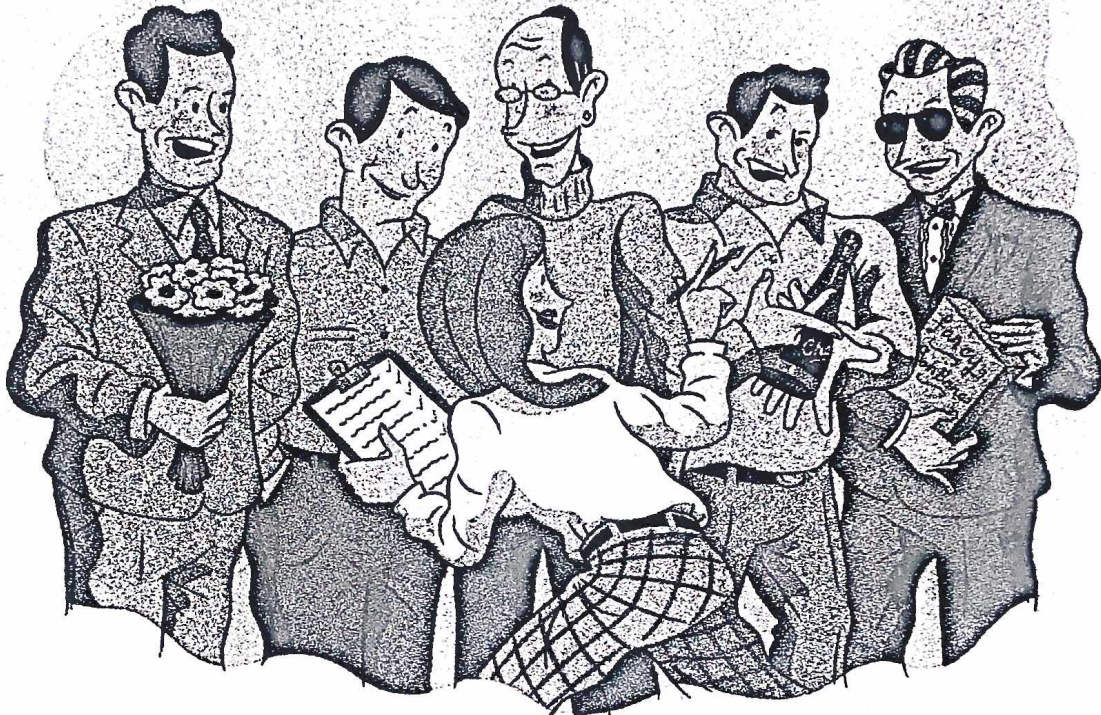


# WEEKEND JOURNAL.

## MARRIAGE

### *The Woman Shortage*



*Thanks to a subtle demographic shift, men in their 30s and 40s are now fighting over a shrinking pool of women. Nancy Ann Jeffrey on how the tables have turned in the search for a mate.*

**A**DAM ROSEN has a law degree from Villanova and trained in psychology at Harvard. He's also handsome and has a passion for social causes. But there's one thing the 37-year-old bachelor doesn't have in his life: candidates to be Mrs. Rosen.

"I thought I'd be married by 30," says the Boston therapist. "This is a great divergence from what I imagined my life would be."

There's a new biological clock out there—the one ticking inside bachelors. After decades in which men statistically had the upper hand in the dating world, the demographics have reversed: For a big chunk of the dating pool—people ages 30 to 44—the number of single men and women are now about even, or in some cases, slightly tipped in women's favor. The odds are especially dismal for men looking for younger mates: By 2010, according to the U.S. Census

Bureau, men in their late 30s and early 40s will outnumber women five to 10 years younger by two to one.

What's happening here is a subtle but significant change in the birth rate. While the numbers of boys and girls born every year are roughly the same, the overall birthrate dropped 40% from 1955 to 1973. Because more than half of all men marry younger women, that means their pool of prospects shrinks a bit every year. "The tables have turned," says Sherry Cooper, an economist who has written about demographic shifts. "Guys in that 35-year-old range are going to have a harder time."

Matchmakers and dating companies are already seeing the impact. Social Circles, a New York singles group, has seen membership among 35- to 44-year-old men soar 25-fold since it started in 1997, while women in the same age group grew at about half that rate. At It's Just Lunch, which pairs professionals, *(Please Turn to Page W4)*

#### PLUS

*Where the girls are. How the odds stack up at some dating services.*

#### W4



# The Woman Shortage

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 the percentage of female membership dropped 9% in the last three years. And online firm Match.com is so anxious to recruit women, it started a new ad campaign to find more. The pitch: Women no longer have to rely on "fate" or "destiny" to find the right mate.

"We're all chasing after the same women," says Jim Hague, a 33-year-old Web designer from California who says he got only a handful of daily e-mails from some online services. His female friends, however, got 200 e-mails a day. "They can easily delete you," Mr. Hague says. Indeed, 40-year-old Suzanne Mulroy got so many e-mails from her service that she put it on hold. "I thought I'd get a response," Ms. Mulroy says, "but I didn't think I was going to get this deluge."

All of which, of course, is a significant shift from the 1980s; at the start of that decade, for example, there were about 1.3 women for every eligible man from 35 to 44. The odds were even better for the narrower group of men in their late 30s dating women in their early 30s: Almost two women for every single man. Many people still remember the 1986 Newsweek article that famously, if controversially, declared that a single, college-educated, 40-year-old woman had a better chance of being killed by a terrorist than of ever tying the knot.

## The One-Time Supermale

But in the years since, the odds have gotten worse for the one-time supermale. Far from an abundance of bachelorettes, today there's a small shortage—for every million thirtysomething women, there is a surplus of 80,000 men of the same age. Men looking for younger women will find even more competition: Within nine years, there will be one woman that's 30 to 34 for every two men 35 to 44, according to one set of projections by the U.S. Census.

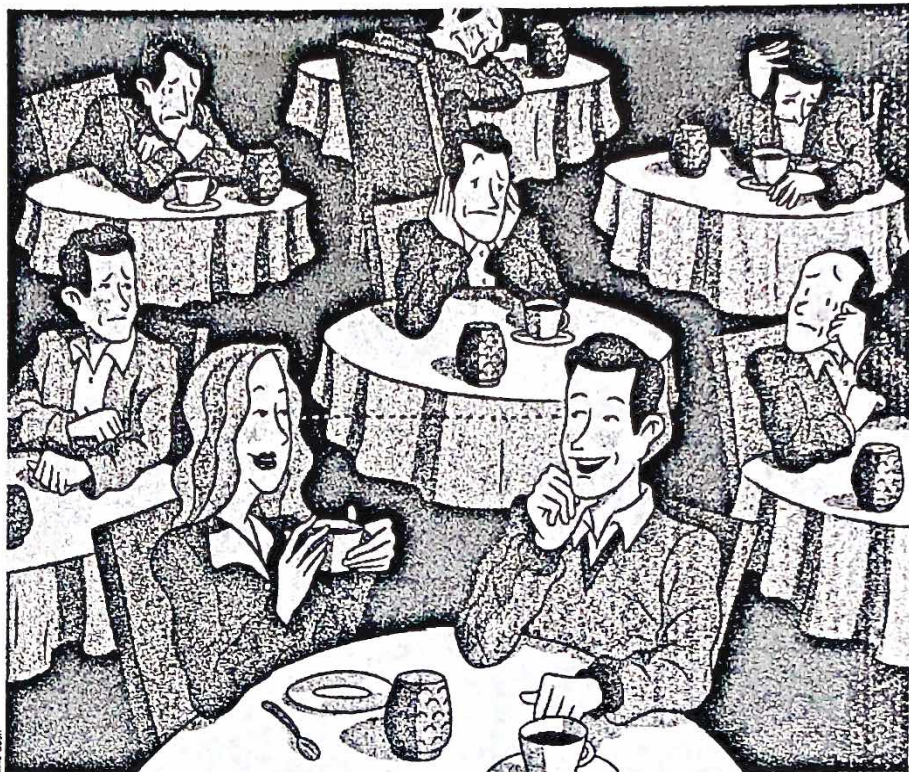
How did this shift occur? For starters, with more women than men on the dating scene, men played the field and postponed marriage—sometimes until their 40s, much later than previous generations. (The percentage of 35- to 44-year-old bachelors almost tripled from 1980 to 2000, ac-

**'We're all chasing after the same women,' complains one man who's fed up with dating services.**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys.) Thinking they had tons of options, especially as divorce rates grew, some men got pickier, too, demanding not only good looks but also good jobs from their mates. That narrowed the field even more: By one estimate, men in their early 30s making \$75,000 or more outnumber women of the same earning power two to one.

All the while, pop culture only perpetuated the belief that men had the advantage, with shows like "Sex and the City" and novels like "Bridget Jones's Diary" harping on themes of the desperate, single woman. And lots of people still believe it. "Men feel they have the upper hand," says Lisa Doherty, a 40-year-old public-relations executive. When she's gone on dates, Ms. Doherty says men have told her they want a younger woman.

But slowly, evidence of the shift is cropping up. Take personal ads, the quintessen-



tial dating device of the '80s and '90s. While the ratio of men to women placing ads varies from city to city, many towns are seeing notable jumps in male advertisers. At Chicago Magazine, for example, the percent of personals placed by women skidded 35% in just two years. During the past three years, the percentage of men placing personal ads in the Cleveland Plain Dealer jumped 14%, according to People2People Group, a firm that creates personals.

Other men are going where experts say they need to—older women. When Match.com polled its members earlier this year, the company discovered that its average male client is now willing to date a woman three years his senior, up from two a few years ago. At It's Just Lunch, men 35 to 43 are now asking to date women 36 to 40—up about four years from a decade ago.

## The Dating Consultant

Things have gotten so bad for 46-year-old Drew Clausen in Marina del Rey, Calif., he has started using a "dating consultant" who specializes in training unattached men on how to attract a woman. For \$600, Mr. Clausen's consultant advised him to wear a Rolex watch, buy black shoes and not talk about his divorce. The investment is paying off. Instead of just pining after his ideal—a 35-year-old brunette—Mr. Clausen just hooked up with a "gorgeous" 43-year-old redhead. Using the consultant made him "more open to other possibilities," he says.

Indeed, once either shy or scornful about blind dates, males are becoming more aggressive about asking to be set up, matchmakers say. They also have become much more open about the fact that they use dating services. A study by It's Just Lunch shows that eight years ago, the average male client kept his membership a secret from his male friends; today, the typical male customer tells three of his

## A Few Good Women

While men have always been more enthusiastic about using matchmakers to meet their future mates, dating services across the country report a surge in interest from men in the last few years. Here are some popular outfits, from coast to coast.

DATING SERVICE	SEX RATIO	COST	COMMENT
<b>Lycos Matchmaker</b> Waltham, Mass.	58% male 42% female	\$19.95 a month	The service includes specialized dating site for everyone from Mormons to nudists.
<b>Social Circles</b> New York	45% men 55% women	\$1,150 a year for various events	Men are coming to about 30% more events than a few years ago—an average of four per month.
<b>Janis Spindel Serious Matchmaking</b> New York	75% men 25% women	\$15,000 for minimum of 12 dates in a year	Most male clients make upwards of \$250,000 a year. Nice guy, but broke? "Don't bother," says Ms. Spindel.
<b>Match.com</b> Richardson, Texas	60% men 40% women	\$24.95 a month	Women receive 66% of the e-mails on this site.
<b>Athletic Singles Association</b> Carlsbad, Calif.	50% men 50% women	\$375 for first-year membership	Is attracting women by promoting social events such as Valentine's Day parties and theater outings.
<b>Cupid's Coach</b> Los Angeles	49% men 51% women	\$5,000 for "aggressive personal search services"	The price of happiness? Clients who paid the \$5,000 fee and find a mate have to pay an additional \$5,000 fee.
<b>It's Just Lunch</b> San Diego	50% men 50% women	\$1,000-1,500 for one-year membership	Male referrals and membership renewals have tripled since 1998.
<b>Renee Plane</b> Los Angeles	90% men 10% women	\$100 and up for makeover sessions	Miss Plane offers tips on dressing and conversation; business has risen steadily in seven years.

friends.

So when will things get better for members of the lonely hearts men's club? Not until the generation born in the late 1970s and early 1980s comes of marriageable age, according to demographers. By then, higher birthrates will tip the scales back in men's favor. About 2005, experts say it'll be rich pickings for men who now are in their early 20s.

Until then, men will just have to keep going, much like New Yorker Eric Starkman, who swore to friends he would be married by 40. Now, at 46, the bachelor spends Sunday mornings at Starbucks, sipping a grande black coffee and scanning the marriage announcements. "I always feel good when I see a guy who is 46 getting married," he says. "I say, 'Hey, there's hope.'"