



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research



TYING THE KNOT: WHAT AMERICANS THINK ABOUT WEDDINGS

Weddings can be heartwarming and weddings can be fun, but they can be a major drain on the wallet. In an Associated Press (AP) and WE tv poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 77 percent of Americans say too much money is spent on weddings these days.

If they could re-do their wedding, many Americans who have ever been married would opt to spend less. Thirty-two percent say they would have a smaller budget for the festivities and 21 percent would have simply eloped. And even just being a guest is seen as costly. Four in 10 say the expenses to attend a wedding are too high.

Nearly all Americans have at least some familiarity with weddings. Seventy percent have been married at least once, and more than 90 percent have attended at least one wedding. Six in 10 adults have been bridesmaids or groomsmen.

With all this experience comes opinions about the modern wedding. Rather than destination weddings or extravagant receptions, most Americans prefer modest celebrations held closer to home. The perfect wedding gift is selected from the registry. And 4 in 10 say that couples may put too much effort into planning the wedding and not enough into preparing for the marriage.

Millennials are more likely to have experience with weddings that use social media than are older Americans, but most Americans think it adds a stressful element. The convenience and economy of electronic invitations haven't overcome the traditional way of doing things.

Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,234 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points.



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Three Things You Should Know

About The AP-WE tv Poll on Weddings
Among Adults age 18 and older:

1. Seventy-seven percent say Americans spend too much money on weddings
2. Forty-one percent are concerned that couples put too much importance on planning the wedding and not enough on planning for the actual marriage
3. Seventy-four percent say the ideal wedding gift is a selection from the couple's registry

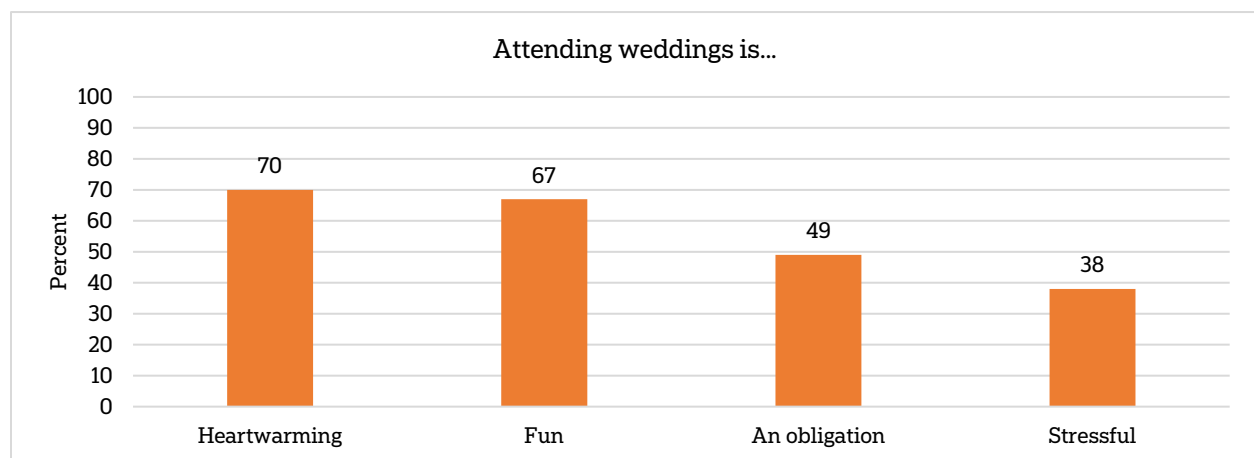
Key findings from the poll include:

- Americans generally have a positive view of weddings. Seventy percent agree they are heartwarming, and 67 percent see them as fun. However, 49 percent regard weddings as an obligation, and 38 percent consider them stressful.
- There is concern about the expense and importance placed on the ceremony. Seventy-seven percent say too much money is being spent on weddings these days, and 41 percent think couples put too much importance on the ceremony and don't prepare enough for the actual marriage.
- Looking back, 40 percent of those who have ever been married were concerned about costs at the time of their own wedding, and if they could do again, 32 percent would spend less money, and 21 percent would elope. Forty-one percent say even the cost of attending a wedding is too high.
- A selection from the couple's registry or money is seen as the ideal wedding gift by most Americans, while a gift card or something not from the registry is acceptable, but not ideal.
- Eighty-five percent of guests gave a wedding gift to the couple at the most recent wedding they attended. However, 56 percent have had a wedding gift go unacknowledged by the couple.
- Some couples are economizing on invitations. Twenty-seven percent of Americans have received an electronic invitation to a wedding at least once.
- An exotic locale sounds like fun, but only 21 percent like the idea of traveling a distance to the wedding venue, whether for their own wedding or as a guest. Few people dream of having or attending a large wedding. Nearly 40 percent would rather be a guest at a small wedding, though two-thirds of Americans say they would opt for their own wedding to be small.

AMERICANS ENJOY WEDDINGS BUT SAY TOO MUCH MONEY IS SPENT ON THEM.

Nearly everyone has attended a wedding at least once in their life—just 4 percent of Americans say they have not. Most Americans see attending a wedding as fun and heartwarming rather than stressful, but the public is split on whether they're an obligation. Women are more likely than men to say attending weddings is fun (72 percent vs. 63 percent) or heartwarming (75 percent vs. 63 percent).

Americans say weddings are heartwarming and fun.



Question: Would you say that each of the following phrases does or does not describe how you feel about attending weddings these days?

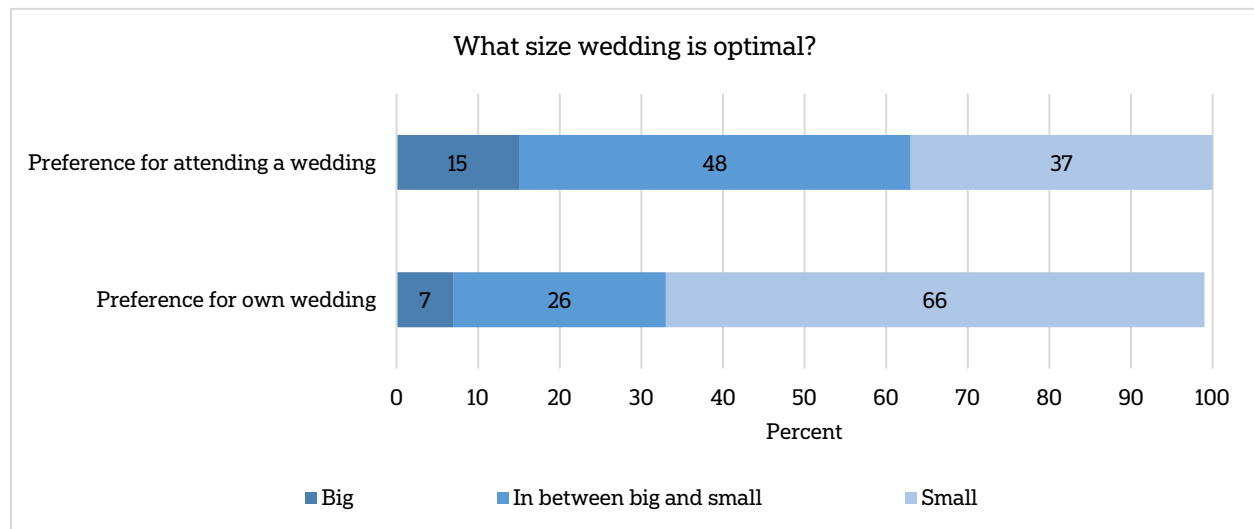
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

Although they generally view weddings positively, most Americans express concern with the amount of money, and some are concerned with how much importance is being placed on them. Eight in 10 say too much money is being spent on weddings these days, and 4 in 10 think couples put too much importance on the ceremony to the detriment of the actual marriage that comes after.

Those with firsthand experience are more likely to see excess in how much is spent. Eighty-one percent of those who have ever been married say Americans spend too much money on the wedding ceremony, compared with 68 percent of people who have never tied the knot.

Most people would opt to skip big celebrations and destination weddings either as the groom or bride or as a guest, preferring instead more modest nuptials held closer to home. Whether attending or hosting, just 2 in 10 Americans say they would like a destination wedding, while 8 in 10 want something nearby. However, Americans' preferences for size differs slightly depending on which side of the wedding they are on—they'd like to attend a slightly larger wedding than they'd want to have for themselves.

Nearly half of Americans want to attend a medium-size wedding, but more would prefer a small wedding for themselves.



Questions: If you were planning on getting married this year, would you prefer to have a big wedding, a small wedding, or something in between?; Now think about your preferences as a wedding guest. Would you prefer to attend a big wedding, a small wedding, or something in between?

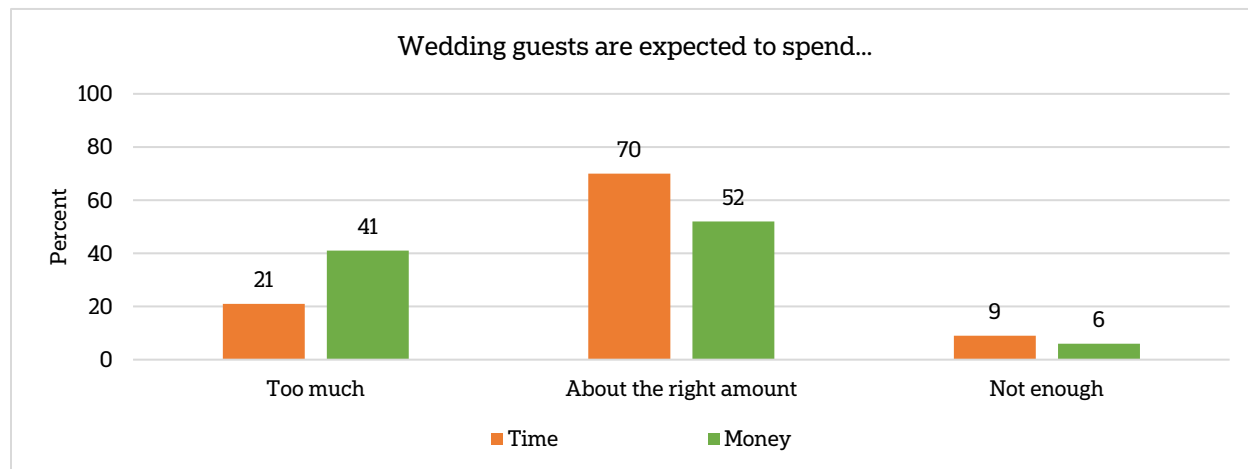
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

And looking back to their own wedding, 40 percent say they were concerned about costs at the time. If they could get a do-over, 32 percent say they would spend less money on the wedding, and 21 percent would elope.

Though most Americans take a more traditional route with their ceremony, some cut costs by eliminating a major line item from their wedding budget: the venue. A third of Americans say they have attended a wedding at City Hall or a courthouse at least once.

About a quarter of Americans have attended a wedding with events lasting more than a day, but this doesn't bother many people. Only 2 in 10 say couples getting married expect too much of a time commitment from their guests. In contrast, twice as many think guests are required to shell out too much money to attend a wedding, though a majority say they spend about the right amount.

Twice as many people say guests are expected to spend too much money than say too much time.



Questions: Do you think most couples getting married expect too much time from their guests, too little or about the right amount of time?; Do you think most couples getting married expect their guests to spend too much money, too little or about the right amount of money?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

Those who are stressed out by weddings are particularly likely to feel guests have to spend excess time (32 percent vs. 14 percent) or money (56 percent vs. 32 percent). Women also tend to feel attendees need to spend too much (45 percent vs. 36 percent).

About 6 in 10 American adults have been a bridesmaid or groomsman at least once. Who should pay for all these dresses and tuxedos? The public is divided. Fifty percent say the bridesmaids and groomsmen should pay for their own dresses and suits, while 48 percent say the bride and groom or their family should ante up the cost. Those who have been members of a bridal party are just as likely as others to say paying for their outfits should be the responsibility of the individual attendants.

The stereotype is that bridesmaid dresses are unflattering and relegated to the back of the closet never to be worn again. But 61 percent say wedding attendants are outfitted stylishly, and only 8 percent say bridesmaid dresses these days fit the stereotype. In fact, 70 percent of women who have been bridesmaids describe dresses today as stylish.

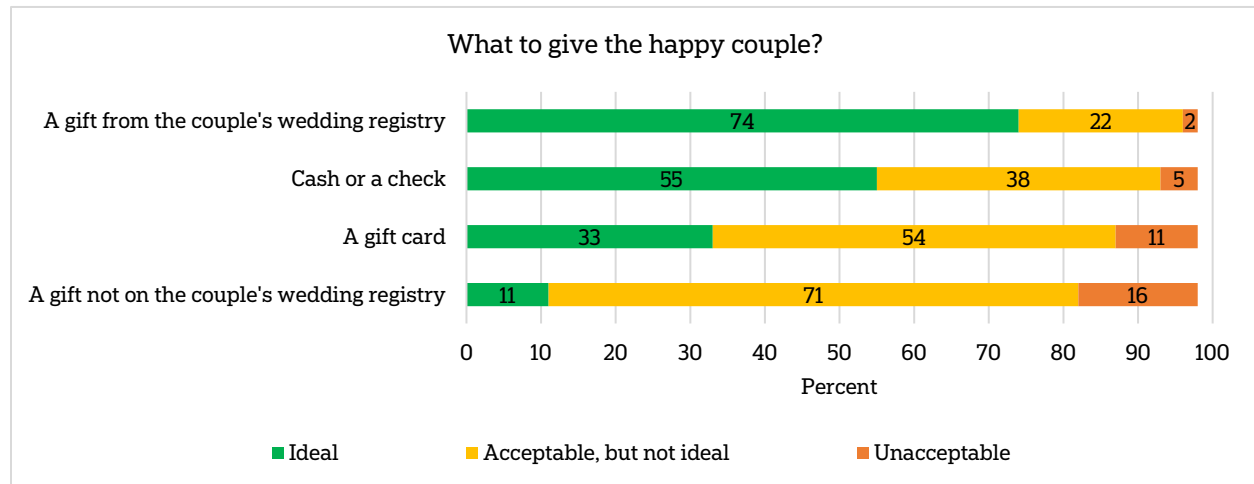
NEARLY ALL GIVE WEDDING GIFTS, BUT NOT EVERYONE GETS A THANK YOU.

Eight-five percent of guests gave a wedding gift to the couple at the most recent wedding they attended, but engagement and shower presents are not nearly as ubiquitous. Forty percent gave a shower gift, including 43 percent of women and 35 percent of men. Just 12 percent gave an engagement gift. High-income adults are more likely to give any of these kinds of presents.

While a large majority of couples receive wedding presents from their guests, not all couples are courteous enough to acknowledge the gesture. Fifty-six percent report having given a wedding present without receiving a thank you note in return.

What do Americans think you should give as a wedding present? More than half consider a selection from the couple’s registry or money to be the perfect gift, while only a third say the best present is a gift card. Very few think a gift that’s not on the registry is ideal, but the vast majority say it would still be acceptable.

Americans consider a gift from the registry to be the ideal wedding present.



Question: Do you think that each of the following is ideal, acceptable but not ideal, or unacceptable to give as a wedding gift?

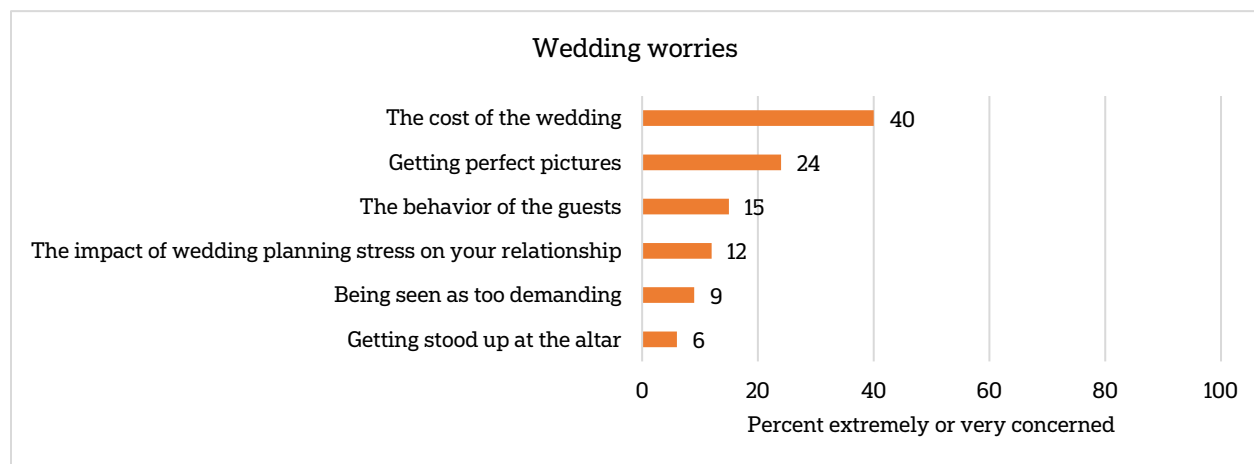
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

MONEY WAS THE BIGGEST WORRY FOR MOST AMERICANS WHO HAVE TIED THE KNOT.

What concerned people most about their wedding, and what would they do differently if they got the chance to do it over again? For Americans who have ever been married, money was a key worry when planning their wedding for 40 percent, and about a third say they would spend less money if they got a redo.

Another quarter were concerned about getting perfect pictures of the event. Fewer worried about the planning effort putting stress on their relationship, being perceived as too demanding of a couple, or how their guests would behave (though 2 in 10 would invite different people if they had to do it over again). Just 5 percent worried about getting left at the altar.

Money tops the list of wedding concerns, although some also worry about photos.



Question: When you got married, how concerned were you about each of the following? If married more than once, think about your most recent wedding.

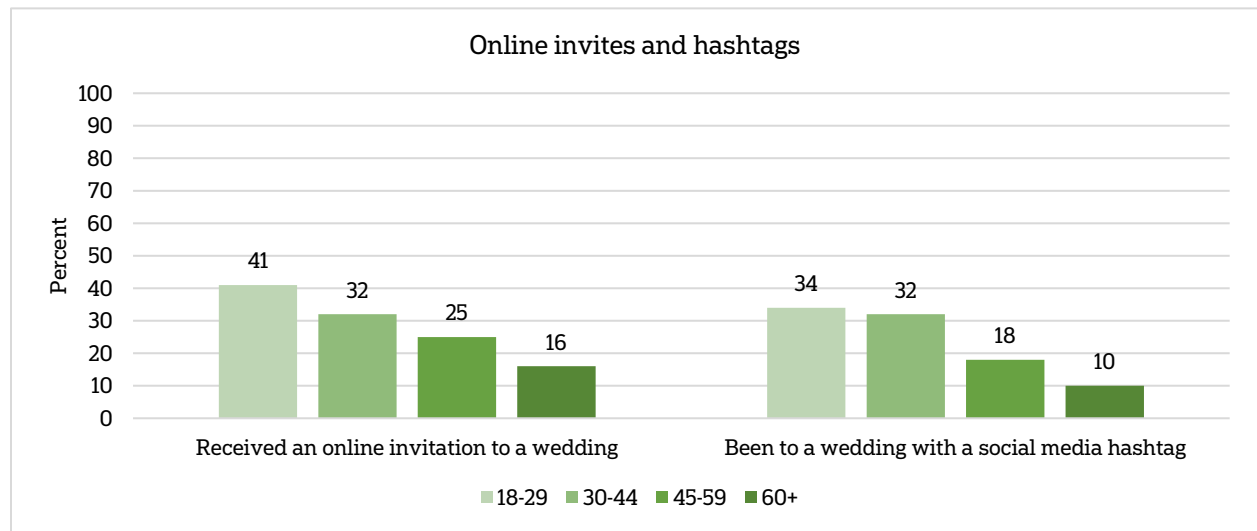
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

In addition, 18 percent said they would marry someone else if given the chance. Among divorced people, 59 percent say it was extremely likely that they would select a different partner if they were given a do-over for their wedding. Only 7 percent of those currently married agreed.

THE MODERN WEDDING: ELECTRONIC INVITES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND HASHTAGS

Electronic invitations are becoming more and more commonplace. While for most weddings, they remain an exception, 27 percent of Americans have received an online invitation to a wedding. Twenty-two percent have attended a wedding with its own social media hashtag. Younger adults are more likely to have encountered an e-invite or a wedding hashtag.

Millennials are most likely to get an electronic wedding invitation or attend a wedding with a hashtag.



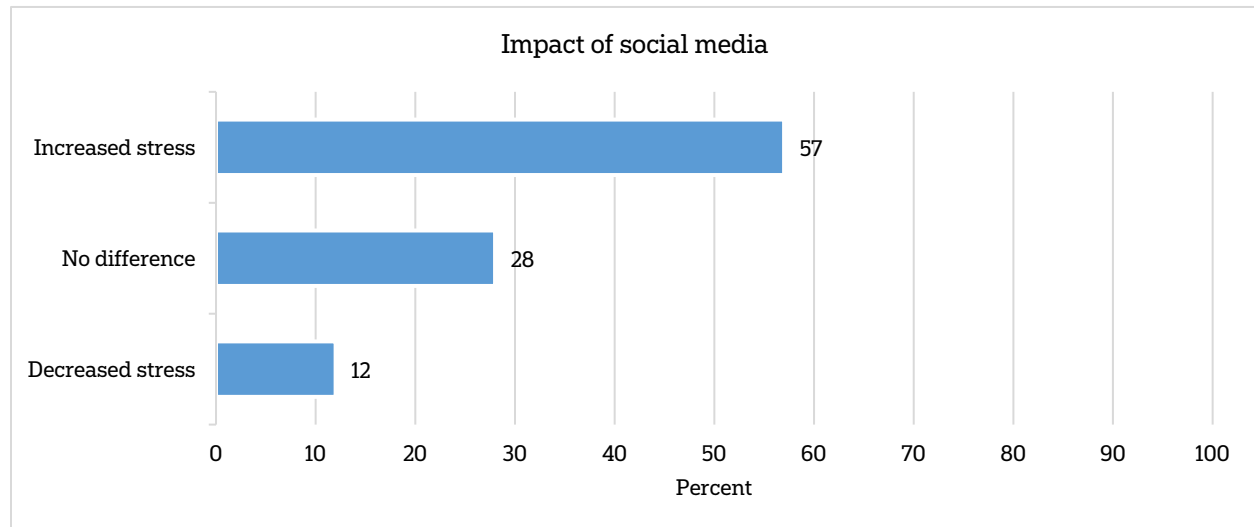
Question: When you got married, how concerned were you about each of the following? If married more than once, think about your most recent wedding.

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

Each year, 40 million people use Pinterest to help plan their wedding,¹ but Americans are not convinced Pinterest and other social media sites like it have had a positive impact. Nearly 6 in 10 say social media sites and apps like Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, and Instagram have put additional stress on the process of planning a wedding.

¹ <https://business.pinterest.com/en/blog/wedding-planning-gets-personal-on-pinterest>

The majority of Americans think social media has made wedding planning more stressful.



Question: Overall, do you think social media sites and apps like Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, and Instagram have increased or decreased the stress involved in planning a wedding, or haven't they made a difference?
 Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted January 11-16, 2018, with 1,234 adults nationwide

A FIFTH OF AMERICANS PLAN TO TUNE INTO THE ROYAL WEDDING.

Nearly 23 million Americans got up early in 2011 to watch Prince William marry Kate Middleton live on television.² And millions more streamed it online or watched re-broadcasts.

Will his brother capture as much attention? A fifth of Americans expect to watch Prince Harry and Meghan Markle get married in May. However, while only 7 percent of men say they are extremely or very likely to watch the royal wedding, 31 percent of women say they are likely to watch the pageantry of the prince's nuptials.

Few think the wedding will have an impact on other couples currently planning their own weddings. Nearly 3 in 4 say the upcoming royal wedding has made no difference in pressure for people getting married to plan a perfect wedding, though close to 1 in 4 say it has turned up the heat.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Survey Methodology

This AP-WE tv survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, with funding from WE tv. Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

² <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2011/23-million-watch-royal-wedding-in-u-s.html>

Interviews for this survey were conducted between January 11 and 16, 2018, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak. The survey was completed by 1,234 adults—1,120 via the web and 114 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on respondent preference. Telephone interviews were conducted by professional interviewers who were carefully trained on the specific survey for this study. The final stage completion rate is 26.1 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 33.7 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 88.1 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 7.7 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2017 Current Population Survey. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over, were used for all analyses.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: <http://www.apnorc.org>. For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.

NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.

ABOUT WE TV

With compelling, can't-miss, unscripted shows, WE tv's programming is fueled by personalities and relationships filled with purpose and passion. WE tv welcomes everyone and creates an inclusive experience across all platforms: on TV, online, on demand, and social media, embracing how today's digitally savvy, socially engaged audiences connect through content, using it as a catalyst to drive conversation and build community. WE tv is owned and operated by AMC Networks Inc., and its sister channels include AMC, BBC America, IFC, and SundanceTV.