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## Retro Marriage Trend Makes a Comeback, for Better or Worse

By Beth Greenfield, Shine Staff | Love + Sex – 17 hours ago



Illustration: Corbis

"My reason for changing my name is not terribly *romantic*. I did it for simplicity," Tracy Robert, née Stientjes, a 28-year-old newlywed told Yahoo! Shine. "My maiden name is super hard for others to say and spell, and my married name is not." And, though the process of changing it came with lots of annoying paperwork, she added, "I do feel like we are our own little team now!"

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Robert is not alone. She is, in fact, in a growing majority, according to the most recent available data on the topic.

"For the married female population, keeping your maiden name is so last decade," wrote Abby Haglage Thursday in her Daily Beast story "[Retro Wedding Craze: Taking the Husband's Name](#)." She reveals that, according to Facebook data on 14 million married women recently collected jointly by the social media company and the Daily Beast, 65 percent of women in their 20s and 30s changed their name when they married.

Those percentages rose, unsurprisingly, with women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s—to 68, 75, and 80, respectively. Another recent poll had even more extreme results, finding that only eight percent of married women keep their maiden names, which is down from an all-time-high figure, from the 1990s, of 23 percent. And it seems to be the younger brides who are leading the old-fashioned trend: a [2011 study](#) found that those aged 20 to 24 are the most likely to leave their maiden names on the cutting room floor.

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"Did I miss the cultural moment when all the women of my generation got together and decided, 'Hey, let's all go get jobs in any field we want and have babies, but take our husbands' names'? Should I check my spam folder for that memo?" wrote syndicated blogger [Christie O'Brien Tate](#) last year, after she was surprised to notice all of her fellow feminist-mommy friends had taken their husbands' names.

At least one expert on the topic, women's studies professor and onomastician (studier of names) Donna L. Lillian, thinks the trend is in part a backlash from young women who had watched their mothers struggle with hyphenated names and dual identities. "[They] don't want to go through the same amount of hassle," she told the Daily Beast.

With so much of our lives tied up in social media today, though, is changing your last name to your husband's really less of a hassle after all?

Take, for example, blogger [Sarah Millar](#), who wrote a response to a recent [Guardian piece](#) in which the self-dubbed "cranky feminist" writer takes all women with changed names to task.

"I admit, things are a lot tougher for us women in the digital age. I mean, changing our Facebook name is easy, but what about everywhere else?" She explains that, while she plans to take her fiance's last name, Foster, just because she wants to, she understands that making the change won't be easy in cyberspace. "After all, I blog at SarahMillar.com. And SarahFoster.com belongs to a woman in Virginia who is an insurance agent."

Twitter and Google are whole other problems. "The Internet is beyond hard," she writes. "It is for that reason that while I plan to change my name personally to my future husband's, I will remain Sarah Millar online."

Still, no matter how messy or controversial or not, the reasons to take or not take a spouse's name is always personal. A call for stories on Facebook by

Shine drew a slew of responses ranging from "I like his better" and "I wanted continuity for the children" to this response, from Louise Gore, of New York, who did not take her husband's name when they married 15 years ago: "Not only did I not want to introduce myself in social and professional situations by a new name, but my sense of self was somehow tied to my full name. At 33, I was just beginning to settle down, psychologically speaking, and I feared that to change my name would jeopardize my emotional stability."

For gay couples, the idea of adapting names for children can take on a heavy importance. Mariann Fedele McLeod, née Fedele, of Maryland, explained that when she and her wife were married, they decided to combine each other's names and make a new one that could be shared by their baby. "In an emergency where events and decisions occur rapidly we thought that we should be able to convey in the most basic and universally understood way that we are a family," she explained. "Our names."

Finally, there is the rare husband who decides to take his wife's name. "He was abandoned as a child and was raised in a Catholic abbey. When we met, he had a 'name,' but no family to back it up," explained Joy Davidson, of Hawaii, about her husband Michael. "When he met my dad he knew that he wanted to be a Davidson, so when he asked for my hand, he also asked for my name." It's a sweet reminder that the name game doesn't always have to be played the same way.

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