

Weddings: Before vs After 1980s

Dimension	Pre-1980 (Ritual Model)	Post-1980 (Spectacle Model)
Primary meaning	Public covenant + family transition	Personal expression + identity performance
Time horizon emphasized	Lifetime, generations	The day, the moment
Economic logic	Prudence, limits, realism	Escalation, indulgence, “once-in-a-lifetime”
Typical venue	Church, home, community hall	Dedicated venues, destination locations
Decision authority	Families, elders, clergy	Couple + planners + vendors
Role of parents	Hosts, guides, stewards	Check-writers, often sidelined
Community involvement	High (potlucks, volunteers, shared labor)	Low (professionals replace community)
Vendor ecosystem	Small, local, limited	Dense, specialized, national
Planning complexity	Simple, weeks/months	Elaborate, 12–24 months
Use of credit	Rare, discouraged	Normalized, expected
Social comparison	Modest, local	Intense, global (media + social)
Aesthetic focus	Formal but restrained	Curated, themed, Instagram-ready
Media influence	Minimal	Massive (TV, magazines, social media)
Marriage preparation	Informal but present	Optional, outsourced, or absent
What’s celebrated	The union	The production
What’s de-emphasized	The wedding itself	The marriage itself
Economic winners	Household stability	Vendor ecosystem
Failure mode	Quiet disappointment	Debt, stress, post-wedding crash