisfy the needs of the women who will only consider a learner. This type of selectivity may induce scarcity.

Shadchan and Respondent Perception

The perception among shadchanim and respondents is that there is a scarcity of men who learn, particularly for men who are committed to learning for at least five years. Many women are looking for that demographic, and shadchanim feel those men are "hard to come by." Many respondents share in open-ended responses that more women "want learning boys than there are boys serious about their learning." Some explain that seminaries set unrealistic expectations for women regarding the level and number of years their husband should learn, and others commented that the Yeshiva system does not produce enough "top learners."

Other participants described a dearth of "middle of the road boys," men who are learning but have either an educational or professional plan for when they stop learning. Some participants shared that yeshivas are not producing men who learn for a few years and then move into the professional world. One lamented that the population of men is "missing that sweet spot," because "you either have long-term learners or professionals, nothing in between."

There is clearly tension between the levels of scarcity measured above and shadchanim, and community members' perception of the availability of men who learn or wish to learn after marriage. While the survey data does not support the existence of overall scarcity, it does illustrate that men's willingness to learn after marriage, especially for five or more years, decreases more rapidly than women's learning expectations for their spouses (especially as men reach ages twenty-four to twenty-nine). Furthermore, as noted in the Limited Capacity section below, shadchanim describe a lack of access to available men learning in yeshiva. Both factors may fuel some of the perceptions of scarcity held by shadchanim and the community.

This issue can be addressed by sharing and familiarizing the community with the observed typical male learning patterns in the Yeshiva community. This could result in an adjustment of expectations among unmarried women as they age or a rededication to encourage or enable older unmarried men to remain committed to learning full-time after marriage.

Religiously Conservative

Survey results suggest that women are only slightly more religiously conservative than men.[14] The survey asks respondents how often they engage in secular behaviors such as following news, listening to music, watching TV or movies, drinking alcohol, and smartphone use. The greatest discrepancies between men and women are between following current events, alcohol consumption, and the use of smartphone filters.

More women (23%) than men (12%) say they never follow news and current events, however, men and women report following current events most or some days at similar rates. Men listen to secular music at slightly higher rates than women, and the discrepancy gets even smaller regarding watching movies and TV. Men and women report similar rates of owning a smartphone, while men use smartphone filters more often than women. More women (87%) than men (54%) say they never drink alcohol. Social norms surrounding alcohol consumption in the Yeshivish population may explain some of this discrepancy.

TABLE 8 | **REPORTING ON FREQUENCY OF SECULAR BEHAVIOR BY GENDER**

Secular Behavior	Women	Men
Follow News and Current Events (% never)	23%	12%
Listen Secular Music (% never)	76%	68%
Watch TV/Movies (% never)	67%	62%
Wears Trendy Clothes (f) or Colored Shirt (m) (% never)	53%	75%
Drink Alcohol (% never)	87%	54%
Have a Smartphone (% no)	41%	42%
Use a Smartphone Filter (% yes)	51%	74%

Some differences are seen when comparing Self and Parent reporting on secular behaviors. For women, Parents are more likely to say their daughter never drinks alcohol (94% vs. 85% Self), never wears trendy clothes (60% vs. 51%) and significantly less likely to say they own a smartphone (50% vs. 39%) or use a filter on their smartphone (56% vs. 49%).

For men, parent and self-reporting differ significantly on five of the seven behaviors, with men exhibiting more secular behavior than parents claim about their male child. These findings support the notion that men who are more religiously conservative may not have opted into the survey but are more broadly represented in parent responses.

TABLE 9 · **REPORTING ON FREQUENCY OF SECULAR BEHAVIOR BY GENDER AND SELF/PARENT REPORTING**

Secular Behavior	Women		Men	
	Self	Parent	Self	Parent
Follow News and Current Events (% never)	22%	26%	8%	18%
Listen Secular Music (% never)	76%	78%	59%	78%
Watch TV/Movies (% never)	65%	72%	53%	72%
Wears Trendy Clothes (f) or Colored Shirt (m) (never) (% never)	51%	60%	72%	68%
Drink Alcohol (% never)	85%	94%	45%	63%
Have a Smartphone (% no)	39%	50%	27%	60%
Use a Smartphone Filter (% yes)	49%	56%	74%	74%
Secular Index (Average)	**13.2**	**13.9**	**11.6**	**13.6**

The above behaviors (Table 9) are combined to form a secular index score. Overall, men score slightly lower, or more secular, on this index (12.5 out of 17 vs. 13.4 for females – not shown in table), suggesting they are moderately less religiously conservative; however, this difference is relatively minimal and does not seem likely to create a substantial source of scarcity. Furthermore, when looking at Parent responses (13.6), which describe a more religiously conservative population of men who may not have opted into the survey, there is even less to suggest scarcity of men who are religiously conservative.

Men who are in yeshiva full time scored higher, or less secular, on this index than men who are working (Table 10).

TABLE 10 · **SECULAR INDEX BY LEARNER/WORKER**

Secular Index (Average)	Total
<u>**Workers**</u>	<u>9.8</u>
Non-Yeshiva No Daily Seder	7.6
Non-Yeshiva Daily Seder	10.4
<u>**Learning (Not Working)**</u>	<u>13.9</u>
FT Yeshiva - 1-2 Post Marriage	11.9
FT Yeshiva - 3-4 Post Marriage	13.4
FT Yeshiva - 5+ Post Marriage	15.0
Total	12.5

Secular Entertainment and Smartphones

When comparing specific behaviors women find unacceptable and the percentage of men who exhibit those behaviors, we see some scarcity within our sample of men who do not watch secular movies or TV and who do not have a smartphone. Most women find a spouse who watches secular movies and TV unacceptable or undesirable (81%); however, only 62% of men in the sample say they do not watch movies or TV. Half (51%) of women desire a spouse who does not have a smartphone, but only 42% of the men do not have smartphones. Parental reporting, however, points to a male population that predominantly does not have a smartphone (60%), and there is reason to consider that the single men in our sample who responded directly to the online survey are more likely than others to have a smartphone. Taken together, this category of scarcity would be eliminated.

Notably, only 67% of women say they do not watch movies or TV, but 81% say they find this unacceptable or undesirable in a spouse. Additionally, 41% of women do not have a smartphone, but 51% say having a smartphone is unacceptable or undesirable. These discrepancies could indicate some women desire a spouse who is slightly more religiously conservative than they currently are, which may be aspirational towards the type of home they would like to create with a spouse. Alternatively, some women may own smartphones for work but as they seek a spouse who learns, their expectation is that they would not have a smartphone.

Easier To Be a Good Woman Than to Be a Good Man

A common refrain in the open-ended responses and in shadchan interviews is the notion that it is easier to be a "good" woman than it is to be a "good' man; however, success is measured differently for men and women. Respondents share that it is easier for a woman to meet expectations surrounding middos, tznius, education, and professional aspirations than it is for men to meet expectations surrounding commitment to Torah learning, davening in a minyan three times a day, and the capacity for long days of yeshiva learning. As a result, it is easier for women to earn the status of "good/high-caliber girl" than it is for men to earn the status of "good/high-caliber boy." One respondent shared:

> A girl does not need to be super successful in the BY system to be a real good BY girl and to want a learning guy. However, from the boy's end, if you weren't successful in the yeshivah system, you're not considered a matzliachdik guy. Therefore, there are many more girls who are looking for the classic great learner as there are guys.

Religious Patterns of Older Single Men and Women

Survey data confirms that as men age, the percentage of men who are learning full time decreases, and the percentage of men who are working increases. Between the ages of eighteen to twenty, 96% of men are learning in yeshiva and 4% are working. Between the ages of twenty-four to twenty-six, the number of men who are learning in yeshiva decreases to 72% and the number of men working increases to 28%. As men age and leave Yeshiva, the percentage of those who daven every day decreases as well, perhaps a consequence of leaving the yeshiva system and entering the workforce.

Several respondents also comment in open-ended responses on the transition men go through as they age out of Yeshiva. They explain that after men leave Yeshiva, they can become less frum, while the women "are staying very strong in what they want."

Shadchanim observe the same patterns in older single men and women as do respondents, women continue to seek the same qualities and qualifications they looked for when they began dating after seminary; however, men change over time, as they move into the professional world and leave the confines of the yeshiva lifestyle.

> When you're in yeshiva you're grounded by yeshiva. And when you're married, you're grounded by your wife. But when you're working, it's not always the easiest.

Women maintain their religious level, as it was never dependent on their environment like it is for some men in yeshiva. Shadchanim explain that this transition creates scarcity within the shidduch system as men and women age. Reliable retention rates across the Orthodox community would deepen our understanding of religious patterns and trends as people age and help inform policies and programming to address this potential phenomenon.

Education, Sophistication, Cultural Competency

A variety of questions are used to measure levels of education, sophistication, cultural competency among single women, and their desire to have them in a spouse. Findings suggest some scarcity among younger women seeking men with higher levels of secular education, however, sophistication and cultural competency are not highly valued in a spouse by single women.

Education

Women have higher levels of secular education, as evidenced by bachelor's or graduate degrees, than men. Nearly two-thirds of women (60%) and almost a third of men (26%) have secular college degrees. A third of single women (37%) and over half (57%) of single men view a secular college degree as somewhat/very desirable or necessary in a spouse. When looking at the total Yeshivish population, there appears to be a scarcity of men with bachelor's or graduate degrees (26%) to meet the demand of women who desire a spouse with a bachelor's degree (37%). However, when the data is analyzed by age and female age preference in a spouse, scarcity is only an issue for women eighteen to twenty years old, because most men in that age bracket (twenty-one to twenty-three) are either learning in Yeshiva or working towards a degree.

Given the relatively high number of women who say a secular degree is unacceptable or somewhat/very undesirable (30%), some women may consider holding a bachelor's degrees a negative achievement given the communal expectation that men learn for several years in yeshiva after high school. Only 4% of men say that it is unacceptable or somewhat/very undesirable for a potential spouse to have a bachelor's degree; this more positive attitude toward women's education may be related to their need for education in their role as breadwinners for the family while men learn.

Sophistication/Cultural Competency

Most women do not select 'worldly' (91%) as one of their top four (of a set of twelve) desirable character traits in a spouse. Most single women find a spouse who watches mainstream movies and TV (81%) to be somewhat/very undesirable or unacceptable. Half (51%) of single women find a spouse who has a smartphone to be somewhat/very undesirable or unacceptable. The survey did not measure desired levels of social skills or competencies, care of one's personhood, or sense of fashion to test for women's desire for sophistication in a spouse. More research should be conducted to fully understand these aspects of sophistication.

Shadchan Perception of Sophistication

Although the survey data suggests that women do not desire a man with sophistication and cultural competency, which shadchanim confirm, some shadchanim comment that due to the way children are raised and educated in the yeshiva systems, some women are more sophisticated and socially advanced than men. According to shadchanim, women are raised and educated to have professional aspirations, which increases their social skills, competencies, and sophistication. The focus on men's education is Torah learning, which leaves little room for social development and sophistication. Some shadchanim feel that these educational and professional experiences result in a misalignment in the shidduch market, rather than scarcity, because men and women's dispositions and life experiences are drastically different, or as one shadchan commented, "We're not building the same models."

Shadchanim also pointed to misalignments in the way women and men are raised and the expectations placed on each gender. Firstly, some shadchanim shared that men spend too many years away from family in a yeshiva "raising each other in the dorms," while women are

raised at home by parents who continue to refine their character and middos. Because men are in yeshiva, they have less exposure and opportunity to observe how healthy marriages are built and function while women observe (healthy) marital relationships in progress throughout their teenage years. This contributes to the mismatch between expectations men and women have of marriage.

Age

Similar to the age gap noted in the models above, women reported a preference for a spouse who is two years older (1.9 on average). Correspondingly, men desire a spouse 1 ½ years younger (1.4 on average). This is not a source of scarcity; however, age preference fluctuates with age group.

Single women ages eighteen to twenty-two have adjusted their age preference to meet the age at which men enter the shidduch system. For single women, ages twenty-six to thirty, there is a misalignment between their age preference and men's age preference, meaning the men who they desire, prefer somewhat younger women.

TABLE 11	AGE PREFERENCES BY GENDER	
Age (or age group)	**Women**	**Men**
18	22.6 (+4.6)	*
19	23.1 (+4.1)	*
20	23.7 (+3.7)	*
21	23.9 (+2.9)	20.9 (-.01)
22	24.6 (+2.6)	20.8 (-1.2)
23	25.3 (+2.3)	22.2 (-0.8)
24	25.9 (+1.9)	22.1 (-1.9)
25	27.0 (+2.0)	23.1 (-1.9)
26	27.9 (+1.9)	23.4 (-2.6)
27	28.6 (+1.6)	24.7 (-2.3)
28	29.6 (+1.6)	25.3 (-2.7)
29	30.6 (+1.6)	26.4 (-2.6)
30-32	32.8	27.1
33-35	35.6	29.3
36-38	37.8	*
39-41	39.6	31.6
42-44	41.3	*
45-47	43.8	*

*N < 5

Wealth

The availability of wealthy households exceeds the percentages of men and women who desire a spouse from a wealthy family. Just under a third of men (29%) and women (26%) report wealth as necessary, desirable, or somewhat desirable. Additionally, 42% of female households and 41% or male households report their financial status as "comfortable", which was the highest rating of the choices offered for this question. Taken together, there is no scarcity of wealthy, or comfortable families, for the men and women who desire this characteristic.

Fixes from Survey Respondents

Only sixteen responses in the open-ended question asking how to address the challenges in the shidduch system were related to scarcity, perhaps indicating that the scarcity and misalignment highlighted above are hard to address. A few respondents suggest changing expectations of how long a man should learn, "People have to stop putting all this hype on how long a boy needs to sit and learn for him to be a 'top boy.'" One felt that there needs to be a recognition that learning for an extended period in Kollel is for a select few and should not be the standard expectation.

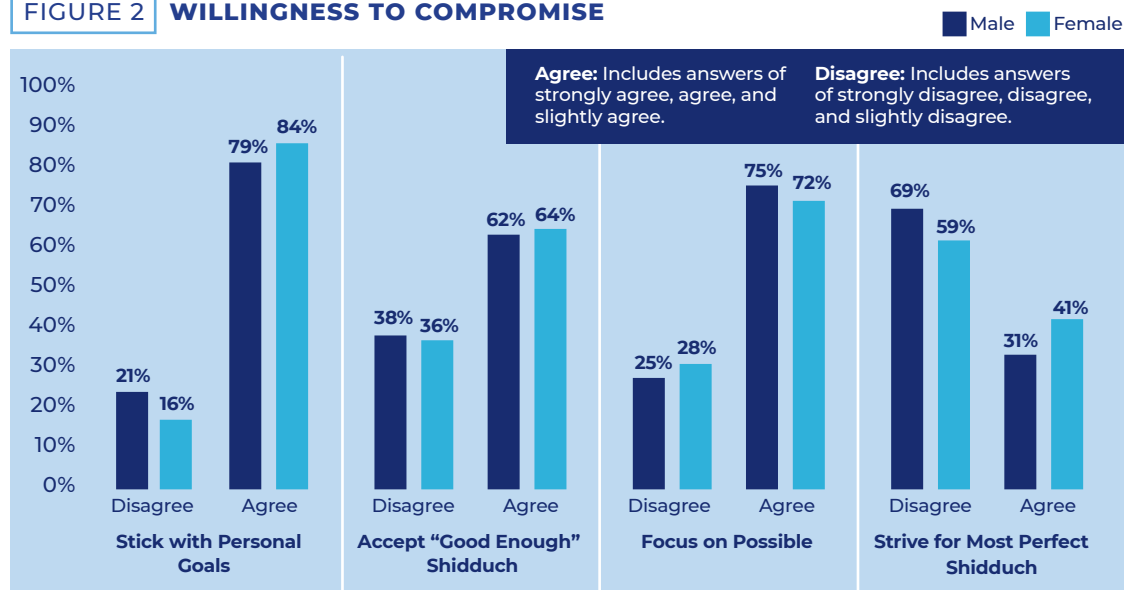One respondent wants to see a shift of focus from learning to middos, sharing, "The focus should be shifted, the first question a mother asks the shadchan shouldn't be 'is he a long-term learner,' it should be 'is he a nice boy?'" A few suggested changes to parenting and the educational system "to increase the sincerity and honesty" of men and to "give men more responsibility so they are more mature."

Selectivity Hypothesis

There is conflicting data concerning whether men and women are so selective in their choice of partners that they remain single. The survey data indicates that they are somewhat willing to compromise, whereas the shadchan interviews and open-ended responses point to a highly selective population of single men and women.

The selectivity hypothesis suggests that some individuals are highly selective in their choice of marriage partners, to the point that they remain single. To research this hypothesis, we looked at respondents' willingness to compromise and the attributes they desire in a spouse.

FIGURE 2 | **WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE**

■ Male ■ Female

Agree: Includes answers of strongly agree, agree, and slightly agree.

Disagree: Includes answers of strongly disagree, disagree, and slightly disagree.

	Disagree	Agree
Stick with Personal Goals	Male 21%, Female 16%	Male 79%, Female 84%
Accept "Good Enough" Shidduch	Male 38%, Female 36%	Male 62%, Female 64%
Focus on Possible	Male 25%, Female 28%	Male 75%, Female 72%
Strive for Most Perfect Shidduch	Male 69%, Female 59%	Male 31%, Female 41%

Willingness to Compromise

Survey Data

Single respondents, and parents answering for single children looking for a spouse, are asked how willing they or their single child are to compromise when it comes to finding a spouse. Most men and women agree (slightly to strongly) they are ready to "accept a good enough shidduch" (men 62% and women 64%).

Only 31% of men and 41% of women agree they "strive for the most perfect shidduch, no matter how long it takes," indicating that women are somewhat more selective than men. Several shadchanim express that it is hard to get a "yes" from a boy to go out, and it is hard to get a "yes" from a girl for marriage, suggesting that selectivity plays a greater role for men in who they date and for women in who they marry.

The above statements have been combined to form a selectivity index score out of twenty. Women scored slightly higher on this index (10.0) compared to men (9.4), again suggesting women are moderately more selective than men. Willingness to compromise does not appear to be a function of wealth or age.

Interestingly, parents responding for their randomly selected single child report that their children are more flexible than single men and women reporting for themselves. It is possible that single men and women are less concerned with appearing selective, as they feel it is important to be discerning when it comes to finding a spouse, whereas parents are more protective of their children and do not want others to view them as selective, an often-mentioned cause of the "shidduch crisis."

Years in the Shidduch System

Women spend more time in the shidduch system than men. Looking at data on children of participants, 92% of men are married after spending three years or less in the shidduch system as compared to 78% of women. On average, women spent eight more months in the shidduch system than men.

TABLE 12 | **TIME SPENT IN THE SHIDDUCH SYSTEM BY GENDER**

MARRIED CHILDREN OF RESPONDENTS - YESHIVISH ONLY	MALE	FEMALE
N size	1039	1237
Married less than 1 year in the system	42%	22%
Married between 1-2 years in the system	36%	37%
Married between 2-3 years in the system	14%	19%
Married between 3-4 years in the system	3%	10%
Married between 4-5 years in the system	2%	5%
Married between 5-6 years in the system	1%	3%
Married between 6-7 years in the system	1%	1%
Married between 7-8 years in the system	1%	3%
Mean (years)	1.05	1.73

This discrepancy is notable in that it may point to the advantages men have in the shidduch system structure. Because men are inundated with potential match suggestions, they go out on many more dates per year than women and subsequently, get married faster than women. This discrepancy also reinforces the perception of a shidduch crisis for women who spend more time in this stressful stage of life.

Interviews with shadchanim support the notion that this can be a stressful and painful stage of life for some. One shadchan shared, "Their feelings are very real, and there's a lot of pain, unfortunately. And we feel it, we feel it when we meet them." Several shadchanim spoke about the pain older single men and women experience while watching others get married and build families, the pain of rejection, and the struggle to stay hopeful.

However, the descriptions of pain and stress also included those just entering the shidduch process. Some described the pain when individuals cannot get a date, sometimes for months or years, and the stress of making a bad decision since there may not be a potential prospect on the horizon. Additionally, shadchanim spoke about the familial and social pressure brought to bear during this stage of life as marriage, in your early twenties, is an expectation in the Yeshivish community. Others pointed to the lack of control during this stage of life, the lack of respect for those in this process, and the lack of empathy from the community some single men and women feel. These descriptions echo the findings from the CCR's report, *The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews*, which found similar pain points and stressors.

Shadchan and Open-Ended Response Data

Shadchanim and respondents, however, paint a different picture of single men and women's levels of selectivity. Shadchanim feel single men and women are extremely picky, are not open-minded, and do not give serious consideration to proposed suggestions. Some shadchanim explained there is too much emphasis on physical appearance, wealth, and status and that many have "fantasies" about what they are looking for in a spouse and in a relationship. Selectivity is the fourth most mentioned topic in the open-ended survey responses. Respondents share that people are too picky, looking for perfection, and focused on unimportant qualities or checklists.

There is, however, a discrepancy between the way survey respondents and shadchanim talk about notions of "perfection." SIngle men and women who agreed with the statement, "I will strive for the most perfect shidduch, no matter how long it takes" may be interpreting the statement as looking for a spouse who is the "perfect match for me." Shadchanim who feel that single men and women are looking for or feel they "deserve perfection" are referring to the expectation that a potential spouse be perfect, without any flaws or shortcomings.

Tension Between Selectivity and Discernment

In their responses to open-ended questions, respondents who have never been married speak about the challenges of selectivity. They feel a tension between what they are taught to look for in school and being seen as too picky or selective:

> *We are taught in school about so many red flags, hear about so many horror stories and see so many broken people, yet then we are yelled at for being picky.*

Women are usually presented with only one suggestion at a time which makes rejecting a suggestion a high-risk proposition They know suggestions are "off-target" but are afraid to decline the date for fear of being labeled too picky. Consequently, at times, women feel coerced into agreeing to a match, because they are concerned about maintaining a positive relationship with their shadchan and want to avoid being viewed as too selective. A woman shares:

> *But what good are the yeses if they are not for me?! I end up wasting my time and energy and am so burnt out even though, if I would have given a no originally, it would have prevented that and freed me up to someone more my speed.*

There is a balance to be struck between respecting the feelings and opinions of single men and women regarding which potential spouse is right for them and interpreting their discernment and awareness of needs as extreme pickiness. The shidduch system would benefit from increased communication and discussion between shadchanim, singles, and community members surrounding appropriate and expected levels of selectivity and discernment in the shidduch process. Engaging all stakeholders in thinking and dialoguing about levels of selectivity is an important mechanism in addressing it.

Too Many Choices

Many shadchanim and respondents believe that there are too many choices and options for men, which exacerbates selectivity. As suggestions for potential spouses are sent to men first, they tend to become inundated with choices for potential spouses, which increases their ability to be selective. Shadchanim feel that men are passing up good suggestions because they assume something better will come along, have inflated egos because of the many suggestions they receive, and therefore, seek perfection. When asked about the causes of the "shidduch crisis" in the open-ended questions, one survey respondent commented:

If there is even one slightly imperfect thing about the girl, why not just go ahead and pick out the next one from the shopping list? Surely, there is someone better.

Unrealistic Expectations

Many shadchanim speak about the unrealistic expectations that women hold about dating, marriage, and the opposite gender. Some women want men to work full time and then come home and learn, have chevrusas, and go to shiurim at night. Participants feel these expectations are unrealistic and based on women's fathers, who have spent decades working on themselves to grow into who they are as heads of the household. Some women want a man who will learn for a few years and then have a plan for a career after, but men do not always know what career path they will pursue while still learning. Men's expectations for women are mentioned less often, one shadchan shared that men simply do not have such high expectations of women as women have of men, which aligns with the societal expectations described above in the *Scarcity* section.

Desired Attributes

Levels of selectivity are equal among men and women for middos, desires related to physical appearance, lack of acceptance of health conditions, and a spouse who grew up in a Ba'al Teshuva household.

Middos

Men and women's desire for specific middos are very consistent. The most desired middos are kindness (81% women, 83% men), ehrlichkeit (61% women, 53% men), and even-tempered (46% women, 44% men). Men also desire an intelligent spouse (45%), while women desire a responsible spouse (55%). Many (54 % men vs. 71% women) desire a spouse from a specific seminary or yeshiva, potentially using this as a signal of desired qualities. Both men and women rank lowest of the desired middos on the survey: being stylish, sheltered, worldly, and hardworking.

Physical Appearance

Physical appearance is important to both men and women. Most men say it is somewhat/very desirable or necessary their spouse be fashionable (59%) or slender (72%). Almost all (90%) of women say it is somewhat/very desirable or necessary their spouse be attractive. Men are more likely than women to say seeing a photo before the first date is somewhat/very important (47% vs. 27% women).

Health Concerns

The health of a potential spouse is important to both men and women. Nearly all (94% men, 95% women) say the presence of physical, mental, or emotional conditions that affect daily living can raise concerns in an otherwise suitable match.

Grew Up in a Ba'al Teshuva Household

Close to half of men (46%) and 54% of women do not have any concern considering someone who grew up in a Ba'al Teshuva household, with a few men (3%) and 7% of women indicating a preference for it. However, there remains a substantial portion of men (54%) and women (46%) who indicate a preference for a spouse that grew up in an observant household and are concerned about being matched with someone from a Ba'al Teshuva household.

Secular Entertainment

Both men and women say it is unacceptable or very/somewhat undesirable for a potential spouse to watch mainstream, secular movies. Over two thirds of men (64%) and 81% of women find it undesirable for a potential spouse to enjoy secular movies.

Living Outside the Greater New York Area

To a lesser extent, but worth noting, men are more likely to say that it is unacceptable or very/somewhat undesirable for a potential spouse to want to live outside the Greater New York area (41%) than women (30%). Within our sample, 18% of respondents live outside of New York and New Jersey (13% men, 20% women).

Shadchan and Respondents' Perception of Selectivity

Shadchanim confirm that men are selective first and foremost about looks. Most shadchanim agree that all boys need is the picture, and "they are good." Many share that men seek women who are thin, and of average height. Data from interviews with shadchanim confirms that men are selective about schools and Israel seminaries women attend and dismiss suggestions simply because the women did not attend the "right" school. Men who want to learn long-term seek financial security, either through a woman's professional earning capacity or her family's ability and willingness to offer financial support.

According to shadchanim, the most often mentioned issue women are selective about is learning. Whether it be "long-term learners," or "short-term learners," shadchanim observe that most women are looking for a man who will learn. The survey data regarding commitment to learning after marriage confirms this perception about women's selectivity.

Contributing to the Problem

A few survey respondents believe that shadchanim add to and enable the selectivity issues they complain about. When a shadchan will not work with women who "aren't pretty enough or thin enough," they are exacerbating the focus on looks and external qualities. One married respondent shared:

> *Shadchanim actually feed into this by not redting people to other people who they don't think will say yes just because of height, [or] financial status.*

Another single respondent commented:

> *I think externals get in the way of shadchanim as well, when girls are pretty and come from wealthy families in my experience, they got much, much more dates than an average income family.*

Shadchanim walk a fine line between suggesting matches they believe are good suggestions and suggesting matches they know single men and women will say yes to but will perpetuate selectivity surrounding external and materialistic qualities. If shadchanim are to be successful, they need to suggest matches that align with what single men and women are looking for, but in those suggestions is a reinforcement of the negative aspects of selectivity. A question to consider is what role each stakeholder in the shidduch system has in changing issues around selectivity.

Easy and Hard to Match

When asked who is easy to match, shadchanim share that those who are easy to match are single men and women from "good" or wealthy families, who went to the "right" schools, who are attractive and slim, have good personalities, and who are confident in themselves and what they are looking for. Data from the survey supports the claim men and women are selective about physical appearance of a potential spouse and what seminary or yeshiva a potential spouse attended, however, only about a third of men (30%) and a quarter of women (26%) say they desire a spouse from a wealthy family.

Attitude also plays a role in being easy to match according to some shadchanim, with those who are raised to get married and are "marriage minded" often getting married quickly. Single men and women who are flexible, open-minded, easy going, and open to suggestions are easy to match up. Attributes such as simple, not complicated, and positive, with realistic expectations, are also easy to match up, according to shadchanim.

When asked who is harder to match, shadchanim most often mention a complicated, messy family background. Single men and women from divorced or broken families, orphans, those who had a death in the family, or a member of the family in trouble with the law are harder to set up. Single men and women from families with little means and no yichus also fall into this category. Singles with an unconventional past, Ba'alei Teshuva, and those with *off the derech*[15] family members are also harder to set up, which was confirmed in the survey data. Qualities that make it difficult to find a shidduch to suggest are independent and analytical thinkers, questioners, and people who are closed minded and inflexible. Finally, shadchanim feel that it is difficult to find a match for someone who is more reserved or has poor interpersonal skills.

Fixes from Survey Respondents

Many of the suggestions to address the challenges of selectivity center on a re-evaluation of communal priorities and values, shifting a focus back to finding the right spouse for them, "not their image." One respondent comments:

> *Everyone must take a long hard look in the mirror and decide what the most important things in life are. And not just think about gashmiyus, money, yichus, "top boy in Brisk" and all the other shallow things that are swallowing up this generation.*

Part of that re-evaluation is a reality check for women on what is important in a husband beyond the ability to learn Torah, and if she wants a husband who learns, there is a compromise to be made in other areas such as "looks and personality." The suggestion of being more open-minded is a common response, as well as a need to educate children and parents on reasonable expectations and standards.

Limited Capacity Hypothesis

Although most marriages are suggested by family and friends, there is still a shortage of shadchanim. Shadchanim receive limited training and have inefficient tracking systems. Compensation is neither reliable nor commensurate with the effort expended and insufficient as full-time income. Current shadchanim recognize that a consequence of their limited capacity is underserving more challenging clients.

The limited capacity hypothesis suggests that the existing pool of shadchanim do not have the capacity to ensure that most men and women in the marriage market will marry. There is a relatively small number of shadchanim, who in turn, have limited information processing power and resources, an outdated process, and limited training.

To research this hypothesis, we asked shadchanim about their experience making shidduchim, how they track clients, how they suggest and make matches, and what training they received.

Most Successful Shidduchim are Not Suggested by Shadchanim

An important finding of the study is that most marriage partners in current marriages were suggested by family and friends rather than shadchanim. Among married respondents, 68% of matches were suggested by friends and family and 6% by community leaders, with 13% suggested by part-time shadchanim and 10% suggested by full-time shadchanim.

TABLE 13 **MATCH SOURCE FOR MARRIED RESPONDENTS**

Match Source	Male	Female	Total
Family Member / Friend	65%	69%	68%
Part Time Shadchan	13%	13%	13%
Full Time Shadchan	13%	8%	10%
Rabbi / Rebbetzin / Community Leader	6%	6%	6%
Other	3%	4%	3%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Married respondents are also asked, "At any point in the process, was a full-time shadchan involved in arranging your marriage?" 80% of married respondents report that a full-time shadchan was not involved in their marriage.

When looking at trends over time, shadchan use has been increasing in recent years. Married respondents ages thirty-five or under are much more likely to have been introduced by a full-time or part-time shadchan or used a shadchan at some point in the shidduch process, than those over thirty-five (see Table 15).

TABLE 14

FULL-TIME SHADCHAN INVOLVEMENT FOR MARRIED RESPONDENTS

Response	Male	Female	Total
No	81%	80%	80%
Yes	19%	20%	20%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Married respondents who were married between 2010-2023 are much more likely to have had a full-time shadchan involved in arranging their marriage than those in earlier decades.

TABLE 15 **BREAKDOWN BY DECADE OF MARRIED RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED A FULL-TIME SHADCHAN INVOLVED AT SOME POINT IN THEIR MARRIAGE**

Decade of marriage	Count of Respondents	% of Respondents Who had a Full-Time Shadchan Involved at Some Point
70's & 80's	6	2%
90's	44	8%
2000's	76	17%
2010's	193	29%
2020's	134	30%
Total	**453**	**19%**

Respondents married between 2010 and 2023 were much more likely to have been suggested to their spouse by a full or part-time shadchan. Calculated as a compound growth rate, rates of being introduced to a spouse by a shadchan have been increasing by 8% each year. The cause of this increase is beyond the scope of this report. It may be a combination of an increase in the number of people working as part or full-time shadchanim based on institutional and communal initiatives, as well as factors that have made the use of shadchan more normative or expected in the Yeshivish community. The increase in the use of shadchanim deserves its own research effort to understand this change more fully.

TABLE 16 **BREAKDOWN BY DECADE OF MARRIED RESPONDENTS WHO HAD THEIR SPOUSE SUGGESTED BY A FULL OR PART-TIME SHADCHAN**

Decade of marriage	Full-time Shadchan	Part-time Shadchan	Full and Part-time Shadchan Totals
80's	1%	5%	6%
90's	4%	8%	12%
2000's	5%	10%	15%
2010's	15%	17%	32%
2020's	16%	17%	33%
Total	**10%**	**12%**	**22%**

Although most shidduchim (68%) are introduced by friends and family, there is some evidence that those who describe their financial situation as "living comfortably" or "meeting their basic expenses with a little left over for extras" (a proxy for higher wealth), are more likely to be introduced to their spouse by a shadchan than those who say they "just meet basic expenses" or "don't even have enough to meet basic expenses." More respondents in the higher wealth categories (16%) are introduced by a shadchan than those in the lower wealth categories (6%). Although these differences are not statistically significant given the low sample size, they suggest a possible imbalance between these two groups.

TABLE 17 **MATCH SOURCE BREAKDOWN BY HOUSEHOLD FINANCES**

Household Finances	Friends or Family	Shadchan (Full/Part Time)	Rabbi/Rebbetzin/ Community Leader
Lower Wealth (Not Enough/Basic Expenses)	76%	6%	13%
Higher Wealth (Comfortable/Extras)	74%	16%	7%

Additionally, none of those in the lowest category, "don't even have enough to meet basic expenses," report having been introduced by a shadchan; instead, they were introduced by a friend or family member (93%) or a by a rabbi, rebbetzin, or community leader (7%). This trend may be caused by preferences among shadchanim or by aversion among the less wealthy to use a service that will require them to pay a fee.

Shadchanim are becoming increasingly essential to the shidduch process, but their efforts do not impact the entire population. Friends, family, and community members are foundational to the shidduch process. Helping family and community members understand how impactful their involvement is in the shidduch process and encouraging, equipping, and motivating them to become actively engaged in suggesting and supporting shidduchim is a key action point.

Not Enough Shadchanim

Many of the suggestions to address the challenges of shadchanim recognize that the demand for their services is greater than their capacity to adequately meet the needs of those who would like to work with them, meaning there are not enough shadchanim available to those who seek their services. Many feel this is particularly true for more challenging clients, such as older single men and women or those with complicated backgrounds. This limited capacity was reinforced often in the open-ended survey responses. Many survey respondents feel that there are not enough shadchanim in the system and talk about the need for more shadchanim to focus on specific groups of women or specific ages.

Not Enough Compensation

Shadchanim believe they should be financially compensated for their work, as it is a difficult, time-consuming, and at times, "all encompassing" job. There are no established levels of compensation, few shadchanim have a set fee, and on average, shadchanim report receiving between $3,600 to $5,000 per match, with each side contributing half of the total compensation ($1,800 to $2,500). Compensation in "out-of-town" communities is on the lower end of the range compared to the tri-state area.

A Steady Stream of Income

A repeated concern surrounding compensation is that being a shadchan does not bring in a steady stream of income. Many say they cannot work full-time as a shadchan because they must maintain employment in other professions to generate income. Survey respondents also share this concern and feel the lack of real compensation structure disincentivizes interested people from becoming shadchanim.

Some shadchanim feel that when they work with harder to match populations, they should be paid a higher compensation rate, as the work is more difficult and requires more "handholding," time, and patience. They feel a higher compensation rate would incentivize more shadchanim to work with these individuals. A few shadchanim said they shy away from people who they think will be very hard to set up or require an exorbitant amount of time and resources because they do not have the time and will not be compensated fairly for their effort.

When shadchanim make choices about who they will work with based on their personal financial needs, a perception develops among those that seek their services. Within the open-ended survey responses, single men and women and their family members comment that "shadchanim are running after the high profile shidduchim" and are "looking to help those who are prestigious and wealthy so they can get good shadchnus money." These comments make up some of the harsher accusations leveled against shadchanim. Phrases such as, "out for shadchanus" and "approached more like a business than a chesed" demonstrate the assumptions some hold about shadchanim.

Not Enough Time

Resoundingly, most shadchanim express unhappiness over not having enough time in their day to work with every person that contacts them for help. This lack of time limits their capacity to respond and adequately service potential and current clients. Shadchanim comment on their overwhelming workload and explain, "The system is drowning the people that are involved," and people are "falling through the cracks," because they simply do not have enough time to work with everyone.

Unresponsiveness

When single men and women or parents answering on behalf of their single adult child score shadchanim on responsiveness, 76% of men agree shadchanim are responsive compared to only 49% of women. Asked if they agree that shadchanim follow through on suggestions for dates, 70% of men agree, compared with only 38% of women. This suggests women receive fewer responses from shadchanim compared to men and that shadchanim prioritize working with men, perhaps because more women engage their services than men, and men are more valued in the market than women.

Off-target Suggestions

Beyond responsiveness, some respondents share in open-ended survey responses that shadchanim often send out resumes or make suggestions that are not "shayach," "on point," or "on-target" because they do not take the time to get to know them well. There is evidence of this sentiment in the survey data, 37% of single men and women (or those answering on their behalf) feel shadchanim do not understand what they are looking for and 53% report that shadchanim do not provide on target suggestions.

Not Enough Training, Inefficient Tracking Systems, and Limited Access

Becoming a Shadchan

There are multiple reasons and ways individuals become shadchanim. Some participants say they are motivated by the desire to do chesed, others want to fill a need in their community, to pay "good mazal" forward. Some got involved in shidduchim when they had close relatives or friends who were struggling to succeed in shidduchim. Having access to single individuals and community networks also leads some to become shadchanim. Finally, several participants describe joining community shidduch organizations. All the above paths to becoming a shadchan result in people with varied skills, unique levels of access to single men and women, and inconsistent training taking on the role of shadchan, which creates a field of shadchanim with very different levels of preparedness and ability.

Lack of Training

There is a lack of adequate training for becoming a shadchan. Most shadchanim start out with no formal training, there is no set of skills, curriculum, or best practices established and accepted for shadchanim. Furthermore, there is a sense that being a good shadchan is not about knowledge or skill, but rather experience and intuition. The only formal training they mention is offered by dating sites like Adopt-A-Shadchan or YU Connects. These organizations have training requirements and commitments related to time spent working on their website to arrange shidduchim.

Lack of Professional Development

Compounding the lack of formal training is the absence of any systematic mechanism for professional development. To hone their craft, a few participants talk about books, magazine articles, or podcasts they read and listen to for new ways to approach and think about their role as shadchan. Most participants feel learning through experience and feedback is the best way to grow and improve one's skills. They speak about calling other shadchanim they trust, mentors who have many more years' experience, or reaching out to shadchanim WhatsApp groups for feedback and guidance.

Tracking System

Recent research shows that maximizing the number of successful marriages in a given marriage market requires matchmakers who have global knowledge of that market, making comprehensive and efficient tracking systems critical to the process.[16] Shadchanim report struggling to manage and track their knowledge of the current shidduch market, as do a few survey respondents, who identify shadchanim's lack of tracking abilities as a major challenge. Outdated modes of tracking clients, such as handwritten systems or resume binders, and reliance on notes stored in a cell phone to track clients create gaps in shadchanim's knowledge of the market and limits their capacity to successfully make shidduchim. Only a few shadchanim interviewed use more advanced technology to track client information.

Access

Many shadchanim speak about recruitment by explaining that once you make a shidduch, single women, more so than single men, come to you asking to be set up, they describe the process as a "snowball effect." Finding single men however is different, as they do not reach out to shadchanim in the same way that single women do. Shadchanim outside the tri-state area are at an even larger disadvantage because many single men leave their communities to study in the larger yeshivas in the Northeast.

The most efficient way to meet single men is by going to visit the yeshivas in which they learn; however, that creates an issue of access. Some try to get the list of single men from the yeshivas, but that information is described as very guarded. Some female shadchanim and community initiatives arrange opportunities with yeshivas to meet the eligible men, which is helpful in accessing a new pool of men for the women they work with.

There are a small number of male shadchanim who work within the yeshiva systems they are a part of and get to know single men even before they are on the market. They suggest many more shidduchim than female shadchanim because of their access to male clients and the relationship and trust they built with the men in the yeshiva. Male shadchanim report the same success rate as female shadchanim, about 10% of all first dates result in marriage, however, their access to single men learning in yeshiva increases the volume of dates they suggest.

Treatment by Shadchanim

Approximately three quarters of single survey respondents, or those responding for an adult child, report that shadchanim are not "too critical" (76% male, 70% female) and over half feel shadchanim give them good advice (62% male, 58% female). These numbers are relatively positive, however, a fair percentage of survey respondents feel shadchanim are too critical and criticize the treatment they receive from shadchanim in open ended responses.

In line with current research on singles' experience while looking for a spouse,[17] some single respondents believe that shadchanim have "too much power" and no accountability, as they do not have to answer to any governing body. They express feelings of powerlessness in the

shidduch system and frustration with "waiting [for] a shadchan to set you up." One respondent shares she must "just put up with the necessary evils of the shidduch system [or] you'll never get set up or married." Other respondents feel shadchanim cater to and prioritize what men are looking for when making suggestions, without considering what women are looking for. They say this results in feelings of entitlement and increased pickiness among men, while making women feel desperate.

Fixes from Shadchanim

Shadchanim are explicit about the support they need to be more successful. Shadchanim desire more access to single men currently learning in yeshivas. They want more training and education from experts to help them improve their skills. A few want help improving their tracking system and developing the technological skills needed to use platforms like Evernote or Excel effectively. Finally, many feel that working on shidduchim is "everyone's achrayus" and community members should be more involved in thinking about and redting shidduchim.

Fixes from Survey Respondents

Recruit More Shadchanim

The most common suggestion from the open-ended survey responses to the challenges with the current shidduch system is to increase the number of shadchanim in the system to adequately work with and support the volume of single men and women looking for a spouse. Many suggest some sort of ambassador or advocate system, to ensure that all people in the shidduch system have someone they work with closely, who knows them well, and meets with them on a regular basis to support them through the process. Some feel that schools or shuls should employ their own shadchan to work for the single men and women in their communities.

Higher Compensation for Shadchanim

Many respondents suggest rethinking the incentive and compensation structures and feel shadchanim should receive a full, set salary for their work, which would incentivize more people to become shadchanim. Some want to see the professionalization of the shadchan position, recasting the work as professional, not a volunteer or chesed position.

Procedural Improvements

Several respondents want a centralized database of available single men and women "to allow everyone access to a larger pool of people and to ease the work of the shadchan." Respondents want to see suggestions for dates going to women first, normalizing women reaching out to shadchanim to ask about a specific man and eliminating the need for pictures. A few respondents suggest sending only one resume at a time to motivate more on-target suggestions and reduce the overwhelming amount of resumes men receive and consider. One married respondent suggests shadchanim should agree to only work with single men and women above the age of twenty-three and allow everyone younger to be set up through family, friends, other newly-married couples, and Rabbeim. Others suggest shadchanim relinquish responsibility for the scheduling and coordination of dates to create more time in their day.

Shadchan's Comments Beyond the Limited Capacity Hypothesis

Dating Coaches

According to shadchanim, in recent years, there is a proliferation of dating coaches who work to prepare single men and women to date, set expectations, and support them through the dating and marriage process. Some shadchanim raise concerns about the coaching paradigm they observe in the shidduch system. Firstly, they feel that there is a "heavy level of bias" towards successful outcomes when one plays the role of both shadchan and dating coach, potentially leading shadchanim to push too hard for a relationship to succeed.

Additionally, because the industry is new and unregulated, there is a lack of reputable or accredited training programs for coaching. Individuals receive online certificates after a few sessions of training and are not adequately qualified to be dating coaches. Furthermore, coaching can be a lucrative endeavor, so some become coaches without the experience of working in shidduchim for many years, which most agree is an important prerequisite for coaching success. Most of the shadchanim interviewed who are also dating coaches have ten to fifteen years of experience. Shadchanim with this higher level of experience are inundated with requests for dating support.

Structure of the System Advantages Men

Gender plays a specific role in the shidduch structure as suggestions for potential spouses are sent to men first. Men receive a consistent flow of suggestions for shidduchim and control the forward movement in the market, essentially establishing them as gatekeepers. This constant stream of suggestions creates an advantage for men in several ways.

Firstly, it positions men in the system as the "commodity," increasing their value in the market. Open-ended survey responses support this positioning, with many saying that sending suggestions to men first can lead to an inflated sense of self-worth, on both the part of the men and their families, because the overwhelming number of suggestions is interpreted as an indicator of their value in the marriage market. Furthermore, it creates a system that offers "too many choices" to men, which also increases selectivity.

Because men hold the advantage in the structure of the system, shadchanim are more responsive to and follow through more often with men than with women. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that shadchanim are responsive, 76% of men agree, compared to only 49% of women. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that shadchanim follow through with suggestions for dates, 70% of men agree, compared to only 38% of women. Furthermore, some shadchanim said that they will usually prioritize working with a man over a woman, because it is harder to get men to work with them.

The current structure creates an environment in which men are overwhelmed with suggestions for shidduchim, women wait around for a man to agree to go out with them, and shadchanim are looked at negatively because women are not aware of the suggestions made on their behalf.

Older, Single Men and Women

There is a sentiment among many shadchanim that the shidduch crisis looks different for older, single men and women than younger, single men and women. They feel more powerless to help older individuals and believe the system doesn't work as well for individuals who are twenty-five and older. Some shadchanim believe they should be paid more for older singles who they successfully set up. They feel older single men and women should work with dating coaches for support. Many shadchanim said they prefer to work with a younger population, as the older population of single men and women require more time, energy, and patience.

Perception of Older, Single Men and Women

Shadchanim perceive older single men and women as being less willing to compromise, although the older individuals surveyed insist otherwise. Shadchanim feel older single men and women hold more preconceived ideas and focus more on chemistry and personality rather than hashkafa and family details. Older men and women seem less likely to trust shadchanim, are very burnt out by the process, and often do not listen to suggestions. They share that older individuals are also more cautious about agreeing to a shidduch and do a lot more research on a potential match because they are afraid of getting hurt again with a bad shidduch experience.

Working with Older, Single Men and Women

Shadchanim talk about working with older single men and women in different ways than they talk about working withyounger individuals. Shadchanim tend to work with older men and women directly, parents are less involved in the process, with some shadchanim feeling it is a red flag if a mother reaches out on behalf of her older child. They also note how important it is to talk to older people with respect and reverence towards their experiences and accumulated pain. One shadchan shared, "You can't say to older singles, trust me, just try it; they are in too much pain to agree to something they are not sure about."

Conclusions

Conclusions

There is a perception of a shidduch crisis among respondents in our study. More than half (65%) of respondents answer yes when asked if they believe there is a shidduch crisis, with only 25% responding that there is no shidduch crisis. This study does not determine the presence or absence of a crisis, rather, we address the factors that contribute to the current situation and the way it is perceived.

Age Gap

Based on current demographics and conventions in age of marriage for men and women, the actuarial models predict a range of female surplus in the marriage market between 2.5% and 6.2%. Understanding the proportion of those who have fallen out of the Orthodox system is a critical variable to our actuarial model. However, we cannot identify this data in our sample, as those who have left the Orthodox system would not opt-in to this type of survey. Findings from an ongoing study by the CCR on religious switching among yeshiva and day school graduates should provide current retention rates that can be used to refine our age gap model.

Scarcity

Of the behaviors measured, we do not see huge discrepancies between what women want and what men offer; however, if women who would consider both a potential spouse who learns or works choose to marry men who learn (without working), the result could be a scarcity of men who are learning for the women who insist on being matched with a man who does not work at all. Parental responses on behalf of their adult, unmarried children suggest more religiously conservative eligible men compared to those men responding for themselves. When looking at the parent reported population, levels of scarcity between what women want and what men offer are even smaller than within the total sample population. Future research should investigate additional measures around scarcity, such as relative religious attrition of men and women and alternative measures of religiosity and desired types of sophistication.

Selectivity

Despite shadchanim and survey respondents' willingness to attribute the crisis to selectivity, survey results indicate reasonable and appropriate levels of selectivity among single men and women, with women being slightly more selective than men. Men are most selective when evaluating resumes, while women are most selective in agreeing to continue to date or marry. Communication, thinking, and discourse around the ways in which people are being selective may address the perception of too much selectivity among single men and women.

Limited Capacity

Despite the increase in shadchanim involvement in the past two decades, shadchanim are involved in only 30-40% of all marriages. However, there is ample evidence that shadchanim do not have the capacity to handle the demands of the market.

Shadchanim enter the system for different reasons and with different backgrounds, bringing various levels of skill to the field. Little formal training is available to develop necessary skills. Compensation is neither dependable nor commensurate with the effort shadchanim devote to the work and insufficient as full-time income. Access to men learning in yeshiva is limited and inefficient tracking systems make it difficult for shadchanim to manage their case load.

Improving the capacity of the shidduch system, including friends and family (who are responsible for the majority of shidduchim in our sample), as well as shadchanim and other community leaders, may increase the efficiency of the system.

Who is the Current System Most Likely to Fail?

The current shidduch system is less likely to meet the needs of those who are facing health challenges (physical and mental), who are Ba'alei Teshuva or are the child of Ba'alei Teshuva, who do not meet demanding physical standards of beauty or body type, older single men and women, and others with complicated family backgrounds or situations.

Gender Differences in the Shidduch Process

Men are sent numerous resumes for consideration from multiple sources, which allows for increased selectivity, since the risk of rejecting a suggestion is low given the broad possibilities offered. Shadchanim are perceived by three quarters of men as responsive, perhaps because male agreement to a suggestion is necessary to move the shidduch process forward.

Women are presented with only one resume at a time which makes selectivity, or saying no to a suggestion, a high-risk proposition. Because suggestions are approved by men first, women are uncertain if and when they will receive another resume. Additionally, women, at times, feel coerced into agreeing to a match because they are concerned about maintaining a positive relationship with their shadchan.

Recommendations

BASED ON THESE CONCLUSIONS, THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT ACTION POINTS TO ADDRESS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE SHIDDUCH SYSTEM.

Creating Systemic Change

1. **ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS** in thoughtful discussion around what process changes can lead to an increased flow of suggestions for women, thereby reducing the uncertainty and pressure they experience to agree to a suggestion.

2. **CREATE MORE ACCESS** to the pool of eligible men through the creation of a comprehensive database of eligible men and women that can be accessed by all shadchanim, normalize female shadchanim working with men who are currently learning in yeshiva, and hire more male shadchanim who have access and relationships with men currently learning in yeshiva.

3. **UNDERSTAND RETENTION RATES** in the Orthodox community and incorporate reliable rates to improve accuracy and rigor in the actuarial models.

4. **ENCOURAGING** men and women to marry individuals closer to their age could alleviate some of the perception of a shidduch crisis for women and would likely have a minimal effect on men. As we suspect male attrition to be greater than female attrition, the female surplus is likely to be larger than the actuarial models indicate, thus a reduction in the gap between ages when men and women marry could positively impact women's experience in shidduchim.

Increasing Resources for Those Making Matches

5. **HELP FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS** understand how impactful their involvement is in the shidduch process and encourage, equip, and motivate them to become actively engaged in suggesting and supporting shidduchim.

6. **ESTABLISH STANDARDIZED LEVELS OF COMPENSATION**, offer financial incentives to shadchanim who work with harder to match clientele, and identify tasks, such as managing date logistics and conducting client intake, which can be offloaded to free up shadchanim's time for higher skilled tasks.

7. **CREATE SOME LEVEL OF VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION** and initial shadchan training, develop high-quality professional development opportunities, and help support shadchanim in developing skills to use more advanced tracking systems to monitor the market more efficiently and effectively.

Adjusting Communal Expectations

8. **CREATE MORE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS** for women by sharing and familiarizing the community with typical patterns by age of men learning in yeshiva.

9. **USING COMMUNAL COMMUNICATION**, debate, and discourse, adjust expectations of of single men and women, community, and shadchanim regarding appropriate levels of selectivity and discernment during the process of finding a spouse.

1   The survey asks respondents, "How do you describe yourself / your family with respect to Torah Hashkafa?" The following six options are offered: Modern Orthodox, Modern Orthodox – Machmir, Mainstream Yeshiva, Heimish, Chassidish, and Other.

2   Only 2% had their first child before the age of twenty. Most women in the sample had their first child between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, thus averaging out to a median age at first birth of twenty-two. Only 3.8% of women had their first child after age thirty.

3   Smith, "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated." https://static1.squarespace.com/static/618c15bb5b6c97242acc237a/t/6244a2b85c41d94590ec18cb/1648665273803/Religious+affiliation+in+the+United+States+-+2021.pdf

4   Typically, women are more likely than men to respond to survey research and is not in of itself indicative of a population with more women than men. See Curtin, Presser, and Singer, "The Effects of Response Rate Changes on the Index of Consumer Sentiment."

5   Austad, "The Human Prenatal Sex Ratio"; see also Orzack et al., "The Human Sex Ratio from Conception to Birth."

6   We did not take into account whether some of these children were from previous marriages of either spouse or non-biological children (e.g., adopted or foster children), as we did not have information on this. This corresponds well to the 2022 report on the global Haredi population, which notes the average family size at 6-7 (Daniel Staetsky, *Haredi Jews around the world: Population trends and estimates*, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, May, 2022 https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/haredi-jews-around-world-population-trends-and-estimates). It is also referenced by the 2022 report on Israeli data for the Yeshivish population (Gordon, 2022:23), where the average family size was 6.3.

7   See Table 28 for confidence levels and intervals for annual growth rate.

8   As will be shown below, we also included some models which hypothesized a smaller age discrepancy between husbands and wives to see what effect more flexibility in desired age difference would make on the results in the age-gap analysis.

9   According to unpublished data from Israel (from the study https://www.idi.org.il/media/18254/demographic-trends-and-participation-in-the-workforce-an-analysis-of-the-ultra-orthodox-sector-in-israel.pdf and communicated from Gilad Malach on November 28, 2023 to Harriet Hartman), the average marriage age for Yeshivish males is 23.3 and for Yeshivish females is 22.1, resulting in the average gap between husbands and wives is 1.2 years (page 20).

10 See Table 28 for confidence levels and intervals for surplus of women.

11 Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin, and Michael Argyle. The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief, and Experience. Routledge, 1997.; Schnabel, Landon. "How Religious Are American Women and Men?: Gender Differences and Similarities." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 54, no. 3, Sept. 2015, pp. 616–22.; Walter, Tony, and Grace Davie. "The Religiosity of Women in the Modern West." The British Journal of Sociology, vol. 49, no. 4, Dec. 1998, pp. 640–60. (1997)

12 https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/the-size-of-the-u-s-jewish-population/

13 Khanna, Diana, Jyoti Khadka, Christine Mpundu-Kaambwa, Kiri Lay, Remo Russo, and Julie Ratcliffe. 2022. "Are We Agreed? Self- Versus Proxy-Reporting of Pediatric Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) Using Generic Preference-Based Measures: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." PharmacoEconomics 40 (11): 1043–67. doi:10.1007/s40273-022-01177-z.

14 The survey asks respondents, "On weekdays, how often do you (or your unmarried child): Follow world news and current events; Listen to mainstream secular music; Watch mainstream TV shows or secular movies; Wear a colored shirt (only men); Wear bright or trendy clothes (only women); Drink alcohol; Vape (only men)." Four options are offered: Never, Some days, Most days, and Every day. The survey also asked respondents, "Do you (or your unmarried child) have a smartphone" and "Does the smartphone have an internet filter?" Two options are offered for each of these questions: Yes and No.

15 The expression "off the derech" originated within Ultra-Orthodox communities and refers to individuals who were raised Orthodox but have since left the community and no longer affiliate as Orthodox. Lang, Jessica, *Off the Derech: Leaving Orthodox Judaism.* (Albany : SUNY Press. 2020); *Degrees of Separation: Identity Formation While Leaving Ultra-Orthodox Judaism*, by Schneur Zalman Newfield, is another recent book about this phenomenon. (Temple University Press, 2020).

16 Enrico Maria Fenoaltea et al., "The Stable Marriage Problem: An Interdisciplinary Review from the Physicist's Perspective," *Physics Reports* 917 (June 18, 2021): 1-79; Gale, D., & Shapley, L. S. (1962). College Admissions and the Stability of Marriage. The American Mathematical Monthly, 69(1), 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/00029890.1962.11989827

17 *See The Challenges of Singlehood among American Orthodox Jews* https://research.ou.org/content/uploads/2023/07/the-challenges-of-singlehood.pdf

18 Typically, women are more likely than men to respond to survey research and is not in and of itself indicative of a population with more women than men. See Curtin, Presser, and Singer, "The Effects of Response Rate Changes on the Index of Consumer Sentiment."

19 AAPOR Standards Best Practices, Updated March 2022

20 Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967).

21 O'Connor and Joffe, "Intercoder Reliability in Qualitative Research: Debates and Practical Guidelines"

Appendix A

Glossary

- **Achrayus** – Responsibility
- **Ba'al Teshuva (sing.), Ba'alei Teshuva (pl.)** – A Jew who becomes Orthodox or returns to Orthodoxy
- **BY** – Beis Yaakov (prominent schools for ultra-Orthodox women)
- **Chareidi** – Orthodox Jewish sects characterized by strict adherence to the traditional form of Jewish law and rejection of modern secular culture
- **Dati** – Orthodox Jewish sect categorized by adherence to the traditional forms of Jewish law and strong ties to the State of Israel
- **Daven** – Pray
- **Frum** – Religiously devoted, pious
- **Hashkafa** – Religious worldview and guiding philosophy
- **Hashkafic** – Of or relating to religious worldview and guiding philosophy
- **Machmir** – Strict
- **Matzliachdik** – Successful, referencing success in Torah learning
- **Middos/Middot** – Attributes qua characteristics, usually those of value, e.g., kindness
- **Minyan (sing.), Minyanim (pl.)** – A quorum of ten men required for Jewish public worship, or a gathering for public worship
- **Modern Orthodox** – A mode of Orthodox culture and ideology, relating to the synthesis of secular knowledge and Jewish religious knowledge
- **Rebbetzin** – Rabbi's wife, often playing a community role alongside her husband
- **Redting** – Suggesting a match
- **Sephardic** – The population of Jews whose ancestry and tradition is from the Iberian Peninsula
- **Shadchan** (sing.), Shadchanim (pl.) – Matchmaker
- **Shidduch** – Match
- **Shiur** (sing.), Shiurim (pl.) – Class
- **Yeshivish** – A mode of Orthodox culture and ideology, originating in the great Lithuanian yeshivot of the 19th century, that emphasizes Talmudic learning
- **Yichus** – lineage or pedigree

Appendix B

Describing the Total Sample

Technical note: Ideally, this information would be collected from a probability sample of the individuals in the target population. Unfortunately, there is no extant, comprehensive list of all the individuals in the target population from which a random sample could be drawn. Neither are there precise, valid estimates of the demographic characteristics of the target population that would allow us to correct statistically for any bias in a convenience sample. The data collected is a good alternative to a probability sample.

Total Survey Respondent Demographics

Survey respondents are a diverse group in terms of gender, marital status, age, Orthodox affiliation, and location.

Gender and Marital Status

Most respondents are female, a finding that commonly occurs in survey data[18]. Across both genders, marital status is broken down into four groups: married, never married, separated/ divorced, and widowed. About 69% of respondents are married, 31% are currently single, and 0.4% did not provide their marital status.

TABLE 18 **RESPONDENT GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS**

Match Source	Number of Male Respondents	Number of Female Respondents	Number of Respondents Missing Gender	Total
Married	1222 (21%)	2693 (47%)	21 (0.4%)	**3936 (69%)**
Never Married	381 (7%)	1155 (20%)	12 (0.2%)	**1548 (27%)**
Separated/ Divorced	49 (1%)	109 (2%)	2 (0.04%)	**160 (3%)**
Widowed	3 (0.05%)	29 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	**32 (0.6%)**
Unknown	9 (0.2%)	16 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	**25 (0.4%)**
Total	**1664 (29%)**	**4002 (70%)**	**35 (1%)**	**5701 (100%)**

Age

The ages of respondents range from eighteen to 103, with about 80% of respondents reporting ages of fifty or below. Approximately 36% of the respondents fall within the age group twenty-one to twenty-nine.

FIGURE 3 **RESPONDENT BY AGE**

Number of Respondents / AGE GROUP

Age Group	Respondents
Unknown	261
18-20	271
21-23	715
24-26	715
27-29	587
30-32	437
33-35	328
36-38	264
39-41	273
42-44	265
45-47	351
48-50	310
51-53	258
54-56	172
57-59	120
60-62	107
63-65	88
66-68	56
69-71	42
72-74	8
75-77	10
78-80	3
81+	3

Location

About 75% of respondents are from New York or New Jersey, with 50% from New York alone; less than 6% of respondents are from Canada.

State	Respondents
OR	1
NV	2
CA	76
AZ	2
CO	17
WY	1
TX	15
MN	11
WI	5
MI	46
IL	116
IN	5
OH	84
MO	30
AR	1
TN	3
GA	13
LA	1
FL	85
NC	1
VA	4
PA	38
NY	2,719
VT	1
MA	11
RI	11
CT	23
NJ	1,473
MD	293

Appendix B

Hashkafa

The majority of survey respondents identified as Mainstream Yeshiva (70%) followed by Modern-Orthodox Machmir (9%) and Heimish (7%).

TABLE 19 | **HASHKAFIC AFFILIATION OF RESPONDENTS**

| Hashkafa	Count	%
Mainstream Yeshiva	3,813	70%
Modern Orthodox - Machmir	507	9%
Heimish	374	7%
Chasiddish	267	5%
Modern Orthodox	107	2%
Other	403	6%
Total	5,471	100%

Children of Respondents: Demographics

In addition to the data collected about survey respondents, information is also gathered about the children of respondents. This, in turn, provides a secondary and larger sample within the original sample in which to run analysis.

Of the 5,701 valid respondents, there are 16,214 children reported. Out of the sample of children, 8,997 are under age eighteen and 7,217 are over age eighteen. For the purposes of this study, the focus is primarily on the older demographic, as they are more likely to have experience within the shidduch system.

Age

Children over eighteen have ages ranging from eighteen to sixty-three, with more than half (53%) of the subset falling between eighteen and twenty-six. The ages are broken down into three-year categories to replicate the categories used for respondents.

FIGURE 4 | **CHILDREN OVER 18 BY AGE GROUP**
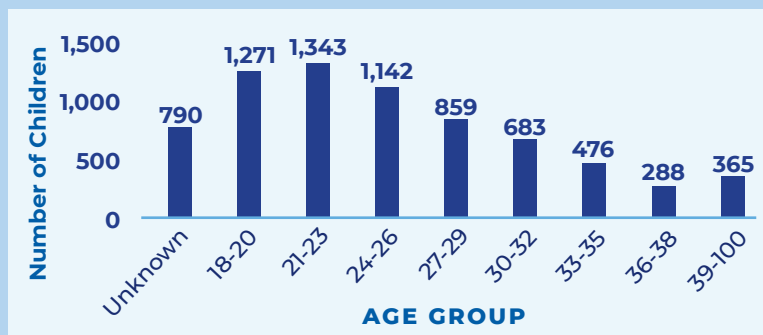
Gender

Of the 16,214 children, 7,249 are male and 7,119 are female.

Of the children of respondents over eighteen who were never married, 1,186 are male and 982 are female.

TABLE 20 **CHILDREN BY GENDER**

Gender	Number of Children	Percent of Children
Male	7,249	45%
Female	7,119	44%
Unknown	1,846	11%
Total	**16,214**	**100%**

FIGURE 5 **NEVER MARRIED CHILDREN BY GENDER**
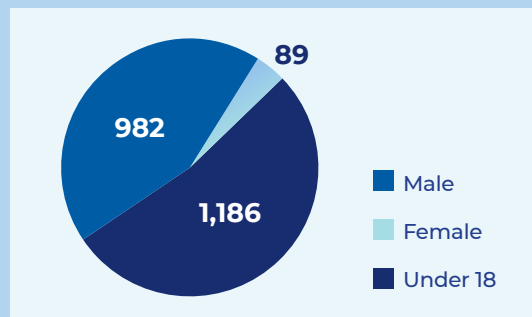
Marital Status

The marital status of children over the age of eighteen is recorded using the same categories as respondents. 31% of this subset have never married and thus can be assessed as part of the single demographic.

TABLE 21 **CHILDREN OVER 18 BY MARITAL STATUS**

Marital Status	Number of Children	Percent of Children
Married	3,264	45%
Never Married	2,257	31%
Separated/ Divorced	52	1%
Widowed	2	0%
Unknown	1,642	23%
Total	**7,217**	**100%**

Interview Participants: Demographics

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with thirty-eight shadchanim. Interview participants are a diverse group in terms of commitment, location, and length of years as a shadcahn. The majority are female (thirty-four).

Commitment

We interviewed fifteen full-time shadchanim, of which four are male and eleven are female. The twenty-three part-time shadchanim interviewed are all female.

TABLE 22 **SHADCHAN COMMITMENT BY GENDER**

Commitment	Male	Female
Full Time	4	11
Part Time	0	23
Total	4	34

Location

The majority of the shadchanim interviewed live in the New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas (twenty-five). The remaining thirteen are from the Midwest, Southeast, Mid-Atlantic states, and Canada.

TABLE 23 **SHADCHAN GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

Location	Shadchanim	Location	Shadchanim
Edison	1	Toronto	3
Far Rockaway	1	Five Towns	4
Florida	1	Brooklyn	5
Passaic	1	Chicago	5
Baltimore	2	Lakewood	5
Detroit	2	Monsey	5
Queens	3	Total	38

Years of Experience

There is a wide range in years of experience, with nineteen shadchanim having over fifteen years of experience, five having between ten to fifteen years of experience, six having between five and ten years of experience, and eight having less than five years of experience.

TABLE 24 **YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BY GENDER**

Years of Experience	Male	Female	Total
15+	3	16	19
10-15	0	5	5
5-10	1	5	6
0-5	0	8	8
Total	4	34	38

Appendix C

Methodology

The study was conducted by the OU's Center for Communal Research (CCR). It uses data on the market and data on matchmakers to assess four hypotheses about the root causes of the shidduch crisis. To protect the rights and welfare of our research participants, the study protocol was approved by WCG IRB evaluators.

Survey

We surveyed a large sample (5,701 respondents) of married and single individuals from the Orthodox Jewish population eighteen years of age or older, who live in the US and Canada. The survey was conducted online using the Qualtrics survey management platform. To maintain data integrity, participants were asked, "Has anyone in your household already completed this survey?" to screen for double responses from a single household. The survey instrument (available below) covers a range of topics including family demographics, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, characteristics and behaviors of single men and women, desired characteristics in a potential spouse, and information related to married respondents dating, shadchan, and marriage experience.

The study population consists of 5,701 survey respondents who took the survey between January 18th, 2023, and May 16th, 2023. Respondents have a minimum age of eighteen with varying hashkafas, communities, and marital status. Data collected about the survey population is broken into three subsets for analysis.

1. Single Respondents
Survey respondents answering questions pertaining to their own life and experiences.

2. Married Respondents
Survey respondents answering questions pertaining to their own life and experiences.

3. Children of Married Respondents
Married respondents answering questions about their children. Children over eighteen are broken down by marital status. Additional questions are asked about one child over eighteen (randomly selected) who is looking to get married, if applicable.

The survey was distributed through multiple channels to minimize noncoverage bias. The Shidduch Institute recruited respondents through the following four channels:
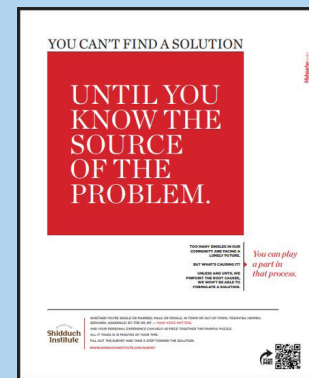
Distribution Channel 1: Print Media

1. *Mishpacha Magazine* - The Shidduch Institute, our client, partnered with Mishpacha magazine to introduce their organization and the goals of the survey. A sponsored full-page advertisement with the anonymous link to the survey ran for five weeks to

engage the readership. On week six, Mishpacha magazine ran the ad a final time with a "Time is Running Out" Banner. Mishpacha magazine marketing department claims a readership of 175,000+ in the US.

2. ***The Voice of Lakewood*** - The Shidduch Institute published the ad with the anonymous link to the survey several times. Circulation for the Voice of Lakewood is 17,000 families.

Distribution Channel 2: Online Media

1. Podcast "Jewish History Soundbites"- The Shidduch Institute sponsored a podcast regarding marriage practices, including a call to action to participate in the survey.

2. www.Matzav.com printed an article The Shidduch Institute wrote with a call to action for people to take the survey.

3. The Shidduch Institute sponsored an ad on *Inspiration for the Nation*

Distribution Channel 3: Social Media

1. The link to the survey, as well as links to the articles, were sent to the following three Shadchan groups (note that the membership on these groups overlap):

    i. Care To Connect – 171 shadchan members

    ii. Golda Shidduch Network – 256 shadchan members

    iii. MIS – 263 shadchan members

Shadchanim were asked to forward the anonymous link to the single men and women and families they are working with to publicize the survey.

2. The Shidduch Institute posted the anonymous link to the survey on the L&N Network/ Status which has five-thousand viewers.

Distribution Channel 4: School-based Outreach

The following schools agreed to send a letter explaining The Shidduch Institute's mission and encourage their families (students and alumni) to participate in the survey using the anonymous link or via phone surveys, and also offered to cover paper mailings if preferred:

1. The Mir Yeshiva- Jerusalem
2. Yeshiva Darchei Torah- Far Rockaway
3. Bais Yaakov D'Rav Hirsch- Monsey
4. Bais Yaakov of Ramapo- Monsey
5. Manhattan High School- NYC
6. Hannah Sachs BY High School- Chicago, IL
7. Bnos Leah Prospect Park HS- Brooklyn, NY
8. Bais Yaakov Lakewood- Lakewood, NJ- sent 750 requests by mail
9. Shiras Devorah – Lakewood, NJ
10. Bais Shaindel High School- Lakewood, NJ
11. Chaviva High School- Cleveland, OH
12. Bais Yaakov D'Rav Meir- Brooklyn, NY
13. Bnos Bais Yaakov- Lakewood, NJ
14. TAG- Far Rockaway, NY
15. Shulamith- Brooklyn, NY
16. Esther Miller BY- St. Louis, MO
17. Bais Kaila- Lakewood, NY
18. Bais Yaakov Denver- Denver, CO
19. Darchei Torah, Detroit, MI
20. Bruriah, Elizabeth NJ

The following is the text of the recruitment email:

We are reaching out to you in partnership with Machon L'Shidduchim/The Shidduch Institute, to request your assistance with a new Shidduch Initiative geared to help the Yeshiva/Bais Yaakov community. Machon L'Shidduchim is working with a number of Rabbanim and Askanim in creating a new centralized organization dedicated to helping singles, and taking achrayus on a large scale for the benefit of the Klal. They have launched a national research effort to identify the different contributing factors and causes of what has come to be known as the "Shidduch Crisis" and need as much participation as possible in order to have ample data to evaluate.

We are encouraging our parents and alumnae to participate in taking the survey. Please note:

- *This is a survey that is completely anonymous. The only personal data point collected is your zipcode.*
- *They need one survey completed per household for people who have been in shidduchim in the past ten years. You can answer either for yourself, or for your children of marriageable age- whichever is applicable.*
- *[If offering internet option please include:] https://shidduchinstitute.qualtrics.com/jfe/ form/SV_eA8VDIbB3bWyHVY?sch=10*
- *The survey can either be taken online at the following link https://shidduchinstitute. qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eA8VDIbB3bWyHVY?sch=10 and/or [If phone survey is preferred] there is an option of having the survey done anonymously over the phone by calling 908-349-0361 to make an appointment for a callback.*

Once the data is received and analyzed, the Machon L'Shidduchim has askanim and donors ready to put resources to use in addressing some of the challenges our singles, and their families, are facing as they navigate shidduchim.

We are attaching a letter of support and approval from the Rabbinic Board of Machon L'Shidduchim/The Shidduch Institute, as well as a related flyer, for your reference.

We hope that together we will have Siyata D'Shmaya to forge new pathways for each member of the Bais Yaakov family to find their zivug hagun in a dignified way with menuchas hanefesh. We look forward to partnering with you in this effort.

TABLE 25 **RESPONSES BY DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL**

Distribution Channel	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Yeshiva or Bais Yaakov School	1769	31%
Mishpacha Magazine	1515	27%
Friends and Family	971	17%
Whatsapp	590	10%
Podcast	239	4%
Social Media	144	3%
Shadchan Initiative	133	2%
Other	112	2%
Online Advertisement	82	1%
Print Advertisement	69	1%
Community Group	51	1%
Unknown	26	0.5%
Total	**5,701**	**100%**

An "opt-in" online survey is not an ideal method of distribution but without a census of Orthodox Jews, which does not yet exist in North America, there is no viable option for a representative sample. The Shidduch Institute targeted multiple sources of print, online, and social media platforms to minimize coverage bias. Additionally, we followed the recommendation of AAPOR (American Association for Public Opinion Research) when working with "opt-in" online survey data by using specific statistical techniques, described below, and ensuring a high level of transparency in our methodology.[19]

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty-eight shadchanim. The Shidduch Institute identified five shadchanim to be interviewed based on their knowledge of the Mainstream Yeshivish community. These original shadchanim recommended other potential participants from their professional networks, in a referral ("snowball") sampling approach. Ultimately, we reached out to fifty-nine shadchanim, and thirty-eight participated—a 64% cooperation rate. The shadchanim we interviewed worked primarily in the Yeshivish community, with two shadchanim serving the Modern Orthodox community as well. No shadchanim serviced the Chasidic community.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to give some uniformity to the interviews, while allowing them to proceed organically. The average interview, which was conducted via Zoom conferencing, lasted fifty-nine minutes. We interviewed fifteen full-time shadchanim, of which four were male and eleven were female. The twenty-three part-time shadchanim interviewed were all female. There was a wide range in years of experience as a shadchan, with nineteen shadchanim having over fifteen years of experience, eleven having between five and fifteen years of experience, and eight having less than five years of experience.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The transcripts were coded inductively, using the constant comparative method[20], looking for themes, categories, and patterns to emerge in the data. After an initial review of the transcripts, several parent codes were defined, along with sub or child codes. Once all codes were defined, and a codebook created, three transcripts were triple coded by three researchers to determine inter-coder reliability, assess agreement and disagreement between the codes, and to promote reflexive dialogue within the research team.[21] Researchers had difficulty obtaining substantial agreement (>.61 using a Cohen Kappa coefficient) on some codes during the first iteration of coding and, therfore, collaboratively examined and discussed the discrepancies in these codes to adjudicate them and further refine the codebook and coding process (i.e., coding all text versus coding specific responses). Researchers completed this process twice and for the remaining codes that did not score a substantial agreement (<.61), adjudicated the discrepancies in this third discussion of coding.

TABLE 26 | **OVERVIEW OF CODES, INCIDENT COUNTS, AND WORKING DEFINITION**

Code	Frequency	Definition
Community Initiatives	433	A reference to a community initiative or effort organized by leaders of the community
Training/Professional Development/Mentors	289	References any type of training shadchan received or sought, what PD they have access to or how they cultivated a relationship with a mentor
Age Discrepancy	230	A gesture towards the differences between younger and older single men and women
Systemic – Root Causes of the "Shidduch Crisis"	203	A reference to an opinion on what is a contributing factor to the "shidduch crisis"
Process	154	How the shadchan tracks and gets information about clients, uses technology, time consuming tasks, and compensation
Clientele	151	References who the shadchan works with and why
Getting Started	139	How the shadchan got started as a matchmaker
Market Imbalance	115	A reference to a surplus or a deficit of something in the marriage market
Gender Issues with the Rules of the Market	72	A reference to the different "rules of engagement" for women and men in the shidduch process

Interview Protocol for Shadchan Interviews

1. Tell me a little about yourself and the story of how you came to be a shadchan.
2. Do you have any experience in a related field (e.g., social work) that informs your work as a shadchan? Tell me about it. Did you have any formal training, either as a shadchan or in a related field? Tell me about it.
3. How do singles and parents perceive you in terms of being a Shaddchan? A Professional? Semi-professional? What do you consider yourself?
4. Have you heard about or been involved in any community initiatives around shidduchim? How have these impacted on your work, if at all?
5. What kind of support do you get for yourself—like administrative support, professional development, or mentoring? What kind of support would be valuable to you?
6. Tell me about your single clients. Who do you work with, and why? Who do you not work with, and why?

7. Tell me about the process of making a shidduch. How many hours a week do you devote to this work? How do you find people, and how do you keep track of them all? (Do they recruit, or people come to them?) How do you decide who to set up—that is, what makes a good shidduch?

8. What makes someone easy to match? What makes someone difficult to match?

9. What's the role of the parent and the role of the single man or woman ("boy" or "girl") in the shidduch process? How do you counsel singles and families throughout the process?

10. What role does technology play in your process making shidduchim?

11. Numbers: How many men and women ("boys" and "girls") do you deal with in a typical week? What is the ratio of boys to girls you deal with? Approximately how many people have you sent out this year and how many have resulted in marriage? On average, how many people do singles go out with before they get married?

12. If you're comfortable sharing, confidentially – How are you compensated for your work? (taxes)

13. What are your strengths as a shadchan? What are the things you struggle to do well?

14. Do you think there is a "shidduch crisis," and what do you think led to the crisis? What do you see as potential solutions to the shidduch crisis?

15. What else is important that we haven't touched on? What am I missing?

Analysis

Survey analysis focused on relationships within the resulting dataset, between variables, to understand ratios rather than absolute numbers. The statistical associations between variables are reliable, even if the demographic breakdown of survey respondents does not perfectly match that of the target population.

Age Gap Hypothesis Methodology

The age gap hypothesis was tested through an actuarial analysis using two inputs: (1) the community's rate of growth, year-over-year, and (2) the median age difference between spouses. The survey data provided these inputs.

The percent increase in each consecutive age cohort of children across respondent households was modeled by looking at the following factors:

- Sex ratio
- Median number of children per family
- Median female age at first birth
- Median span of childbearing

The formula used to arrive at the rate of growth and the percent of unmarriageable women is:

$$1 - birth\_ratio\_m{:}f \times retention\_ratio\_m{:}f \times (1 + growth\_rate) \char94 age\_gap$$

Growth rate and age gap are in years. The growth rate is calculated by the Excel IRR function (internal rate of return). We assume that each child has the same growth rate as their parents. When no retention rate is available, it is calculated as 100% for males and females (=1 when the values for males and females are the same).

The confidence levels are calculated using a stochastic model, so that the overall confidence level for the proportion of unmarried females would be 95%. In the stochastic model, we generated two hundred random sets of parameters that could be realistically created by similar studies with

the same sample size. We can call each random set of parameters a scenario. For each scenario, the proportion of unmarried females was calculated. The upper and lower bounds are those that exclude 2.5% of the scenarios that give the highest proportion and 2.5% of the scenarios that give the lowest proportion of unmarried females.

The upper and lower limits for the growth rate are calculated from the same two-hundred scenerios but are looking specifically at the results of the growth rate from the scenarios. The growth rate in each scenario is only one input into the calculation of the proportion of unmarried females - the other is the median age gap between spouses. Since higher growth rates in a scenario could be offset by a lower age gap in the same scenario, the limits for growth rates do not correspond with the limits for the proportion of unmarried females.

This model is run using several varieties of specific inputs to improve the quality of our estimate (Table 27).

Our original model (Model #1) uses the central tendency measure of mean rather than the median for the above factors and the actual sex ratio found in our sample, 103.1 (based on total number of boys/total number of girls out of all children recorded for the Yeshivish families in our sample). Those inputs resulted in a growth rate of 3.9% and a 6.2% surplus of women.

To reduce the effect of extreme outliers and non-symmetric distribution of scores, we also ran the model using median instead of mean (Model #3). This results in a growth rate of 3.8% and a 4.3% surplus in women.

Because the actual sex ratio found in the sample (103.1) is drawn from a non-representative sample, we ran the above models again using the more reliable universal sex ratio of 105.0.[1]

Using the mean and the universal sex ratio of 105.0 results in a growth rate of 3.9% and 4.5% surplus of women (Model #2).

Using the median and the universal sex ratio of 105.0 results in a growth rate of 3.8% and 2.5% surplus of women (Model #4).

Confidence intervals for each model appear in Table #28.

TABLE 27 | **MODEL ITERATIONS WITH INPUTS**

	Model #1	Model #2	Model #3	Model #4
Input Parameters:	Mean	Mean	Median	Median
Sex Ratio M/F	103.1	105.0	103.1	105.0
Number of children per family*	6.5	6.5	6	6
Female Age at First Birth	23.3	23.3	22	22
Span of child-bearing years*	13.2	13.2	14	14
Growth rate	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8
Age difference between spouses (Male age - Female age)	2.5	2.5	2	2
Surplus of women	6.2	4.5	4.3	2.5

*For women who have completed fertility (age 50+)

[1] Austad, "The Human Prenatal Sex Ratio"; see also Orzack et al., "The Human Sex Ratio from Conception to Birth."

TABLE 28 | **CONFIDENCE LEVELS**

	Model #1	Model #2	Model #3	Model #4
Sex Ratio M/F	Low: 99.4 High: 107.0	Low: 105.0 High: 105.0	Low: 99.4 High: 107.0	Low: 105.0 High: 105.0
Range	7.6	Not applicable	7.6	Not applicable
Growth rate	Low: 3.8% High: 4.0%	Low: 3.8% High: 4.0%	Low: 3.7% High: 3.9%	Low: 3.7% High: 3.9%
Range	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Surplus of women	Low: 2.4% High: 9.4%	Low: 4.1% High: 4.8%	Low: 4.0% High: 4.7%	Low: 2.1% High: 2.8%
Range	7.0	0.7	0.7	0.7

Scarcity & Selectivity Hypotheses Methodology

The scarcity hypotheses and the selectivity hypothesis were tested using survey data, comparing characteristics, preferences, and experiences of single men and their parents to characteristics, preferences, and experiences of single women and their parents.

Sokol et al. (2022) base their research, also an Orthodox population, on an opt-in survey, gathering data about the respondent and their family members. Sokol et al. (2022:714) decided not to use the individual respondents' data about themselves, because of possible "self-selection bias" of women and/or currently unmarried individuals being more likely to complete the survey due to "a greater vested interest in the topic of marriage rates in the Orthodox Jewish community." This caution prompted us to compare responses of parents to single respondents. Parents' responses about their children are likley to reflect a broader selection of unmarried individuals, especially among sons, who may not have been exposed to the magazines or newspapers advertising the survey or may not have been interested in spending their time answering the survey. We point out interesting differences in the discussion of our results, especially about the scarcity and selectivity hypotheses.

Limited Capacity Hypothesis Methodology

The limited capacity hypothesis was tested primarily with interview data. Transcripts underwent thematic analysis using the constant comparative method to understand how shadchanim acquire knowledge about the marriage market and how they deploy that knowledge. Survey data was also used to understand how married respondents had interacted with shadchanim.

Disclaimer: Data Errors

Our goal when analyzing survey data was to retain as much meaningful information as possible. As with all survey data, entry errors are common among responses. Because all valid responses were utilized, you will find that the numbers vary based on the actual responses to the questions (respondents did not have to answer a question they did not want to answer.)