



Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?

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Marilyn Monroe's character didn't make a secret of hunting for a rich man in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," especially when she sang a tribute to diamonds ("a girl's best friend").

Thirty years later, Madonna satirized that shallow gal with dollar signs in her eyes in her pop hit "Material Girl."

Today, there are still plenty of examples in Hollywood (and beyond) of that good old-fashioned "gold digger" — **Anna Nicole Smith** ([search](#)) immediately comes to mind.

But new statistics from the online dating company Match.com suggest a downtrend in the number of women looking to marry Mr. Moneybags — and, surprisingly, an upswing in the number of men who seem to be seeking Mrs. Moneypenny.

Furthermore, one in three single men says he wants to snag a woman who outearns him, according to dating Web site [True.com](#).

Could it be that the traditional gold digger is on the decline?

At least one self-professed male money-hunter from New York says the stereotype is changing.

"I've met more and more guys who have realized that if they want the finer things in life, it's going to involve meeting someone who can give them all that," said Eben Anderson, 26, a university administrator. "More women are attached to their career. I've dated a lot of women who have a lot more money than me."

In 2001, 72 percent of women filling out profiles on Match.com specified an income preference for the man they were seeking, whereas only 31 percent of men checked off a salary level they wanted a mate to have.

But this year to date, 57 percent of women specified income level — a 15 percent drop — while 51 percent of men did, a 20 percent increase.

Though there's a gap in the number of 2001 profiles versus the number today (2.3 million then compared to 15 million now), Match.com says its membership makeup still looks about the same, with about 60 percent men and 40 percent women using the Web site and its services.

Do the Match numbers mean that female gold diggers are dwindling and male gold diggers are on the rise?

A look at the **Britney Spears-Kevin Federline** ([search](#)) saga (Spears' parents and handlers reportedly convinced the pop star to have Federline, a dancer, sign a prenuptial agreement before they married) — and some examples of regular guys who say they're searching for a rich wife and women who say they don't care what their man makes — might suggest that's exactly the trend we're seeing.

Anderson, for one, wasn't shy about confessing that he's "looking for a sugar momma."

"I'm not adverse to being a male gold digger," he said. "I would want to be supported."

On the flip side, Janella Gamble, 33, a graphic designer from the Dallas area, checked "any" income level for a potential mate in her Match profile.

"I really don't factor [salary] in," said Gamble. "It doesn't make that much of a difference. ... Money cannot always solve the situation, and half the time money compounds the situation."

But Match.com and other relationship gurus don't think Anderson and Gamble reflect a sea change in who wants to marry a millionaire.

"I don't like the term 'gold digger' on either side," said Match spokeswoman Kristin Kelly. "'Gold digger' implies someone who is only after money. ... I see it as more of a generational shift than anything."

Indeed, times have changed when it comes to who's responsible for bringing home the bacon. Today's 35-and-under set are the first adults who were more likely raised by two working parents, according to a 2004 study in [The Journal of Marriage and Family](#).

It's also a group more directly affected by high rates of divorce and single-parent homes than previous generations.

As a result, there's been a shift in so-called "traditional" gender roles, with more women earning their own incomes, more men wanting a woman who can share the monetary household responsibilities and more couples wanting to contribute jointly to family finances and raising kids.

"What they're looking for is a partnership promise," Kelly said. "[Women think], I want a man who works but doesn't just bring home a check, a man just as invested in child rearing as I am. The men say the same thing. They're expecting women to work more."

Part of it is sheer practicality, with career opportunities, earning potential and the cost of living all on the rise.

"It takes two incomes these days to be able to afford housing, unless you're the CEO of a corporation," said Charles T. Hill, a Whittier College psychology professor and co-author of the well-known **Boston Couples Study** ([search](#)), a 25-year look at couples and what kept them together.

"It used to be a man was expected to provide that, but now it isn't going to happen," he added. "You had the impression the wife was working for 'pin' money she could buy extra things with. ... If a woman's [salary] criteria is going down, what's probably happening is they're getting more equal."

Others suggest that men could also be getting weary of women who "take them to the cleaners," so they want to make sure a spouse is self-sufficient — especially if the marriage doesn't last.

"Men are sick and tired of women taking advantage of them all these years," said Wendee Mason, who teaches dating skills in southern California. "They want to know how stable the woman is financially so she won't suck the living daylights out of them. They're tired of supporting women who can't support themselves ... I know a man who has given four houses away."

Some attribute the switch to the change in the purpose of marriage. A look back through history shows marrying for money — or at least financial stability — used to be a necessity for women, just like marrying for offspring who could carry on the family name used to be the norm for men.

"Marrying for love is a fairly recent phenomenon," said **Brides magazine** ([search](#)) executive editor Cynthia Hornblower.

Whether they were monarchs or ordinary folk, people were generally married off to spouses whose families could bring status, wealth and land to the union. Conjugal love usually came later, if at all.

"Until 150 years ago, marriages were arranged in this country, and in many places they still are," said Hill. "The idea that marriage needs to meet psychological needs, that your spouse should be your best friend, that's an idea invented after 1950. Making that the cornerstone of marriage is a whole new perspective."

For Gamble, the Dallas graphic designer, it's an outlook worth holding on to. She dated a man who was interested only in material wealth, and the relationship fizzled fast.

"Money compensated for what he lacked in personality and what he lacked physically," said the single mother. "I want the whole package: the person who's caring, considerate, attractive, has a good head on his shoulders and has goals. Money doesn't play a role in that. He could be a stay-at-home dad."

Perhaps if she lived closer to Anderson, the male gold digger, the two might hit it off. Though he has dreams of creative writing, Anderson says he isn't attached to a profession and is used to being supported by his parents. So he'd rather just be a well-kept househusband.

"I've never wanted to have a serious career," he said. "I need a woman who'd want me to stay at home and take care of the kids. She'd have to have the income for both of us."

Anderson seems aware of what he might have to give up — equal partnership, romantic ideals of love, maybe even a certain sense of self-worth — but he says he's willing.

"It's an odd sort of role reversal. There's a completely different dynamic," he said. "But true love is just a decision you make. My true love could be a 50-year-old with a mansion somewhere."

Whether those with money on their minds are true gold diggers or just practical budgeters, they might find the bubble bursting in ways they didn't imagine if they place too much importance on cold hard cash.

Recent studies on why some people are more content than others indicate that, in spite of the perpetual rat race, the old adage about money not buying happiness is still as true as ever.

"The research on happiness shows that once you're out of poverty, the amount of money you have doesn't equate with how happy you are," said Hill. "Whether you're wealthy or poor, the personal relationships are what really matter."