

JEWELRY

Affluents seeking sentimental, sustainable wedding rings post-pandemic

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Consumers are increasingly searching for sentimental, sustainable options when it comes to wedding jewelry. Image credit: Bridget Flohe

By KATIE TAMOLA

Engaged affluents are taking a more thoughtful approach to wedding jewelry as the COVID-19 pandemic eases and lavish weddings resume.

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Sentimentality and sustainability seem to be on the forefront of consumers' minds when it comes to selecting jewelry for their special days. Brands including Mikimoto, Tiffany & Co. and more are continuing to expand their wedding jewelry offerings, inviting consumers to choose from a variety of products that will best fit their vision.

"Many brides and grooms are seeking out unique, sentimental ways to make their wedding stand out choosing unique styles and diamond shapes that speak to their personal style and values, including purchasing pieces with sustainability in mind," said Mona Akhavi, CEO of [VRAI Fine Jewelry & Engagement Rings](#), Los Angeles. "We continue to see a significant increase in the number of engagement ring purchases where sustainability and transparency are important values."

Thoughtful jewelry

According to a 2020 study from wedding planning platform [The Knot](#), the COVID-19 pandemic led couples to rely more heavily on online jewelry offerings for their weddings. In a study of more than 5,000 recently engaged individuals, 33 percent report increasing the amount of time spent on researching engagement rings online, 11 percent report connecting with jewelers on social media and 10 percent even used virtual tools for online consultations with jewelers.

The national average cost of an engagement ring in 2020 was \$5,500 compared to \$5,900 in 2019. The most popular center stone cut was round at 43 percent, followed by princess or square at 13 percent and oval at 15 percent.



The Mikimoto boutique in Las Vegas. Image courtesy of Mikimoto

After a year of postponements, couples are ready to tie the knot this year and next, with more couples electing jewelry as a reflection of their love.

"After over a year of separation in most cases, weddings are truly a celebration of family and community," said Georgina Coleman, vice president of the retail division at [Mikimoto](#), New York. "Jewelry carries with it memories and sharing this with loved ones during a wedding celebration is meaningful beyond compare."

According to Ms. Coleman, Mikimoto has seen the inclusion of pearls become more popular in engagement jewelry. The Japanese jeweler currently offers a wide range of pearl engagement rings to choose from.

"Since the recent engagements of celebrities like Emma Stone and Ariana Grande, we have seen renewed interest in classic pearl engagement rings," Ms. Coleman said.

Whether pearl or diamond, round or princess cut, consumers are flocking to sentimentality and what feels classic. Several brands offer customization efforts that help engaged couples express themselves even more.

Jean Dousset, the founder and designer of a luxury fine jewelry brand that specializes in engagement rings, showcases a wide variety of rings on his website, as well as the option to create one's own solitaire design.

"People are investing in items that are timeless and meaningful," said Jean Dousset, founder of [Oui by Jean Dousset](#), Los Angeles. "With vaccine rollouts and lifted restrictions, we're seeing that people want to celebrate each other, and our customers purchase jewelry that's unique, meaningful to them, and celebrates a special moment in their lives."

Jewelry brands are continuing their efforts to help every couple celebrate the special moments of their lives by also implementing inclusive offerings.

U.S. jeweler Tiffany & Co. recently introduced its first men's engagement ring, the Charles Tiffany Setting, available in round and emerald cuts. The new addition invites men across the world to celebrate their love with a Tiffany diamond.



This is the first men's engagement ring from Tiffany & Co. Image courtesy of Tiffany & Co.

The U.S. jeweler is also continuing to bring transparency to its diamond supply chain, highlighting its role in diamond traceability. Tiffany & Co. Delivers the full craftsmanship journey for each newly sourced, individually registered diamond, including each diamond that is set in The Charles Tiffany Setting ([see story](#)).

Additional jewelry retailers and brands are continuing to highlight their inclusive offerings as well.

"We offer a huge line of wedding rings for men as well as women, but those categories should never limit someone from choosing the ring that perfectly suits them or their partner," said Denis Stepansky, founder and owner of online jewelry retailer [ItsHot.com](#), New York. "No matter who you are, you deserve to feel special when you wear your engagement ring."

Sustainability and traceability

It is clear that consumers are growing increasingly concerned with sustainability and traceability reflected in their wedding jewelry. Jewelers are making continued efforts in reflecting transparent practices.

Last October, Tiffany & Co. introduced a video series, sharing the full craftsmanship journey of its newly sourced, individually registered diamonds that are 0.18 carats or larger. As younger consumers lose interest in mined diamonds because of sustainability concerns, the jeweler continues to offer unprecedented levels of transparency for its diamonds ([see story](#)).



Diamond brands are featuring sustainability efforts in marketing campaigns as consumers become more values-oriented. Image credit: De Beers Group

British jeweler De Beers officially announced a list of 12 sustainability goals it plans to achieve by the year 2030.

The 12 goals are part of De Beers' Building Forever framework, a sustainability approach embedded in the business's commercial strategy and focused on maximizing the positive impact of diamonds on their journey from discovery to retail ([see story](#)).

"Customers today are more socially conscious and aware of sustainability, environmental impact, and natural alternatives than ever before," said Suzanne Sachs, president of antique jewelry and diamond business [VintageDiamondRing.com](#), New York. "It is no surprise then that many consumers are concerned with choosing an eco-friendly engagement ring /products that will show their commitment to the planet even as they make their commitment to each other."