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**Tao Yinbing**

Local wedding planner



He Sihao (right) and Ding Yifeng stop for a quick photo after receiving their marriage certificate at the marital registration office. — Ti Gong



He and Ding pose with their marriage certificates. — Ti Gong

adults endorse the concept of no-frills weddings. And some 60 percent view the trend as a reflection of a desire for individuality and freedom from social pressures. They also believe traditional wedding customs have become passé.

The survey said the move toward more intimate, personal celebrations values the essence of a relationship over spectacle.

In Shanghai, the shift toward simplicity in weddings is clear. And there’s an added benefit. The money saved by shunning costly celebrations can be spent on more meaningful aspects of a couple’s new life together.

He Sihao, a community worker in Hongkou District, and Ding Yifeng, a human resources staffer at a foreign company, are planning a straightforward yet traditional wedding in Shanghai this September.

They have chosen a one-stop wedding service that covers everything from the wedding car to the ceremony. The watchword is simplicity.

“We just want a wedding that’s easy on us and our families,” Ding explained.

That means eliminating some old customs they feel are superfluous, like elaborate games, an expensive diamond ring, unnaturally posed professional wedding photos and marriage bedroom pranks. Instead, they are spending most of their budget on the banquet.

“Life’s big moments should be meaningful rather than luxurious,” He told Shanghai Daily. “Simplicity does not diminish significance.”

Tao Yinbing, a veteran local wedding planner, noted an increasing trend among couples requesting “three-no weddings” — no to the bridal convoy, no to the elaborate fetching of the bride and no a bridal party.

“They just don’t want the stress of a big show, and they don’t want to spend too much,” said Tao, who has been operating a company specializing in small-scale weddings for over a decade.

She said the new trend is a seismic shift in the wedding business.

### Simple weddings

“Simple weddings let couples enjoy their day more,” she told Shanghai Daily. “They get to focus on each other and the fun, by not doing things just because ‘that’s how it’s done.’”

A recent survey by Houlang Research Institute shows that both men and women agree that door-blocking games are the least necessary part of a wedding. On the men’s dislike list are games for guests and the long process of toasting guests during the banquet.

Over half of young people also want DIY weddings, with more than 60 percent seeking a relaxed wedding vibe.

Certainly, minimalist weddings are easy on the budget, compared with their grandiose counterparts.

A report by Guyu Data shows that the average cost of a traditional wedding is about 174,000 yuan (US\$24,100), or about nine times the combined monthly income of the betrothed.

Moreover, 42 percent of couples who start down the path of an elaborate wedding end up spending more than their budgets. Expenses range from wedding photography to venue selection, décor, entertainment, food and drink, and wedding planners. And preparations for these gala events can stretch over half a year.

A new bride surnamed Yu from Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, said she invited only about 20 family and close friends for her wedding last May. The affair skipped the bridal pickup, the wedding convoy and the bridesmaids and grooms.

She bought a simple wedding dress online, rented a homestay for the venue and spent less than 80,000 yuan, including decorations, makeup, catering and drinks.

“We didn’t need to perform, give speeches or engage with many guests I hardly knew,” Yu said.

This trend toward simpler, more intimate wedding celebrations is not confined to China. Globally, lawn weddings, camping weddings, civil ceremonies or even elopement are becoming more popular. Small weddings in family homes, local community centers or even online streamed events have attracted the interest of many engaged couples.

Millennials and Gen-Z in the United States are transforming wedding traditions by prioritizing personalization over established norms, according to a survey by The Knot, a top wedding

planning company.

The survey of over 9,000 young US couples revealed a decreasing trend in the popularity of matching wedding attire or traditional church venues.

Ye Deqin, a clinical psychologist from the southeast Chinese province of Fujian, said the high cost of elaborate wedding celebrations is a key factor behind the trend.

Simpler ceremonies reduce economic strain, offering a grounded approach, Ye told Strait News. Moving away from traditional wedding complexities to embrace equality and personal satisfaction mirrors modern marital ideals, Ye said.

This evolution encourages young people to celebrate their unions in more joyful, equitable and liberated style, she added.

Shanghai sociologist Gu Jun said the trend of minimalist weddings reflects a historical cycle where extravagance inevitably leads to simplicity.

“When we were young, our weddings were grand for a day, but then, as newlyweds, we’d eat simple meals for years,” Gu told Shanghai Daily. “Young people today have become more enlightened.”

He questioned the necessity of spending huge sums on lavish weddings that are influenced by social norms. Economic pressures such as high housing costs, Gu said, make grand weddings impractical and prompt a rethink of old traditions. He also noted a significant shift in perspectives, particularly among women, toward practicality over pomp.