

Low Marriage Rates In Our Community

A Community Problem: Today, there is an unprecedented number of unmarried youth in the Mashadi Community. Our community is seeing an annual average of only 15 to 25 weddings per year. The year 2018 had the following statistics:

- Among women, age 20 to 27, there were 260 singles.
- Among men, age 20 to 27, there were 255 singles.
- Among women, age 28 to 37, there were 57 singles.
- Among men, age 28 to 37, there were 100 singles.
- For women & men age 38+, a total of 98 singles.
- In total, over 770 single males & females from age 21 to 38+.
- In 2018, there were a total of 19 Engagements in the community.

The Marriage Committee, and others within the community, have spent the last few years attempting & implementing efforts to encourage more engagements in the community, including singles events, matchmaking efforts, trips, discussion forums, and involvement from our community Rabbis. Through these efforts, the Marriage Committee has heard feedback, opinions, and ideas from the young men, women, and parents within the community.

Causes Of The Low Marriage Rate:

- **Changing Attitudes & Norms In Community's Youth.** As our community's youth continue to absorb American culture, some have observed a deterioration of traditional mashadi bonds, courtesies, and the sense of our community members as being "family". Behaviors are changing, as well. One recent example is that community youth often travel separately to gathering places (men in one car, women in another car.)
- **Money Concerns** continue to suppress engagements among our youth. Our youth (and their parents) have understandable concerns about the youth's ability to start a new family in Great Neck. This weighs heavily on the minds of the community's youth and their parents, and in turn, it creates roadblocks in dating. Expectations of family wealth & success are high within our community, yet the reality is that a vast amount of our community's youth cannot afford the costs of starting & supporting a household in Great Neck. This is causing community males to postpone marriage until they are "ready" financially.
- **Economic burden of getting married.** Our community is trending higher in spending on marriage celebrations: the engagement party, the bridal shower, the jewelry, the wedding, etc. Our community weddings consistently exceed the cost of the average Long Island wedding, which is \$61,113, according to statistics. Unfortunately, in many cases, families are stretching themselves to pay for expensive catering halls in order to preserve the family's social status.
- **Modest Average incomes of today's youth.** Due to a decline in some of our community's traditional industries, our youth are trying new career fields. Fewer young men are going into their father's businesses than before. Combined with an increasingly competitive business climate, this is yielding lower / stagnant incomes for our youth. As an example, the average starting pay at investment banks today are approximately \$70,000 per year, for kids coming out of college (considered an excellent job). Our children's commissions/wages remain in line with today's modest incomes for American youth.

- **Difficulties in Dating:** Our youth have mentioned that dating can be complicated due to various issues: some singles report that when they have started dating someone (or even just talking to someone), that rumors prematurely come out about them as a “couple”. Another issue that is often cited by the youth, is that once a boy dates a girl from within a group of friends, and they eventually split, then all of the other girls in that group soon know about it, making it difficult for the boy to pursue others afterwards.
- **Choosier Than Before:** Today’s youth tend to be more “choosy” / picky about their potential partners.
- **Phones / Screens** have had an impact on face-to-face interactions, and they are hindering meaningful connections between our youth. Also, the “hookup culture” featured in social media & popular “apps” are apparently affecting the perceived need to get married.

Possible Solutions, Ideas & Thoughts from Community Members:

- **Good Parental Guidance Is Critical:** Our youth often look to their parents for guidance in what type of spouse to look for. Obviously, all of us know that going strictly after money, or looks, is a mistake. We must discuss this with our children. For example, a young man who lacks wealth now, will often have strong potential to be a future financial success. Our children are smart, and often know who will make them happiest as a husband or wife. We should respect their choices as much as possible.
- **Shir Lamaalots At Kanisa** have been an excellent step towards simplifying our engagement & wedding customs. More steps are needed to further simplify our community’s simchas. For example, *smaller weddings* could help alleviate heavy costs for newlyweds, enabling them to start their new family with more funds in their pocket.
- **Encourage Economical Living Arrangements for Our Young Couples.** Our community must play an active role, and encourage our newlyweds to seek low-cost living arrangements & lifestyles at the start of their marriage. We must support our children if they choose to reside in economical neighborhoods.
- **Deep Community Involvement.** Dedicated people within our community are needed, to help plan & organize initiatives to help encourage marriages, such as matchmaking, organizing shabbat dinners, chesed programs, trips, and speeches by experts & our community Rabbis.
- **Encourage Dual-Income Households:** Two-income families are becoming more prevalent than ever in the country. Fostering a professional career for the young girls of our community will spur more new couples, as well as stronger double-income households. Many of our brightest ladies in the community have successful professional careers (whether before or after having children) and our daughters should emulate them.

Please email your comments or suggestions to MarriageCommittee@GoogleGroups.com. Your feedback is very valuable. We at the Marriage Committee would like to thank you, and we hope to continue the conversation on this community issue. We hope for many years of health & happiness for our vibrant community, b”h.