

The marrying kind? What Aussies look for when it comes to long-term relationships

- More than half (55%) of men and women believe the most appropriate age for marriage is between 25 and 29 years old
- Almost two-thirds (62%) of people think one to four years of dating is appropriate before a couple ties the knot
- Nearly half (43%) of singles don't want to get married, while 28% are unsure. That leaves just 29% of singles keen to tie the knot
- For four-fifths (82%) of Australians, honesty is the most important factor in deciding whether a partner is marriage material; only a third (35%) think attractiveness is important
- Only one in five (18%) of women say a partner's income would influence their desire to marry, compared to, perhaps surprisingly, 23% of men

It may be the case that 65% of Australians believe you don't need to be married to have a successful relationship, but that doesn't mean people feel marriage is an outdated concept. In fact, almost half (42%) of Aussies believe marriage still has contemporary relevance.

But, according to new research commissioned by eharmony, when you look at the traits both men and women consider make someone marriage material, it's factors like being honest (82%), trustworthy (79%) and respectful (74%) that come out on top. For eharmony psychologist Sharon Draper, this doesn't come as a surprise.

"When you're looking at the long term, these are the sorts of shared values that ensure people have the best chance of staying together," said Draper.

"When you consider the 21 factors on the list, being supportive at 73%, having similar values at 65% and being willing to compromise at 63% also rated highly. It's a clear indication that people realise attributes like sexual compatibility (53%) and attractiveness (35%) might spark an initial attraction but may not guarantee rapport in a decades-long relationship."

What makes someone marriage material?

Right down the bottom of the list are attractiveness (35%), ambition (27%) and a history of civility in the relationship (22%).

If you're wondering how important 'the spark' is, 53% rated sexual compatibility as important, meaning it comes in at number 14 on the list.

While it was fairly even across the board between generations and genders, ambition seems to be the trait where men and women differ most, with women making up more than two-thirds (69%) of the group who said ambition makes someone marriage material, with men only making up 31% of the group.

Women also considered someone's ability to get along with their family (59%) and their friends (58%). Only 14% of women would marry someone of whom their family disapproved, compared to 25% of men who would go ahead with the ceremony anyway.

Faith in the matter

It seems religious beliefs have little to do with marriage as we go into 2023, with more than half of those surveyed (52%) believing religion shouldn't influence someone's decision to marry a partner. A further third (33%) believes it depends on the situation.

Just 9% of Australians think weddings should take place in a church or other religious location. Of those, just a third (34%) were women.

Similar values, however, is seen as important by about two-thirds (65%) of respondents.

Other factors

When it comes to wanting children, 30% would marry a partner who said they didn't want any, while 27% would not. A further 38% of those surveyed would weigh up the situation before making their decision, while 6% were unsure what they'd do.

Only a quarter (25%) of women think children are better off when their parents are married, compared to almost half (42%) of men.

When it comes to protecting what we've worked for as singles, only 30% of people believe couples should sign a prenuptial agreement, while 35% say nup to the nup.

Perhaps not surprisingly when you look at studies of who is happiest – single women without a spouse or children – a larger proportion of men (34%) believe there are more benefits to marriage compared to the single life than women (20%).

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