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**Press Release from Marriage Foundation**

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**Average wedding costs are less than a third of the £30K pushed by some bride and groom magazines finds study**

* **Since 2017 average cost of a wedding is less than £9K with an average of 50 guests**
* **Data suggests link between high wedding costs and increased chance of divorce for three years**
* **However, more guests reduce risk of divorce for 10 years after tying the knot**

The average cost of a wedding in the UK are under a third of the £30,000 pushed by a small number of bride and groom magazines, finds a new study from Marriage Foundation.

The study, *Wedding Costs and Guest*, surveyed 2,000 ever-married adults aged 30 and over asking them how much they spent on their (first) wedding in today’s money and how many guests attended.

The mean cost of a first wedding, based on today’s prices, has risen steadily since the 1960s (£3,729), peaking in the 2010s (£9,832) and dropping slightly since 2017s to £8,957, with a median cost ranging from £5,000-£10,000.

While the median number of guests at a first wedding has risen from 50 in the 1960s, peaking at 80 in the 1990s, and is now back down to 50 in the recent years since 2017.

Harry Benson, Marriage Foundation’s Research Director commented: “These figures bust the myth that wedding costs are out of control and routinely exceed £30,000. On the contrary our study found that these weddings were accounted for just one in 25 (four per cent) of the total. While the median cost of getting married since 2017 was £8,957.

“Setting the record straight on the true cost of weddings is important as our previous study *Wedding Costs and the Marriage Gap*, found that almost one in three (29 per cent) of young unmarried UK adults aged 18-30 say they would be more likely to get married if the ‘typical’ wedding was cheaper. While three in 10 (28 per cent) women and one in five (21 per cent) men surveyed, who were in a relationship cited ‘wedding cost’ as a reason why they were not currently married.”

The study also found that the median number of guests had also risen since the 1960s (49) peaking in the 1990s (80) before falling back to 50 since 2017, then over-laid both sets of figures to see if there was any correlation.

Interestingly, Marriage Foundation found evidence that wedding size and cost affect future divorce risk.

“In a series of regression analyses, we were able to look at the relationship between wedding size and divorce, after taking into account a range of other factors, such as age at wedding, employment status, reasons for marrying, where couples met, and whether they completed marriage preparation or signed a pre-nup,” the report says.

“Among weddings taking place since the year 2000, we found that 8 per cent of marriages ended in divorce in the first three years following expensive weddings (costing between £20,000 and £30,000). This was more that the overall divorce rate of 5 per cent across the sample.

“Taking other factors into account, this difference was statistically significant over the first three years of marriage but disappeared thereafter.

“We also found that 34 per cent of marriages ended in divorce in the first ten years following small weddings (with 10 guests or fewer). This was close to double the overall divorce rate of 18 per cent across the sample.

“Taking other factors into account, this difference was statistically significant over ten years of marriage, but not before.”

“Although our numbers are small, our findings are very much in line with American research that suggests having a lot of guests can help affirm the decision you’ve made but spending too much money on the wedding does not.”

The UK survey data from ComRes Savanta echoes previous research from the US suggesting expensive weddings can be bad for marriages, because of the risk of debt, but more guests are good for marriages because they affirm the choice to commit to one person and rule out all other choices.

Mr Benson continued: “These startling findings, build on our previous work highlighting the importance of social capital during the early years of marriage. Taken together these findings deliver the clear message that marriage doesn’t have to cost earth and couples should celebrate their special day with their friends and family where possible. This strikes me as the perfect Valentine’s Day message.

Sir Paul Coleridge, founder of the Marriage Foundation commented:

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

**About Marriage Foundation**

Marriage Foundation was founded in 2012 by Sir Paul Coleridge, a High Court judge who was moved by his personal experience in 40 years as a barrister and judge specialising in family law. The think tank seeks to improve public understanding of marriage and to reduce the numbers of people drawn into the family justice system – some 500,000 children and adults each year. It has established itself as a leading voice on marriage issues in the UK.

Sir Paul Coleridge, Harry Benson and Michaela Hyde from the Marriage Foundation are available for comment and for interviews linked to these new findings.

For all media enquiries, please contact Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225