

Examine Valentine Demographics: Prospects Vary Greatly

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Like many other people, Montgomery residents are getting ready to celebrate Valentine's Day on Feb. 14. It is a special day for lovers, who often exchange flowers, chocolates and other gifts. This historical tradition of Valentine's Day goes back to the Roman Empire.

According to some legends, Saint Valentine was put to death for marrying people at a time when Emperor Claudius II put a ban on marriage in order to recruit young men into the army. This unfortunate event led to what is now a day of celebration, a day on which people exchange gifts to show love and admiration.

Valentine's Day is a busy holiday period for many retailers. Unlike Christmas, Valentine's Day is supposed to be a romantic holiday -- or at least that's what lovers (and potential lovers) dream about. No wonder a heart is used as a Valentine's Day symbol representing love and affection.

As Feb. 14 approaches, retailers -- and lovers -- become more and more anxious. Retailers want to sell more products to increase their profits, while lovers struggle to find the perfect gift to symbolize their love, and still others wait for a secret admirer to surprise them with gifts on Valentine's Day.

While school-aged children also celebrate Valentine's Day by exchanging cards and candies with their classmates and friends, the majority of advertisers and retailers will continue to focus on the most profitable audience: the adult population.

As this holiday approaches, it is interesting to consider the demography of Valentine pairings in the city of Montgomery. How many adults are Valentine-eligible in Montgomery? How many have lovers, potential lovers, or loved ones with whom they will -- or would like to -- engage in Valentine exchanges on Feb. 14?

What are the possibilities for the Valentine-minded in Montgomery? Let's start by looking at the married population, and then discuss the possibilities for those still searching for their Valentines. According to estimates from the Census Bureau, about 42 percent of Montgomery residents aged 15 years and older are married. In other words, more than half of people in that age group are not currently married, which is good news for Valentine-seekers!

There are remarkable differences in these statistics when grouped by age and gender. Among men age 15 years and older, 46 percent are married, compared to only 39 percent of women. The age-gender difference is wider among senior citizens: nearly 7 out of 10 men age 65 and older are currently married, compared to only 3 out of every 10 women.

This statistical difference reflects the universal demographic pattern in which men tend to marry "down" while women tend to marry "up" in terms of age, income, and other attributes. Higher male mortality also helps to account for this sex-age difference in marriage among older people. Because there are more women than men at older ages, older men have greater success in finding heterosexual mates than older women do. Retailers might increase their Valentine's Day profits by reminding these lucky men to purchase gifts for their sweethearts.

For those looking for a new Valentine this year, it is important to know the mate-search market. Although there are more women than men in the city of Montgomery, the percentages of each varies greatly by zip code. For example, the best place to find a man is within the zip code 36115, where there are about 141 men per 100 women aged 18 years and older. Statistically speaking, the second best place to look is within the zip code 36104, where there is a ratio of 130 men per 100 women aged 18 and older.

When arranged by zip code, all other areas in Montgomery have more women than men. Unmarried men are more likely to find their Valentines this year if they look within zip codes 36108 and 36116, where there are 74 and 76 men per 100 women. The most sex-balanced zone in the city is within the zip code 36117, so Valentine-seekers in that area may have to consider going beyond their own neighborhoods to find a Valentine mate.

Traditionally -- and not surprisingly -- the Maxwell Air Force Base area has a higher concentration of men than women. However, since many of the men on the base are in Montgomery for temporary assignments, it may not be advisable to seek Valentine romance there. For white women seeking white men as their Valentines, the pasture is greener, as long as they look outside the South Boulevard, Atlanta Highway, and Wares Ferry Road areas.

Minorities looking for statistical support in finding their Valentines should look near the center of the city. For example, a black woman looking for a black man to be her Valentine partner may be more successful around the East Boulevard and I-85 junction.

Despite these enlightening demographic statistics, as we prepare for Valentine's Day, it is important to remember that love has no boundaries, whether you have a significant other or are searching for one. Think about all of the important people in your life. Give Valentine presents to your parents, siblings, children, teachers and friends.

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