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## Do you take this man and his name too? Most brides do

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By Belinda Goldsmith

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - The tradition of the bride taking the groom's name still prevails in the United States, with a survey released on Monday finding eight of 10 brides-to-be planned to take their husband's name.

The survey conducted by online wedding planning directory, WedAlert.com, found that 79 percent of respondents planned to switch to their husband's name after walking down the aisle while only 21 percent planned to keep their maiden name.

"There is a thrilling blending of identity that meshes the couple together and, if they intend to have children, sharing the same last name creates a sense of unity for the whole family," said Kristin Ciccolella, co-founder of WedAlert.com.

"On the other hand, a woman may decide to keep her maiden name for a variety of reasons ... her personal or professional identity, an important reflection of her heritage, or simply may not want to go through the hassle of changing her name on her driver's license and other forms of identification."

Studies show the number of women who do not take their husband's name has climbed in the past 30 years, with Harvard researchers estimating between two to four percent of women kept their maiden names in 1975, but they remain a minority.

The first American woman known to keep her maiden name was 19th century suffragist Lucy Stone, wife of abolitionist Henry Brown Blackwell, who refused to take a husband's surname as part of her efforts for women's rights. She died in 1893.

The Lucy Stone League was founded in New York City in 1921 but faded out. The league was reborn in 1997 with the aim of campaigning for equal rights for women and men to retain or modify their own names and equality of the father or mother's name for children.

A MARRIAGE BY ANY OTHER NAME..

Women involved in the online survey said the name issue was still a major topic for couples and a frequently asked question. It was also an issue that causes some division.

"I will be keeping my maiden name because I feel that I was raised having this last name, graduated with the same name and proud of it," said Ghenwa Zahr from Michigan.

"My husband-to-be would prefer that I change my last name to his but the choice is mine."

One woman said her husband was taking her name.

"I remember asking my mother when I was younger why boys never took the girls' names instead, and I guess she never gave me a good enough answer!," said Angela Marcakis from British Columbia. "(My fiancée) fully supports me, in fact, he will be taking my name."

Others stood by the decision to take their husband's name -- out of respect, tradition, to avoid confusion, or to get rid of a name from a previous marriage.

"I took my husband's name. I married him so we could be one, a partnership. If I kept my maiden name it would have been like taking only half that step," said Tracy Harriman from California.

But a large number of women decided to go for the best of both worlds -- hyphenating their name with their husband's.

"I have a PhD in psychology and plan to practice. I believe that the best way to go is to hyphenate our names. This way I can use both depending what the situation calls for," said Anna Salsman, from California.

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