

BUDGET USERS LESS LIKELY TO HAVE FINANCIAL FIGHTS

Just in Time for Valentine's Day, New Research Uncovers Sources of Marital Money Woes Along With Some Solutions

CHICAGO, IL – February 10, 2010. Money is a well-known source of conflict among married couples, but research released today identifies a step couples can take to dial down their financial disagreements. A national survey of over 600 married people conducted by market research firm Synovate through its eNation service, and commissioned by personal finance writer/speaker Matt Bell, found that couples who use a budget to guide their household finances have fewer financial disagreements than couples who do not use a budget.

Nearly 40 percent of all respondents said they have financial disagreements with their spouse either often or sometimes. However, those who use a budget that guides how much they save, invest, give, and spend – especially a detailed budget – are less likely to have financial fights.

How often do you and your spouse have disagreements over money?	All	Use detailed budget	Use general budget	Don't use a budget
Often or Sometimes	39%	32%	38%	43%

The survey found that just 12 percent of married people use a detailed budget, 50 percent use a general budget, and 38 percent do not use a budget.

“I’m not suggesting that couples spend this Valentine’s Day setting up a budget,” Bell said. “However, before this year’s roses are wilted it would be a great idea to set up another date – a money date – to talk about how they will use their income for the rest of this year and start putting together a plan.”

Among the financial topics most often fought over by married people, spending and debt topped the list.

Disagree about this topic often or sometimes.	Respondents who have financial disagreements
How much we should spend on various items.	49%
How much debt we should carry.	33%
How much we should keep in savings for emergencies.	26%
How much or where we should invest.	15%
How much or where we should donate money.	10%

In addition to the topic they disagree about, respondents were asked to assess the degree to which other factors contribute to their financial fights.

Said that this factor comes into play in their financial disagreements with their spouse often or sometimes.	Respondents who have financial disagreements
Our different temperaments.	39%
Our different family backgrounds/upbringing.	33%
Our different levels of financial knowledge.	31%
Our different spiritual beliefs.	7%

“An important key to making money work in marriage is understanding each other’s temperaments and then maximizing the strengths each person brings while minimizing the weaknesses,” according to Bell, who teaches workshops for engaged couples. “Someone with a sanguine temperament – that is, an outgoing, highly social person – is not likely to want to use a budget. The good news is that financial opposites tend to attract. So, if the sanguine spouse will at least drop receipts in the vicinity of the household budget, the other spouse can be in charge of recording the information.”

One factor that drives up the frequency of financial disagreements among married people is the presence of children in the household.

How often do you and your spouse have disagreements over money?	All	Children in the household	No children in the household
Often or Sometimes	39%	50%	32%

“Having children brings many joys, but also more financial pressure. There are simply more expenses such as school supplies, sports programs, friends’ birthday gifts, and for some, college,” Bell explained.

One bit of good news from the survey is that as couples are married longer, financial disagreements become less frequent.

How often do you and your spouse have disagreements over money?	All	Married <1 – 5 years	Married 6 – 10 years	Married 11 – 20 years	Married 21+ years
Often or Sometimes	39%	43%	50%	43%	31%

“Married couples face a lot of changes and pressure in their first 10 to 20 years together – from raising children, to buying a home, to establishing their careers. The silver lining in this research is that most couples can look forward to fewer money fights in the future,” according to Bell.

ABOUT

Synovate (www.synovate.com), the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 5,500 staff in 108 cities across 50 countries. For the money and marriage research, Synovate used its eNation service, an online survey of nearly 650 married adults 18 years of age or older in the contiguous U.S.A. The sample is balanced to be representative of the general population based upon region, gender, age, and household income data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The margin of error on this study is approximately +/- four percentage points.

Matt Bell is the author of two personal finance books, writes a personal finance blog (www.MattAboutMoney.com), and leads personal finance workshops at venues around the country, including one for engaged and newly married couples called “Investing in Your Marriage.” His web site contains a free “Budget Quick Start Guide.” For comments about the findings in this news release, contact Bell at 708-447-8022.

Bell and Synovate have teamed up for three previous personal finance surveys. The results can be seen at www.mattaboutmoney.com/media/news-releases.

###