



If all the singles in America put their hands up right now (hey, Bey!), there would be 105 million adults with their mitts in the sky—and 53 percent of those would belong to women. According to the U.S. Census, unattached ladies outnumber bachelors and married couples.

Sad? Ha! Unlike Dakota Johnson's character in the upcoming rom-com *How to Be Single*, real stag women aren't lamenting their solo status. In fact, they're less likely than men to believe that finding an S.O. is needed for happiness, and they'd rather be alone, successful, and satisfied than in a bad union, says a recent survey. Even women in healthy couples are embracing a new independence. Turn the page to meet four kinds of unattached women who are redefining what it means to be f-r-e-e.

## That Single Life

This chick's unattached—and clearly miserable. (Sarcasm game: strong.) With new data proving that more women are happily riding solo, *WH* explores the trend and why it might even be changing how couples connect.

by Faye Brennan



**> THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY**

Susy Solis, 34, Dallas

*"I was 24 when I married and 32 when I divorced. As the more social person in my marriage, I always felt bad for making new friends. Now I can accept pretty much any invite and spend more time with my family and my nieces, who keep me grounded. I was nervous that men wouldn't want to seriously date a divorced woman, but that has not been the case. In fact, I'm the one keeping my options open."*

**BIGGER PICTURE**

A calendar jam-packed with plans? No surprise there. A study in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* found that single people are more likely to have more active social lives and stay in touch more frequently with their friends, and also with their parents and siblings, than hitched folks. (Ever had a BFF ghost on you after getting a boyfriend? Or a sister move to a different state with her hubby and fall off the map? The love bubble is real, folks.) All that mingling can open the door to meeting new people—and perhaps a bedroom buddy for the night. It's been a hotly debated topic, but studies prove that women enjoy and desire casual sex just as much as men. And that's only one pleasure-filled plus.

**APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE**

Whether you're single or coupled up, having an array of friends to call your own can add a deeper sense of fulfillment to your life, beyond what a romantic



LADIES' NIGHT: VERY NECESSARY

relationship can provide, says Rachel Sussman, L.C.S.W., a psychotherapist and relationship expert. But scrolling through your pals' updates on social media won't cut it—you actually have to, you know, physically hang with them in real time. If you've been a social hermit lately, Sussman suggests reconnecting with someone who would make a great support for your current goals. Like, for instance, your running-obsessed pal on Insta, who may help you get back into your training routine. Or join a book club or take a cooking class—yes, by yourself—to meet some brand-new faces. "Keep an open mind, and realize that some friends will be better for having fun, while others may be great for serious conversation. That's why casting a wide net is important," says Sussman.



**> THE HOMEOWNER**

Victoria Popoff, 34, Modesto, California

*"I just bought a Spanish-style home in a young neighborhood that's close to the Pilates and fitness studio I own. I love the freedom. I'm able to teach swim lessons in my pool, host birthday parties for friends, watch movies in the backyard. I love knowing I have a project to do in my yard or on the house, and I don't feel the pressure to get married."*

**BIGGER PICTURE**

Compared with their grandparents' generation, millennial women are scooping up significantly more bachelor's degrees and higher paychecks, so hell yes they're

buying their own bachelorette pads. The latest National Association of Realtors report shows that today's women are more heavily involved in the real estate market: 16 percent of home buyers are unattached females, whereas 9 percent are single men.

**APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE**

Home prices and interest rates are historically low, but they're on the rise, says Lexie Puckett, a spokesperson for Realtor.com. So if you have the means and you're ready to lay roots in one spot, lock it down! "Buying a home gives you the opportunity to start building long-term wealth," says Puckett. Talk to a lender, who can list your options (such as a fixed-rate down payment or an FHA loan). And consider renting out a room in your new digs to help offset the mortgage and utility payments if you can't afford them on your own just yet.



BABY GIRL, YOU GOT THIS.

female travelers report feeling more energized from solo vacations as opposed to going away with others.

**APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE**

"You may not know how to ride the bus in a foreign place, but when you barrel through those anxious feelings, you really learn about your grit and yourself," says Amy Spencer, author of *Meeting Your Half-Orange: An Utterly Upbeat Guide to Using Dating Optimism to Find Your Perfect Match*. Plus, your itinerary can be self-indulgent (two-hour spa stop? Yes, please!). Free apps like Jetzy and Skout (iPhone and Android) can connect you to other travelers based on your location, so you can ask for instant advice, like where to get great local grub.



**> THE SELF-SUFFICIENT MAMA**

Kojenwa Moitt, 37, New York City  
*"I've wanted to be a mother for as long as I can remember: At 2 years old, I would walk around with my baby doll cradled on my back. I paid for college by babysitting and always imagined what my life would be like with my own child. Sometime last year, after several failed relationships, I began investigating sperm donation and artificial insemination. I had an MBA*

*and a great career and was living the dream in New York—I didn't need to rely on anyone to make a decision. In the end, an affair with an older man resulted in a pregnancy, but he didn't want to be involved. My baby girl is scheduled to arrive soon. She'll be surrounded by love and affection from me, my aunts and uncles, godmothers and godfathers, and my best friend. The best part is that I'm free. Free from ticking clocks and fertility issues, or the need to be with a man solely to fulfill my destiny of becoming a mother."*

**BIGGER PICTURE**

Last year, a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revealed that, while overall nonmarital birth rates have declined in the U.S. since 2007, they have spiked for one age group: women 35 and older. Other data from the U.S. Census shows that about 49 percent of single moms have never married.

**APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE**

Now that it's more common, having a child solo is no longer as socially stigmatized, says Helen Fisher, Ph.D., a biological anthropologist and scientific advisor at Match. Like Kojenwa, you'll need to have a support system in place. "In reality, it takes more than even two people to raise a child, so make sure your family and friends can help," Fisher says. Beyond that, it should be a very well-planned decision: The latest report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that it costs a single parent who makes a before-tax income of less than \$61,530 about \$164,160 to raise a child to age 18.

**EVEN COUPLES ARE LIVING SINGLE**

They click—together *and* apart. Hear their tales, while an expert weighs in on whether the setups are healthy (or not).

—Sarah Wexler

**> WEEKENDS**

*"I do lots of stuff without Oscar, my husband of seven years, on the weekends: brunch with friends, hiking with my niece, or going to a coffee shop by myself. Alone time helps me recharge. And he loves recording music. It's so attractive to me that he has his own passions—that's one of the things that made me fall in love with him. And it helps us not take our time with each other for granted."* —Bethany Gumper, 35, Portland, Oregon

**EXPERT SAYS:** Establishing "separateness" is a crucial part of any lasting relationship, says Michael Gurian, author of *Lessons of Lifelong Intimacy: Building a Stronger Marriage Without Losing Yourself*.

Why? You'll probably irritate the hell out of each other if you spend every waking moment together. And you may lose sight of your personal passions if you're doing only activities that both you and your partner enjoy. Weave in kickboxing or cross-stitching on the weekends and you'll find that the time you do spend together can feel more intentional and special.

**> VACATIONS**

*"I take around three vacations a year with my husband and six without him. I can focus on my friends or family and not worry if he's having a good time. I also like missing him, as weird as that might sound, and filling one another in on what we missed when we weren't together. Plus, I love to ski and he doesn't."* —Alice Oglethorpe, 35, Chicago

**EXPERT SAYS:** Go ahead and book your solo trips, and let

your guy as well. "It shows that you trust each other, which is great for your bond," says Gurian. Once you're back, your focus will land on each other. "There's going to be the need to reconnect, so you'll be more likely to talk, hold hands, and have sex because you've been apart." Score! If that doesn't happen—or you notice that your man is being distant or making passive-aggressive comments—it may be a sign that he felt abandoned while you were away, says Gurian. Talk it out to determine how you can feel more connected next time. (Maybe he just needed a souvenir!)

**> BEDROOMS**

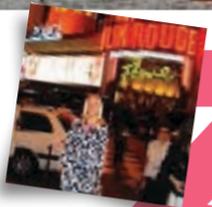
*"When my now-husband, Shawn, and I started dating, I would sometimes sleep in the spare bedroom due to his horrendous snoring. After I got pregnant, I moved down the hall full-time. We still talk, have sex, cuddle, and watch TV in bed, but when it's time for sleeping, I go to my own room. I love that I sleep through the night and can get up for an early run without bothering him, or he can stay up late watching baseball. We've been happily married for 18 years, and a large part of that is because I can sleep."*

—Samantha Lewis,\* 44, Fairfax, Virginia

**EXPERT SAYS:** Sleeping side by side can be a mood killer if you or your partner has a disruptive health issue. That's when you might consider this scenario, Gurian says, but even then, "you still need to make time to have sex—it doesn't matter whose bed. And you should be having dinner together and snuggling



SEPARATE BEDS, NOT SEPARATE LIVES



**> THE JET-SETTER**

Heather Franks, 30, Charlotte, North Carolina  
*"Last year, I celebrated my 30th birthday in New Orleans, squeezed in a shopping trip to New York, and flew to Key West on a lark to go fly-fishing. And I have already been to Hawaii and have Prague, Vienna, and*

*Slovakia stamps on my passport. I want to see the world, and I don't need someone by my side to do so. It's an expensive hobby, but I make it a priority by working hard and cutting back elsewhere."*

**BIGGER PICTURE**

Forty percent of solo travelers are women, says the 2015 Visa Global Travel Intentions Study. And they're dominating the adventure-travel scene (think white-water rafting). A survey by Booking.com found that 63 percent of single

**OKAY, SO WHAT IF YOU DO WANT TO SETTLE DOWN WITH A GUY?**

Oof: Among college-educated people ages 22 to 29, there are about four women for every three men, and five women for every four men for those ages 30 to 39, says *Date-onomics* author Jon Birger. Beat the odds.

<b>Expand your options.</b> "There's an excess supply of non-college-grad men. Try going to a blue collar pub instead of your usual wine bar, and see who you find."	<b>Go westward, woman!</b> "Seattle, San Diego, Silicon Valley, and Aspen have more men. Of course, it's extreme to move your whole life, but if you're marriage-minded, it's worth considering."	<b>Force a decision.</b> Been together for-evah and want a ring? Give him an ultimatum. "It creates artificial scarcity in abundance. If he says no, you won't waste more time on him."
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\*Name has been changed.