

# THE NEW S I N G L E G I R L

There's more to life than finding the perfect husband and building the house with the white picket fence. (Though having those, too, wouldn't hurt either!)

**A** new study by the Pew Institute in 2011 found that 49 percent of Americans are now single. And most importantly—women are becoming increasingly vocal about celebrating their “without a plus one” status. Meet the new single girl: She's attractive, confident, independent and loving life.

Since birth, women are constantly bombarded with the pressure to get married and settle down. For women who remain single, they are often written off by society as lonely spinsters who have nothing going for them but their cats. We watch movies like *Bridget Jones' Diary*, see commercials by Tiffany & Co. and subject ourselves to other women in our lives that say things like, “You ought to get married soon and settle down. You're thirty-something and you're drying up.” All of this conditions us to believe that our worth and desirability as women is dependent upon whether or not we are married.

However, meet one woman at the helm of this new movement who believes something different.

Eleanore Wells writes one of the web's most popular blogs rejoicing her decision to stay single called *TheSpinsterliciousLife.com*. She describes herself as a heterosexual woman living in New York City whose life is awesomely filled with loving family, a fabulous circle of friends, and a successful career as the owner of marketing consultant group Golden Door Consulting. Her income has allowed her to purchase a second home in the Hamptons, have an active social life and take vacations around the world. She supports charitable organizations with her money and time and adores her 11-year-old Yorkie, Danny. And she dates; in fact, she dates a lot. She's a far cry from the dowdy bitter woman society plays out.

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The heart of the matter is that “marrying and/or having children are a matter of choice,” says Wells. “Although lots of people don't seem to think so. Many believe it's what one must do. I never felt that way ... though, I'm not sure why. I don't recall a time when I was really drawn to either.”

“I like having a boyfriend and I enjoy my nieces and nephews, and my friends' children. I also enjoy that they all go home at some point.”

Although many would argue that people naturally want to couple up and that Wells may be in the minority, she counters by agreeing to a certain point. “I think most people like sharing their life with someone,” says Wells, “and so do I. I'm not against coupling up, I just don't think that marriage is for everyone.”

With the strong divorce rates, there's a rising number of single people, including her thousands of followers, who seem to agree with her. To her critics, she says that “people are uncomfortable when anyone goes against the grain of social norms so they look for ways to brand you as the ‘other.’” But she thinks that, “everybody should just relax and enjoy the ride [of life].”

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She has advice on how to do this—particularly for younger women ages 25 to 35, who feel the stigma the most, according to a 2011 study, *I'm a Loser, I'm not Married, Let's All Look at Me*. The study was conducted by Lawrence Ganong, co-chair of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Missouri, and associate professor, Elizabeth A. Sharp at Texas Tech University.

“I think that when you're young, you're sometimes less sure of yourself in general,” says Wells. “However, an important lesson that I would hope any young woman receives—whether she decides to marry or not—is to build a nice life for yourself every step of the way, rather than spending time pining about what you don't have. Have good friends and be a good friend, pursue things you find interesting, have hobbies or pastimes you enjoy, be close to people (or someone) in your family, learn to be smart about money and stop using drugs and alcohol as an excuse for poor decisions or bad behavior,” says Wells.

Most importantly, “Love yourself first,” she says. ■

- Kimberly S. Lin