

*May 2026*



**The Dating Recession:  
Insights from the 2025 National Dating  
Landscape Survey**

Presenter:

**Dr. Alan J. Hawkins**

Affiliated Scholar, Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University

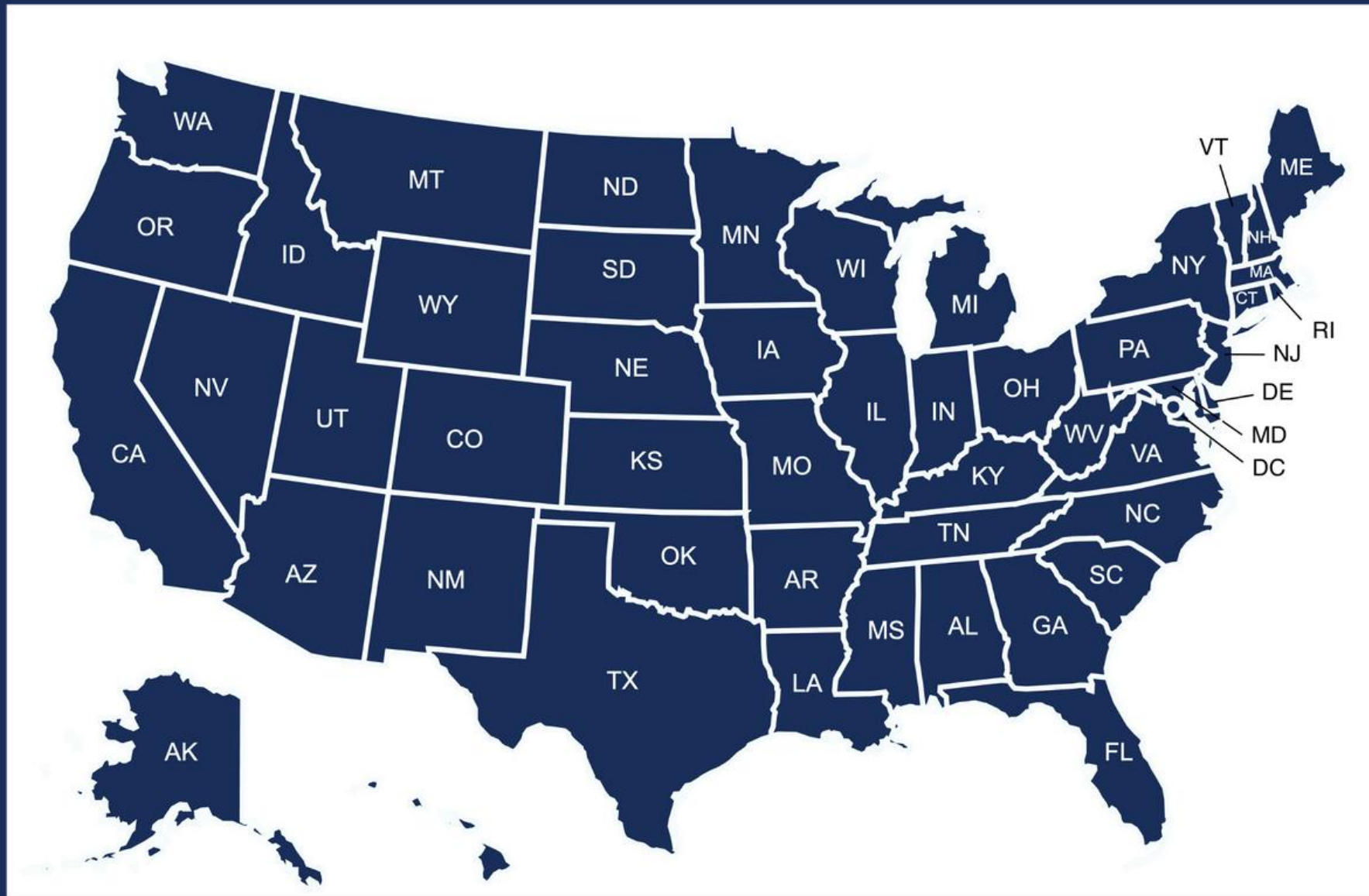
# Webinar Resources

1. If you cannot hear this presentation, **check your audio settings located in the control panel.** If that does not work, please dial in using the number found in your invite.
2. We will be putting “**handouts**” in the chat located in the control panel.
3. Please **tell us who you are and where you are from** in the chat.
4. Questions? The **Q&A box** is located in your control panel.
5. **Closed Captioning** is available in your control panel.

# Charlie and Helen Dibble



2023-2024 Clients  
served approximately 116,978 youth



The Dibble Institute  
is a national,  
independent non-  
profit organization.

# Our Mission

*Empowering youth and young adults with skills to build and sustain healthy interpersonal and romantic relationships.*



We believe in **research**.



We believe in **stable, safe, and nurturing** families.



We believe that **relationship education** is for **everyone**.



# The Dating Recession

## Views from the 2025

### National Dating Landscape

### Survey

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Dibble Institute Webinar, May 13, 2026



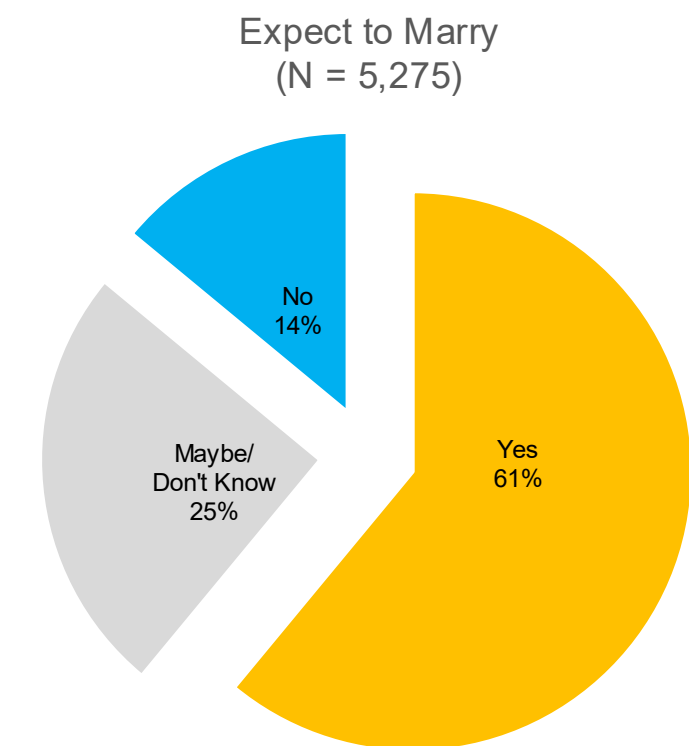
# **National Dating Landscape Survey (2025)**

**Driving Question: *How functional or dysfunctional is the modern dating system for marital formation for young adults?***

# National Dating Landscape Survey (2025)

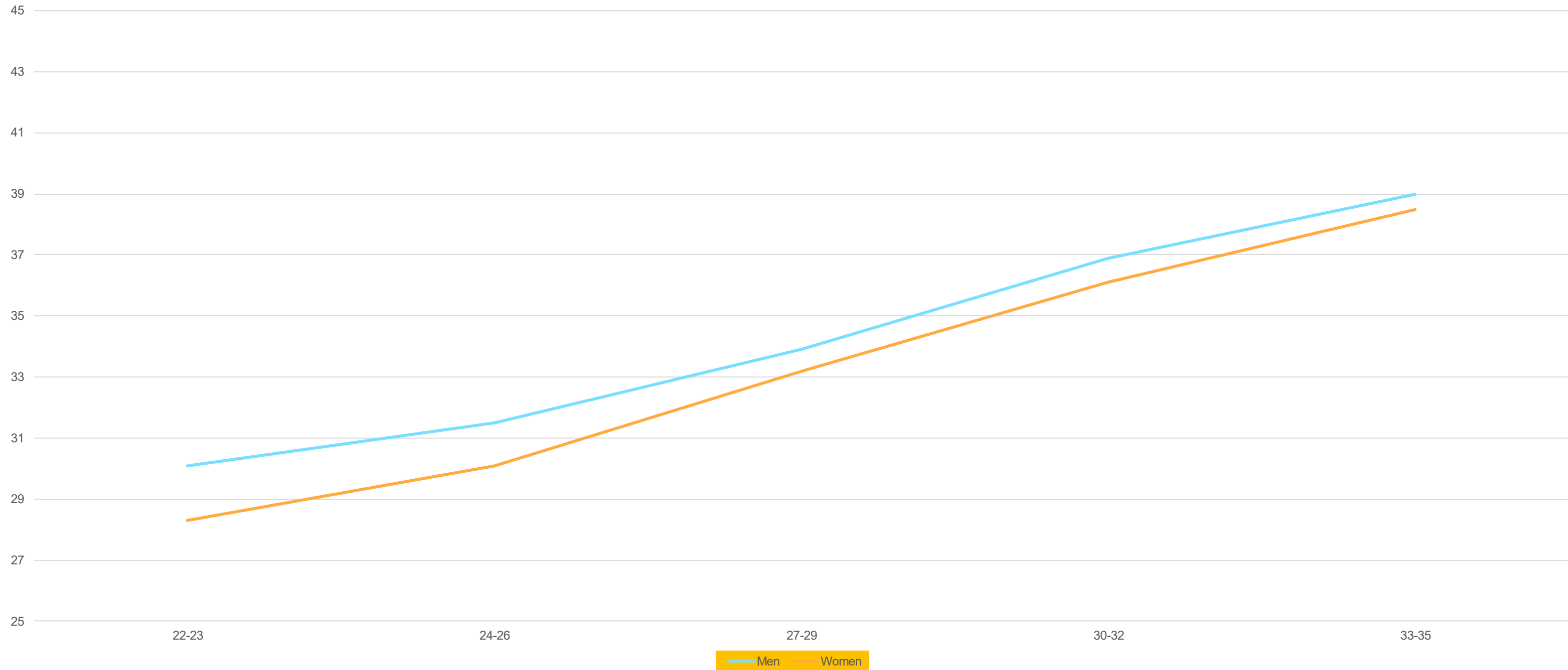
**Driving Question: *How functional or dysfunctional is the modern dating system for marital formation for young adults?***

- N = 5,275
- Ages 22-35, (prime serious dating years)
- Unmarried
- “Expect to marry someday?”
  - yes/maybe = 86% (N = 4,539)
- Cohabiting Couples = 11% (N = 493)
- Engaged Couples = 3% (N = 133)



# Marriage Expectations

Mean Expected Age of Marriage  
by Age Group

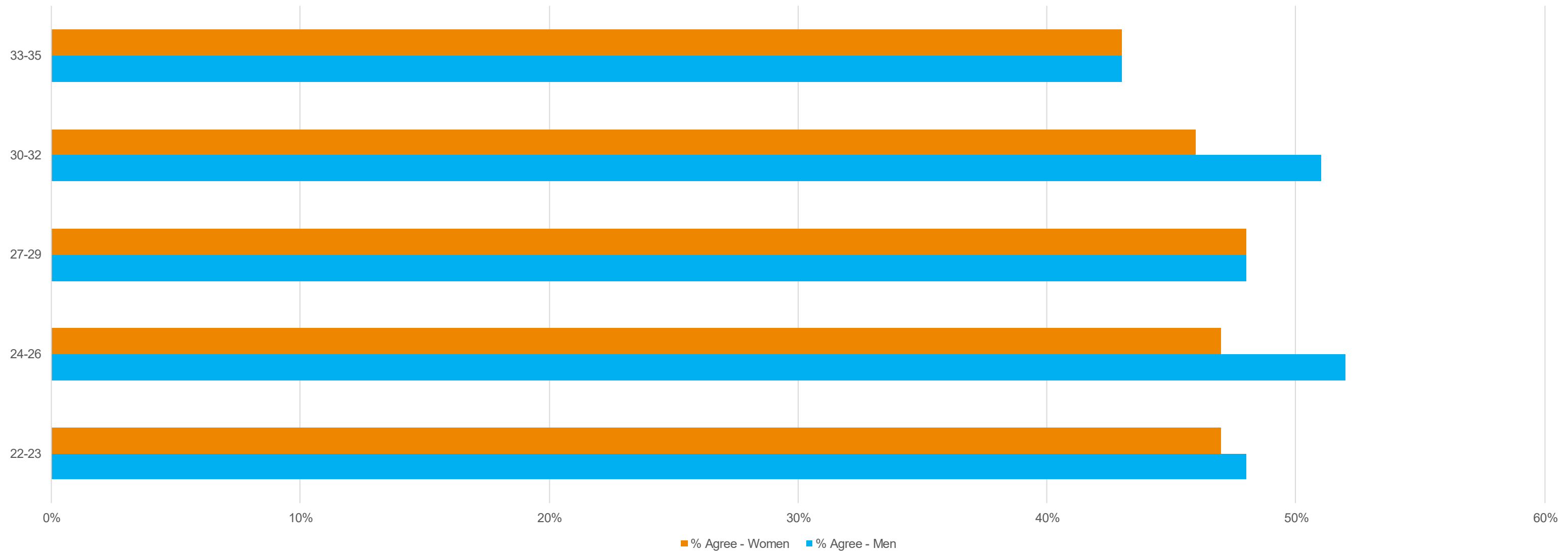


Note: Marital horizon = 5-6 years regardless of current age.

# Marital Salience

**47% Agree: “Getting married is among my top priorities during this time in my life.”**

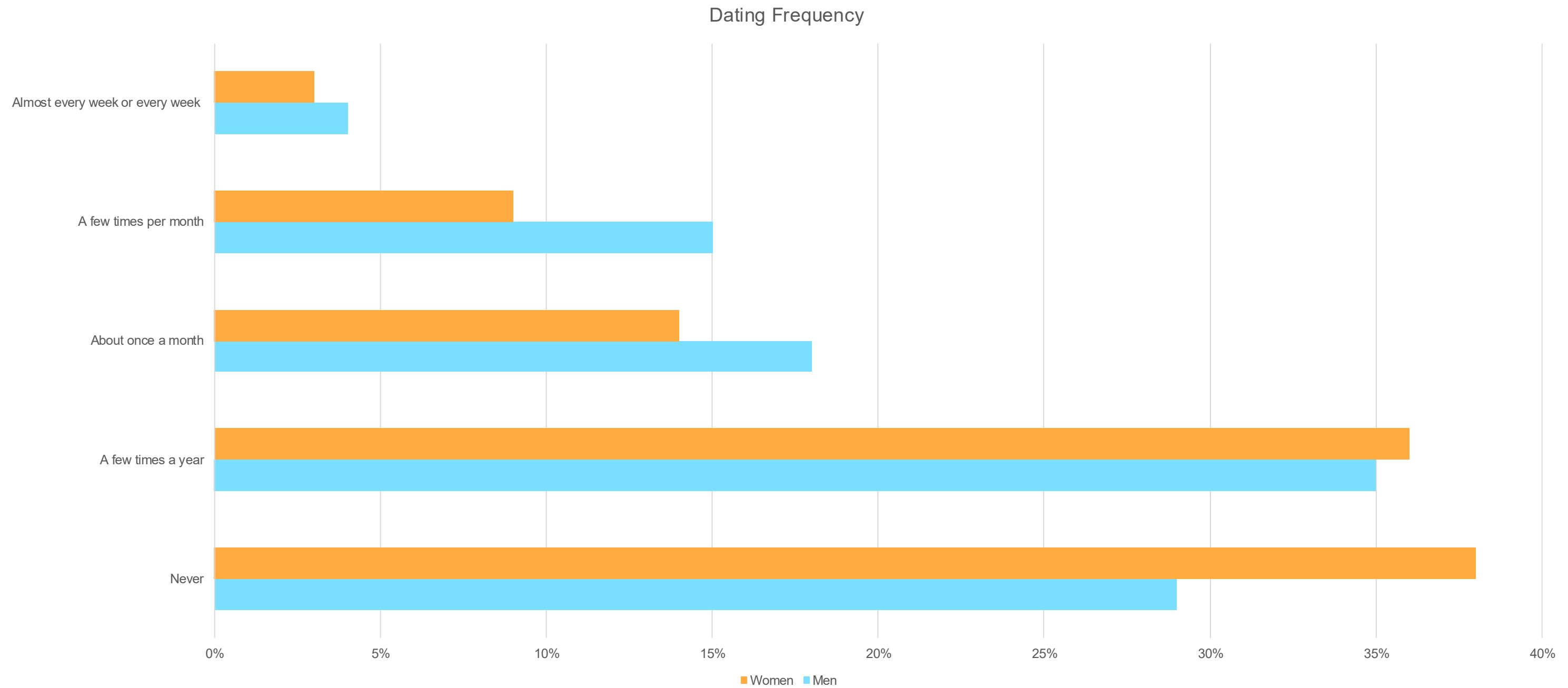
(by age group and sex) (N=4,539)



*6-point Scale: Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree*

# Dating Frequency

**Only 31% active daters (Women = 26%; Men = 36%)**



Notes: Excludes cohabitators and engaged.

Only 21% satisfied with dating options

# Dating Efficacy

| Dating Skill/Attribute   | All<br>% Agree | Men<br>% Agree | Women<br>% Agree |
|--|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| I believe I am attractive to potential dating partners.  | 38%            | 39%            | 37%              |
| <b>I feel confident when approaching someone I'm interested in.</b>  | <b>25%</b>     | <b>29%</b>     | <b>21%</b>       |
| I feel comfortable discussing my feelings with a potential dating partner.   | 34%            | 35%            | 32%              |
| I am good at managing my emotions when on a date.  | 42%            | 42%            | 41%              |
| I am good at picking up on social cues when dating.  | 36%            | 33%            | 39%              |
| I trust my judgment when it comes to choosing a romantic partner.  | 37%            | 39%            | 36%              |
| I stay positive after a bad date or relationship setback.  | 28%            | 31%            | 25%              |
| <p>Notes: (N<sub>all</sub> = 3,995; n<sub>men</sub> = 1,969; n<sub>women</sub> = 2,026).<br/>           Response categories: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree.<br/>           Reporting % Agree or Strongly Agree (does not include % Somewhat Agree).<br/>           7-point scale: Strongly Disagree -- Strongly Agree<br/>           Excludes cohabitators and engaged couples</p> |                |                |                  |

# Dating Purposes

| Dating Purposes   | All<br>% Agree | Men<br>% Agree | Women<br>% Agree |
|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Building Serious Relationships:</b>  |                |                |                  |
| Creating emotional connection   | 80%            | 76%            | 83%              |
| Forming serious relationships   | 78%            | 74%            | 83%              |
| Exploring potential romantic partners   | 69%            | 70%            | 68%              |
| Enjoying romantic experiences   | 67%            | 70%            | 64%              |
| Learning about myself and what I want for a future partner  | 63%            | 62%            | 63%              |
| Figuring out relationship goals   | 60%            | 61%            | 59%              |
| Personal growth   | 67%            | 69%            | 65%              |
| <b>Facilitating Social Experiences:</b>   |                |                |                  |
| Feeling social pressure to date   | 28%            | 30%            | 26%              |
| To be part of social activities   | 24%            | 27%            | 20%              |
| Fitting in with others  | 17%            | 21%            | 13%              |
| Because friends are dating  | 13%            | 16%            | 10%              |
| Gaining social validation   | 16%            | 20%            | 13%              |
| Engaging in physical intimacy   | 45%            | 55%            | 35%              |
| Notes: N=3,995; n <sub>men</sub> = 1,969; n <sub>women</sub> = 2,026.   |                |                |                  |
| Response categories: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. |                |                |                  |

# Dating Barriers/Problems

| Dating Barriers  | All<br>% Agree | Men<br>% Agree | Women<br>% Agree |
|--|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Financial:</b>  |                |                |                  |
| * Not enough money for dating activities   | 52%            | 58%            | 47%              |
| <b>Social/emotional factors:</b>   |                |                |                  |
| * Lack confidence  | 49%            | 48%            | 50%              |
| * <b>Bad experience in the past</b>  | <b>48%</b>     | <b>46%</b>     | <b>50%</b>       |
| Social component challenging   | 39%            | 41%            | 36%              |
| Lack relationship experience   | 38%            | 40%            | 36%              |
| Not emotionally ready  | 35%            | 36%            | 33%              |
| Not ready for physical aspects   | 27%            | 26%            | 28%              |
| <b>Freedom/Commitment Issues:</b>  |                |                |                  |
| Fear getting into serious relationship   | 34%            | 33%            | 35%              |
| Don't want to lose personal freedom  | 27%            | 28%            | 26%              |
| Don't want to commit long-term   | 18%            | 21%            | 16%              |
| Not enough time because of career/education priorities   | 29%            | 29%            | 28%              |
| <b>Pressures:</b>  |                |                |                  |
| Family disapproves of dating choices   | 26%            | 25%            | 26%              |
| Feel pressure to date  | 24%            | 25%            | 23%              |
| Cultural/Religious restrictions  | 17%            | 20%            | 15%              |
| Notes: N=3,995; n <sub>men</sub> = 1,969; n <sub>women</sub> = 2,026.<br>Response categories: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Moderately Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.<br>Cohabiting and engaged respondents excluded in these analyses. |                |                |                  |

# Break-up Attitudes

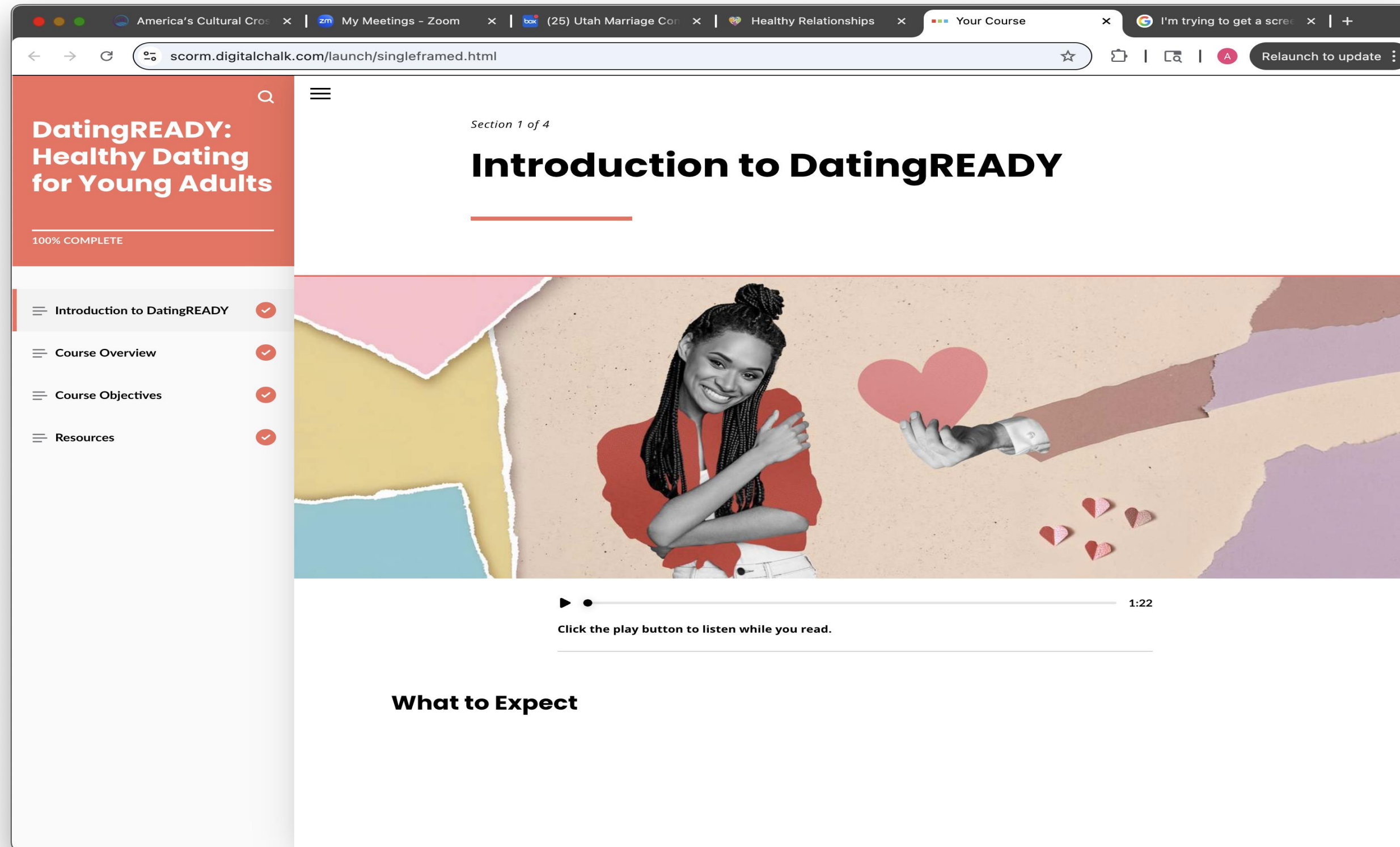
| Breakup Feelings  | All<br>% Agree | Male<br>% Agree | Female<br>% Agree |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| My relationship breakups have generally left me with negative feelings and attitudes about relationships.   | 50%            | 50%             | 50%               |
| My relationship breakups have generally left me feeling personally injured.   | 48%            | 47%             | 48%               |
| * My relationship breakups have generally left me feeling more reluctant to engage in future relationships  | 55%            | 55%             | 55%               |
| * I have passed up many opportunities to get in new relationships because of my experiences with previous relationships.                                    | 45%            | 45%             | 44%               |
| I feel that I am now too quick to end my relationships for fear that they will end up causing me too much pain if I let them go on.                         | 36%            | 36%             | 35%               |
| Response Categories: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=It Depends; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree. (Note: engaged respondents were included in these analyses.) |                |                 |                   |

# Big Picture Take-aways

- **Young adults are in a dating recession.**
- **They lack confidence in dating skills.**
- **Young adults could use some basic help.**
- **Relationship education needs to address directly dating skills (not just relationship skills).**
- **We need a new “category” of RE – [Dating Skills Education](#).**



# Can Dating Skills Be Learned?



A screenshot of a web browser displaying a course page. The browser's address bar shows the URL [scorm.digitalchalk.com/launch/singleframed.html](https://scorm.digitalchalk.com/launch/singleframed.html). The page title is "DatingREADY: Healthy Dating for Young Adults" and it indicates "100% COMPLETE". The main heading is "Introduction to DatingREADY", labeled as "Section 1 of 4". Below the heading is a video player with a play button and a progress bar showing 1:22. The video player shows a woman in a red shirt and a hand holding a heart. Below the video player, the text "What to Expect" is visible.

<https://www.relationshipready.org/> (non-Utah)

<https://extension.usu.edu/strongermarriage/course/datingready> (Utah)

# Recommendations for Relationship Educators Teaching Dating Skills

- Offer creative dating bootcamps: skill practice and confidence boosts.
- Prioritize online platforms.
- Create engaging “infotainment” rather than traditional didactic instruction.
- Make it low- or no-cost. Find financial supports to offset instructional costs.
- Use peer educators who understand the contemporary dating environment.
- Build greater dating resilience by including preventative training on how to deal with bad dating experiences and painful breakups.
- Include lists of creative dating options with cheaper price tags.
- Don't accentuate gender differences in instruction.
- Reconnect dating and marital goals.

# Thank you for joining us today!

Please **keep your browser open** after we end.  
A **brief survey** that will pop up automatically.  
Thank you for providing us feedback!

Webinar will be available in 3 days:  
<http://www.dibbleinstitute.org/webinar-archives/>

Need a certificate? [Kim@Dibbleinstitute.org](mailto:Kim@Dibbleinstitute.org)

*Second Wednesday*

*Webinar*  
June 10, 2026



**Explore Mind Matters 2.0:  
A Map for Thriving**

Carolyn Curtis, Ph.D.; Author of Mind Matters  
and Aaron Larson

The Dibble Institute