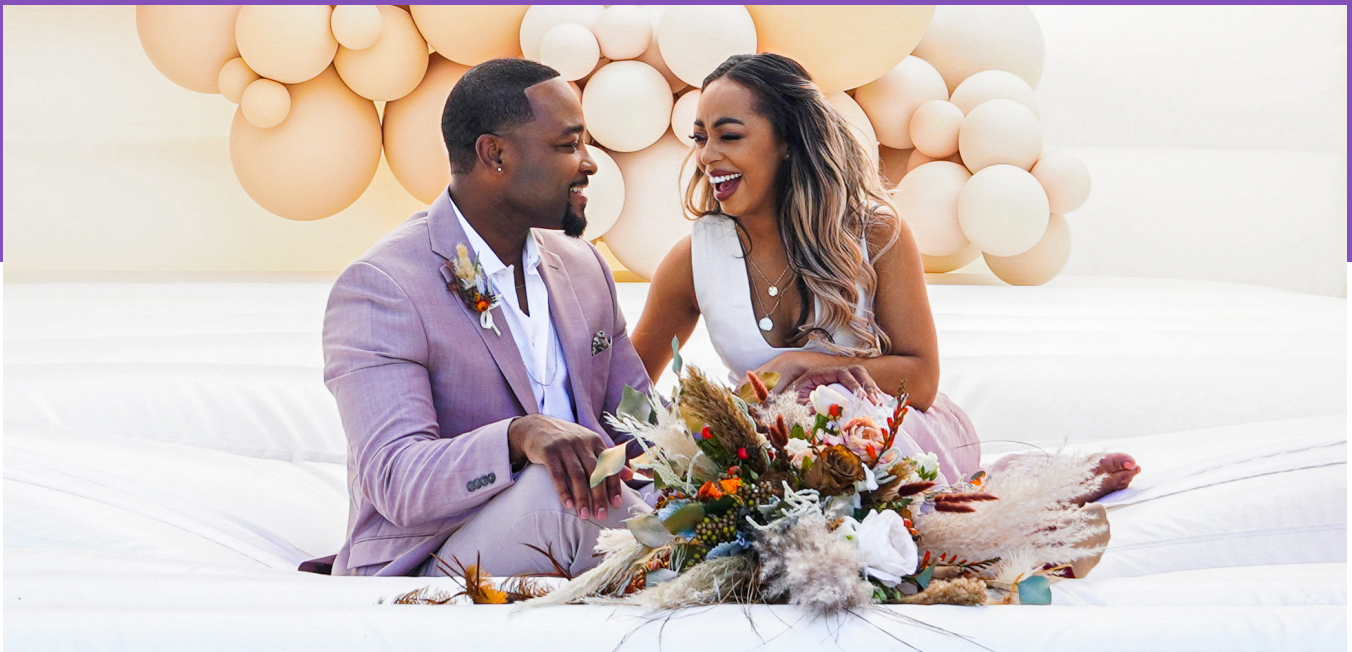


# The Knot Real Weddings Vendor Report

What matters to today's couples and what that means for your business



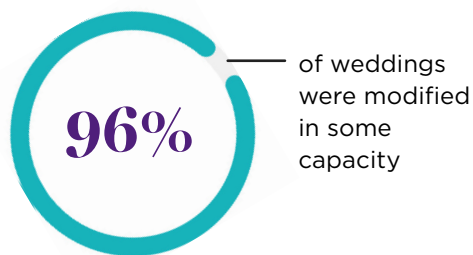
Knowing what's important to couples is vital to the success of any wedding business, especially during a time when the best-laid plans can turn on a dime and clients need to rely on their pros more than ever. Pros everywhere have been kept on their toes over the last couple of years, but luckily, this agility has paid off in spades. We surveyed more than 15,000 couples who were married in 2021 for The Knot Real Weddings Study to get a full picture of how they navigated their wedding-planning process, the top

trends they incorporated into their events and the measures their pros took to help them every step of the way. Using this data, we're going to give you insight into what we saw during the past year and what we're expecting for the 2022 wedding season. An estimated **2.6 million** couples are heading down the aisle this year, so to be as prepared as possible, join us as we dive into the numbers to see exactly how today's couples are planning their weddings and what your business can do to help them throughout their journey.

# A look back at 2020

2020 brought a lot of uncertainty to every part of the wedding industry. COVID-19 was an ever-present obstacle that forced nearly half of the weddings planned to be postponed and resulted in the implementation of some sort of safety modification for the weddings that did go forward. Despite the challenges, **78%** of couples say their vendors were understanding of their unique situation and accommodating to new requests/updates—which speaks highly to the pros in the industry.

Throughout 2020, pros worked with their clients even more closely than before to create an elevated experience that prioritized health and safety. Whether it was creating different offerings, coming up with creative solutions to problems or leaning into technology, there were countless ways that pros showed up for their clients. Additionally, the rapidly changing rules and state regulations surrounding the pandemic gave pros the opportunity to be both agile and flexible so their couples' events could proceed as normally as possible.



**Nearly half**  
of weddings were postponed  
due to COVID-19

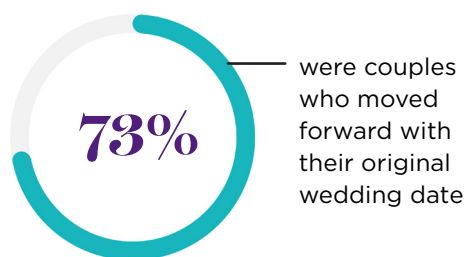
**82%**  
of couples added  
safety precautions



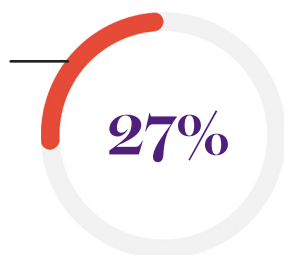
# Fast-forward to 2021

## Weddings are trending back to normal

2021 was a much-needed lift for the wedding industry because demand began to trend back to the pre-pandemic numbers we saw in 2019. The majority of couples who married in 2021 did so without any sort of delay due in part to the vaccine rollout, reduced local restrictions and the rise in available COVID-19 testing. Of that majority, **73%** were able to move forward with their original wedding date (the remaining **27%** were couples who moved their original wedding dates from 2020.) Because of this, many areas that were negatively impacted during the previous year made a strong recovery.



were couples who moved their original wedding dates from 2020



# *Going into the 2022 wedding season*

You can feel cautiously optimistic that your couples' weddings will go on as planned with bigger guest lists than in years past.

But, be sure to keep a few COVID-centric contingency plans in your back pocket so you can be prepared for anything.

## **Guest Count**

One of the main areas that trended upward was wedding guest count. **93%** of couples were able to host family and friends at their weddings in 2021, and even though **50%** of couples opted to have fewer guests in attendance than they originally planned, the average wedding saw 105 guests, which was a huge increase from the 66 average we saw in 2020.

## **Vendor Count**

The number of vendors hired and wedding location trended back towards pre-pandemic numbers as well. Couples hired an average of **14 vendors**, two more than the previous year, and hosted their weddings in more diverse locations than was seen in 2020, resulting in a rise in bookings for one-of-a-kind venues and destination weddings.



This upward trend points to both the resilience of the couples and pros who had to navigate through uncertain times and the increased opportunity for pros to work with more couples who were looking to create the wedding of their dreams despite huge setbacks.

# Health and safety are still a huge factor to couples

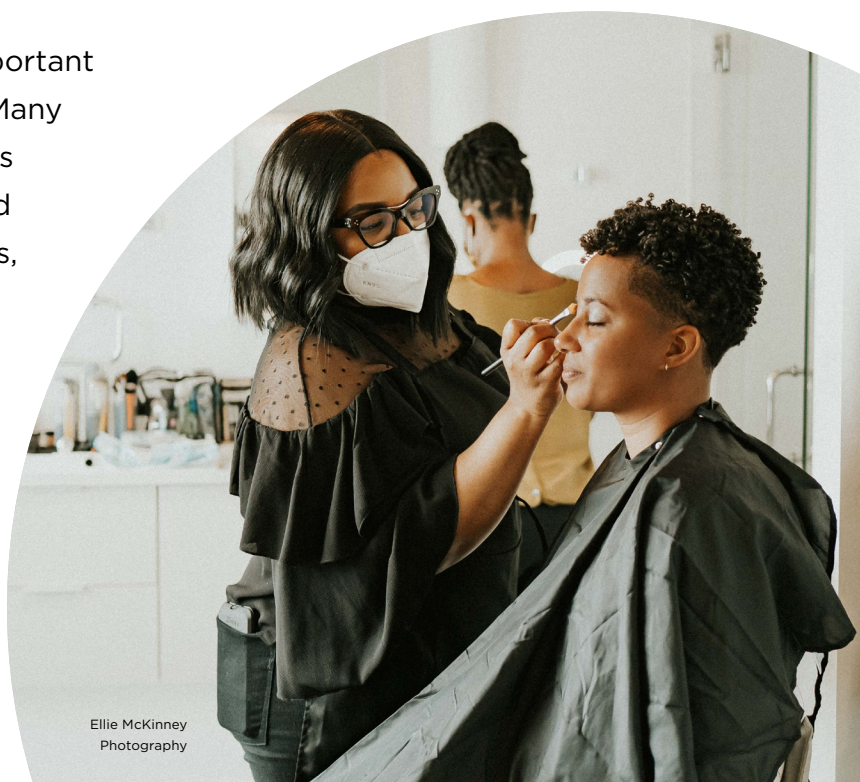
Even though trends inched back up to pre-pandemic numbers, health and safety protocols were still a major factor to many couples in 2021. In fact, **85%** of couples incorporated at least one health and safety measure into their wedding, with three being the average. More than half of the couples we surveyed provided hand sanitizer for their guests (**54%**), **40%** required their staff to wear masks and almost a third of weddings practiced social distancing in some capacity.

Interestingly, our research also showed that couples started to relax some aspects of their safety protocols as COVID-19 numbers trended downward and vaccines became readily available. For example, only **27%**—down from the 61% seen in 2020—made changes to how guests received food during their receptions. So, while increased health and safety measures may not completely go away anytime soon, it's safe to say that with more access to vaccines and information on how to stay healthy, these protocols will continue to relax over time.

In the immediate future, however, it's important to remain agile as wedding season hits. Many couples are confident that their weddings will continue on despite shifting rules and restrictions concerning emerging variants, but having multiple plans you can rely on is still recommended.

## Pro Tip

Even though the uncertain landscape that COVID-19 created is becoming more familiar, it's important to stay up-to-date with the latest information to know how to help your couples deal with any sudden changes. You can also create your own set of safety precautions that can be built into your services so you're prepared for anything that may crop up before your event.



Ellie McKinney  
Photography



## Couples relied on their pros to plan and execute their weddings

Couples have historically relied on wedding planning websites and their pros to make sure their events go off without a hitch. But, over the past year, half of couples struggled with planning a wedding during the pandemic and over a third of them had no idea where to start, in general. Because of this, couples have started to turn to their pros, along with wedding websites like The Knot and WeddingWire, even more to help ease these new anxieties.

Regardless of the service offering, couples viewed their pros as trusted partners that they could lean on for advice as well as solid execution. So, it was important to them to find pros who aligned with their vision and values. As in previous years, the majority of couples found their pros through wedding websites, like The Knot and WeddingWire, and relied heavily on their overall review rating (**96%**), photos (**93%**) and the total number of [reviews](#) (**92%**) to make their booking decisions. In fact, **over 70%** of couples found reviews to be very important when deciding which businesses to contact.

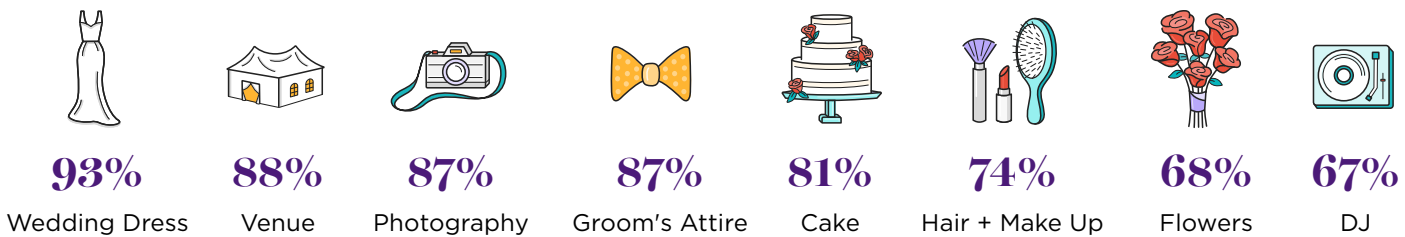


**70%**

of couples used reviews to determine which businesses to contact

Looking at the types of vendors couples opted to hire, wedding dress retailers, venues and photographers were the most sought-after. Venues especially saw a major booking increase in 2021, with **over 88%** of couples opting to book them—an **18% increase** from the previous year.

Top vendors hired



As we head into this next wedding season, it's important to keep your [website](#), [Storefronts](#) and reviews up-to-date so potential couples can get a sense of who you are and how your business can bring their dream wedding to life. So, request reviews from recent clients, conduct an annual [website review](#) and give all of your channels consistent audits to make sure that your business is telling the right story.

# The biggest trends we saw in 2021

## What's important to couples

In 2021, **60%** of weddings were semi-formal events that couples described as fun (**38%**), romantic (**34%**) and elegant (**25%**). But, interestingly, this past year saw couples shying away from doing what's trendy and, instead, focusing on personalized and unique touches. Nearly **60%** of couples made it a priority to have their wedding day be deeply personal and a true reflection of their relationship.

Personalization occurred in many different areas. For example, **60%** of couples found it important to incorporate their ethnicity, religion and/or culture into their wedding celebration. Additionally, **one in five** couples personalized their event by incorporating sustainable elements to help make their wedding eco-friendly by using secondhand decor/upcycled items, minimizing food waste and avoiding one-time use products as the most popular decisions. For other couples, unique food moments like creating signature drinks (**36%**), late-night snack options (**26%**) and additional dessert options (**61%**) helped personalize their day. And these unique and individual touches are only going to continue to rise as time goes on.

Kelsea Holder Photography; Erich McVey Photography; Anna Delores Photography



**60%**

**of couples incorporated their ethnicity, religion and/or culture into their celebration**



**1 in 5**

**couples incorporated sustainable elements to help make their wedding eco-friendly**



**61%**

**of couples incorporated unique dessert options while 36% created signature drinks. and 26% included late-night snack options.**

There was also a huge emphasis placed on ensuring that wedding guests were well taken care of. Couples spent, on average, **\$266 per guest** in 2021, up from \$214 in 2019. Additionally, they incorporated things like an open bar (**79%**), interactive food experiences (**11%**), special diet accommodations (**60%**) and personalized favors (**56%**) to make sure guests' experiences were worthwhile. It's clear that their loved ones were a huge priority for couples last year, and they wanted to pull out all of the stops to ensure that they were entertained from start to finish.

To meet couples where they are during the upcoming wedding season, put an emphasis on how your services can highlight and champion their individual stories. To do that, you need to first be sure that your channels show what your values are so you can attract your ideal client. Then, have your content show exactly how you used your services to bring your couples' unique visions to life.

**11%** included interactive food experiences

**56%** gave out personalized favors

**60%** accommodated special diets

**79%** incorporated an open bar

**\$266** was the average amount couples spent per guest in 2021

Lizzie Randazzo Photography





# Looking forward

## How pros can successfully navigate 2022

With a projected **2.6 million weddings** happening this year, the upcoming season is going to see a full-out boom. 2022 is going to be the busiest year for weddings on record, and pros are likely already feeling this significant uptick in demand.

**75%** of couples who got engaged in 2021 have already set a date for 2022. And roughly **85%** of those couples started planning within less than 2 months of their engagement, with **60%** planning within a month of getting engaged. To meet this incredible demand, it's important that pros get ahead of this wealth of potential clients in order to stay organized, calm and collected so they can meet the needs of their couples.

As we head into this year, there are a few things to keep in mind. COVID-19 is still going to be an aspect that couples and pros will have to factor into their wedding planning, and with more couples moving forward with their plans than in past years, it's important to keep health-focused contingency plans readily available. Additionally, as we've seen in past years, **65%** of couples are slated to have weddings in the Summer and Fall, with **October** being the **most popular month** overall (with October 22, 2022, being the most sought-after date of the year.)



**October 22, 2022**

Most popular wedding date of the year



Given this, during the slow season, prepare your business by adjusting prices, evaluating your technology and reviewing your service offerings. Below are a few more ways you can set your business up for success:

## 1 [Invest in business education](#)

Learning new business concepts is the key to growing your business. Invest in your business and yourself by enrolling in a course, reading books by seasoned business leaders and attending educational events.

## 2 [Build your brand](#)

Your brand helps differentiate you from the pack, and like other aspects of your business, it needs regular attention. So, update your marketing plan, do a brand audit and make sure your content is relevant.

## 3 [Revitalize your advertising](#)

Advertising is the best way to get your name out there. Make sure you're getting the most out of your advertising by reviewing your channels to ensure they are working for you, revamping your copy so it's telling the right story and continuously finding new ways to take your advertising to the next level.

Want more education about industry insights, business basics, entrepreneurship and more? Head over to the [WeddingPro Blog!](#)