

# Bridal News Network

## Trend Report

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### New Traditions Women Pop the Question

From Monica on “Friends” to Trista on “The Bachelorette”— the days of “ladies in waiting” are over when it comes to marriage proposals. The new trend of women popping the question is not seen just on TV. A 2003 survey conducted by Korbel Champagne Cellars found that almost one in three Americans (31%) know a woman who has proposed marriage to a man.

This “role reversal” is evident not only in the number of women taking the initiative, but in society’s willingness to accept this shift, as six out of ten Americans (59%) do not think that men should always be the ones to propose. The survey also revealed that almost half (48%) of women would propose to their significant other, and eight out of ten men (80%) would accept a proposal from their significant other.

### The ‘Best Woman’ and ‘Dude of Honor’

TheKnot.com reports that 9% of all engaged individuals are considering attendants of the opposite sex, up from just a trickle a few years ago. The terms “bridesman”, “manmaid” or “honor-attendants” are applied to male attendants to the bride, while female attendants to the groom are called “groomswomen” or “friends of honor”. The new approach to attendants is more often seen in the weddings of older couples, especially those who have been married before, where the families aren’t as concerned with tradition.

### Return to Tradition

#### Taking the Husband’s Name

In a shift away from a three-decade trend, more college-educated women are taking their husband’s surname. A recent Harvard University study by economics historian Claudia Goldin and one of her former students, Maria Shim researched recent years of Massachusetts birth records and New York Times wedding announcements. They found that the feminist trend toward the bride’s keeping her surname in marriage, which began in the late 1970s, had reversed in the ’90s, with college-educated women keeping their own last name having declined from 23% in 1990 to 20% in 1995 and 17% in 2000.

Among the possible reasons cited for this reversal were:

- 1) less peer pressure for brides to keep their name;
- 2) a general shift to more conservative social values; and
- 3) frustration with the logistical problems of a wife’s having a different last name than her spouse.

## Jewelry

### Men Give Gems a Buy Sign.

Men purchased \$5 billion worth of jewelry last year, or 12% of all jewelry sold, according to the Jewelry Information Center. Taking a lead from rap stars and athletes, more mainstream males choose to adorn themselves. In fact, jewelry designers who once catered mainly to the female market are coming out with special lines devoted exclusively to men. Darlene Smith, vice president of Diamonds.com, reports that sales of men's jewelry increased 20% in the first six months of 2004.

### Yellow Gold, Pearls Make a Comeback

Over the last two decades there has been a decided move toward platinum and white gold in both engagement ring settings and wedding bands. However, according to Chad Crawford, Merchandise Manager of DiamondSafe.com, the pendulum is beginning to swing back toward yellow gold as young, trendy brides are showing more interest in yellow gold for their rings.



Hot Diamonds at  
DiamondSafe.com

Cultured pearls, popular with many of today's brides' grandmothers, are also making a comeback. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, Tiffany's launched its Iridesse brand of pearl boutiques with the opening of a 1,300-square-foot store in Tysons Galleria Mall in McLean, Va. With the Iridesse launch, Tiffany will compete directly with Mikimoto, the famed and established Japanese jeweler. The stakes are high: Pearls are a \$900 million annual market according to the Jewelry Information Center (JIC).

The \$45 billion jewelry market continues to develop new styles and marketing concepts. Some of these include: right-hand rings, color gemstones and semi-precious stone jewelry, pearl jewelry sets—necklace, bracelet, earrings—and Hot Diamonds, small diamonds set in sterling silver.

## Fashion

### Wear-Again Bridesmaids' Dresses; Destination Wedding Dresses; Embellishments and Details.



1950's-inspired dress from Dessy  
Collection

Bridesmaids: "Shorter hemlines are hot right now," according to Dessy and After Six designer Vivian Diamond, recently interviewed in Bridal Guide. She created many tea-length styles with a refined 1950's look as well as little satin slip dresses with georgette overlays which a bride's female attendants will wear again and again. Regarding the "wear-again" quality of the dresses, Diamond observed that "bridesmaids want to look like gorgeously dressed guests at an elegant party." Since her own lines are inspired by the Marc Jacobs and Calvin Klein collections, they can easily be worn to holiday parties or to an elegant restaurant on Valentine's Day.

**Fashion**

*Silk Charmeuse  
destination wedding  
dress*

*Watters Brides*



*Organza dress with  
ribbon detail on  
bodice and hem*

*Watters Brides*

Brides: Tiger Woods' recent marriage to his beautiful Swedish bride, Elin Nordegren, in the Caribbean will surely be remembered as the "Destination Wedding" of the year! Since nearly one in every 10 weddings today is a "Destination Wedding"—that is, couples' choosing to exchange vows in some exotic or other chosen setting away from home—gown designers are responding to this fastest-growing segment of the wedding industry. Voyage, a new collection by Mori Lee, centers on easy elegance, pack-and-go wedding dresses in chiffon, satin, lace and organza. Also, Watters Brides offers many fresh options for take-away bridal dresses including the net overlay knee-length dress with shirred halter neckline and ruffled skirt.

Embellishments and ornamentation are key elements of bridal gowns going into 2005, creating a new sense of fantasy. These include ribbon and bow details often in a contrasting color and fabric; appliqués of beaded lace; metallic embroideries with chandelier diamond-shape Swarovski crystals; textures on the skirts of dresses such as crinkled, puckered organza; and tulle organza and lace ruffles and streamers softly hanging from chiffon.

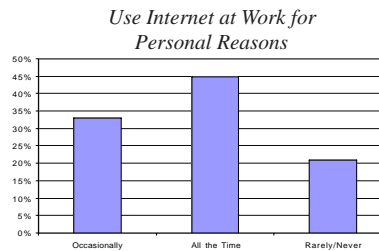
Strapless necklines continue to dominate but with an added dimension. Bodice details of hand-draping, pin-tucking, pleating and crystal-beaded net over lace on sweetheart necklines give a fresh new look to strapless bridal gowns.

**Internet****Online Sales Skyrocket**

Online sales sped past the \$100-billion mark in 2003, according to an annual Shop.org study conducted by Forrester Research. Shop.org, a division of the National Retail Federation, reported that online retail sales jumped 51 % to \$114 billion, now representing 5.4% of all retail sales. The trend is projected to continue to grow, as online sales in 2004 are expected to climb 27% to 144 billion, commanding 6.6% of total retail sales. Retail categories that serve the bridal industry are experiencing extremely high growth, with online sales expected to increase by more than 40% in such categories as health and beauty (61% ), flowers (42%) and cards and gifts (41%).

## Internet Cont. Shopping at Work

A recent comScore Survey Research study noted in *American Demographics* reported that younger workers are much more likely to use their internet access at work for personal activities, indicating that today's prospective brides and grooms may well do more of their wedding planning online. According to the survey, 78% said they used the internet at work occasionally (33%) or all the time (45%). Only 21% or roughly one in five said they rarely or never use online access at work for personal reasons.



## Gifts Returning Wedding Presents

In spite of exhaustive gift registries, couples still receive many presents they don't want or cannot keep. The \$6 billion gift registry business (Fairchild Bridal InfoBank) is becoming more accepting of returns. Crate&Barrel lengthened the time that you can return a gift after purchase to 90 days from 30 days. Bed Bath and Beyond has a "hassle-free" return policy. Couples who have registered with the store can return gifts for up to two years for credit or cash. All this is good to know if china or crystal does not fit a newlywed's lifestyle and they would like to make an exchange for something more useful and relevant.

## Market Why Married Men Make More Money

Even controlling for age, education, and other effects, married men make more money than single men. Is this because more successful men get married or does marriage make them more successful? A recent study of identical twins by Kate Antonovics and Robert Town from the University of California published in *The American Economic Review* found a significant marriage premium: married men in the sample earned 19% more than unmarried men. The results of the study indicate that marriage indeed has a causal impact on wages.

## Weddings: More Wedding Planners; More Ideas

The Association of Bridal Consultants reports that the number of bridal consultants has grown 25% in the last 18 months, to 7,000. All aim at helping brides find more creative and original ideas in order to have their wedding stand out. Print media and the Internet are the main sources of innovative ideas and good ones are copied widely thus losing their originality and appeal.

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

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