

# Bridal News Network

## Trend Report

Issue One, Volume One  
Summer 2004

### A Toast to the Bridal Market!

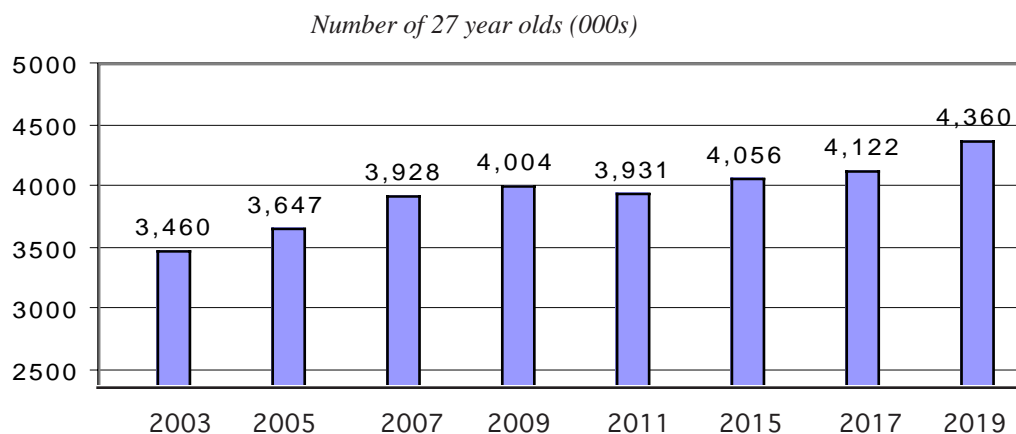
Welcome to Issue I, Volume I of Bridal News Network's *Trend Report*, which provides editors, marketers and PR professionals with a summary of the demographic, economic and style trends that are shaping the growing bridal industry today. The Trend Report is planned as a quarterly to assist editors in creating informed editorial copy for bridal and lifestyle sections, and to guide marketing and PR agencies through important brand-development decisions.

Hit movies such as "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," numerous reality programs, including "The Bachelor," MTV's "Newlyweds," (starring Jessica Simpson), and the newest addition, "'Til Death Do Us Part: Carmen & Dave," plus Lifetime's "'I Do' Diaries," all show how powerfully the media and our popular culture are reflecting the explosive growth of weddings — the echo boom as the 'millennial generation' moves through their twenties. More than a dozen new bridal magazines have launched since 2000, and an increasing number of newspapers are scheduling wedding sections on a quarterly or bi-monthly frequency.

### Demographics

While the average age of marriage was 20 for females and 22 for males in 1960, it is now 25 for females and 27 for males. Based on census figures, the number of 27-year-old adults will increase by 26% over the next 15 years.

Thanks to generation Y — the echo baby boom of people born between 1979 and 2000 — the number of women of typical marrying age, 20 to 29 years old, is expected to grow to about 20 million in 2008 from about 18 million in 2000.



Source: US Census Bureau

**Diversity** Within the exploding bridal market, Hispanics and Asians are outpacing other racial and ethnic populations due to higher-than-average birth rates and immigration. Young couples today have more friends in different racial, ethnic and religious groups. Also, there are now more weddings involving couples from different groups, making weddings culturally richer and less conventional.

**Engagement Rings and Wedding Bands** Although there are several new options in precious and semi-precious stones, diamonds are still a girl's best friend. The vast majority of engagement rings sold last year — 84 percent, worth 4.3 billion — were diamonds. According to industry figures, 50 percent of these glittery rocks are sold between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day.

Platinum is now becoming the most fashionable. Both brides and grooms tend to look for unique styling in their rings, and approximately 40% of all wedding bands sold today are platinum. The custom of men wearing wedding bands became popular during WWII, when men started wearing them to be reminded of their wives back home. According to the Jewelry Information Center (JIC), it is estimated that over 70% of new grooms receive wedding bands at their ceremony.

**Ceremonies** Because couples are marrying later in life, more are financing their own weddings. The average cost of a wedding today is now \$22,360, up 18% from 1999, according to the Fairchild Bridal Infobank. Traditionally, the bride's family pays for the reception and the groom's family pays for the rehearsal dinner. Now, in more cases, the cost of the wedding is shared between couples themselves; 27% in 2002 vs. 23% in 1997. As a result, nearly half of all couples pay for their whole wedding, while a vast majority pays a larger share of the cost. Because of their financial involvement, grooms are more apt to take part in the selection of flowers, photography, the reception and the rehearsal dinner site than in the past.

Weddings performed in houses of worship continue to be the most popular venue, with over ninety percent of couples seeking a traditional ceremony.

With costs rising, more couples are financing their nuptials with credit cards, incurring large debts. Wedding expectations have far outgrown people's incomes, especially those in the low to moderate end, according to wedding book author, Cheryl Ingraham. Couples who years ago would have married at City Hall are now planning extravagant celebrations and "emulating what they believe to be an upper-class model."

## Destination Weddings

Whereas a decade ago it would have been unthinkable to hold a wedding on an exotic island or a beach, this year some 200,000 American couples — nearly one in every 10 — will hold a destination wedding and exchange vows in a far-off location. This makes the destination wedding the fastest-growing segment of the \$50 billion wedding industry.

## Gift Registries

A total of \$19 billion per year is spent on wedding-gift registries. Several registries are now found in non-traditional, non-gift categories. For example, if you register with WeddingMiles.com, this gives your friends and relatives the unique option of giving you part of your honeymoon as a gift! Another unusual idea — home furnishings retailer, Ethan Allen, now has a bridal registry for furniture.

## Fashion

Of the twenty-two thousand dollars spent on the wedding, it was surprising to learn that, on average, only eight hundred dollars is spent on the wedding dress. According to a senior executive at David's Bridal, more and more brides are choosing to spend less on their wedding gowns. Instead of paying several thousand dollars for gowns that require multiple fittings, today's brides prefer to buy "off the rack" in their size and then spend their savings on the wedding reception or the destination wedding.



*Mori Lee Strapless Sweetheart*

Just as brides are opting for creativity and originality in their wedding ceremonies and celebrations, they are also looking for special touches in their wedding dresses to set them apart from other brides.

Mori Lee designer, Madeline Gardner, visits bridal retail stores in several U.S. cities each year and speaks to many brides-to-be. "Gowns no longer have to be in a shade of white but can be in soft tones, especially blush pink," says Gardner. "Individuality is also important to brides. Therefore wedding dresses must have a special detail or embellishments."

For instance, the long, tapered A-line strapless gown is still the leading fashion silhouette but the addition of a 'sweetheart'-shaped bodice with bands of color gives it a unique touch. For brides who prefer a non-strapless look, the halter neckline with the sweetheart shape is a fresh and individual approach.

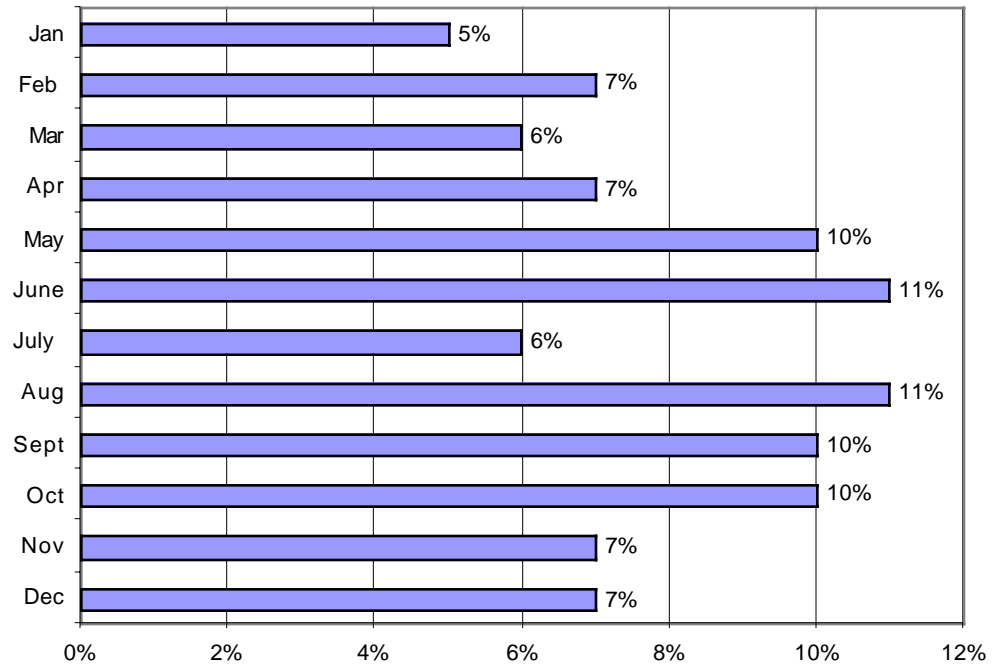


*Mori Lee Halter Sweetheart*

Destination Wedding gowns have a particular style according to Gardner, who describes them as lightweight, soft chiffon and slightly beaded. These dresses fall gracefully over the body and can easily be transported in a garment bag along with bare, sexy sandals and a pretty headpiece.

**Seasonality** The tradition of the June wedding is another custom that is being redefined as couples plan their marriage. Now they take place all year round, with August and September being as popular as May and June.

*Distribution of 2.3 million Weddings by Month*



*Source: Fairchild Bridal Infobank, The Knot*

Bridal News Network *Trend Report* welcomes your comments, thoughts and ideas for future issues. Please email or call us anytime!

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