

## Will the Wedding Boom Continue?



**The bridal sector hopes the momentum will last following the busiest year for nuptials in almost four decades.**

For nearly two years, the world came to a standstill as Covid-19 raged. Travel was limited, and fewer activities took place outside the home.

Yet something that seemed to continue in force during the pandemic was engagements. More people popped the question, perhaps realizing how short life could be — or they simply discovered they could thrive in close quarters with their significant others.

But tying the knot was a different story. Pandemic restrictions meant many couples had to hold off on the ceremony itself. The trend led many in the industry to predict 2022 would be a banner year for weddings — and the reality appears to have proved them right.

“We definitely did have a boom in 2022, and it was pretty intense and insane, to be honest,” says Robyn Bruns, managing editor of *Wedding Planner Magazine*, a publication of the Association of Bridal Consultants (ABC). “It felt sort of like the industry had an earthquake. People were so eager to get married in 2022, they were willing to seal the deal on a Tuesday or Thursday even. They waited two years, and they didn’t want to wait anymore. I personally planned a wedding early in the year, which was supposed to have white roses, and my florist couldn’t get a white rose to save her life.”

## **By the numbers**

A total of 2.6 million couples got married last year, the highest figure since 1984, according to a survey from wedding site The Knot. Of those pairs, the average engagement length was 15 months, though 13% had been waiting two years or longer to seal the deal.

The increase in nuptials was around 75% versus 2019, notes Veronica Foster, president of the ABC and head of ABC USA, based on her own experience and feedback from her community of wedding service providers throughout the US.

“The boom of 2022 sure did happen,” she explains. “A lot of our members were a bit overwhelmed. [They were] ecstatic, because there was no income for us in 2020, and little in 2021, but 2022 was still incredibly stressful.”

Wedding registry site Honeyfund enjoyed a 20% year-on-year rise in sign-ups, reports its CEO, Sara Margulis.



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Meanwhile, Shane McMurray, CEO of data resource The Wedding Report, claims the vendors he spoke to in late 2021 were completely booked for 2022.

But does this indicate fundamental growth, or was it just a rollover of weddings that couldn't take place while the world was on pause?

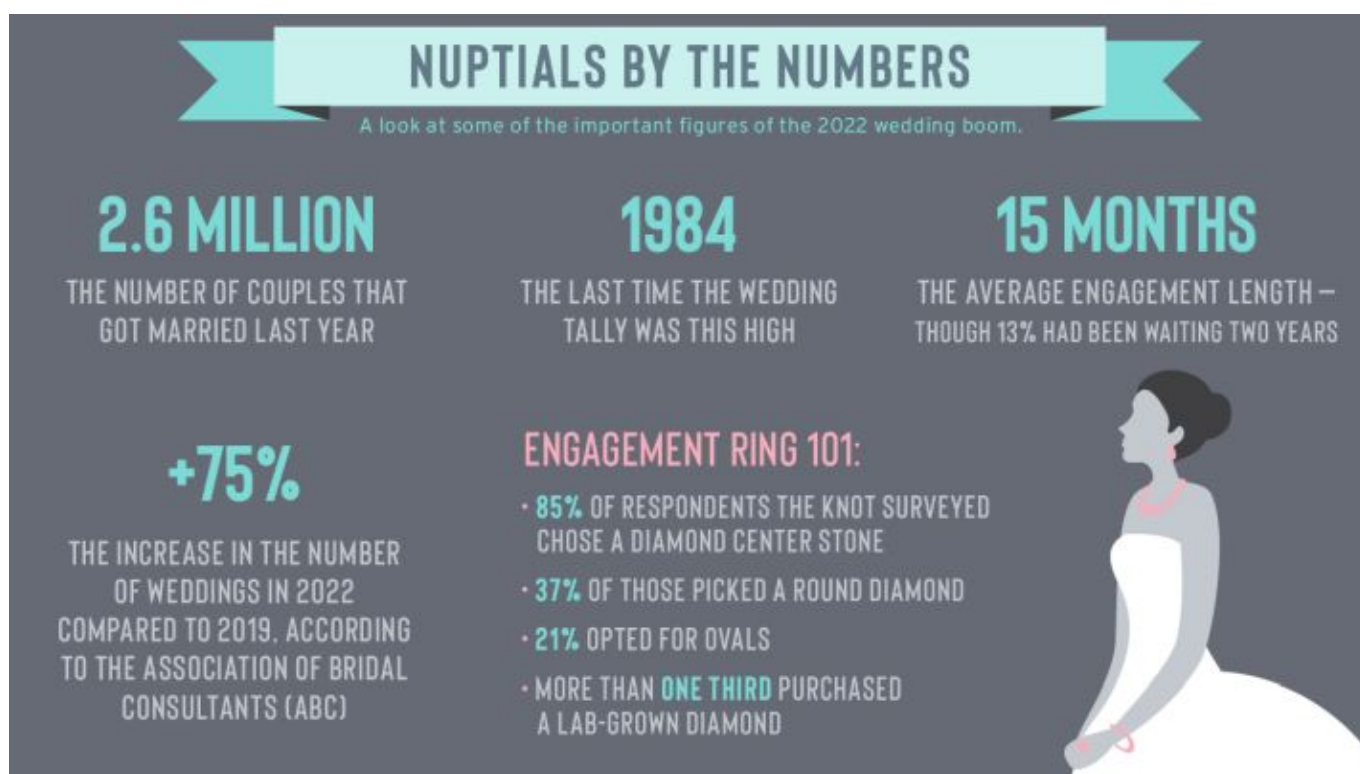
“I think this was the result of three years of weddings being stuffed into one year,” says Bruns. “Everybody came down at once, so you had kind of a dual thing going on. You had the people who waited, and then you had the people who would have normally gotten married in 2022, so it was kind of all compacted together.”

Bruns estimates the total number of weddings last year was about 50% to 60% higher than a normal, pre-pandemic wedding year.

## Keeping the ball rolling

The high rate of engagements last year indicates 2023 will be another strong one for the sector, says Severine Ferrari, founder of Engagement 101, a multimedia platform for couples planning their engagements.

“From the feedback I’m getting, 2022 was not just a boom year for wedding-band sales, but the engagement-ring market was booming,” Ferrari reports. “It’s still very strong. People sold at least 30% more than the year before.”



**Based on data from The Knot and the Association of Bridal Consultants (ABC)**

Within the engagement-ring segment, diamonds remained the number-one pick, according to The Knot. Some 85% of respondents the site surveyed chose them in 2022, with 37% of those buying round diamonds and 21% veering towards ovals. More than one-third of center stones purchased during the year were lab-grown.

McMurray agrees this year will be strong, noting that many wedding service providers who were fully booked last year have similarly tight schedules for 2023, and some even for 2024. Honeyfund data also show that due to the immense backlog of postponed weddings, many couples will be saying “I do” in 2023, Margulis says.

It’s not just local hot spots that are getting booked up. One of the more popular trends is destination weddings, and Foster has struggled to find space for her clients seeking that type of event.

“We’re finding that a lot of the resorts’ wedding dates are already booked until fall 2023, and that is much earlier than usual,” she explains. “Usually, if I tried to book right now, I could definitely get a date for September, October, but I’m having a really hard time, and I’m having to push a lot of clients into January 2024 just to get a date, sometimes even for a weekday. I spoke with one of our vendors yesterday who’s a very high-end luxury florist, and she told me she’s already overbooked for all of 2023 and can’t take any more.”

However, Bruns at *Wedding Planner Magazine* doesn’t believe 2023 will be as busy as people predict.

“I think this year will be closer to normal, or even slower,” she says. “Most vendors have said their backlog from postponed weddings has been worked though. I think people have also lost the sense of urgency that was driving them last year, because they didn’t know when things might shut down again. I think the economy will also hinder weddings, and people may decide to wait a year or so and save some money before getting married.”

Bruns wonders if that hesitation might lead to a mini-boom in 2024. Either way, she says, the jewelry industry will continue to thrive.

“From a jewelry-industry standpoint, I think they have nothing to worry about,” she comments. “2023 is probably going to be a decent year for engagements. [People will] continue to get engaged [and] they’ll continue to buy rings. They just won’t necessarily

get married right away.”

*Main image: A wedding that took place in 2022. (Zach Nichols, supplied by Robyn Bruns)*