

# Future of the Wedding industry: Is the party over?

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The wedding industry has been hugely impacted by the ongoing global pandemic, with many future brides and grooms, who were supposed to get married this year or next year, either delaying or cancelling weddings until there is a vaccine. But with there being no certainty of if and when a vaccine will be made available, and how long it could take to vaccinate the whole UK, the wedding industry hangs in the balance.

As wedding venues have been given the go-ahead for a maximum of 15 guests, down from the previous limit of 30, there's speculation and thought surrounding the idea of what weddings will look like after the pandemic in the future. The future of the wedding sector remains an uncertainty, until the rules in the UK are lifted and there is confidence again for the industry.

The effects of COVID-19 have caused the sector an estimated loss of £4.8bn (\$6.3bn), as a significant number of weddings were cancelled or postponed this year (1). There has been a 32% drop in weddings taking place in 2020, compared to the previous year. Around 80% of UK weddings take place between April and September, which was the prime moment of the nationwide lockdown for social distancing and closure of many venues.

With the current restrictions from the 28<sup>th</sup> September only allowing 15 people to legally attend wedding venue, this has influenced many to cancel or delay. 15 is the maximum number for all attendees at the event, including the couple and guests, which is incredibly small. These restrictions are also in place for venues that cater for receptions and other celebrations, but only in the form of a sit-down meal (2). Many of the 80% weddings affected have been rescheduled for 2021, which has meant the Wedding industry will cater for around 160,000 more weddings than usual if the restrictions are eased. However, with the new 15 guests restrictions expected to last until March, the likelihood of 100+ guests at weddings in just six months seems somewhat unlikely.

There is still uncertainty whether a second wave will peak; therefore, the Wedding industry is still on hold until there is light at the end of the tunnel. For some eager couples, they have gone through with small, socially distanced, weddings. Outdoor Weddings have surged in popularity during the lockdown summer months, as outdoor gatherings are safer and easier to adhere to social distancing measures to keep all guests safe. However, as we fall into the winter months, it's expected that many couples will wait until 2021, or are considering delaying until 2022.

Many couples have adapted to the new normal, and have hosted their wedding ceremonies on applications like Zoom, allowing guests to virtually attend, but not risking their health. Although it doesn't seem like the most picturesque and romantic method for a special day, it has certainly been popular during lockdown this year (3). Not only have couples used online applications to broadcast their special day, but some have used Zoom for the likes of virtual bridal appointments and online venue tours, rather than attending in person.

Technology will play a massive role in the future of the bridal and wedding industry (3). More wedding research is done via mobile devices, with 75% of couples using social media for wedding inspiration and 64% of couples using at least one or more wedding planning app to stay organised. The future of the wedding industry seems to be shifting digital, but only time will tell.

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The impact the pandemic is having on the sector goes much further than couple's not being able to say 'I do' amongst loved ones, and it's having a catastrophic impact on people's livelihoods based solely in the wedding sector. The pandemic has not only damaged the wedding sector, but also the third parties involved with the supply of gifts and hospitality at the venues. Many small independent suppliers, such as the likelihood of florists and catering services, have also lost out massively. From wedding stationary services, to the florists and photographers, many wedding suppliers are small, locally run and independently owned businesses. Often, they rely on a busy wedding

season to stay afloat. Without weddings going ahead, or being massively reduced, how can these business owners continue to make money?

The number of enquiries for wedding insurance went up by 900% to 140,000 when the restrictions were first introduced in March. Unfortunately, many couples were left disappointed by wedding insurance companies because many refused to pay out for cancelled weddings. Even now, it is almost impossible to get wedding insurance. Many were not covered because cancellations were due to the government-ordered lockdown, rather than an outbreak of COVID-19 at their venue. Instead of losing money on both sides of the parties, couples have rearranged for next year without having to lose a deposit. Time will tell if they will be able to have their dream day on their second date, or if many couples will eventually end up waiting for more certainty of a vaccine.

The future of the Wedding industry is hard to predict, just like every other sector within the event industry. For the wedding sector to have a fighting chance of surviving, it is critical that the industry makes a bounce back in 2021.

1. [https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-4-8-bn-lost-by-the-uk-wedding-industry-in-2020-130907099.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAALTbA33nBKAD1zKaXdkvj-ob\\_GJ8db3PkDxYAfzlsMaUmj0w2MhpZjd6mNZD\\_ybR\\_2TZ8h1Yh5D4imSaTPUI0YjSmp\\_NyNFY8\\_QliJ29F\\_jMuXDwvOMXJaiL\\_uvLfy9CsT8e4lZorsYVx-ziDFSAsTPAuj5JIUb9UHlRdLgjlV](https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-4-8-bn-lost-by-the-uk-wedding-industry-in-2020-130907099.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALTbA33nBKAD1zKaXdkvj-ob_GJ8db3PkDxYAfzlsMaUmj0w2MhpZjd6mNZD_ybR_2TZ8h1Yh5D4imSaTPUI0YjSmp_NyNFY8_QliJ29F_jMuXDwvOMXJaiL_uvLfy9CsT8e4lZorsYVx-ziDFSAsTPAuj5JIUb9UHlRdLgjlV)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships#:~:text=From%2028%20September%20no%20more,gathering%20limit%20will%20be%2030.>
3. <https://insights.digitalmediasolutions.com/articles/future-of-wedding-marketing-covid19>