

Bridal News Network

Trend Report

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Weddings 2005: A Big Business

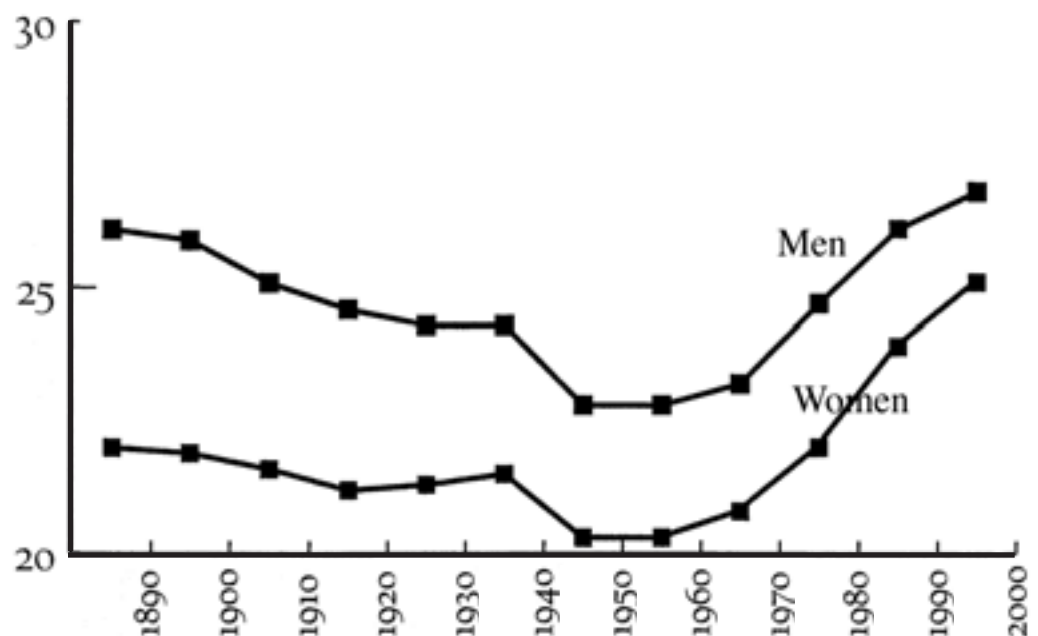
Several significant trends highlight the 2005 wedding scene. And, in addition to their romantic dimension, weddings continue to be big business. The average wedding in the United States today costs over \$22,000. As there are more than 2.3 million weddings a year performed across the nation, the resulting \$51-billion nuptial ceremonies business is significantly larger than the movie industry (\$45 billion in sales and rentals).

Demographics

Professor Claudia Goldin, in her book *Understanding the Gender Gap: an Economic History of American Women*, has charted the age at first marriage of female U.S. college graduates throughout the 20th century. For women graduates born between 1930 and 1950 the median age at first marriage hovered at around 23. It then rose precipitously to 25.5 years for those born in 1957, and continued to rise. What explains this dramatic age-demographic shift? “We’ve pinned this one down to ‘the pill’ very definitively,” says Goldin, citing research she has published in the *Journal of Political Economy*.

Throughout the 20th century in the U.S., the difference in age between men and women marrying for the first time narrowed, from four years in 1900 to 2.9 years in 1950. Today it is only 1.6 years. Clearly, women are waiting longer to make their marital commitment.

Estimated Median Age at First Marriage



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Demographics

(Continued)

Ages at first marriage still vary widely around the world. In India, for example, the median age for a bride is just under 19, and for grooms just over 23. In Jamaica, it is much higher for both men and women, at 31. Such differences can be attributed to various factors including culture, economics and traditions.

Cohabitation: The number of U.S. couples living together without a marriage license shot up 1,100% between 1960 and 2002, and more than half of all legal unions now begin with “trial marriages”, according to the Rutgers University Marriage Project.

Pre-Wedding Anxieties

Notwithstanding how weddings have evolved over the years, they continue to be a stressful time for many couples. According to statistics provided by the Fairchild Bridal Group:

- Since their engagement, 24% of about-to-be-marrieds have found themselves feeling daily anxiety about the wedding plans. 53% are slightly less affected by anxiousness (experiencing it a few times a week), while only 22% report never feeling pre-wedding anxiety.
- Several bigger worries include: the wedding budget (66%), forgetting a crucial detail (50%), and not having a successful party (39%).
- For 55% of couples, the task of planning their wedding has gotten so unwieldy that they have considered eloping.

Source: Fairchild Bridal Infobank, “Are You Normal?” Survey, *Bride’s magazine*, Dec. 2000/Jan. 2001

Bridal Fashion



Coat/Dress: Priscilla of Boston

Many bridal-gown designers today are adding special embellishments to the back of the wedding gown, since the main focus is on the bride as she walks down the aisle or moves around the dance floor. Layers of silk and knife-pleated organza, ruffles, lace, and ribbon applique’s on trumpet skirts and sweep trains add a touch of romance and glamour to the back of the dress.

And because nowadays four out of every ten weddings are second marriages for one or both partners, new attention is being given to what is appropriate for the bride to wear when it is her “second time around”. Although second-(third- or fourth) time brides seldom wear the same style worn at their first wedding, they still like a special and beautiful dress. A good example was the look worn by Camilla Parker Bowles at her celebrated, recent royal wedding to Britain’s Prince Charles—a full-length silk, porcelain-blue, fitted coat, and dress laced with gold threads from the London design team, Robinson Valentine.

Gifts & Registries

Wedding registries, particularly for traditional gifts such as silver, crystal, and china, have long been an accepted custom. However, the Internet has dramatically expanded the business. A survey by WeddingChannel.com in 2001 reported that 71% of couples registered for gifts. The number had climbed to 89% by 2003. A recent (2005) *Bridal Guide Magazine* survey found that 43.6% of brides considered it very important for their registry to be available online, up from 24.8% in 2002.

The Internet has also created new types of registries including honeymoon travel and home-improvement gift registries such as those offered by Home Depot. And, according to the Consumer Electronics Association, digital cameras were the most popular wedding gifts in 2004.

Wedding Jewelry



Gown: Priscilla of Boston

The Spring/Summer 2005 bridal collections spotlighted wedding-day accessories. Trends included three-tier drop earrings, graceful chandelier earrings, dangling jewel lines called “stiletto” earrings, and floral-inspired diamond earrings, necklaces, and bracelets.

According to Penny Proddow and Marion Fasel, authors of *With This Ring: The Ultimate Guide to Wedding Jewelry* (2004; Bulfinch Press), “the wedding dress is critical, of course, but the jewelry is equally important. Wedding day jewelry which is almost always white — diamonds or pearls — will personalize and perfect a bride’s appearance.”

For instance, a classic Alençon-lace, sculpted A-line dress with sweetheart neckline and chapel train is enhanced by perfectly chosen jewelry. Both Proddow and Fasel emphasize that wearing a necklace with a strapless dress is a must.



Chandelier Earrings: DiamondSafe.com

Honeymoons, Near & Far

An increasing number of travel destinations are developing bridal registries to help newlyweds plan their honeymoons. According to *The New York Times*, Starwood Hotels, Sandals Resorts, and the West Indies island of Aruba have created registries linked to the Internet sites HoneymoonWishes.com, DistinctiveHoneymoons.com, TheBigDay.com, HoneyLuna.com, TheHoneymoon.com, and MoonRings.com.

Combining honeymoon venues with the wedding ceremony is one of the newest variations of the so-called “destination wedding”—i.e., vows being exchanged in some picturesque location away from home—which now accounts for one in every ten marriage ceremonies. One reflection of this trend is the shipboard wedding being offered in a special program by Princess Cruises.

Following are some recent U.S. data on honeymoons compiled by Susan Breslow Sardone, editor of *Your Guide to Honeymoons/Romantic Getaways*, and presented on her “Wedding & Honeymoon Statistics” page published on About.com:

- Of couples who choose a traditional wedding, that is, a planned ceremony, 99% go on a honeymoon.
- Honeymoons amount to an \$8 billion-a-year industry.
- Couples spend an average of \$3,700 on their honeymoon. That’s three times as much as the average U.S. adult spends on a vacation.
- The length of an average honeymoon is eight days.
- 10% of newlyweds take cruises for their honeymoon.
- 37% of honeymoon trips are to domestic locations; 63% are to foreign settings.
- 40% of honeymooners will stay at a resort v. 27% at a large hotel v. 10% at a small hotel.
- The leading destinations for away-from-home weddings are (figures in parentheses indicate number of weddings performed annually):
 - Las Vegas (100,000).
 - Hawaii (20,000).
 - U.S. Virgin Islands (5,100).
 - Jamaica (5,000).
 - Bahamas (4,000).

Preserving the Memories

The explosion of digital photography has created new opportunities for couples to preserve those precious memories of plighting their troth. One new trend is to have photos taken of not only the wedding ceremony itself, but also of the memorable moments leading up to it, such as bridal dress-fittings, bridal showers, etc. Since a professional photographer cannot always be present for such occasions, guests are often provided with small digital cameras and asked to click away. The images can then be uploaded into a computer. (The market for inkjet photo paper will grow by 23% to \$1.2 billion this year. And even a fading paper picture should not be a problem, as long as couples keep a digital copy.)

Anniversary Diamonds

Since diamonds *are* forever, more and more spouses of both genders are realizing that one memorable way of turning their marriage vow of “I do” into a lifelong “I *forever* do”, is by giving diamonds to their life-mate as wedding-anniversary presents.

What is known as “three-stone diamond jewelry”—featuring a trio of diamonds representing a couple’s past, present, and future—is considered by many to be the most romantic anniversary gift, whether the gems are set in a ring, earrings, pendant, or other appropriate mounting.



3-stone diamond pendant



3-stone diamond ring

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

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