

LIFTING THE VEIL: 'WHAT'S ON BRIDES' MINDS'?

New Survey Reveals Contrasting Blend of Contemporary And Traditional Attitudes

CONSHOHOCKEN, PA, May 25, 2006 — Weddings, by definition, are steeped in tradition. But a just-released survey found that today's brides are standing tradition on its head: Nine out of ten say they're open to a non-traditional wedding gown; nearly half would wear white to their *second* wedding; some 41% attended a wedding solo and 10% have attended an ex's wedding.

The "What's On Brides' Minds" Survey, conducted by Leflein Associates, Inc. for David's Bridal, the nation's leading national bridal retailer, found dramatic changes in attitudes toward the ultimate bridal symbol, the wedding dress. Not only are 90% open to wearing a less traditional wedding dress, but they'd break with conventional bridal attire in a number of ways: nearly six in ten (58%) would eschew the all-white gown in favor of some color, nearly a quarter (23%) would consider wearing a shorter hemline, and nearly half (45%) would break the old taboo by wearing white for a second trip down the aisle.

It's not just the dress that's changing: the social norms associated with wedding guests are evolving too: More than two-fifths (41%) have gone stag to a wedding, and more than one in four (26%) brought along a platonic date. And proving that you can be friends with your former spouse, one in ten said they had attended their ex's wedding.

In addition to shining a light on contemporary attitudes toward these wedding customs, the "What's On Brides' Minds" Survey also uncovered whom brides do—and *don't*—turn to for wedding advice, whose advice is the most—and *least*—helpful, how brides meet their mates, and the biggest bridal stresses.

Some Traditions Still Stand the Test of Time

While the survey "unveiled" some surprisingly changed attitudes, it also revealed which bridal traditions still endure. Almost four-fifths (79%) of surveyed women won't show their wedding dress to their fiancé before the "Big Day." Why? Most (68%) want to keep the moment special or a surprise; more than 3 in 5 (62%) attribute their reluctance to their own superstitions. Living up to their reputation for being forthright, 10% of Northeastern respondents 'just don't want' his opinion!

Another tradition that remains popular is saving the gown after the ceremony. 80% of respondents say they plan to do so, and more than one-third (34%) will heirloom it to save as a keepsake.

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“We weren’t surprised by the combination of new attitudes and traditional values that the survey exposed,” said Lee Applbaum, senior vice president of marketing for David’s Bridal. “As the largest and only national bridal retailer, we’re in touch with more brides-to-be on a daily basis than anyone else, so we’ve heard her perspective first-hand. Today’s bride has made it clear that she wants her wedding to reflect her personal style, whether it goes with or contrasts tradition, or contains a little of both.”

Father Knows Best...But Not When it Comes to Bridal Advice

Brides may lean on their dad’s arm when they walk down the aisle, but when it comes to wedding advice they lean on mom: nearly one-third (31%) of respondents felt the most helpful wedding suggestions come from Mom. That provides yet another apparent contradiction: Nearly 15% indicate that their mother’s advice is unsolicited.

Friends clearly know their friends: Almost a quarter of brides (22%) cite them as having the most helpful suggestions. That may be a good thing, since an almost equal number (24%) say that friends offer the most unsolicited advice.

Sorry Dads, but you’re tied with co-workers for last place in the “most helpful advice” category: only three percent of respondents say they get the most useful counsel from these two disparate groups. But that doesn’t stop co-workers from offering their insights: they’re nearly tied with Mom as the most likely source of unsolicited advice (13% and 15% respectively).

Future mothers-in-law, take heed: While you may mean well, only 1 in 10 brides say your counsel is helpful. Like co-workers, that doesn’t prevent you from sharing your views: you tend to give unsolicited advice nearly as often as Mom does (Mothers-in-law 14%, Moms, 15%).

Wedding Dress Stress

While more than a quarter (27%) of brides say that the most stressful part of getting married is “finding and securing the location,” the search for the perfect dress is statistically tied for the second most stressful element, along with “finalizing the guest list” and “securing the date,” (at 11.4%, 11.8% and 12.2%, respectively).

Why the stress? The brides cite wedding gown expense (55%), gowns not being available to try on in their size (45%), the limited selection of wedding gown styles (32%) and the lack of one-stop bridal shopping (30%).

Shopping for bridesmaid dresses has its own set of “hassles.” Two-thirds of brides-to-be say that their biggest problem when shopping for bridesmaid dresses is finding one style to fit and flatter each bridesmaid’s body type; 45% cite limits in styles, colors and sizes and 37% cite fitting out-of- town bridesmaids as the biggest annoyance.

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“Our goal at David’s Bridal is to make the bridal shopping experience as enjoyable as possible by addressing the very issues unveiled in the survey” said Applbaum. “We do this by offering affordable luxury via an unparalleled range of bridal and bridal party styles and sizes – such as those from aspirational designer labels Oleg Cassini and Monique Luo - available to try on and take home the same day. And to serve today’s on-the-go bride, we deliver convenience via our nearly 260 stores nationwide and user-friendly website. All these elements combine to help reduce stress and allow brides to focus on what’s really critical: enjoying the most important day of their lives.”

You Had Me At ‘Hello’

The survey found that meeting through friends, at 20%, tops the list of how brides “met their match.” And although once taboo, the office romance is not only alive and well, but much more than a mere fling: 15% of respondents met their significant other this way. And proving that true love never dies, more than 1 in 10 brides (13%) surveyed will marry their high school sweetheart.

As a sign of the times, 10 times as many people met their mates through an online dating service as through an offline dating service (6% vs. 0.6%).

No matter where today’s brides-to-be are meeting their true love or what type of gown they plan to wear, one thing is clear: they want their wedding, their way. And then what do they want? To live happily ever after.

For more information, to set-up an interview with a David’s Bridal representative or to receive a map with regional statistics, please contact DBPRinfo@lippettaylor.com

Methodology

This telephone survey was conducted by Leflein Associates, Inc. from January 30th – February 9th, 2006. A total of 501 surveys were completed among a national listed sample of adult women ages 18 and older that were recently engaged. This study has a margin of error of plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence level.

About David's Bridal:

With more than 50 years of bridal experience, David's Bridal understands the importance of providing brides-to-be with a vast selection of exquisitely crafted dresses, available at affordable prices. Today, with nearly 260 locations nationwide, David's Bridal continues to expand its retail store locations, while maintaining its philosophy of beauty, elegance and quality. To locate a store nearby, consumers can call 1-877-693-BRIDE or visit www.davidsbridal.com.

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