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SURVEY OF ORTHODOX JEWISH SINGLES FINDS WEAKER CONNECTIONS TO THEIR COMMUNITY; THEY FEEL LESS VALUED, RESPECTED, AND SEE THE “ORTHODOX DATING SYSTEM” AS DOING A VERY POOR JOB; RESEARCH RECOMMENDS APPROACHES FOR SYNAGOGUES AND ORGANIZATIONS TO BETTER CONNECT WITH ORTHODOX SINGLES

A new survey from Nishma Research explores the strength of communal connection among 913 Orthodox Jewish respondents, and probes the experiences and attitudes of 335 single individuals, mostly Modern Orthodox.* The report and a 3-page summary are at <http://nishmaresearch.com/social-research.html>.

Community Connections – Orthodox Jews feel connected to their community, with an average 77% “communal connection rating” on a 0-100% scale. There are group variations, with the biggest difference being between marrieds (81%) and singles (69%, the lowest level among about a dozen groups examined).

What are singles looking for? – Marriage is a top goal; but not universally, nor the only one. In addition to marriage (63%), they seek overall happiness (59%), personal growth (58%), and financial stability (52%).

How much dating is going on? Using what approaches? – About half have recently done no dating or close to none (perhaps pandemic-related), but most expect to be become more active. The top recent approach used is online Jewish dating sites or apps (more prevalent among Modern Orthodox than Haredi). Looking ahead, respondents look forward to more dating via access to Jewish community events and gatherings.

What do singles seek in a dating partner / potential spouse? – Among 27 attributes, the most important ones sought by single individuals are respect of others, honesty, compassion, and kindness. Women more often list finances, profession, and ambition, while men more often list physical appearance. Women are a bit more selective; on average, they list 8.4 of the 27 attributes as “must have,” compared to 6.5 by men.

Is the Orthodox world’s “dating system” working well? – The widely held view is that the current dating system isn’t working well at all. On a scale of 0-to-10, single individuals rate the system overall at 4.2. In the world of 10-point rating systems, such a rating of is unusually weak. Women rate the system worse than men (4.0 vs. 4.7), and the ratings plunge with age (3.6 among those age 40+).

How can we better address the needs of single individuals? What next? – Singles feel less valued and often say they feel invisible and less respected. Among the ideas raised by the survey are more interaction and listening, better inclusion as shul/organizational members and in their activities, and a generally more respectful attitude toward singles.

The survey report contains an advance summary of a forthcoming report on this issue (“Responding to the Realities of Single Modern Orthodox Jews,” prepared by Professor Sylvia Barack Fishman, Brandeis University with support from PORAT - People for Orthodox Renaissance and Torah) that is based on this survey and other research. This report will be widely disseminated among shuls and other institutions, with the hope that the underlying research can begin to effect needed changes.

* Among 335 Orthodox single individuals who responded to the survey, 80% were Modern Orthodox and 20% were Haredi. The survey report findings are primarily representative of the Modern Orthodox. While the number of Haredi respondents is smaller, a supplementary report on the Haredi segment will be available in June 2022.