

Royal Wedding To Be Most Watched Event Of Decade

Contributed by TNS
Wednesday, 20 April 2011

7.7 million workers to take leave for wedding week

A massive 26.2 million people are set to watch next month's Royal Wedding on TV, making it the UK's most watched event of the last 10 years. Fifty-two per cent of the UK say they will tune in to watch Prince William and Catherine Middleton wed on TV, according to a survey by TNS Omnibus.

The viewing figure surpasses the record 21.3 million people who tuned in to BBC's Only Fools and Horses on 12 November 2001 – the most watched TV event of the last 10 years so far. It also beats the 17.7 million who tuned in to watch the 2010 X Factor final on ITV – the most watched TV show of 2010*.

However, the Royal Wedding is predicted to fall short of the 28.4 million people who watched the marriage of William's parents, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, in 1981 (Broadcasters Audience Research Board 2010).

As the UK prepares to party in front of the television, £195 million will be spent on snacks and drinks to enjoy for the occasion, and 7.7 million workers across the UK are taking whole week off, the TNS Omnibus survey also reveals.

Major Royal and sporting events, season finales and soap specials are the ones which consistently attract top viewing figures, but even by those standards this looks set to be very special. This figure shows what a momentous event this wedding will be for the UK – not to mention food and drink retailers, which will see an average spend of £30 on snacks and drinks for the show, says TNS Omnibus's Sue Homeyard, who analysed the responses of over 6,600 people from six countries on their views on the Royal Wedding.

The survey found that Germany and the USA will also follow the event closely on TV, with respectively 44 and 42 per cent of these nations watching along at home. It seems that the widespread intention to watch the wedding may be linked to the positive opinions people have about Prince William.

We also asked what kind of King they believe Prince William will be and the majority of nations were positive, says Homeyard. The UK believes he will be modern and caring, while Germany and the Netherlands believe he will have to live up to his mother's popular profile. A third of Americans believe he will be aware of global political issues.

They may not share the national holiday, but Germans are especially enthralled by the British Royal couple, coming top of the survey as being the most interested in the wedding. Three-quarters of French and almost the same (73 per cent) proportion of Dutch appear somewhat unmoved by news of the wedding, saying they are just plain not interested.

Uniting the countries, however, is that the majority of people don't know if it is true love.

Very few doubters came out and answered point blank that it is not true love, however many people said they just don't know. Of course, being the home of the Royal couple the UK did have the highest proportion of people to say it is true love at 49%, even topping the traditional romantics – the French, said Ms Homeyard.

The world's wedding in numbers:

* 7.7 million people (15%) across the UK are taking 26th – 28th April as leave from work. 4.23 million will be taking a holiday in the UK and 1.37 million will take a holiday abroad during the week of the wedding.

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* 49 per cent of the UK believe it is true love. 44 per cent say they don't know.

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* Forty-three per cent of the UK believe the Royal Family are good for British tourism, and 34 per cent believe they are good ambassadors for the country globally. Thirty-two per cent say they are a national asset.

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* 50 per cent of the UK think Prince William will be a modern king and 43 per cent think he will be caring, but only 31 per cent view him as an excellent leader, and an even smaller 23 per cent think he will be inspirational.

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* 40 per cent of Germans are very/somewhat interested in the Royal Wedding, followed by 39 per cent of Britons and 37 per cent of Americans.

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* Three-quarters of French (76%) are not interested in the Wedding, with the Dutch also aloof to the royal romance (73 per cent not interested).

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* 35 per cent of people in Germany and the USA want a spectacular, traditional British Royal wedding, but 21 per cent of those in the UK would like a smaller affair, with costs kept to a minimum.

About the survey

“The People’s Perspective Royal Wedding Poll” was conducted by TNS Omnibus between 3rd – 24th March 2011. The survey was conducted online with a total of 6,625 adults from the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands and USA.

* British Film Institute, “Britain’s Most Watched TV – the 1980s”. <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/mostwatched/1980s>.

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United Kingdom - 11 April 2011