



# THE MAIDEN NAME DEBATE:

## THE POWER OF A NAME IN BUSINESS AND BEYOND

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TRENDS, PERSPECTIVES, AND CHOICES FOR MAIDEN NAMES AFTER MARRIAGE





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## A SHIFT IN TRADITION

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77%

of married women said “I do” to taking their partner’s last name after getting married, but only

64%

of non-married women, expect to do the same—hinting at a future with more women rewriting their rules on marital name changes.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## TO CHANGE OR NOT TO CHANGE?

That's the question many women in the U.S. face when deciding whether or not to keep their maiden names after marriage. While many couples still follow the millennia-old tradition of women adopting their partner's last names, more women today are rethinking how the age-old practice aligns with their values, and choosing a married surname on their terms.

**Despite unmarried women being 13% more likely to buck the maiden name tradition compared to married women, many unmarried women across generations still intend to take their partner's last name:**

Unmarried women who plan to take their partner's surname by generation:

- **65%** of Gen Z unmarried women
- **63%** of Millennial unmarried women
- **63%** of Gen X unmarried women

The plethora of name choices highlights a unique shift, where women are taking charge of their maiden name decisions. The question of how a last name change will impact a woman's brand and identity is also more

top of mind than ever, especially among younger generations. While many women legally change their names, many of them—including those who've changed their last names—are proudly keeping their maiden names in their professional lives.

In fact, our research revealed that **27%** of women planning to change their maiden name in any way only plan to change it for their personal life and not professionally.

## SO, WHAT'S BEST FOR ME?

Well, it's personal, real personal. Your decision can be shaped by a spectrum of factors, including culture, religion, practicality, professional identity, family pressure and beyond, but that's why we're here.

This report peels back the layers of complexities behind this topic, unveiling insights and stories that explore women's and men's perspectives around maiden names through various lenses to help you own your decision.

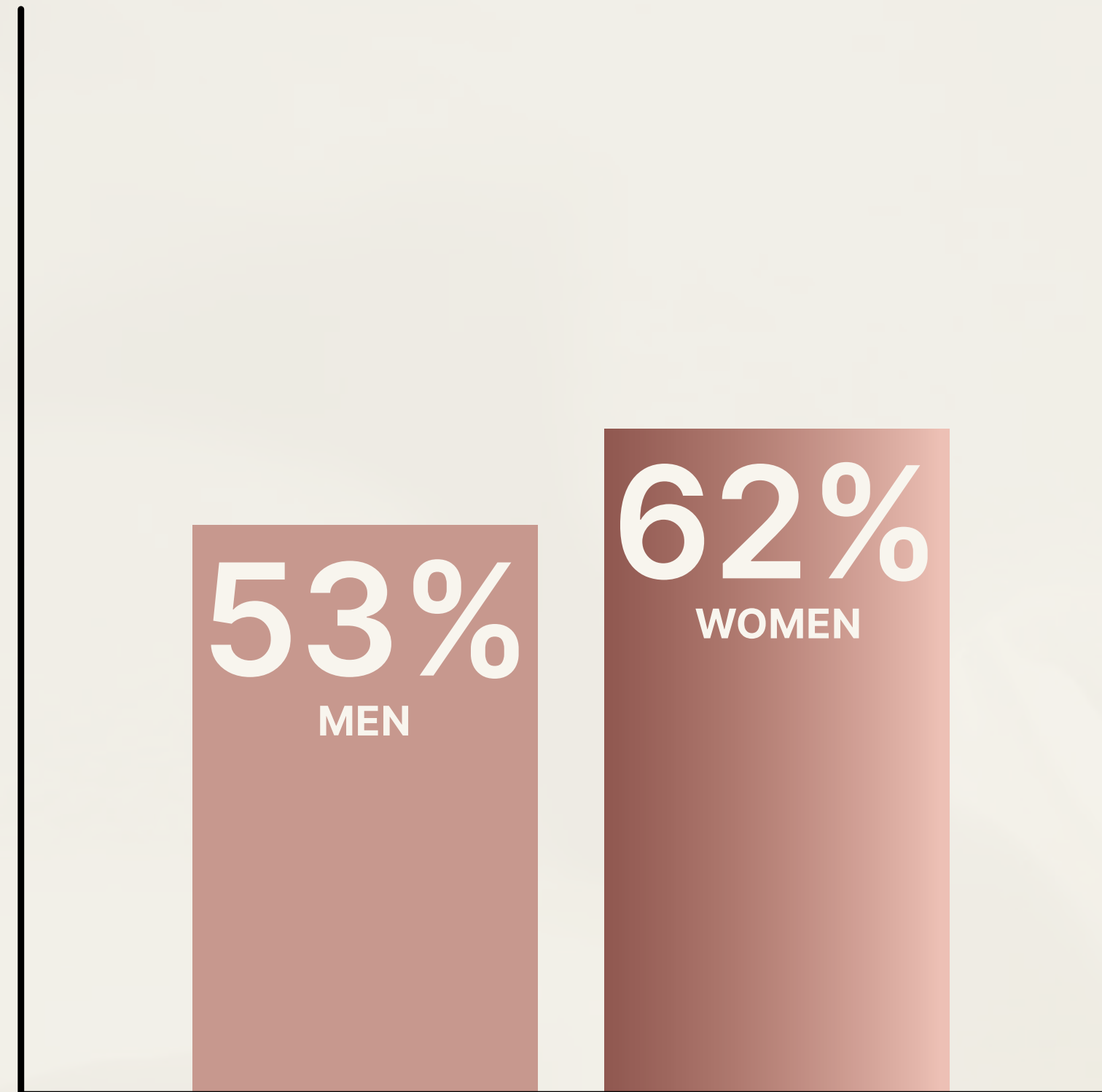
Spoiler alert: While there are certainly trends, there is no right choice, just what's right for you.

Let's talk about it!





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**SAY THE DECISION TO CHANGE A WOMAN'S NAME WHEN SHE GETS MARRIED SHOULD BE HERS**

**53% of men believe it's the woman's right to choose whether to change their last name upon marriage, and 62% of women agree. Older men are more likely than Gen Z men to say it's the woman's choice, with over 50% of Millennial and Gen X men agreeing versus 40% of Gen Z men.**

But, why do so many women still take their husband's last names if most people agree it's the woman's choice?

Patriarchal norms and antiquated traditions still take the cake as key influences, but not always in the way you'd expect. Attitudes towards the last name question are shifting. The tradition is loosening its grip, with women embracing less conventional last name approaches, such as hyphenating names or creating new ones combining elements of each name.

## **ONCE UPON A TIME...**

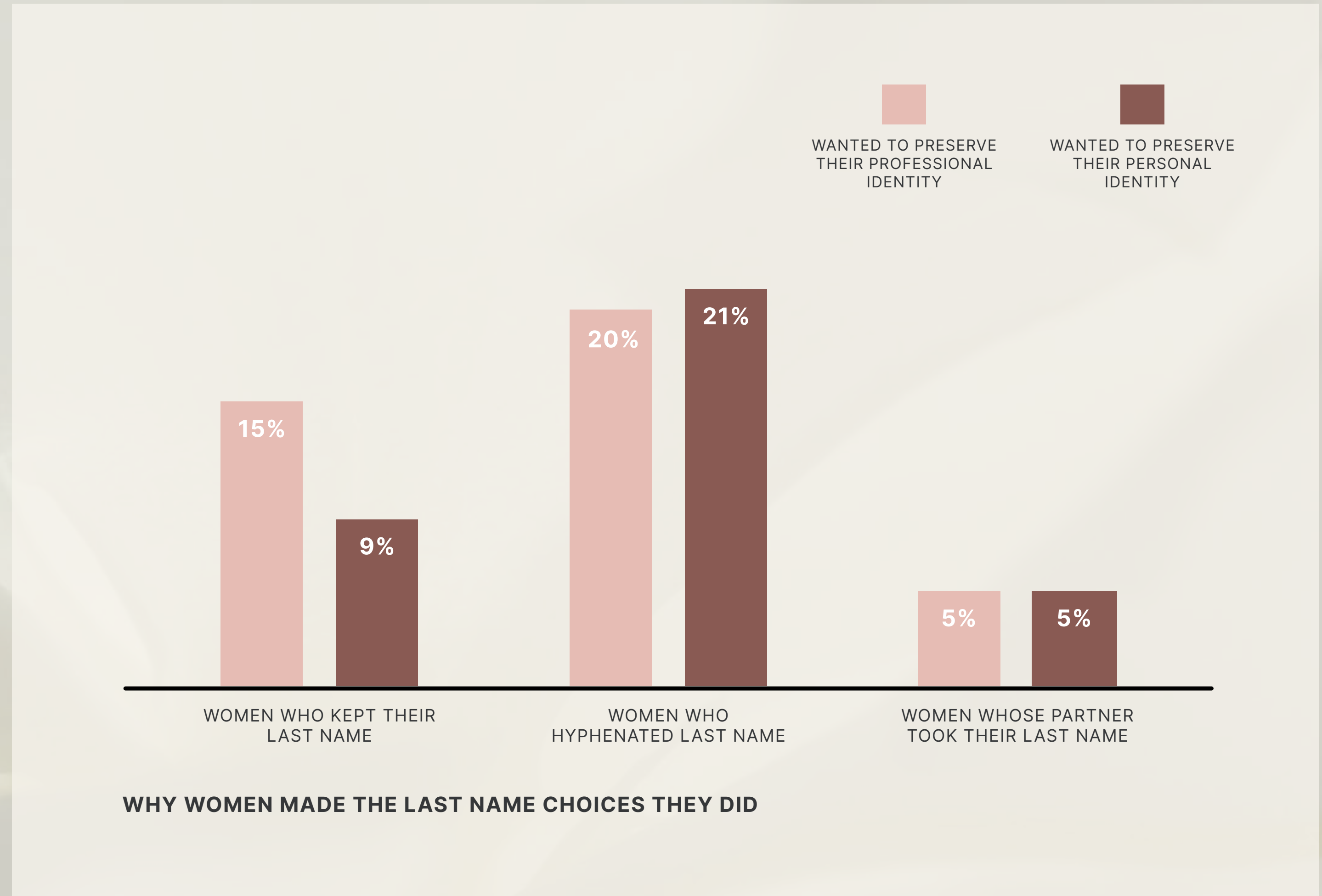
The [tradition](#) of U.S. women adopting their husband's last names is rooted in the centuries-old English common law. "Coverture" was the name of the game—an old law that turned wives into their husbands' legal property, and erased their identities by replacing the woman's surname with his when they married.

It wasn't until the [feminist movement and societal changes in the 70s](#) that sparked women to push for retaining their surnames. Despite these strides, tradition still significantly influences the fate of maiden names after marriage, whether due to cultural practices or the convenience of sticking to the status quo without exploring new options. Meanwhile, in many cultures outside the U.S., women preserve their maiden names after marriage, showing that the tradition of changing names is more of an American custom than a global norm.

# IN OUR DIGITAL ERA

In today's digital age, changing a name isn't just about tradition—it affects your visibility, personal brand, and professional identity in ways like never before. Women are creating personal brands online earlier than ever on Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Facebook, professional networks and beyond, and their names are foundational to their brands. At the same time, [women are getting married at an older age](#), which gives them more time to establish themselves in their careers with their maiden name.

A name change can make it harder to connect a woman's identity to career milestones, such as published work, promotions and other achievements. Also, as AI disrupts how we search for information, changing a woman's last name can result in her accomplishments that are associated with her original name to become unsearchable in algorithms. This unintentional erasure of women's successes from history could widen the women's inequality gap.





# IN OUR DIGITAL ERA

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## POWER IN PROGRESS

The legalization of same-sex marriage is also reshaping the last-name game. In LGBTQIA+ relationships, there's no precedent dictating who should change their last name to whose, since same-sex marriage laws are so new. The LGBTQIA+ community has long been writing their own traditions, having been excluded from marriage customs designed around heterosexual couples.

Instead, they've been sharing the decision-making process and leaning into factors like individuality, mutual equality, aesthetics, and more. Our survey unveiled that 53% of LGBTQIA+ married people took their partner's last name, while 26% chose to keep their last name. They're leading the way in redefining societal norms that heterosexual couples are also increasingly embracing, such as hyphenating and creating new last names.

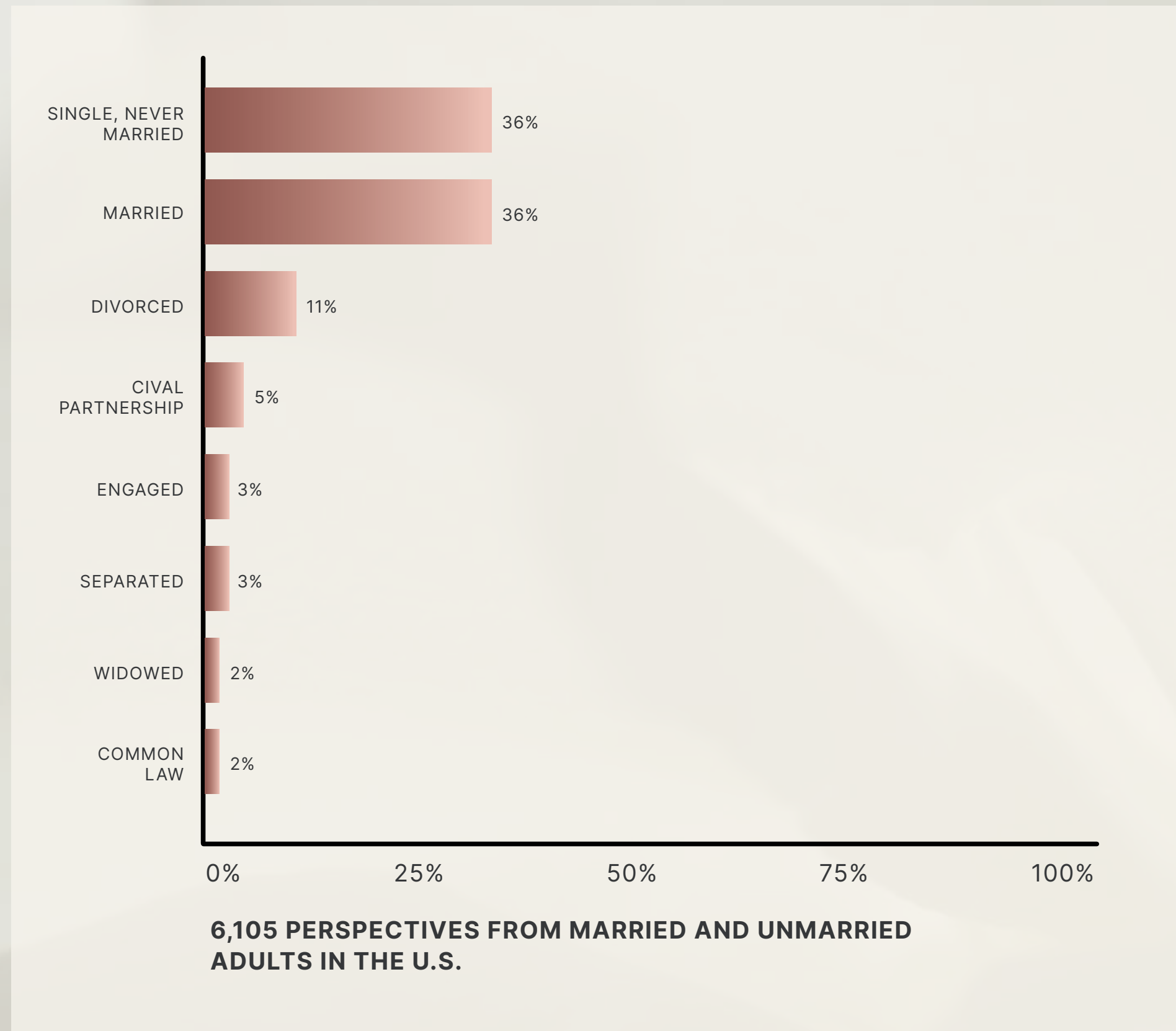
## WEDDING CHECKLIST MATERIAL

Compared to wedding guest lists, florals, and honeymoon planning, the last name question hasn't been top of mind since it was assumed that women would take the husband's last name. But today, the impacts of name changes are far more complex for women of all generations, married and unmarried, making it worth talking about. Just as younger generations have taken on the [practice of prenuptial agreements](#) more readily than prior generations, younger generations are more welcoming to the idea of not defaulting to taking a partner's last name in marriage.





# ABOUT THE REPORT



## BACKGROUND

[The Female Quotient](#) teamed up with [The Knot](#), an all-in-one wedding planning resource, and [SmithGeiger Group](#) to explore the maiden name question and the impact it has on women today. Our study examines the U.S. patriarchal tradition of women taking their husband's name, the impact this has on working women, and whether the custom will continue to have staying power. We set out to understand the status of women across generations who are taking their husbands' names, and examined the beliefs of those who are married or are planning to get married.

### 6,105 PERSPECTIVES FROM MARRIED AND UNMARRIED ADULTS IN THE U.S.

Quantitative surveys were fielded online in August 2023, January 2024, and August 2024 among adults ages 18-64 who are married or planning to get married. Of the qualified respondents:

Marital Status: Single, never married 36%; Common law 2%; Civil partnership 5%; Engaged

3%; Married 36%; Separated 3%; Divorced 11%; Widowed 2%

Sexuality: Identified as heterosexual 81% and identified as other orientations (asexual, bisexual, demisexual, lesbian, pansexual, queer and/or other) 15%

Gender: Male 48%, female 51%

## 2 LIVED EXPERIENCES GROUP DISCUSSIONS

We conducted two online focus group discussions with women representing various demographics and generational cohorts. One group consisted of married women, and the other consisted of single women. These discussions examined the changing tide of young women who are building brands with their surnames on their social media accounts in their teenage years and early in their career years, as well as the establishment of their brand in their career.

Note: All quotes in this report are from the women participants in these lived experiences group discussions.



# WHAT'S IN A NAME: IDENTITY

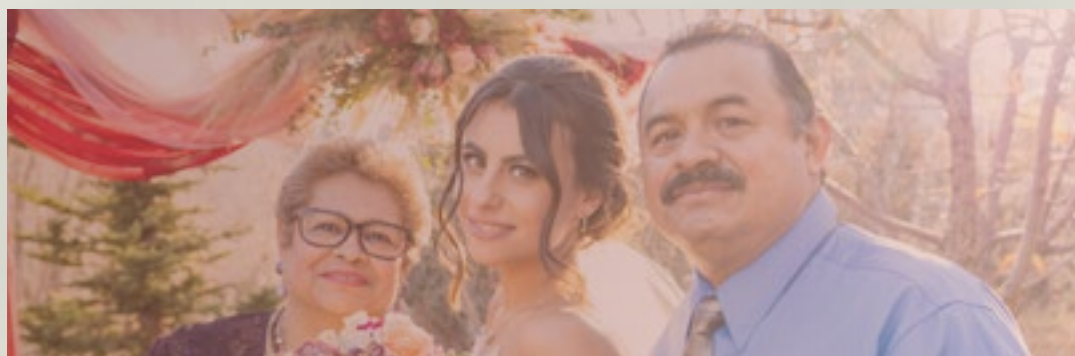
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# WHAT'S IN A NAME: IDENTITY

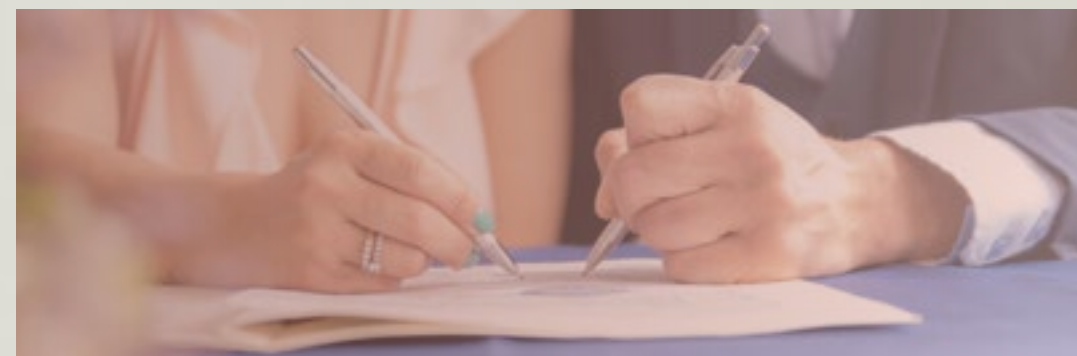
For women, changing their last name isn't just a swap—it's a potential identity overhaul. Before taking the plunge, they're thinking twice about how it affects their personal brand and career, especially younger women.

## WOMEN WHO SAID 'I DO' TO A NAME CHANGE



"My husband is a white man, and I selfishly felt his last name might work better for my career. My last name is Mexican, and you just never know what people think. It was also very important to my husband that I take his last name. I think he grew up thinking that's just what you do. It wasn't really important to me if I kept my last name, so I changed it."

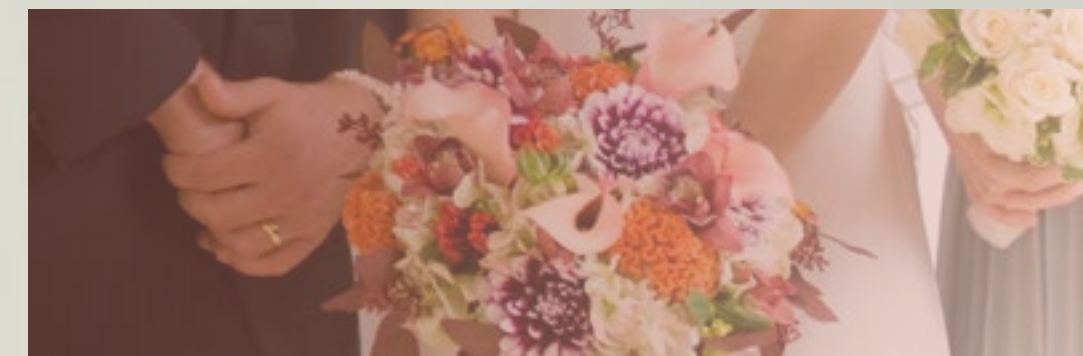
– MARRIED MILLENNIAL



"Historically, it has been women losing a part of our identity in the sense that when women got married, it was always you who became your husband's family, your husband's property. Then you have kids and you're a mother or you're a stay-at-home mom. [Keeping your last name] is an interesting perspective in terms of retaining identity."

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL

## WOMEN WHO OBJECTED TO A NAME CHANGE



"I come from a multicultural background. It's a German last name and no one knew how to pronounce it. As a kid, it was a challenge for me, but almost a badge of honor because I worked really hard for this last name that people respect and try to pronounce. It's an interesting part of who I am, so to walk away from that completely because I decided to marry just didn't resonate with me."

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL



"I've had my name for 26 years at this point, and it's just my identity. So, I definitely lean towards keeping it, but it would be a conversation."

– SINGLE GEN Z



# LET'S CLOCK IN

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**Where a woman is in her professional journey can determine her stance on changing her last name.** Older women and women with higher levels of education are more likely to keep their last names to protect their established reputations.

This wasn't always possible. [Until the 1970s](#), almost all women, including the highly educated, took their husband's surname. Prominent women, like the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who wished to keep their last names, sometimes used them as middle names.

**72% of married women do not plan to keep their professional name separate from their personal one. However, the likelihood of wanting to preserve a professional name increases with age among unmarried women.**

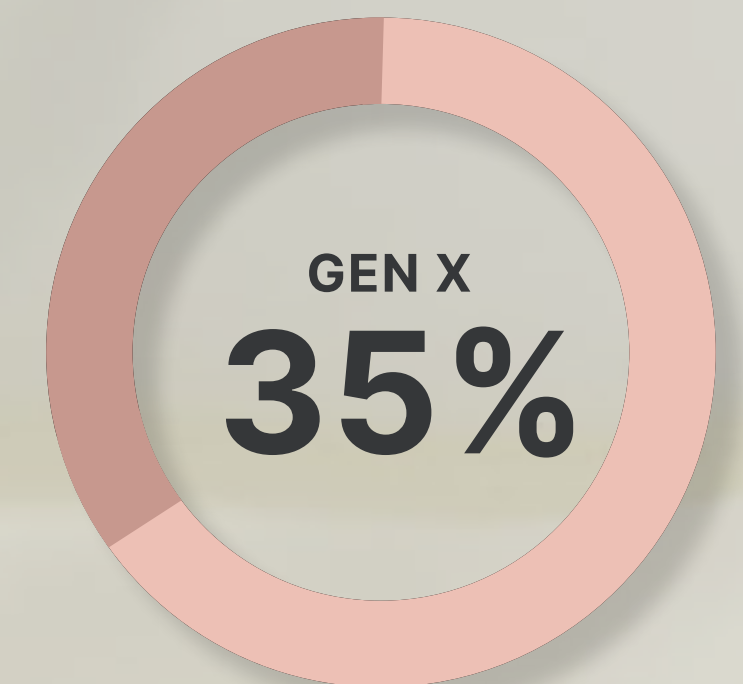
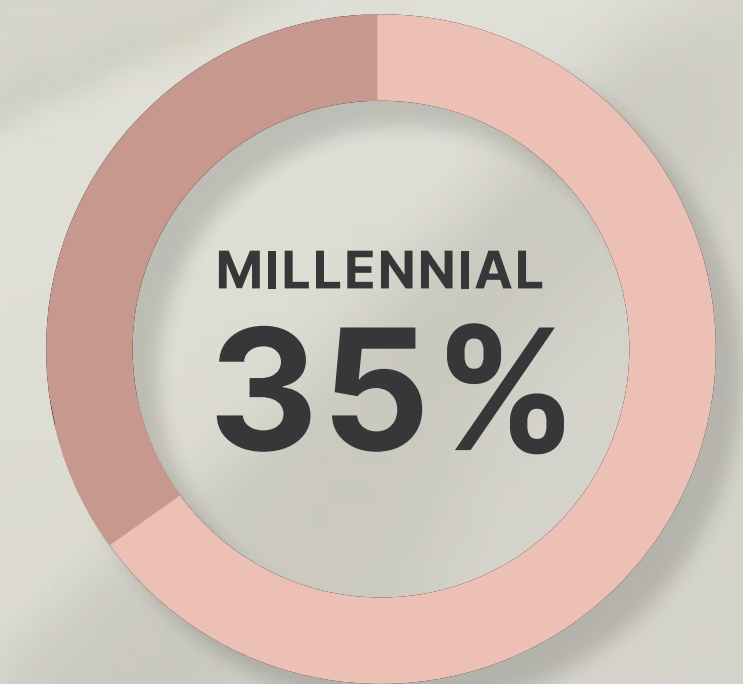
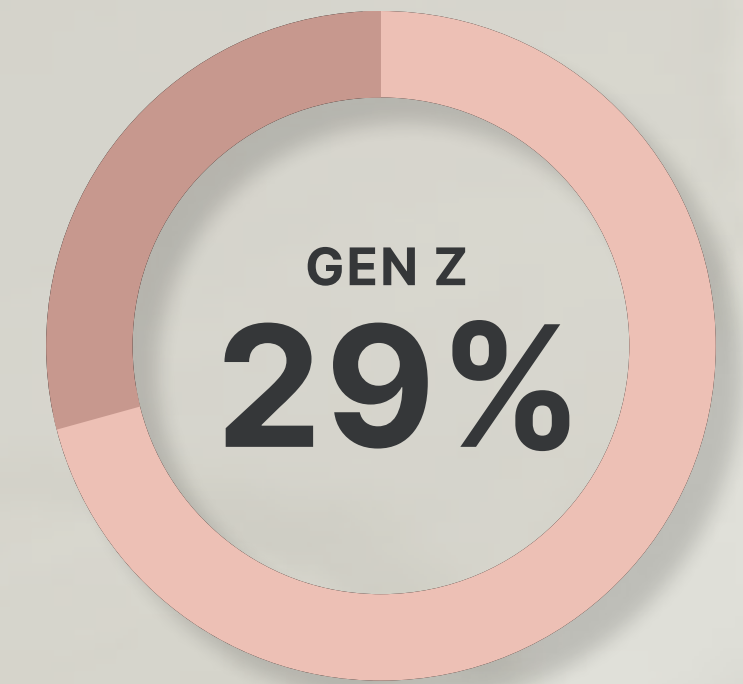
- **32%** of unmarried women intend to change only their personal name, compared to only **21%** of married women.
- **23%** of married people who changed their names after marriage didn't change their professional name after getting married, compared to **34%** of people not yet married who don't intend to change their professional last name.







**UNMARRIED WOMEN WHO SAY THEY  
WILL KEEP THEIR LAST NAME IN  
PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS**







“Maybe on social media I would change my profile, but not my handle, so it’s not hard to find me if you don’t know my new last name.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I would keep my full name and most of my social handles and email the same. But, in my profile and anything else, I would be willing to add on to it, like hyphenating last names.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“There should be a feature on social media around making maiden names for women more prominent. So their careers aren’t as impacted if they change their last name like, that’s a huge product feature that’s missing in the market.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

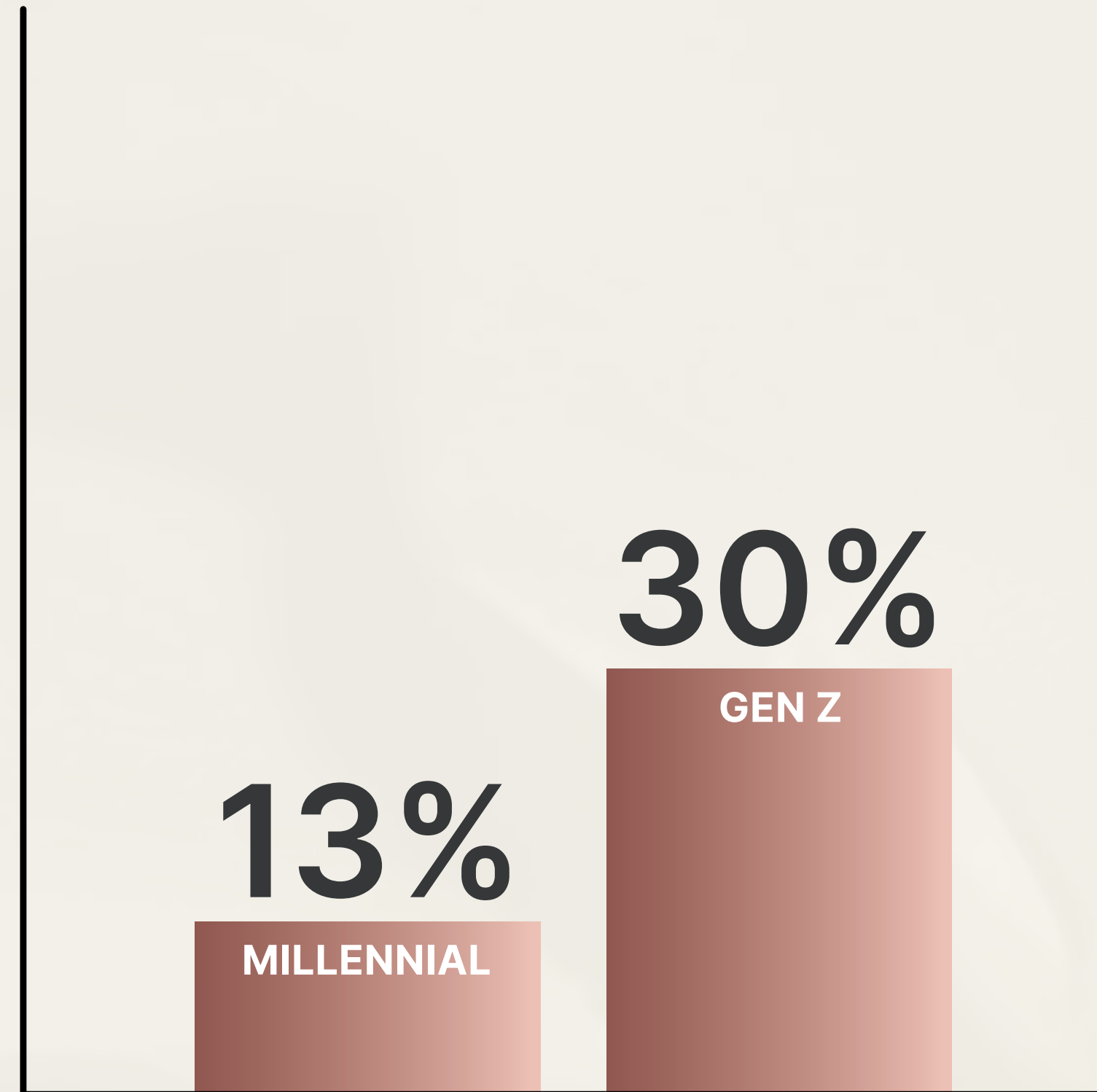
“In this day and age, it’s so different because we have a presence. Everyone has a platform. A lot of my friends and family on Facebook keep their maiden name on there so we can find them. I’d consider changing the alias to what my name would be and adding the extra name. But, I wouldn’t go through the trouble of changing my email because that would be a lot.”

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL



# RISE OF THE SOCIAL BRAND IDENTITY

"I WANT TO PRESERVE MY PERSONAL BRAND OR IDENTITY THAT INCLUDES MY LAST NAME ON SOCIAL MEDIA."



REASONS UNMARRIED WOMEN DECIDE TO CHANGE OR KEEP A LAST NAME AFTER MARRIAGE

**HOLD THE PHONE:** Gen Z women, in particular, prefer to keep their last names and not give up their brand identity and persona, especially what they established on social media.

While changing maiden names is still popular, our research shows the tradition is slowly fading among women and men, particularly the ones most likely to walk down the aisle next. Love birds are marrying later, and women with higher education are more likely to tie the knot. Women with an established career and reputation are thinking critically about how a name change will impact their personal and professional identity.


Yet despite the shift away from name-changes in their personal lives, this shift isn't always reflected in their professional lives. Many women who report they'll change their last names don't plan to use their partner's name professionally.

This means that a portion of women who say they'll take their spouse's surname may not reflect the women who legally changed their last names post-marriage but kept their maiden names professionally.

**WHAT'S ON HER MIND:** Women are keenly aware of their brand and how a name change could impact their digital footprint, and staying searchable and preserving the hard-earned reputation they built is a top priority.

Among women who will take a partner's name, hyphenate their name, or create a new surname, 27% did or planned to change their name for their personal life only, but not change their name in their professional life.



A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing glasses and purple scrubs, is seen from the side, reaching up to hang a framed certificate on a wall. The certificate is titled "DIPLOMA" and has a seal. In the background, there is a white shelf with books and a vase of orange and white flowers on a white cabinet.

“My sister-in-law kept her last name, but her reasoning was because she became a doctor, and all her doctor things say her last name on it. She has the hyphen informally, but when it comes to documents, she doesn’t want to go through the whole process. And, she’s proud of her last name because she went through all that work to become a doctor. My parents were mostly confused at first because I think this is such a new thing. But once they heard it, they’re like, oh, okay, I got respect for that.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I think that it’s important to know where we stand on that before we make any decisions on name changes. And, then professionally—where am I at in my profession? What am I doing? Is it going to be a big deal if I change my name? Would it matter for contact purposes, anything like that.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I was many years into my career when I got married. Uniquely, millennials and younger generations have digital footprints, and my maiden name was my digital footprint. As I was building my professional brand, it became one part of the decision to not change [my last name]. My last name was already established and I didn’t want to rebrand myself, [or] people to have to relearn who I am, or start over. I felt really passionate about continuing that brand throughout my profession.

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL





# IDENTITY LOSS?

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When a woman changes her surname, she often loses data continuity across systems that rely heavily on name recognition. Platforms like job applications, academic records, and social media accounts often fail to connect the dots between the old and new names. For instance, a woman who has built a successful career under her maiden name might find that AI systems struggle to link her past achievements with her new surname.

According to a 2021 Stanford University study, **women could experience up to a 30% drop in professional recognition after changing their last name.** Years of hard work and success may suddenly become invisible in the eyes of a machine.



# PUT A \*RING\* ON IT



“I’m the white partner in an interracial relationship. Objectively, I think my partner’s last name is cooler than mine. I also don’t have much of an attachment to my last name, so it would be cool to have hers. At the same time, I think it’s my responsibility [by taking her last name] to explore what that looks like. Being a white person carrying a name that doesn’t belong to my culture or ethnicity is something I would need to introspect on.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL



“I like my partner’s name way better than mine, but I think my last name represents a lot about who I am and my tenacity, and it has a pretty complex story that I’ve worked really hard to navigate coming from a multiracial background.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

**THE SOUND, SPELLING, MEANING OR ORIGINS OF A LAST NAME CAN PLAY A ROLE IN WHETHER A WOMAN DECIDES TO CHANGE HER LAST NAME TO HER PARTNER’S.**

# 50%

of women say this impacts their decision. It is even higher among Gen Z,

# 72%

of whom say that if their partner has a last name they don’t like, it will impact whether or not they’ll adopt their partner’s last name.



# A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE HER NAME

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# HER CALL

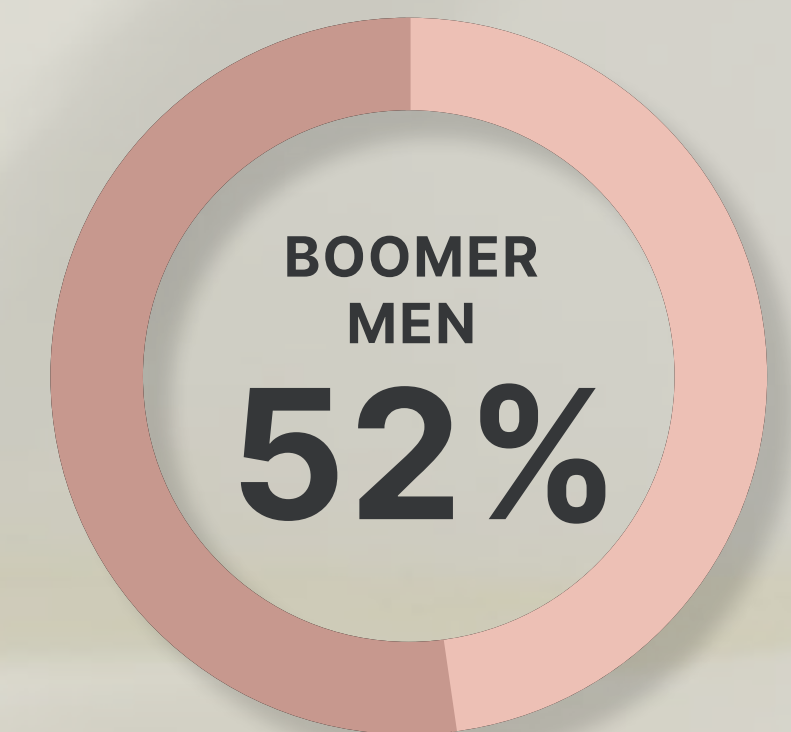
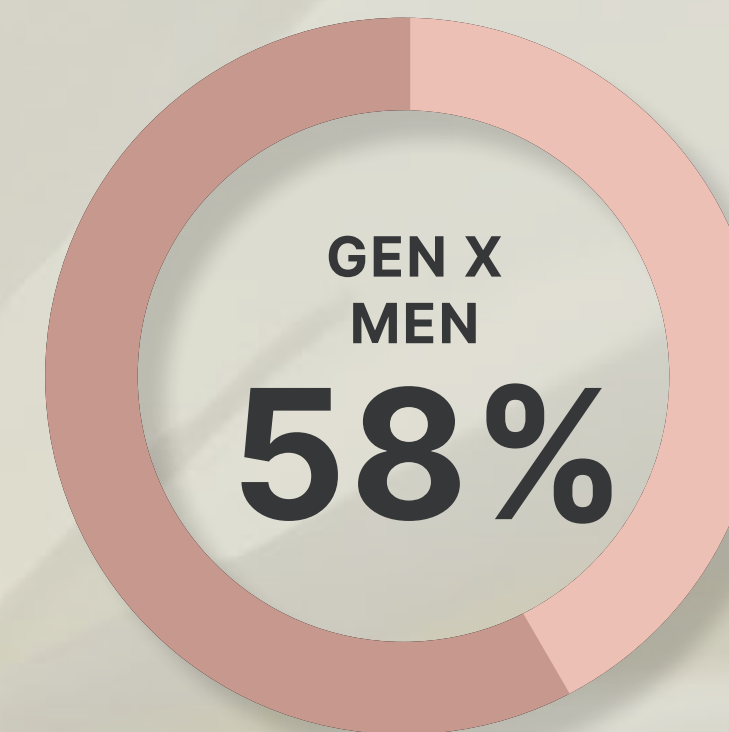
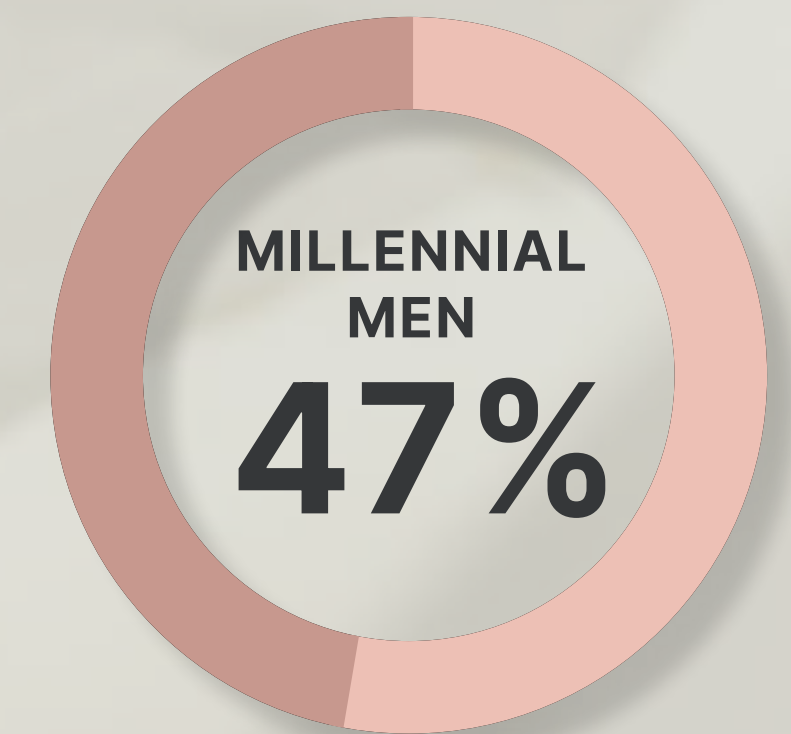
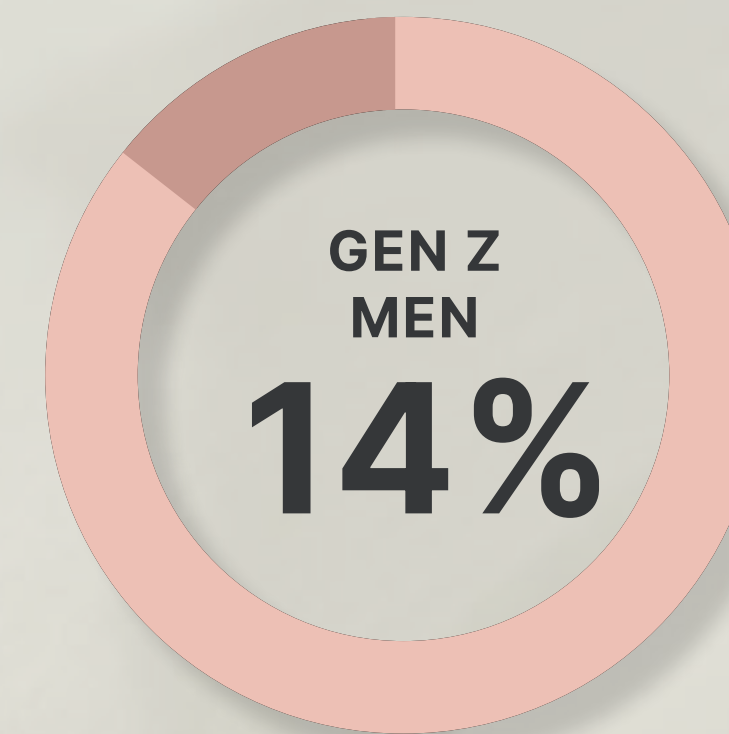
Most women and men agree that the decision to take a partner's last name in marriage belongs to women.

**62%** of all women, regardless of marital status, feel it should be "her" decision whether to change her last name when she gets married, and **32%** of women feel it should be a collective decision.

**Fewer husbands feel strongly about their wife changing her last name to theirs.**

- **51%** of married men don't have strong feelings about it and want their wife to make the call for her last name vs. **44%** of married men having strong feelings about wanting their wife to change her last name to his.
- **53%** of men believe it's a woman's right to choose whether she changes her last name when getting married, with only **36%** believing it should be a collective decision.
- **56%** of married women's husbands don't have strong feelings about it and want her to do what she wants vs. **42%** of married women's husbands having strong feelings about wanting them to change their last name to his.

## GEN Z MEN OVERWHELMINGLY ARE THE LEAST OPEN TO WOMEN DOING WHAT THEY WANT WITH THEIR LAST NAMES







“Why does this [tradition] even exist? The history didn’t resonate with me. I had a conversation with my partner about if it was important to him because that would influence my decision. He said it’s whatever you want to do.”

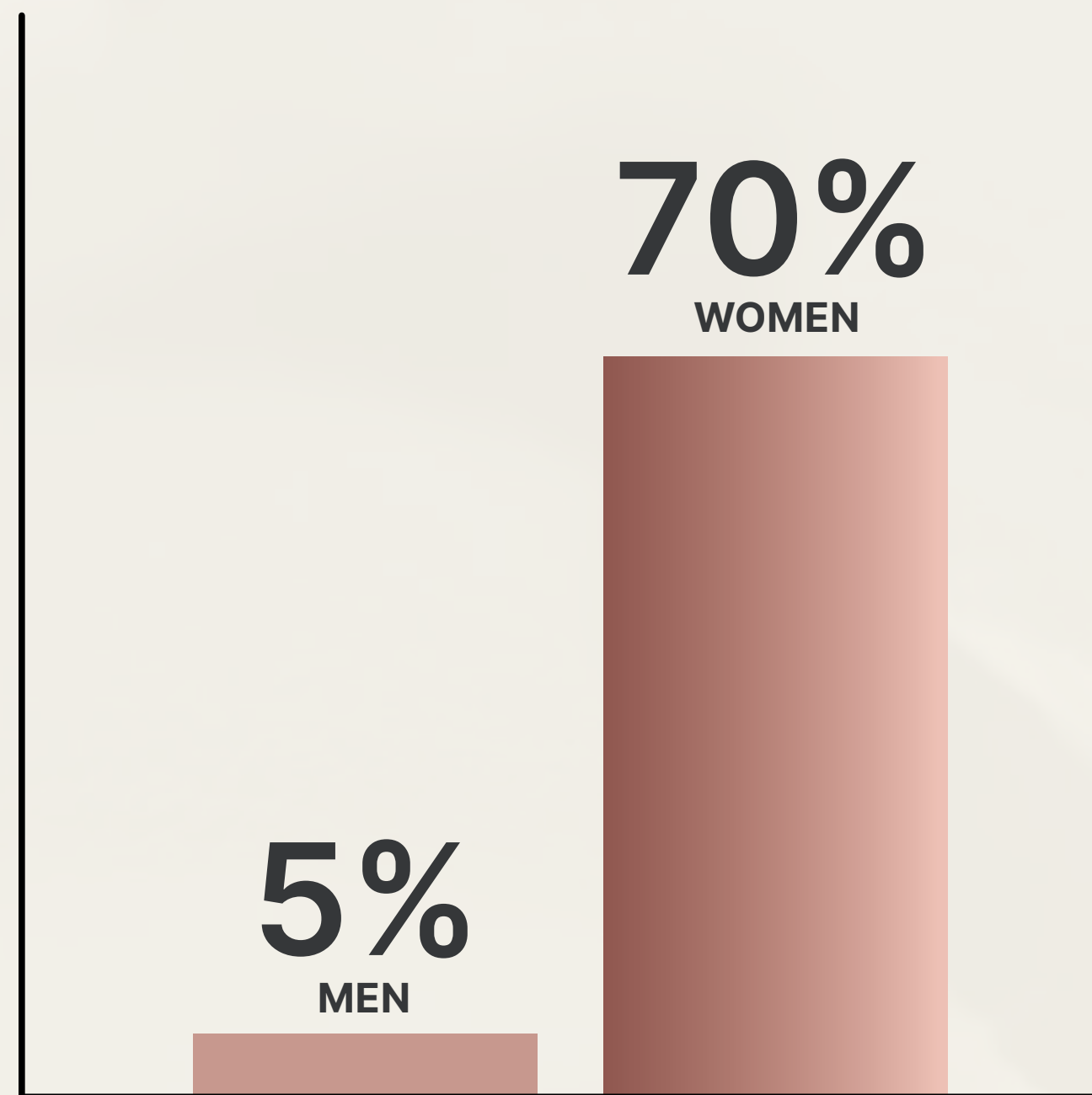
– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

“I wouldn’t want to be with someone who doesn’t allow me [to make the decision]. Because then I think, why do you feel that way? Is it because you feel a stronger gender role as a man, so I need to take your last name?”

– SINGLE GEN Z



# THAT'S WHAT HE SAID



WILL TAKE A PARTNER'S LAST NAME WHEN GETTING MARRIED

Among women who are married, have been married, or plan to get married, **70% of women will take a partner's last name. 5% of men say the same.**

**Unmarried Gen Z men are more likely to take their partner's name.**

- **3%** of married men took a partner's name
- **7%** of unmarried men who plan to marry intend to take a partner's name
- **15%** of unmarried Gen Z men would take a partner's name, compared to 5% of Millennials and **6%** of Gen X men

## IN HIS WORDS

We asked men, "Would you consider taking your spouse's last name?" Here's the tea, and it's mixed:

"Sure. I never thought there was a good reason for the woman to take the man's name."

"If she really wanted me to, I would."

"Definitely not. I really enjoy and like my last name, so I'd keep it."

"I already talked to my girlfriend about it. If we get married, she'll probably keep her last name, which is totally fine with me."

"I think it's my family name and I want it to go on. If I took her name, my children's name would be after her and my family name would die. Plus mine starts with 'B' and hers starts with 'W' and it would be too far down the alphabet."

"Absolutely. It's just a name, it's not that big of a deal."

"It wouldn't worry me. It's too hard to spell though."

"No. It's not necessarily that she has to take my last name. She can keep her last name if she really wants to, but if we're going to be a unit...she can be on this [my] side."

"If she's happy with it then why not?"

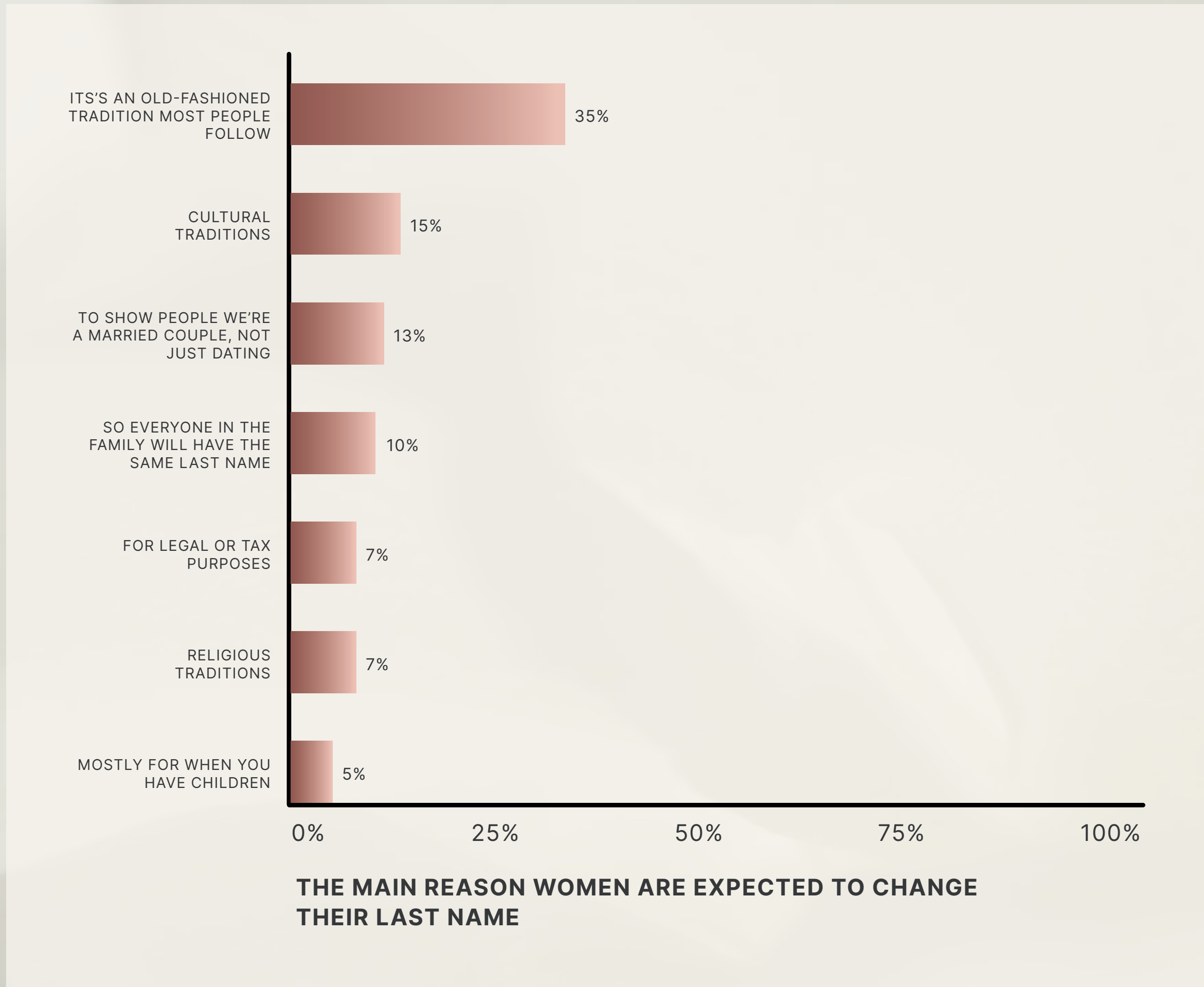


# CONDITIONED - OR NOT - TO TRADITION

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# OLD FASHIONED TRADITIONS



Most women and men agree that the main reason why women are expected to change their last name to their spouse's is because of old-fashioned or cultural traditions that people continue to follow. However, today's unmarried women are flipping the script, questioning the status quo, and expecting real conversations before making their choice.

**This sentiment that an old-fashioned tradition is the main reason is even higher among unmarried women of all ages.**

- Gen Z: **42%**
- Millennial: **42%**
- Gen X: **36%**
- Boomer: **42%**

**20%** of married men believe cultural traditions are a primary reason that women are expected to change their last names in marriage, including:

- Millennial: **23%**
- Gen X: **26%**
- Boomer: **14%**





# OLD FASHIONED TRADITIONS

Most married women say they chose their partner's last name because it's what they themselves wanted or they wanted to follow tradition. Among those who kept their last name, most confirm it was what they wanted, or they wanted to preserve their family name's legacy.

**When asked why they adopted their husband's last name after marriage, most women responded that it's "what they want to do," while others cited tradition.**

## WANTING TO "FOLLOW TRADITION"

Already married

**65%**

of married women cite wanting to "follow tradition"

Not married (but would marry)

**50%**

cite tradition

## IT'S "WHAT I WANT TO DO"

Already married

**64%**

of married women express this

Not married (but would marry)

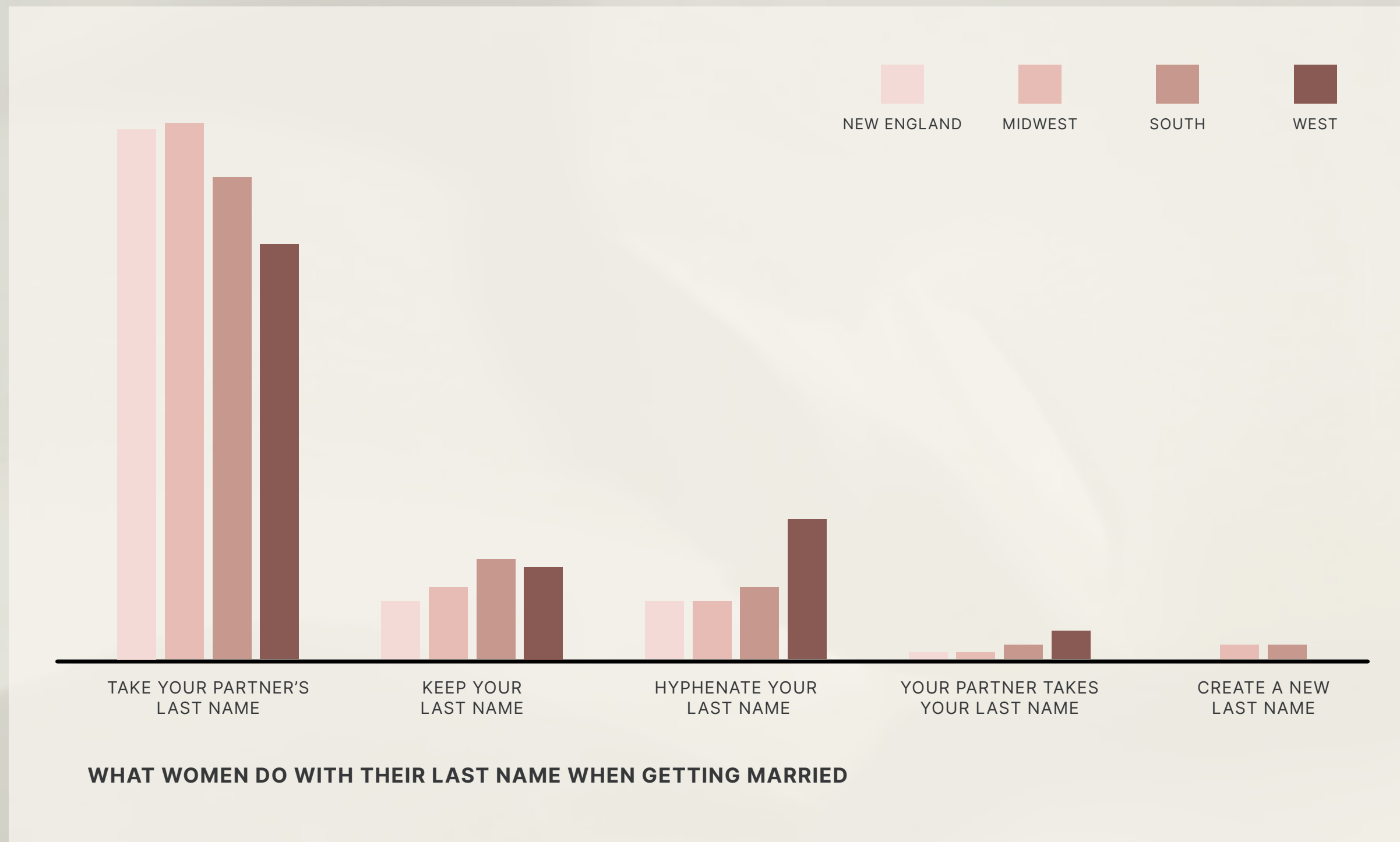
**53%**

express this



**Taking a partner's last name is consistent across U.S. regions, although women in the West are the least likely to do so and most likely to hyphenate.**

- There's an **11%** difference between women in the West and the average of all women when it comes to taking a partner's last name (**70%** for all women).
- There's a **9%** difference for women in the West hyphenating, compared to all women (**11%** for all women).
- Women in the South are the most likely to keep their last name.







“It’s kind of taken as a standard still that the woman will take the man’s last name if you’re in a straight relationship. Okay, but why?”

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL

“The significance of it [is important]. If I can set an example that shows my children they have a choice. We don’t have to follow traditional roles.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I think it truly is a personal choice, so I wouldn’t have to justify it to anyone, just myself and my partner, especially if they felt strongly about it. One person I dated talked about family expectations, and I know that was important to their family. So, it’s also about influence – what does that look like if my partner and my wife don’t take my last name? What does it look like to the rest of my family? That’s a consideration in terms of other reasons or other values. That also says more about the person in terms of what they value and what our relationship could look like.”

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL



# FAMILY NAMES MATTER TO WOMEN

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**Unmarried women feel most strongly about keeping their last names when they get married, and are questioning the tradition and asserting their right to choose.**

**WEDDING KEEPSAKE:** For some women, keeping their maiden name helps them feel like they're [preserving a meaningful part of themselves](#) by keeping their personal and familial identity and heritage.

Some women hyphenate their last name after marriage to include their partner's so their family's name isn't lost. Younger women in our focus groups also said they hyphenated their last name because they have built a personal brand around their name.

- **5%** of married women say they hyphenated their last name
- **15%** of unmarried women talk about hyphenating their name, and this remains consistent among unmarried women of all generations.

**For women who hyphenated, 63% said that the biggest driver was wanting to preserve their family name.**







“I lean towards wanting to hyphenate or wanting to keep my last name. Especially because I am an only child, so I don’t want my last name to die with me.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I wouldn’t want to take their last name because I have such a rare last name. Since no one really has my last name, I wouldn’t want it to die out either.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“My dad would probably love it [if I kept my last name] because it is his last name.”

– SINGLE GEN Z

“I think I would have to see their reasoning first, like why they would want it [me to change my last name] so bad. If it’s because of gender roles or traditional values, then I probably wouldn’t do it for that. But if they had another reason that I could agree with, then maybe. I’m willing to compromise and hyphenate.”

– SINGLE GEN Z



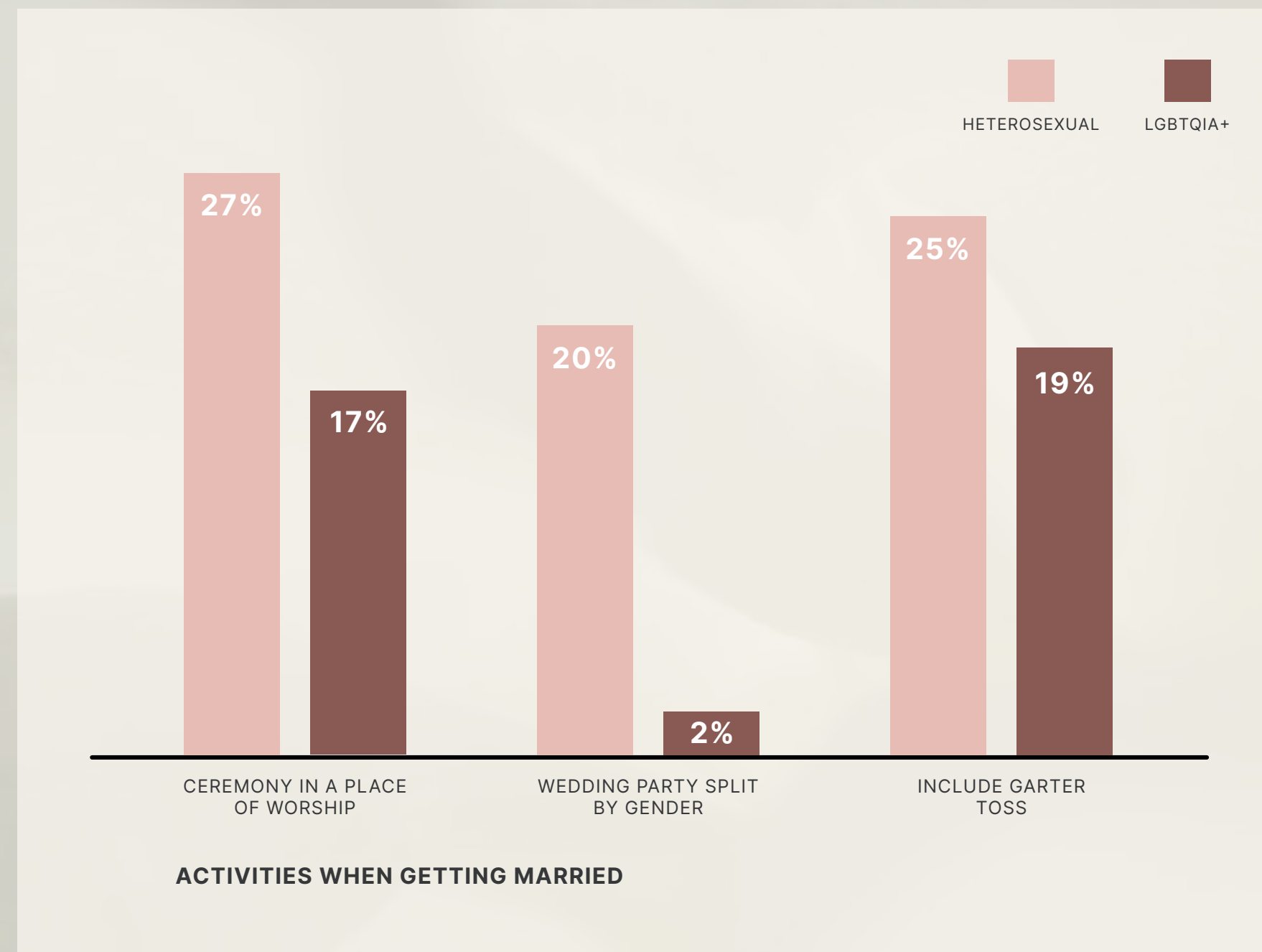
Recent changes in same-sex marriage laws are also shaking up tradition. LGBTQIA+ women are less inclined to adhere to traditional practices, including the tradition of changing their maiden names upon marriage.

LGBTQIA+ are less likely to take part in traditional elements like having their ceremony in a place of worship (10% less than heterosexual couples), dividing wedding party members by gender (12% less than heterosexual couples), and having a garter toss (6% less than heterosexual couples).

53% of LGBTQIA+ married people took their partner's last name, while 26% chose to keep their last name.

Just under 20% of LGBTQIA+ couples did or plan to hyphenate or create a new last name (18%).

These insights highlight the preference LGBTQIA+ couples have to personalize last name choices in ways that reflects their unique story and relationship, rather than fitting into an old mold that never truly represented them.





# WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

**MODERN FAMILY:** Among married women who didn't or don't plan to change their name, more say their children were given or will be given their spouse's last name or a combined version of both.

Even if a woman or couple doesn't follow strict traditions, the mainstream belief of what a "good family" is supposed to mean or look like can shape their decision. There's still a sense that having the same last name symbolizes commitment, and ties all family members into one unit, and this sentiment is especially strong in women who have kids.

Cultural reasons also have a big impact on whose last name the children will take, followed by legal and administrative reasons that can make life complicated without a shared family name.

- Among women and men, cultural traditions (**33%**) have the most influence on whose last name the children will take
- Legal reasons and making administrative paperwork easier are tied for second (**26-27%**)

- Religious traditions are less influential, but still an important consideration for some (**20%**)
- Interestingly, cultural (**36% men, 29% women**) and religious traditions (**23% men, 17% women**) are more influential in men's decision-making process

In the U.S., children often inherit their father's last name due to patriarchal traditions and societal norms that prioritize paternal lineage, but evolving attitudes encourage families to explore alternatives adopting the mother's surname, hyphenation and more. Giving children the mother's surname is an option for all-girls families, for example, to pass on the mother's name and honor the maternal family's heritage.

Around the world, various cultures' traditions entail giving children their mother's last name, or similar, such as in parts of India, Indonesia, Romania and more. In Spain and Latin American countries, children typically receive both parents' surnames, honoring both family's roots. In Japan, daughters may retain their mother's maiden name if they're the last in the family line.







# WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

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In the U.S., many believe that [using one spouse's last name is easier](#) socially and legally, and can prevent “administrative headaches” when it comes to things like booking flights, insurance, healthcare and who’s allowed to pick up a child from school.

Even women who kept their maiden name at marriage [might change it to her husband's after having children](#) to avoid confusion.

“If you’re in a family unit with children, that could be a logistical nightmare if you have multiple last names in your family. I think logistics are a huge one [reason] as well.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

“The biggest challenge when I made the decision [to keep my last name] was if my husband and I do eventually want a family, if we honor the tradition of giving our children his last name. [I thought about how] I won’t share a last name with my children and that is something that gave me pause, and still something I think about...like there’s perhaps a world where I’ll change my last name when we have kids.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL



# THE UNEQUAL COST OF LOVE

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# THE UNEQUAL COST OF LOVE

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Changing your name is no small feat—it's time-consuming, expensive, and packed with administrative headaches. From updating credit cards and bank accounts to driver's licenses and passports, it's a full-on paperwork marathon after marriage. And if things don't work out? It's women, once again, who get hit with the hassle and costs of changing everything back.

**Among married women who changed their name to their spouse's, 89% changed it legally.**

"I did [change it legally]. I wouldn't say it's difficult, more like a massive hassle because you have to do everything individually. Your social security numbers first, then you have to change your driver's license, your bank accounts and credit cards."

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

"I think I'd want to do the thing with less hassle and that costs less money, but I'd have to assess how it affects me professionally. If changing it helps me, then I'd also consider that."

– SINGLE GEN Z

"I probably wouldn't go through the whole process unless it benefited me too, just because it is like so much work and I don't really feel so strongly about doing that."

– SINGLE GEN Z

"No matter what we choose, it doesn't have to be something that's legally changed. I may not have to go through that whole process if I choose not to, if it's not important to my partner, and if it can just be a social thing. If I keep it, it would be for identity reasons and not wanting to change everything—aliases, emails, professional and personal brands. People know me by my full name right now."

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL



# THE UNEQUAL COST OF LOVE

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When women get separated or divorced, the woman carries the burden to reverse her name back or keep it the same.

- **35%** of married women changed their last name back to their maiden name when getting separated or divorced, whereas 60% kept their name as is.
- When considering separating or getting divorced, women most think about:
  - Impact of changing name on children: **50%**
  - Cost to go through changing their name: **23%**
  - Time it would take to go through the process of changing their name: **20%**

“Having to reclaim your identity is something a lot of people don’t think about. The women I know who are divorced, so many of them have ended up not changing their name back to their maiden name just because of the logistical headaches that go with that.”

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL





# THE UNEQUAL COST OF LOVE

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**When children are involved now or in the future, name change stakes are raised and the likelihood that a woman will change her name back to her maiden name decreases.**

Only **8%** give their children the mother's last name, and another **8%** hyphenate to include both parents' last names.

**Six in ten women** in our focus group gave their children their partner's last name.

When getting divorced or separated, the mothers considered the impact on the children to be the most important factor in deciding whether to change their last name back or keep their married name. Other factors considered include the time and cost to go through the name change process.

"It was important for me to have the same name as the rest of my family, my husband and my children. The idea that children will automatically get the father's last name is something that needs to be looked at, because why do they take the dad's name? Why don't they take the mom's? Then the mom wouldn't feel as compelled to have to lose her name and take the husband's name. I want everyone to have the same name, but I think that it shouldn't have to be the husband's last name."

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

"Kids would be part of the discussion for me personally, so I think that would also play into whether I would be changing my name or hyphenating it."

– SINGLE GEN Z

"We chose my husband's last name for his career. It just wouldn't make sense for him to change his name, and I definitely want us to have the same name. Maybe you would call it an ego thing, but he had the more prominent last name, so we went with that."

– MARRIED MILLENNIAL

"I think having the same name, or having elements of her [the woman's] name, is important, so that you can recognize the family unit."

– SINGLE MILLENNIAL

"I would want the same [name] as my kids, but it also depends if I have a good relationship with my husband, and we would be together, then I would want the same last name. But, if it was a different situation and I was a single mom or similar, then I think I would want them to have my name. It would depend on the relationship status."

– SINGLE GEN Z

"I'd rather keep it just because I'm not crazy about the whole traditional values. But if I have kids, I will definitely want them to at least have part of my name."

– SINGLE GEN Z



# FINAL THOUGHTS

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# FINAL THOUGHTS

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## **BRAND IDENTITY IS CHANGING OLD TRADITIONS**

Names today are more than just tradition or family heirloom—it's your brand. Women—especially the digital-savvy younger generation who are carving out their personal and professional identities online, and even older women with established careers—are ditching tradition to preserve their legacy and own their narrative.

## **THE NUMBERS DON'T TELL THE FULL STORY**

Women who change their last name legally, but continue to use their maiden name professionally is a growing trend. Yet women who choose this route would identify in traditional studies as those who have changed their maiden name. So while 70% of women say they changed their maiden name, there is a portion of these women who are still maintaining their maiden names through professional or personal expression of it.

## **EMBRACE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE**

The decision for a woman to keep or change her maiden name after marriage no longer just hinges on tradition. Times have changed, and more women are reflecting on how their name connects to their values, beliefs, and professional identity. The conversation is shifting from “what's expected?” to “what's right for me?”

Unmarried women across generations are evaluating various factors before making the call, weighing economic, familial, social, professional, religious and other impacts of a name change. In today's digital world, a name change can have a lasting impact on your personal and professional brand, a factor we'll see carry more weight as younger generations of women walk down the aisle.

Your name is your story. Whichever you decide, make sure it's one you're proud to tell. Cheers to that!





# REFLECTIONS

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# REFLECTIONS

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**FIRST DATE BUTTERFLIES:** Not sure how to start talking or thinking about whether to keep or change your last name?

We have your back! Here are some thought starters:

- **WHAT A GIRL WANTS: UNDERSTAND YOUR VALUES AND DESIRES**

Have strong feelings about whether to change your last name? Consider family or cultural traditions that you value, and how keeping or changing your last name can impact that. If you're having kids, what last name would you like them to have?

- **MIRROR, MIRROR: CONSIDER PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IMPLICATIONS**

Consider if you have or plan to have a strong professional online presence, whether for your personal brand, becoming an influencer, or ensuring that your professional achievements maintain their visibility. Changing your last name could impact how easily people can discover your achievements or associate your achievements with you.

- **ADULT HOMEWORK: STUDY THE PAPERWORK, PROCESSES AND COSTS**

Research your state's laws, paperwork, timelines and costs associated with changing your last name, which could entail social security, passport, driver's license and much more. Check out this guide from [The Knot](#) for more.

- **THAT'S NOT MY NAME: ARE YOU OKAY WITH BLURRED LINES?**

Having one last name between a couple or for a whole family can make it easier for people and documents in your social, professional, and legal worlds to get your name right. These potential back-and-forths may not matter to some women, but if it's already stressing you out, then that's a sign to consider this.

- **REAL TALK: SIT DOWN WITH YOUR PARTNER**

Talk to your partner and get a pulse on how they feel about what the last name question means to them, and why. Get real and exchange perspectives, and get into why you feel the way you feel. It may not take one conversation, but multiple.



## ABOUT THE FEMALE QUOTIENT

The Female Quotient (The FQ) is an experiences, media, and transformation company advancing equality in the workplace. With the largest global community of women in business, The FQ creates visibility and connections for women and conscious leaders at a global scale across every industry. The FQ's signature Equality Lounge® has changed the business agenda at tentpole industry conferences including CES, Davos, Cannes Lions, and more. Together with our partners, our mission is to change the equation and close the gender gap. For more on how to partner with The FQ and to join our community, please visit [www.thefemalequotient.com](http://www.thefemalequotient.com) and follow @femalequotient on Instagram and LinkedIn.

## ABOUT THE KNOT

The Knot is a leading all-in-one wedding planning resource and Vendor Marketplace that connects couples with more than 200,000 local wedding professionals and offers a comprehensive suite of planning tools that includes personalized wedding websites, invitations and registry services that make planning easier to help couples enjoy the experience. The most trusted authority on wedding planning, The Knot reaches a majority of engaged couples in the US through TheKnot.com; a leading wedding planning app with the most 5-star reviews on iOS and Android, The Knot Wedding Planner; The Knot national wedding magazine; and The Knot book series. Since its inception, The Knot has inspired approximately 25 million couples to plan a wedding that's authentic to them.

## ABOUT SMITHGEIGER

SmithGeiger Group, founded in 2001, is a consultative insights and strategy firm, focused on enabling and supporting the success of our clients in the US and globally, across the media, technology, and consumer sectors. In a world overwhelmed with data, trustworthy guidance is critical. We specialize in partnering with our clients to transform data into something more: relevant, actionable, results-oriented insights. Our team of passionate experts specializes in data-driven, innovative solutions, providing our clients with a deeper understanding of their businesses and the most efficient pathways to growth, viewer and customer loyalty, and long-term success. The group also includes divisions such as Elevate Marketing Research, Vivid Zero Creative Agency, and AccelerateSG. Know what's possible. For more information, visit [smithgeigergroup.com](http://smithgeigergroup.com).