

# The First Look Report

Wedding Pro Edition: 2024



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# The First Look Report 2024

Zola surveyed close to 7,000 couples getting married in 2024. Their answers provide insight for wedding professionals looking to grow their business by supporting the next generation of couples in making their dream weddings a reality.



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# The 2024 Zola Couple is shaking off societal norms and ready to party

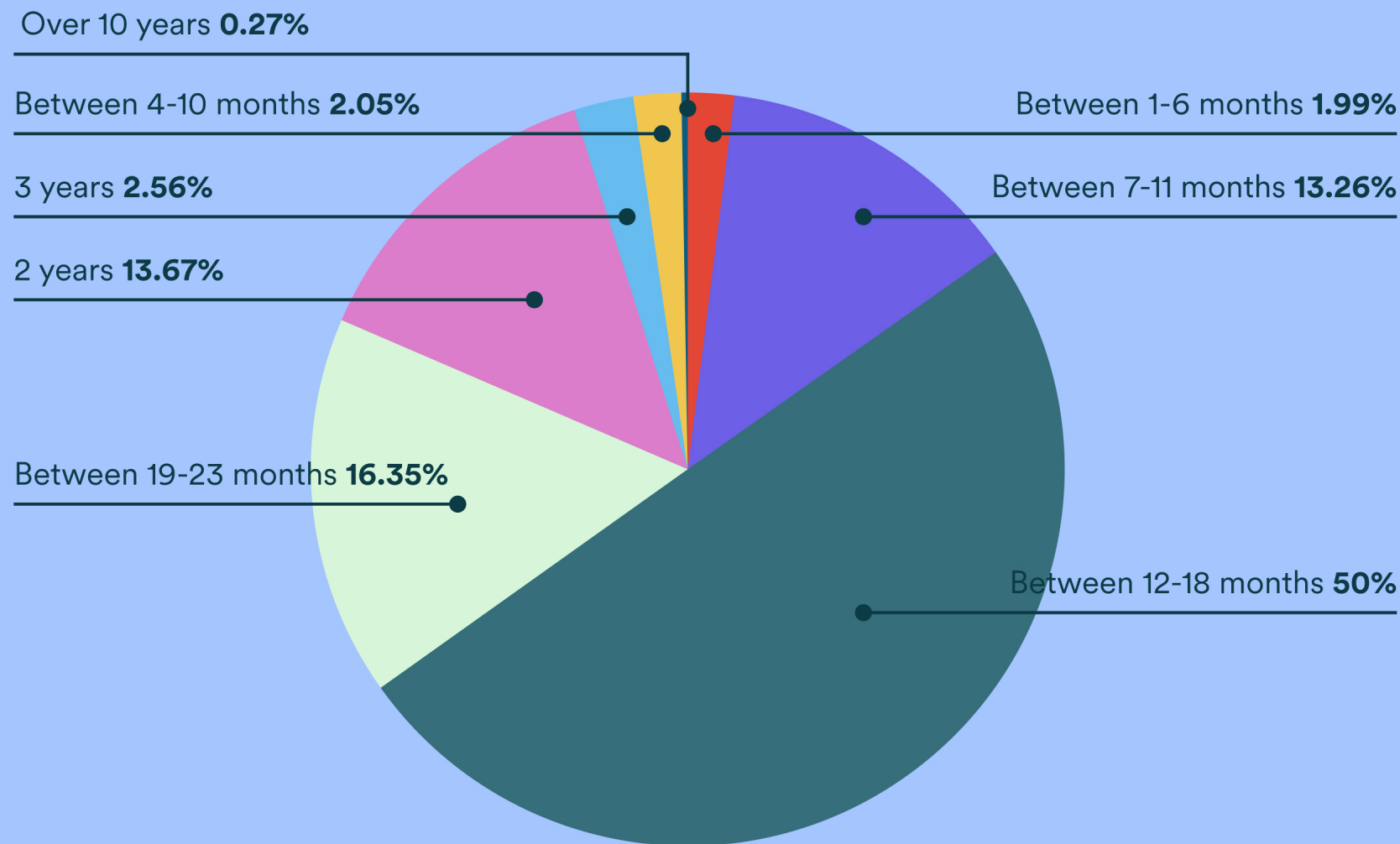


As Gen Z and Zillennial couples enter their late 20s and start planning weddings, these couples are looking to do things a new way - their way. They're changing and creating trends while simultaneously rejecting even more social "norms" and traditions surrounding their weddings.

With the pandemic's impact on lengthy engagements finally waning, we're seeing engagements bouncing back - once again averaging 1-1.5 years. Engaged couples getting married in 2024 will have been together an average of 5+ years before saying "I do."

Excited to get the party started early, 89% of to-be-weds reported that they aren't waiting around for "the" question to begin their planning journey. Some are going so far as to tour wedding venues and even book their venue before getting "officially engaged."

# How long **will you have been engaged** by the time you get married?



# 89%

of to-be-weds have reported that they aren't waiting around for "the" question to begin their planning journey

# Keywords for 2024 include FUN and ENERGY

Wedding bells sound less formal and more like party poppers in 2024. A solid **65.5% of future newlyweds surveyed plan for their big day to be an epic party.** Welcome parties are the new "it" event, up 32% from last year, expanding weddings beyond a one-day affair.

In 2024, values are increasingly at the core of every day along the way and also the big day, with about **21% of couples hand-picking vendors that align with their values** and seeking inclusivity for all their guests

And it's not just about the "I do's" anymore. Couples report their venue selection is based on identifying a location that fits their specific aesthetic and vibe, as well as their budget, preferably with some outdoor space to boot.

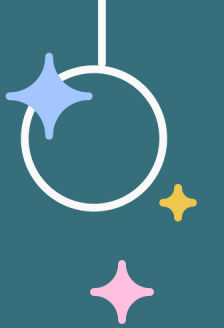


## Take action:

Celebrate your own individuality and creative offerings in your listing to make a great impression on couples.

# 65%

of future newlyweds surveyed plan for their big day to be an epic party.



## What are / were the **top 3 priorities** when it comes to selecting your venue?



# The jury's in... and the couples have **a verdict**

Today's couples have strong opinions on what's in and what's out.

The goal to hyper-personalize the wedding day experience continues to bring in new trends. In 2024, 82-84% of couples said signature cocktails and mismatched wedding party attire are in as a great way to add personal flair.

Other trends are on the way out. In 2024, 92% of couples say those long ceremonies are out, and gender-normative traditions, like the bouquet and garter tosses are out. 67% also said that wedding hashtags are out.



## Take action:

Consider what offerings you can scalably tailor to bring in that “special touch” that feels personal and innovative, but doesn't increase costs significantly for you (or the couples). Couples and guests will notice and talk about the details!

# In:

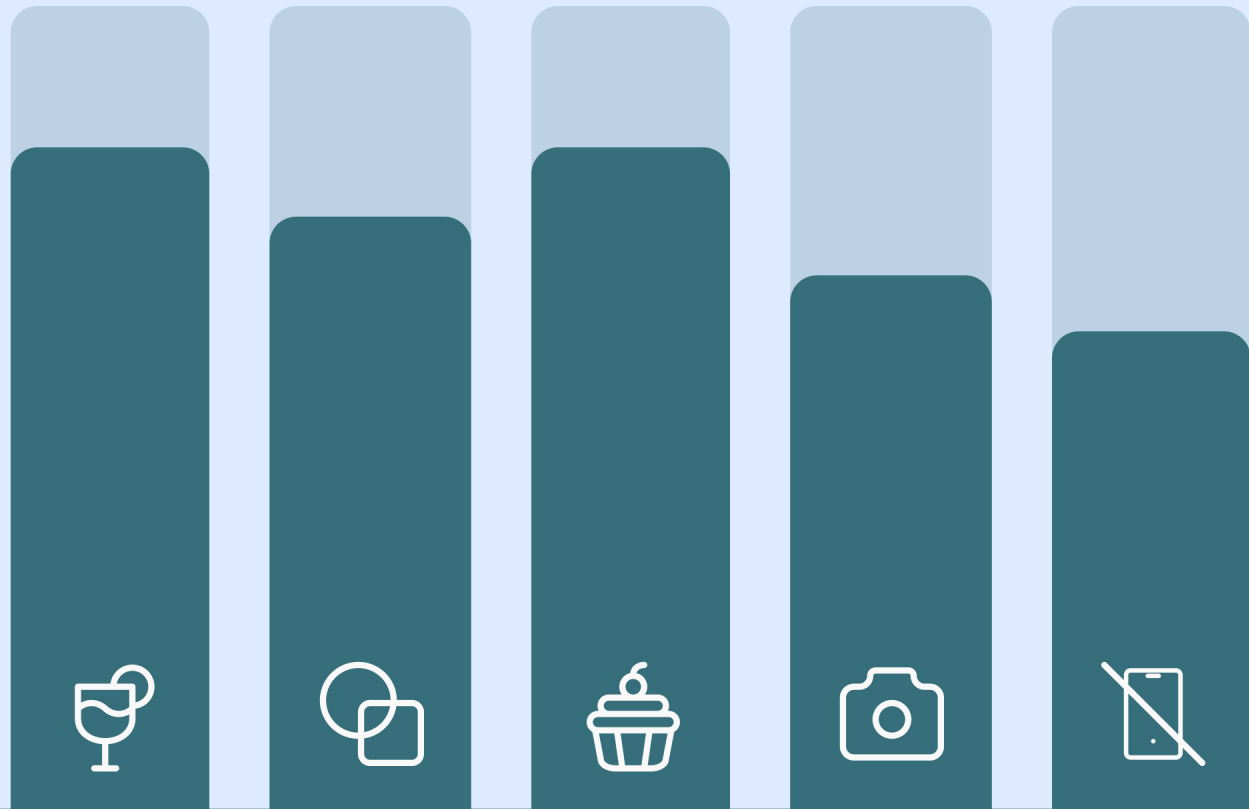
84.16%  
Signature  
cocktails

82.95%  
Mismatched  
wedding  
party attire

84.79%  
Late-night  
snacks

75.98%  
Film  
photography

74.78%  
Phone-free  
"unplugged"  
weddings



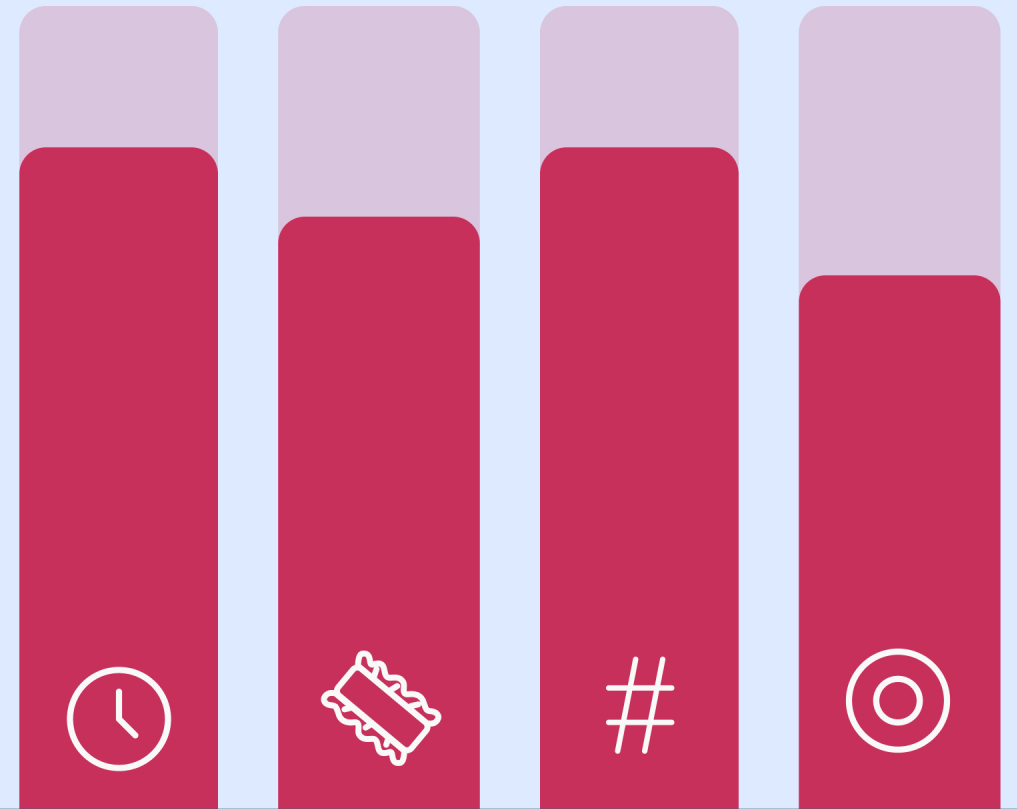
# Out:

92.11%  
Long  
ceremonies

68.34%  
Bouquet toss

66.53%  
Wedding  
hashtags

72.97%  
Donut walls



## Awaiting verdict:



Required guest dress code  
In: 45.65%, Out: 54.35%



Wedding party introductions  
In: 51.92%, Out: 48.08%



Choreographed first dances  
In: 42.06%, Out: 57.94%



Elaborate wedding exits  
In: 52.47%, Out: 47.53%



# Couples are inspired by social media, but **remain practical**



Social media isn't going anywhere as a core source of inspiration. Nearly 90% of couples said that at least 1 social media platform was crucial to their planning process, and 86% made a wedding-related decision based on something they saw on social media.

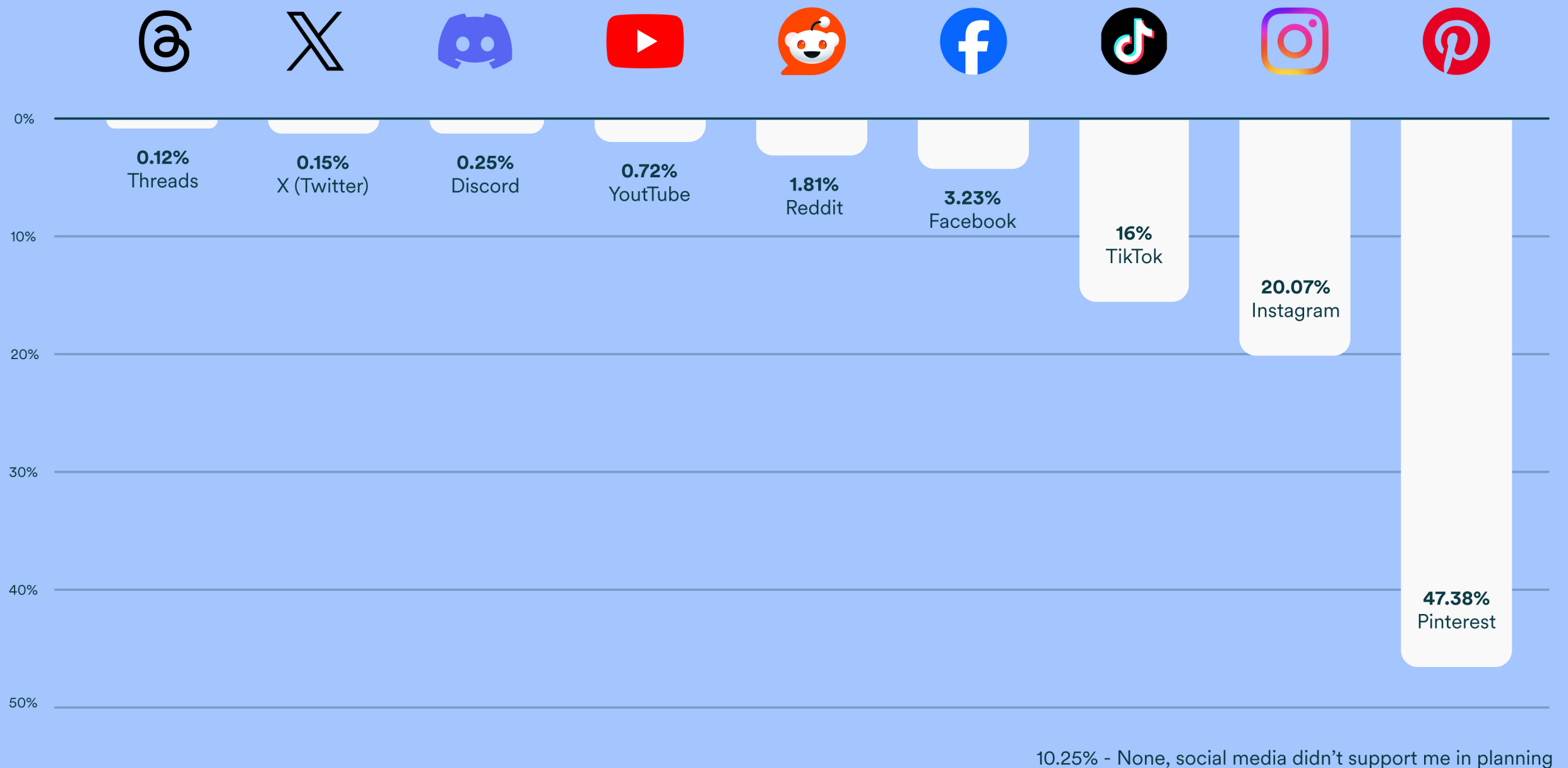
Out of the 58% of couples who said they're using Instagram to support wedding planning, 53% said they used Instagram to discover vendors.



## Take action:

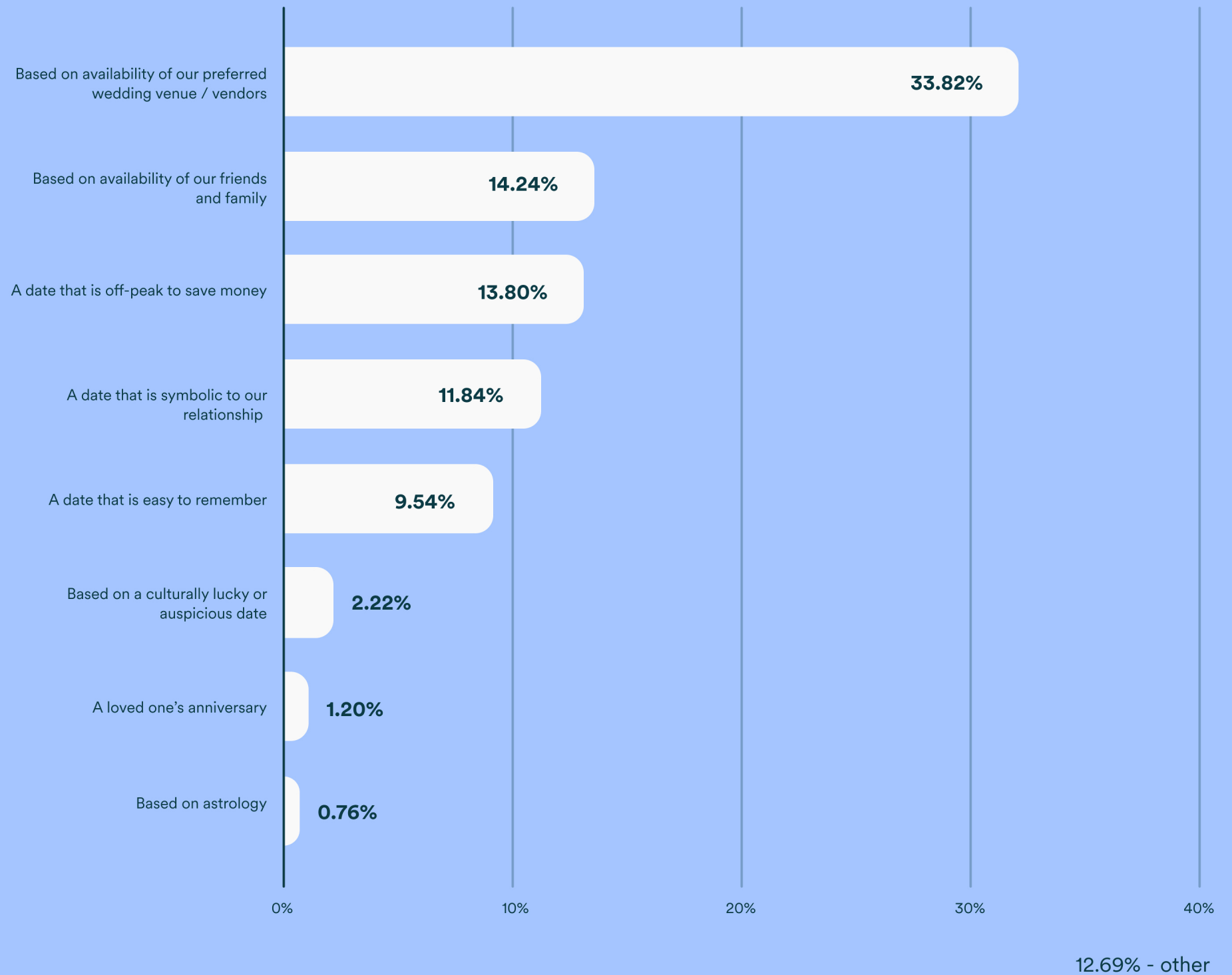
Consider social media as another tool to attract the right couples for your business. Create content that shows how you support couples to have authentic weddings, while keeping your listing up to date with pricing, availability, and more to boost confidence in reaching out.

# Which social media platform is **absolutely invaluable / crucial** to your wedding planning process?



# How did you **select** your wedding date?

When it comes to executing, more couples are being very practical about the choices they're making. Nearly 64% of couples prefer to pick a location central to them and their guests. But, we do see destination weddings back on the rise. Couples are also willing to be flexible to get what they want - 14% of couples are willing to pick dates based on off-peak pricing, while 34% are willing to select their date based on their preferred venue/vendor's availability.



# Couples today have **new** expectations for planning

Couples' top response to their feelings towards planning a wedding was “exciting” - however, “stressful” and “overwhelming” were not far behind.

Nearly 20% of couples said social media was a key contributor to their stress. It both helps and hinders the decision-making process, building stress.

Beyond social media, couples express difficulty managing their budget, guest list, and choosing their vendors (other than their venues). Some of this comes from misguided expectations and others come from poor experiences communicating with vendors during the inquiry process.



## Take action:

Be a leader in the shift, creating a better planning experience for couples. Mitigate stressors by avoiding gender assumptions and creating a more streamlined experience with quick replies and thoughtful communication with couples. You can even recommend tools that you and your couples have loved to help manage stress beyond the services you offer.

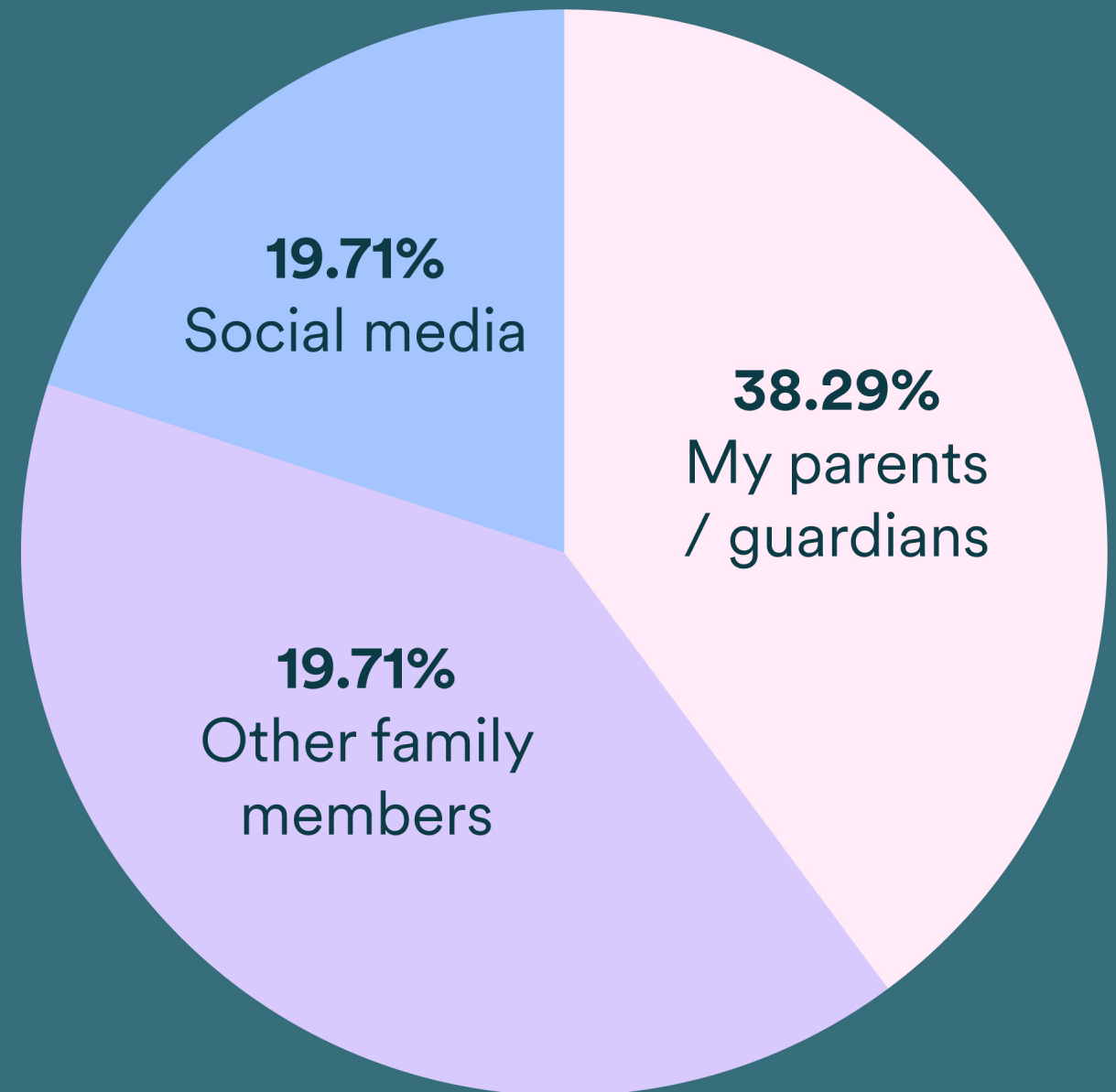
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You think that you're prepared for just how expensive weddings are and you think you can plan accordingly for it but there are so many extra things that you didn't even know you would have to pay for. It's also super hard finding inspiration that feels unique to you and your significant other but you also know will still look nice.

”

# Top 3

stress favorites in  
the planning process



# If you could **change or update anything about the wedding planning journey**, what would you change? (select all that apply)

**32.90%** - Balance / assumptions around wedding planning responsibilities

**32.09%** - Wedding diet culture

**30.94%** - Bride's family paying for the wedding

**21.54%** - Name changing / taking the partner's last name

**20.64%** - Representation of weddings in media / pop culture

**17.95%** - Being "given away" / walked down the aisle

**11.26%** - Gendered wedding parties

**10.26%** - Sending handwritten thank you notes

**5.62%** - Wearing white

**5.02%** - The proposal process

**2.68%** - The ring

With all the stress involved, 83% of couples say they want at least 1 societal norm around the wedding journey to change. The #1 thing they want to change is the stereotypical expectations and assumptions around who in the partnership will take on the invisible labor of planning the wedding itself.

# Not all couples' budgets are created equal —and **that's okay**

Couples have such vastly different life experiences and expectations for their wedding day. In 2024, 90% of couples are contributing financially to their weddings, with 30% covering it all themselves.

Some couples have a strong, well-thought-out budget with financial support from both sides that gives them more room to rely on vendors to help execute their big day. Others are doing their best with limited resources to bring their vision into reality to give themselves and their guests a great day. Regardless, the #1 pain point of their to-do list continues to be creating and managing their budgets.



## Take action:

Know who your target couple is and qualify leads against that. Provide couples with as much information about your pricing and packages to reduce the number of leads that aren't a budget fit.

# Some couples have it all...

Sample from our survey:

## BUDGET: \$60-70K

150-200 guests, PA (Philly metro)



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|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Venue               | <small>(all-inclusive)</small><br>\$43,000 |
| Florist             | \$3,500                                    |
| Wedding party gifts | \$4,000                                    |
| Rehearsal dinner    | \$2,500                                    |
| DJ/MC               | <small>(friend)</small><br>\$1,000         |
| Photographer        | \$2,300                                    |
| Videographer        | <small>(won 50% off)</small><br>\$1,500    |
| Attire              | <small>(suit was free)</small><br>\$2,000  |
| Favors              | \$1,500                                    |

# Others are getting creative...

Sample from our survey:

## BUDGET: \$20-30K

Guests: 75-100, CT

"Due to our budget...and a lack of extra resources, we are resorting to doing a lot on our own. I do love to be creative, but it's tough because it's so much pressure and if I mess up then it's completely my fault and I'm so much harsher on myself than others."

Sample from our survey:

## BUDGET: \$15K-20K

Guest: 75-100, RI

"I got a second job to help afford the wedding and am looking into getting a third"



# Key takeaways

## Be unique.

Use what makes you and your services stand out to help inspire couples during their planning process for ways that they, too, could be unique and use it as an opportunity to prove value.

## Be couple-first.

Couples have a long and complicated journey through wedding planning. Consider their path and map your marketing initiatives against it.

## Be a leader.

Couples in 2024 are very mindful of equitability and inclusion. Consider how you communicate with current and prospective couples to ensure they and their families are comfortable.

## Be targeted.

Not every couple will be a fit for your business. Really think about who your best-fit clients are and focus on positioning your messaging and packages towards them.

Best bets for 2024 success

# Take action

Best bets for 2024 success

Want to learn more about our First Look Report statistics and how they might help you get the most out of 2024 weddings?

Reach out to our Zola team and we'll be happy to talk through our findings, why they matter, and how we can help you make them become a reality.

Email us at [weddingvendors@zola.com](mailto:weddingvendors@zola.com)

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