

## Chapter 11

# Bridget Jones Goes on Holiday

Met this guy last night on a blind date. He is 34, single, tall, a lawyer in the city with a GSOH. I wish, I hope ... he asks me out. Haven't had a decent s\*\*g in ages. I hope he invites me away for the weekend. Haven't been on a romantic date since I can't remember when and even then, it was a disaster.

Bridget Jones writing in her dairy on 31st January 2030

## Being Single

There are lots of Bridget Joneses in society, so many, in fact, that by 2030 single females who live alone could represent 19% of UK households. Today, holidays can act as a meeting place for singles. For companies such as [www.exploreworldwide.com](http://www.exploreworldwide.com) the core market is the single traveller, while [www.elenasmodels.com](http://www.elenasmodels.com) provides holidays for men looking for Russian wives. The main purchasers of 'Lonely Planet' guides (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2005) are single, middle-class females, and cities like New York are symbolised by Jessica in 'Sex in the City'. According to the 2000 US Census Bureau (Rogers, 2006), the number of people in the United States who live alone jumped from 17% of all households in 1970 to 26% in 2000.

There are 95.7 million single American adults according to the US Census Bureau (Rogers, 2006), with New York having the highest population of unmarried adults. According to the Travel Industry Association (Rogers, 2006), nearly 25% of US travellers (34.8 million adults) take a vacation on their own. The average solo vacationer is 42 years of age, with an annual household income of \$54,000. More than 25% have a professional or managerial occupation, 53% are male and 47% female, and 38% have graduated from university. Even married people sometimes prefer to holiday on their own; one in seven of the over-50s take holidays alone to escape the 'other half', according to research by Saga Holidays (2007). This research highlights the fact that going on holiday alone to meet new friends is a major driver for many and that 5% are searching for a new partner (whilst still married!).

In China there will be 10% more men than women by 2040 as a result of rising prosperity, the changing roles of women, new career options and the country's one-child policy. Across the world, the demographic shift away from married life and the

subsequent rise in the number of independent singles have resulted in the *Bridget Jones* phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, single-person households represented almost 30% of all households in the United Kingdom; over the past 25 years the average age of people at the time of their first marriage has increased significantly, rising in 2005 to 28 years for women and 30 years for men, a far cry from the 1980s when it was 22 for women and 24 for men. In the United Kingdom, the lifestyle of many single people aged between 25 and 40 is characterised by a focus on career and a busy social life. When it comes to holidays, therefore, many singles are looking for a wide variety of leisure services and activities that offer relaxation and a means by which to alleviate the stress created by day-to-day living. Furthermore, career-minded singles are more inclined to spend their higher-than-average disposable income on treating themselves, rather than on family life. This presents a potentially high return on investment for companies targeting this growing consumer group with their travel products and services. Without doubt, singles now represent a major consumer group in the United Kingdom.

*Singleton* is a term that is coming to represent a more important, durable life stage: the pre-family life stage is set to last longer and, therefore, become more important. Bridget Jones hasn't abandoned marriage; in fact, she still considers it to be a mystical, romantic and ideal state, while at the same time regarding it as a sullied, outdated institution. Many people are clearly die-hard optimists and retain the belief that marriage is still synonymous with true love, and there is unlikely to be a change in this attitude any time soon, so marriage is safeguarded for a few years yet!

Perhaps the most important point to remember is that the status of being single has changed dramatically since the 1950s. Once a stigma, being single is now largely considered exciting, a chance to experience personal development and opportunity before the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood crowd in. With this in mind, this chapter looks at the world of Bridget Jones and singletons on holiday.

## **The Changing Nature of Singletons**

In order to pin down who we mean when we talk about singletons, it perhaps helps to begin by looking at how people's attitudes towards marriage and singleness have changed. In the 1950s, divorce was very rare, with only a tiny percentage of marriages ending that way. The expectation was that people would marry young and stay married. As the traditional marriage vows suggest, a woman was cared for by her father until such time as the husband took over the paternalistic role. There was only a short period of time in which a young woman could have sole responsibility for her life. Women also bore more children, with the mean number of

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1. Bridget Jones is a column, serialised in UK newspapers, that chronicles the life of Bridget Jones, a thirty-something single woman living in London, surrounded by a surrogate 'urban family' of friends as she tries to make sense of life and love in the 1990s. The column was turned into a successful film 'Bridget Jones Diary' starring Renée Zellweger in 2001.

children per woman being about 2.5. In post-war Britain, being single was usually a momentary aberration between coming of age at 21 and being married. A 1958 US study (Silverstein et al., 2005) found that nearly all Americans assumed a woman would stay single only if she were ugly, immoral or neurotic.

By 2007, attitudes had obviously changed. In fact, a range of pop-cultural portrayals have turned that stereotype on its head: we no longer assume that single women are ugly and immoral. Single people are now standard-bearers for beauty, admired for their independence and self-reliance. People's lives are also very different from the 1950s. They marry later, often having lived outside the family 'independently' for a number of years, and many women expect to work until retirement age, including the period when they are bringing up a family. Critically, the fact that almost all women work for at least a part of their lives means that they are often economically independent and no longer need to rely on a man — father or husband — to take care of them and their offspring. These social and cultural shifts have created an environment where the meaning of marriage has shifted: marriage has become something people can now approach as a desirable living arrangement rather than as a social imperative.

It is a well-documented fact that the number of single-person households is on the rise — and has been for decades. In the 1960s, half of all households in the United Kingdom contained a couple with children — the traditional, nuclear model. A further 25% consisted of a couple either waiting to start a family or at the other end of the family stage (i.e. empty-nesters). The UK government forecasts indicate that by 2021 the proportion of homes containing nuclear families will have dropped to just a fifth of households — a massive decline since the 1960s. In place of model nuclear households, that is, a family with children, there will be a huge increase in single-person households from just 4% in 1961 to 20% in 2021 (Figure 11.1). This means that there will be equal numbers of single-person and family households. It could be predicted that by 2030 the number of single-person households containing a person under 35 will grow by about 70%.

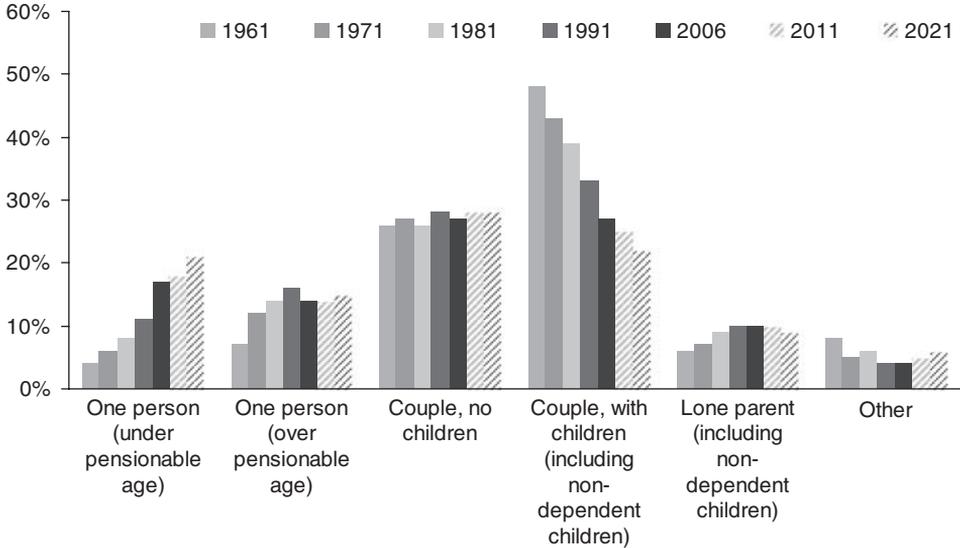
Figure 11.2 shows the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data by lifestyle stage and age. Unlike most other surveys, the BHPS asked whether single people had a girlfriend or boyfriend, demonstrating a distinction between people with and those without partners of any kind. Unsurprisingly, the proportion of married people increases steeply between the ages of 25 and 35, at which point nearly two-thirds of the population are married. The proportion of married people peaks at almost 80% of 60 year olds then declines as the death of the husband or wife affects households. Cohabitation, on the other hand, follows the opposite trajectory. The proportion is highest amongst the under-thirties, but drops off as people marry — and represents just 5% of the over-fifties.

If married and cohabiting people are grouped together — those people in 'committed relationships' — this peak of 80% is reached much sooner, that is, at age 35. The BHPS also tells us that in 2004 the number of singletons in Britain had overtaken married couples — the Bridget Jones society had arrived! Further observations show that the number of people saying they have a boyfriend or girlfriend declines among older age groups to just 5% of the over-forties, presumably

**Household composition as a proportion of all households**

nVision forecast

2001 based forecast



Source: DETR/nVision  
Base: England



Figure 11.1: Household composition in England.

because those relationships transfer into marriage or cohabitation. Just 13% of people in their early thirties are truly single, that is, without a partner of any kind. Between the ages of 30 and 60, at any one point 15% of people will be single: this is equivalent to one in every six or seven people, which, next to the 1950s' model, is high. When we divide the 'truly single' category by gender, then two interesting differences emerge. Typically, men marry later in life than women and marry women younger than them, with the result that they stay single for longer than women. However, men also die earlier, so at the other end of the age spectrum there are more widows than widowers.

Overall, then, today one in four 25- to 40-year-olds in Britain are truly singletons, which equals over 3 million people. This is undeniably an important life-stage which will become more important as a demographic grouping in the future.

In order to separate the widowed and divorced from the pre-married, Figures 11.3 through 11.6 isolate 25- to 40-year-olds. Figure 11.3 shows BHPS data on how much childfree individuals spend on leisure, segmented by relationship status. The data here is merged to group married and cohabiting people together into 'couples', while singletons are separated into those with or without a boyfriend or girlfriend, that is,

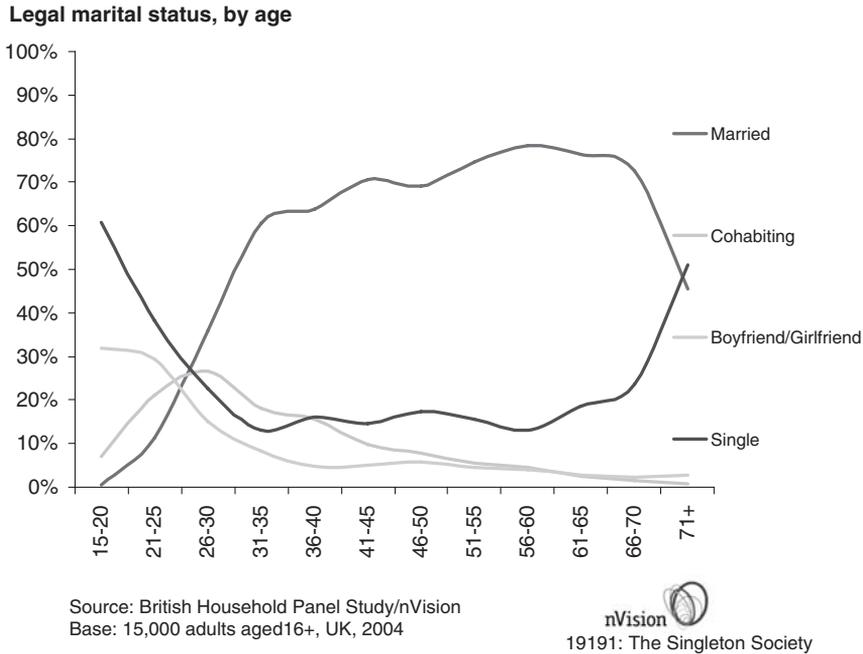


Figure 11.2: Legal marital status in the United Kingdom.

'in a relationship' or truly single. Just 9% of people in relationships — whether live-in or not — spend less than £10 (\$20) each month on leisure, versus 13% of singles. And the opposite is true: you are more likely to be a big spender — over £40 (\$80) per month — if you have a partner with whom you do not live. This data suggests that leisure providers have to work harder to squeeze cash out of singletons than they might have thought.

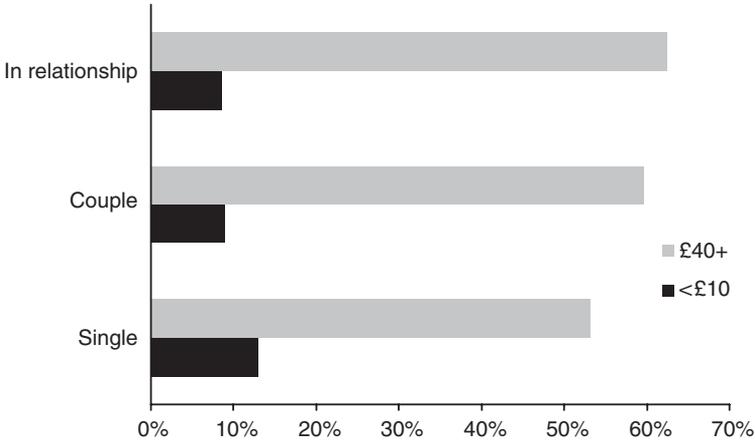
It can sometimes be more revealing to consider attitudes towards money, rather than actual amounts spent since it may just be that singletons are younger than married/cohabiting couples and therefore are earning less. This attitudinal statement from the BHPS (Figure 11.4) asked respondents how well they thought they were managing financially. The findings show that if people are not in a live-in relationship, having a boyfriend or girlfriend does not seem to alter their perception of their financial stability (presumably because they continue to regard their finances as separate) (Figure 11.5).

The differences between cohabiting couples and singletons are negligible for the childfree, with over 70% of singletons managing fine. However, there is quite a disparity when children are added to the picture: again, being in a couple seems to offer more financial security to a family, but we see a considerable difference between those with children: three-quarters of all couples say they are coping fine, but less than half of single parents agree with this statement. This is not a huge surprise since single-parent families obviously have only one income and perhaps not even that if

**Leisure spending of childfree under 40, by relationship status**

Amount spent per month

"Please look at this card and tell me about how much you personally spend in an average month on leisure activities, and entertainment and hobbies, other than eating out?"



Source: British Household Panel Study/nVision  
Base: 15,000 adults aged 16+, UK, 2004



19193: The Singleton Society

Figure 11.3: Leisure spending.

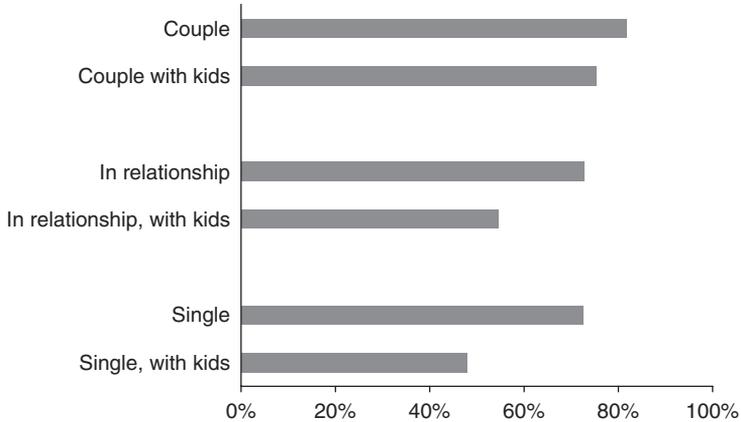
the parent has to take care of the children on a full-time basis. Looking more closely at the data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), we can see that, because many singletons are just starting out, they have a much higher expenditure on the house compared to established families, but at the same time they also spend over half of what a couple together spend on alcohol and tobacco. They also spend more money and time in restaurants in groups, which [Watters \(2004\)](#) calls 'tribes'.

This assumption about eating out is borne out by the Future Foundation's *Changing Lives* Survey data on visiting restaurants. The Future Foundation asked several questions about people's leisure activities, two of which are broken down here by marital status so we can get a closer look at our singletons' lifestyles. Obviously, one of the key facts about a non-cohabiting couple is that they must routinely deal with the 'your place or mine' question, so perhaps it is no wonder that a higher proportion of them are likely to say they eat out once a month. An identical proportion of single people and cohabiting couples eat out once a month, but married couples are clearly missing out here. A singleton is more likely to go to a pub than a restaurant, with a greater proportion saying they go to a pub at least once a month. Three-quarters of people with a non-cohabiting lover are frequent pub visitors versus less than half of married couples. Similar statistics emerge from data on visits to the cinema; singletons with a boyfriend or girlfriend are more likely to

**Proportion of under 40s who say they are "living comfortably/doing alright" financially**

By relationship status

"How well would you say you yourself are managing financially these days? Would you say you are...."



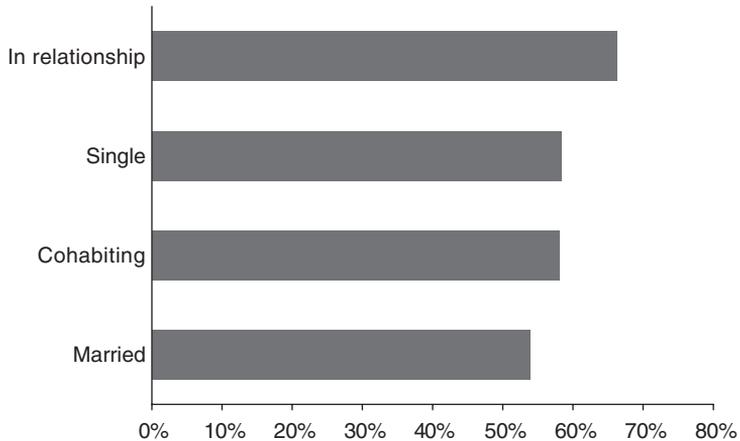
Source: British Household Panel Study/nVision  
Base: 12,000 adults aged 16+, UK, 2004

nVision   
19195: The Singleton Society

Figure 11.4: Financial management.

**Eating out, by relationship status**

Proportion of under 40s who eat out as an occasion at least once a month



Source: nVision Research  
Base: 1,400 adults aged 16+, UK, 2004

nVision   
10599: The Singleton Society

Figure 11.5: Eating out.

**Proportion of who agree/strongly agree that they are under stress in their everyday lives, by relationship status**

"Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements...I find my everyday life is very stressful"

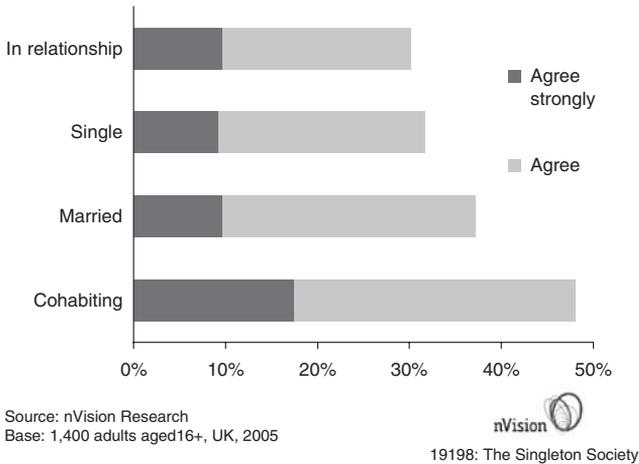


Figure 11.6: Time pressures.

indulge in a range of leisure activities than the truly single person. Having a non-cohabiting lover is, therefore, a driver of a broader leisure portfolio.

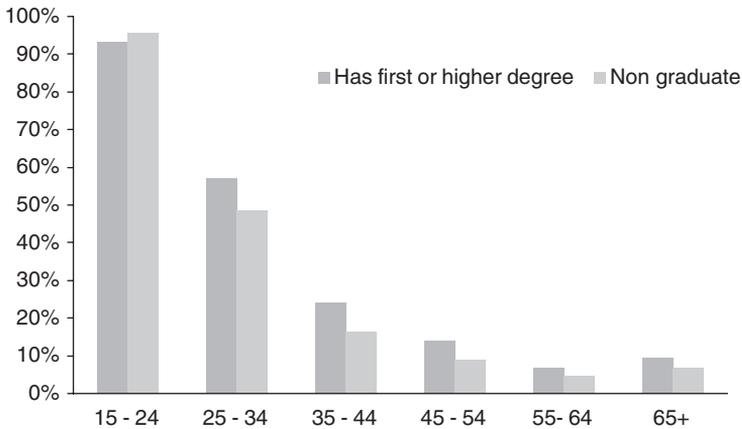
Perhaps one of the reasons singletons spend so much time in the pub is that their lives are just that little bit less full of activity; not having someone else to worry about clearly takes off some of the time pressures. It is, however, somewhat surprising to see just how much more stressed cohabiting couples seem to be than married couples: almost half agree with this statement versus about a third of non-cohabiting couples (Figure 11.6). This may be indicative of the adjustments of cohabiting, or perhaps a sign of the difficulties that people have during the transition period between single life and marriage. It also lends credibility to the data showing that unmarried couples are more likely to break up than married couples (Figure 11.7).

### Bridget's Lifestyle

Some people would say that the arrival of the Bridget Joneses and single society means the end of the world — as portrayed in the film *Children of Men* (James, 2006), when society becomes infertile and is unable to reproduce as a result of the changing roles of women and their rejection of marriage. Robert Putman in his book, *Bowling Alone* (Putman, 2001), views individualism as being selfishness, and putting one's own goals and desires before that of family, community and country, whereas Ethan Watters' commentary (2004) about the social phenomena of tribes in which friends become the new family, draws different conclusions. Watters argues that marriage — or, at least, the committed relationship — is still the key social unit in our society,

**Proportion of who have never married, by age and whether has degree or not**

"What is your current legal marital status, are you ..."



Source: British Household Panel Study/nVision  
 Base: 4,445 adults aged 16+ who have never married, UK, 2004

nVision   
 19200: The Singleton Society

Figure 11.7: Education by marital status.

and something to which most of us aspire. Watters' research revealed that well-educated, ambitious young urbanites were those most likely to want to celebrate their wealth, independence and freedom by holding off on commitments and responsibilities for a few years. Having chosen to live outside a traditional family for a decade or more, they were forming new kinds of 'family' with their friends, replicating the networks of care that a nuclear family used to supply.

So, is delaying marriage a middle-class trend, as suggested by Watters (2004)? By examining the BHPS data, we can see that the level of education attained does have an impact on the speed with which people pair off. Having a degree means that a person is less likely to marry — perhaps because those with degrees often gravitate to urban areas in order to find work and then set up their own 'tribes', which make living outside a family more fun and less arduous. Further analysis suggests that the higher the social grade, the more sexual partners people have. For example, ABC1s are clocking up an average of fourteen partners before marriage versus nine for the lower social grades.

## So, What about Bridget Jones' Love Life and Her Search for Mr Right?

In today's society, a host of companies are cashing in on the singleton's desire for a date: speed dating, slow dating, online dating, singles' holidays, singles' columns in newspapers and singles' clubs. The lonely hearts' columns once seemed like a last resort, but now busy young singletons have lots of socially acceptable options. There is arguably less fear and anxiety surrounding the dating process. Terms such as

*spinster* and *on the shelf* have fallen out of our lexicon, and the dating market extends well beyond catering only for people in their twenties. A survey by GMI (2006) on Internet dating revealed that 10% of those polled had found a long-term partner through Internet dating sites, with Brazilians, Germans and Americans being the most active online when searching for partners. One might even go so far as to suggest that singletons are celebrating this period of their lives and many find that being single is fun. Figure 11.8 highlights a YouGov (2007) survey of methods employed to find a date, with going out with friends to bars and clubs being the most popular; however, 12% of the population have used Internet dating sites and 23% have found a partner at work.

Durex's Global Sex Survey (2005) highlights the sexual attitudes amongst different groups and in different countries. Figure 11.9 shows that, globally, people have nine sexual partners in their lifetime and men have more partners than women. Turks have more partners than people in any other country, whilst Indians have the fewest. Almost two-thirds of Hong Kong residents have had just one partner, compared to 12% in Norway. In Figure 11.10, we can see the types of sexual experiences UK people have had, with 44% of them having used a vibrator when having sex and 17% having had three in a bed.

Figure 11.11 shows that 50% of UK consumers have had sex in a car and 15% in public transport; however, only 3% are members of the mile-high club (having sex in an aeroplane). This insight raises a more general point — that British attitudes towards sex have changed; no longer is the long-running play 'No Sex, Please, We're British' a reflection of society. Today, the sex shop chain, Anne Summers, is found on many UK high streets. It has been a long time since pre-marital sex was taken off the moral blacklist, but as attitudes towards sex continue to become more and more relaxed, one could argue that marriage may become less and less relevant to people who are not yet planning to have a family.

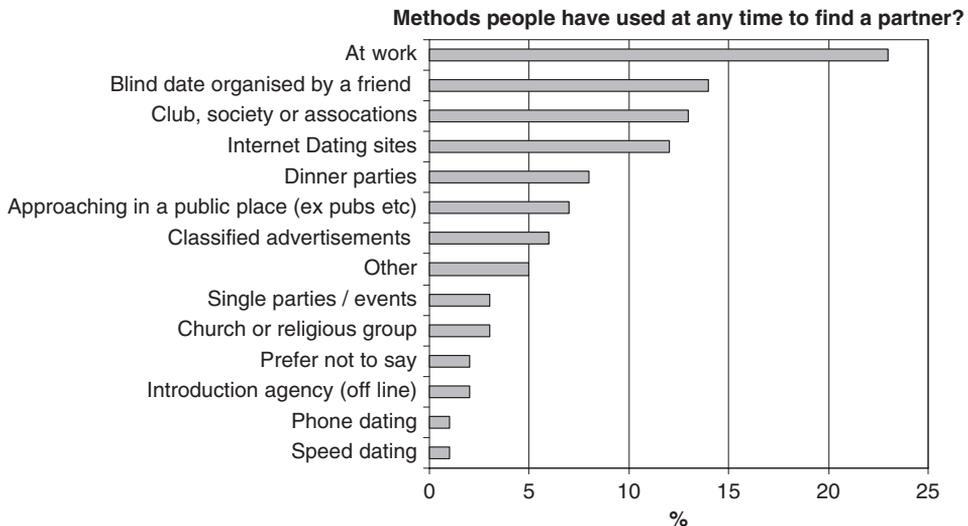


Figure 11.8: Dating methods people have used at any time (Source: YouGov, 2007).

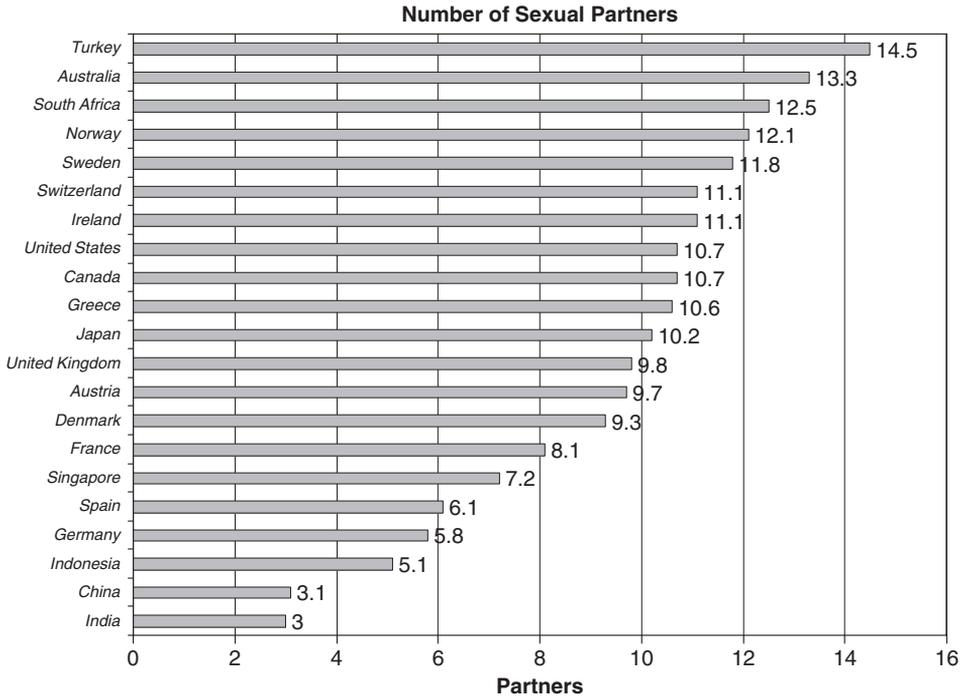


Figure 11.9: Selected sexual partners (*Source: Durex, 2005*).

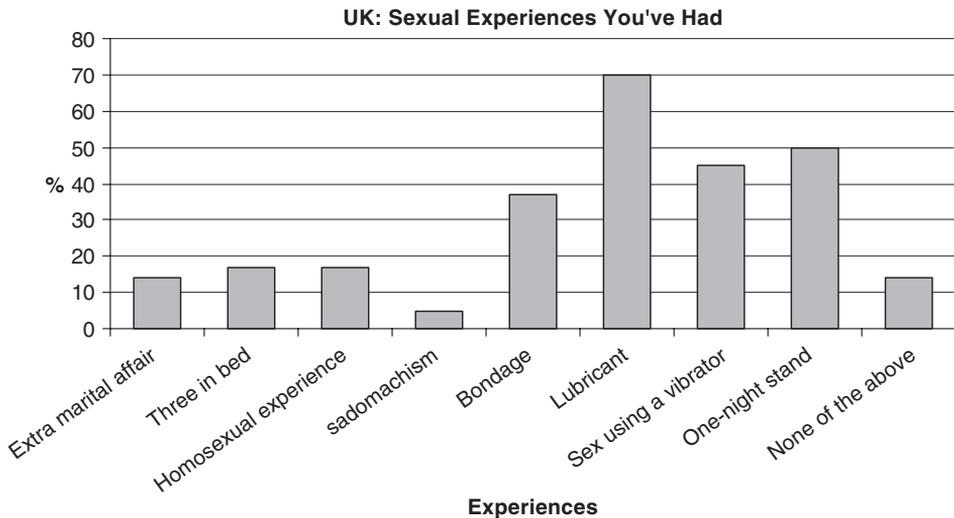


Figure 11.10: Sexual experiences you've had (*Source: Durex, 2005*).

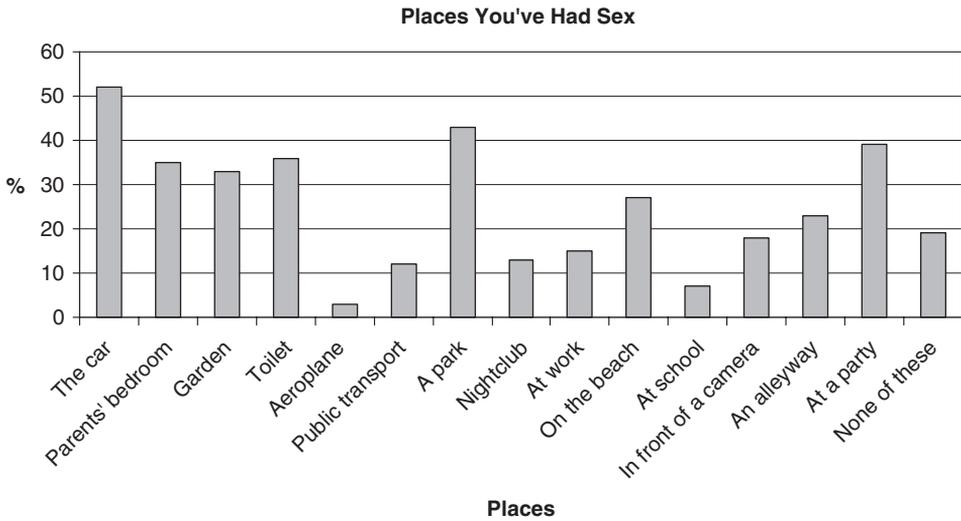


Figure 11.11: Places UK consumers have had sex (*Source: Durex, 2005*).

### Singletons on Holiday

Much of the UK singleton population has already travelled alone on holiday, often during their gap year — or even earlier, that is, during their student years. This backpacker market remains well catered for and continues to flourish because of demand from travellers in their late teens or early twenties. However, career-focused singles, with higher disposable incomes plus an intense and work-filled life, are looking to indulge themselves more while on holiday and are willing to pay the price for higher-end service, unlike cash-strapped backpackers. The main drawback faced by those travelling alone is the higher price of a holiday, compared to going as part of a couple or a group. Whilst the airfare, meals and souvenir costs are the same for everyone, single travellers are made to pay surcharges for accommodation, making their trip more expensive. Most travel operators, whose packages are often affected by the surcharges levied by accommodation providers, also place an additional surcharge on single travellers, who are therefore penalised twice. Safety and security abroad is also of concern to singles, particularly female travellers who venture to new destinations on their own. Additionally, some singles feel conscious of the social stigma attached to 25- to 40-year-olds travelling solo, whilst others feel uncomfortable dining alone on holiday. Such issues currently impinge on the development of the sector (Euromonitor, 2006).

Very few tour operators have adapted their operations to offer packages for single, upwardly mobile consumers, and in consequence the industry remains surprisingly underdeveloped and disproportionately biased towards catering for couples and groups. Euromonitor (2006) believes that the tourism industry is missing a lucrative trick in not responding to the practical, cost-related and emotional restrictions which

affect those holidaying alone. Indeed, the market for individual travel may be the next big thing for tour operators to focus on.

Singletons have different needs from those holidaying in couples or groups. In some ways they are more flexible, because they are not restricted to choosing a holiday which appeals to all members of their family or group. However, whilst this makes them open to a wider range of options, it also means that the needs of the single traveller are much higher in terms of specific requirements, safety issues and demand for more challenging and rewarding holidays. Presented with the freedom to choose a holiday to satisfy only themselves, single travellers often feel a strong urge to take part in activities which they could not do if they had to take into account another person's tastes. They are, for example, more inclined to consider adventure holidays and extreme sports. Themed holidays linked to hobbies, such as trekking, surfing, bird-watching, horse riding or yoga, as well as spa retreats and exotic city breaks, are also all niche-market products which operators would do well to offer single travellers.

More so than couples and groups, singletons also feel the need to take part in activities where they gain a sense of achievement. As such, themed holidays, educational holidays, volunteering tourism and ecotourism are all predicted to do well if correctly targeted at the singles' market. Holidays where new skills can be learned, such as courses on cookery, writing and massage, and sporting holidays, are also likely to be successful if marketed to singles. With young working singles willing to spend more on travel abroad or to achieve a lifetime ambition, a plethora of opportunities exist for travel specialists and niche travel agents to put together mid-to-luxury holidays. For single male travellers in particular, unique trips involving the latest technology, including trips on high-speed boats or other cutting-edge transport, are expected to be successful.

## **Has Bridget Ever Considered a Dating Holiday?**

Bridget could always try a specialist 'singles' tour operator. With the rise in popularity of dating and online dating agencies, such as [www.datingdirect.com](http://www.datingdirect.com), [www.match.com](http://www.match.com) and [www.streetcupid.com](http://www.streetcupid.com), holidays marketed as spin-offs and tour operators offering a similar matchmaking service have begun to flourish. Thanks to the long-running television programme 'Blind Date', where the winning couple actually go on a holiday as their date, consumers are familiar with the concept of singles aged between 25 and 40 finding romance on a 'holiday date'. Tour operators now provide unattached travellers with a similar product, but without Cilla Black and her show as the middleman! Nevertheless, a significant proportion of single travellers remain uncomfortable with the social stigma associated with traditional 18–30 or Club-Med-type holidays and, as far as possible, prefer to avoid giving the impression that they are actively looking for a partner. Therefore, holidays which announce just that will be rejected by a large part of the single traveller market.

Whilst the 'going it alone' market remains small, some businesses in the United Kingdom have already forged ahead, recognising the potential of the independent

singles' market. Established companies that help 'pair up' travelling companions, including [www.thelmaandlouise.com](http://www.thelmaandlouise.com) and [www.companions2travel.co.uk](http://www.companions2travel.co.uk), have been in the market for some time and there is no emphasis in their holidays on travellers finding a partner for life. [www.solosholidays.co.uk](http://www.solosholidays.co.uk) and [www.friendshiptravel.com](http://www.friendshiptravel.com) are amongst specialist operators cleverly catering for young and unattached single travellers who want to meet new people, whilst not actually highlighting the fact that they are full-blown dating agencies.

The rapidly developing online market has also stimulated a small, but growing, market for media content websites, where single travellers can exchange tips and ideas on travelling alone, as well as arrange to meet up somewhere en route. These chat sites provide a useful platform for singles to get advice and share experiences, and to exchange photos in case they meet a potential travel partner. There are also abundant opportunities for tour operators to develop spin-offs from travel services for singles, including holiday reunion events in the United Kingdom or abroad or reunion holiday packages for those who first met when holidaying alone. The potential growth of this product is made evident by the success of [www.friendsreunited.co.uk](http://www.friendsreunited.co.uk), which is the leading reunion site in the United Kingdom and now boasts more than 1 million paying subscribers. This concept would also create a loyal consumer base of repeat purchasers, providing opportunities for singles to combine meeting up and socialising and travelling to new destinations.

The lucrative singles market will also provide opportunities for tie-ups between online dating agencies and travel retailers, where companies such as [www.lastminute.com](http://www.lastminute.com) and [www.match.com](http://www.match.com) could potentially join forces to offer combined holiday/dating packages for those seeking to form partnerships whilst travelling. Such a concept is likely to be incredibly appealing to this generation of busy single people, who desire alternative and fun packages to counterbalance their hectic lifestyle, but are also on the look out for a partner for life (Euromonitor, 2006).

## **What about Mr Darcy; Where Will He Find His Bridget Jones?**

It's getting harder for Mr Darcy to find a woman; according to research by Professor Wiseman of Hertfordshire University (Johnstone, 2006), Bridget Jones will make up her mind about a prospective partner within 30s of meeting a man, whereas men take longer to reach a decision (see also Figure 11.12). No wonder Mr Darcy has turned to Eastern Europe for a prospective partner, through such sites as [www.eastwestmatch.com](http://www.eastwestmatch.com), [www.russian-rendezvous.co.uk](http://www.russian-rendezvous.co.uk) and [www.elenasmodels.com](http://www.elenasmodels.com)

According to the UK Home Office (Dudley, Roughton, Fidler, & Woollacot, 2006) 23,645 temporary visas were granted to wives and fiancées for up to 6 months prior to their forming a legal relationship. The biggest increase in the number of visas has been for Europe (outside the EU, namely Ukraine, Russia and Belarus) rising from 2645 in 2002 to 3223 in 2006. In the United States, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, more than 200 mail-order-bride companies arrange between

**Bridget Jones at the Husband Shop**

A brand new store has just opened in London - and it sells husbands. When women go to choose a husband, they have to follow the instructions at the entrance:

"You may visit this store only once. There are 6 floors and the value of the products increase as you ascend the flights. You may choose any item from a particular floor, or may choose to go up to the next floor, but you can't go back down except to leave the building!"

So, a woman goes to the Husband Store to find a husband.

On the 1st floor the sign on the door reads:

Floor 1 - These men have jobs.

The 2nd floor sign reads:

Floor 2 - These men have jobs and love kids.

The 3rd floor sign reads:

Floor 3 - These men have jobs, love kids and are extremely good looking.

"Great," she thinks, but feels compelled to keep going.

She goes to the 4th floor and the sign reads:

Floor 4 - These men have jobs, love kids, are drop-dead good looking and help with housework.

"Fantastic" she exclaims, "I can hardly stand it!"

Still, she goes to the 5th floor and sign reads:

Floor 5 - These men have jobs, love kids, are drop-dead gorgeous, help with housework and have a strong romantic streak.

She is so tempted to stay, but she goes to the 6th floor and the sign reads:

Floor 6 - You are visitor 31,456,012 to this floor. There are no men on this floor. This floor exists solely as proof that women are impossible to please. Thank you for shopping at the Husband Store.

*Supplied by an anonymous friend*

Figure 11.12: Bridget Jones joke.

4000 and 6000 marriages every year. Googling mail-order brides on the Internet will bring up 4.5 million links.

For Mr Darcy, choosing the woman of his dreams from a catalogue of exotic Eastern European or Asian beauties has never been easier, nor has it ever been more

popular among Western men — particularly since agencies such as Russian Rendezvous UK assure clients that most of their ladies speak English and that many 'prefer to meet a man 10 to 20 years older than themselves'. Foreign Affair, one of the largest providers of romantic tours to Eastern Europe, typically charges £2500 for a two-week tour of Russian cities, including several social events where the ratio of men to women is 1:35.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Singletons in society are becoming more important as the pre-family life stage is set to last longer and, therefore, the value of singletons to the tourism industry can only become more valuable. Holidays for Bridget Jones become a meeting place for romance, social networking, activities or volunteering. Bridget Jones in 2030 will be aspirational and well educated, will have seen the world and will have read many Lonely Planet guides. With this in mind, we can see that tourism has many opportunities. Hopefully, Bridget Jones will get a decent s\*\*g by 2030; the only problem according to social forecaster Richard Scase (2000) is that single women in their thirties and forties have the well-developed social networks and confidence that men lack. Men define themselves more by their work, and relax with too much unhealthy food and drink, a recipe for isolation and loneliness. Single women, by contrast, are more likely to see friends, explore their spiritual side and relax with yoga. Consequently Mr Darcy might not be up to Bridget Jones' standards by 2030!