

## Diversifying

AUG 15, 2022

All the Single Ladies... Pay More



Speakers

Delyanne Barros, Listener Montage, Shani Silver, Bella DePaulo

00:00:01

**Delyanne Barros**

I want to get a little personal for a few minutes. I've taken a step back from dating in the last few years because I've had other priorities. I've been focused on my business, this podcast, and my upcoming move to Portugal. And let me tell you that being single is where I thrive. Nothing is getting in the way of my goals. Definitely not some rando from Tinder. For now, it's just me and my dog Oliver, and I'm cool with that. But I've lived with partners in the past, and there's no doubt that splitting costs definitely makes life a lot easier when you're a household of one things out of fast. So I ask my fellow single Pringles to call in and spill the tea on single life.

00:00:47

**Listener Montage**

Hey, Delyanne. Hi, Delyanne. Hey, Delyanne. My friends and I all refer to being single as carrying a single person life tax, which we kind of joke, but not joke about how everything is harder or more expensive. It takes us longer to save for big purchases like houses or vacations. I am responsible for all of the rent of utilities, all of the extras like Netflix and things like that. There's never a break. There's no one to fall back on. No matter how hard I work, no matter how ahead I get, I am being punished because I'm a single woman. It just sucks. That's a little bit sometimes.

00:01:36

**Delyanne Barros**

It does suck. It can feel like you're being penalized for your independence, and it can be especially difficult to deal with because there's no one thing that you can point to and say, this is why being single is more expensive. Really, it's a lot of little factors that add up government incentives, cultural expectations. Just the way society is set up. So today we're going to walk through some of the financial hurdles single people are facing and why. You might be single, but I promise you, you aren't alone in experiencing this. I'm Delyanne Barros. This is Diversifying.

00:02:26

**Shani Silver**

I think we see security and stability in romantic couple hood that it doesn't necessarily always deserve. Parents are more comfortable with their adult children partner because it makes them think that their children aren't alone. Because alone is still a scary word, right?

00:02:42

**Delyanne Barros**

That's Shani Silver. She's been single for 13 years and she's all about changing the narrative around singlehood. She has a podcast called A Single Serving podcast, and a book A Single Revolution. Don't Look for a Match Light One.

00:02:59

**Shani Silver**

And I would like us to start seeing a loan as a good thing too. Not instead of being in a couple, we can do whatever we want throughout the course of our lives, and we likely will. I would just like there to be more balance in the ways we view people who have a romantic partner and the people who don't.

00:03:14

**Delyanne Barros**

Yeah, I so relate to that. I mean, I have been seeing more women and not just more women, but, you know, people in general own up to the idea of like I'm single by choice and not having to like explain themselves, but somebody will usually say something condescending like, don't worry, you'll find somebody in time. And a lot of that obviously comes from, you know, society, culture, media, family. So I was curious to hear from you, like, what did you hear growing up around relationships, you know, versus being single? How did that make you feel?

00:03:46

**Shani Silver**

I heard what everyone else heard. I heard Disney. I heard fairy tale. I went to middle school and saw kids holding hands for the first time and passing notes in class. And wasn't that just the best thing ever? I think we've been raised in a world that over inflates the importance and value of romantic love. And I don't want to diminish romantic love or partnership. Certainly not. But I wanted to find more balance with everything else that we do. So those of us that don't have romantic love don't move through life feeling like we're less than.

00:04:17

**Delyanne Barros**

I could talk about this all day because I am triggered in all kinds of way, but I want to focus on the personal finance side of this as well. So being single can be much more expensive than being in a relationship in many ways. So to get us started. Can you, rapidfire, tell us some of the things that are more expensive for single people?

00:04:41

**Shani Silver**

Considering singlehood to be more expensive isn't actually the way I look at it. I think singlehood is not discounted. And I think living as a couple, your life has a discount because you need the same number of bedrooms because you share one. Imagine the down payment you could save up for if you could pay half of the rent that you pay and half of the bills that you pay and for half of the household supplies you pay for, not food, because there's two people consuming that. But there's so many aspects of day to day life that single people are paying for alone in full. And those who are in couples are splitting them in half. And that's before we get into things like, you know, married people can be on each other's health insurance. So I'm not sure if more expensive is the way I talk about it. I talk about single life as not discounted because coupled life absolutely is.

00:05:28

**Delyanne Barros**

I completely agree with you. I think, you know, as somebody who has been in and out of relationships where I've lived with a boyfriend and I've split costs, it's significant. You've actually done the math right, to show how much you would have saved if you were splitting it with a partner.

00:05:43

**Shani Silver**

I have yeah. I mean, it's easy math and I'm terrible at math, so I should preface this. The only way that I've done this is incredibly easy for me. So I pay \$2,000 a month in rent. I moved to New Orleans from New York. So I'm I'm currently paying less than I was paying in New York, but I have a much bigger space. So I pay \$2,000 a month in rent for a two bedroom, two bath house. And if I had a partner that was splitting this with me, I would be saving \$12,000 a year. I don't know what you would do with \$12,000, but I self-publish my books and I would use that money to self-publish another book. That's precisely where that money would go, and that would feed into additional revenue streams for me so that this cycle could just keep building and building on itself. And I could build wealth over the course of my career. But that's not something that I'm able to do right now because I am paying all of the rent by myself. I also want to point out that this is okay and I know how privileged and lucky I am to be able to live this life. So I don't want to talk about this stuff in terms of complaining because I'm not. But it is pretty sobering to recognize the amount of money that couples are able to save.

00:06:43

**Delyanne Barros**

One thing I want to highlight about what you said about having the two bedroom, two bath, which I also finally have one after leaving New York City, because that was the only way that was going to happen. And some people, you know, will turn to me or maybe they turn to you and say, well, why don't you just get a roommate and then you can split the cost with the person. Problem solved. What do you say to that?

00:07:02

**Shani Silver**

Have you had roommates before? This does not solve problem? No, that's not. No. Again, I made the choices that I made in my life. I have had many roommates over the course of many, many years. When necessary, it's there. It's. There is an option if I need it. And I am grateful for that. But it is a choice that I have made that I don't want to live with someone that I am not romantically involved.

00:07:26

**Delyanne Barros**

So you have an awesome series on Tick Tock called Things Single People Aren't Doing Any More, love it. And one video in particular really resonated with me and a lot of people, and that was the topic of getting the pull out couch on trips just because you're single. Oh, I've definitely been that person. You know, the couple will get the bigger room or get a single room with the door and they're relegated to the couch, even though you're paying the same price as them. So can we talk about how unfair that is and how it needs to stop? Like immediately.

00:08:00

**Shani Silver**

So if you're on a group trip or a family vacation and you're being put on the couch, you're being told you don't deserve privacy because how could someone ever need privacy unless they have a romantic partner that they're having sex with? You don't deserve a real bed or a good night's sleep because you can just sleep wherever you're still single. Why would you need a real bed? It's the same way we do. Like cute little pallets on the floor for groups of kids at like a sleepover. That's great when you're nine, but I'm almost 40, so let's have a room with a door that closes. I'm not asking for an en suite bathroom. Everyone, we can share that. Let's share that and bring the cost of that trip down. Single people deserve identical dignity two couples identical because we are all just as valid. And if your friend says, Nope, sorry, you're getting the couch, maybe don't go on that trip or any more trips with that group of people because your dignity matters and it is worth splitting up that cost among the group because you are clearly willing to pay for the cost of them to stay at the house as well.

00:08:58

**Delyanne Barros**

Yeah, no, I agree with you completely. I'm also not going to be sharing rooms with random strangers, which is another thing that friends usually recommend. I went to a wedding recently. I'm not attacking my my friends who got married. I love them. But they asked me, oh, a friend of ours just broke up with their partner. Do you mind splitting a room with them? And I said, Yeah, I do mind. I don't know. This person and my friends were totally fine. They're like, totally understand. Just wanted to ask. So don't be afraid to speak up for yourself. And of course, in the theme of weddings, wedding gifts are another expense that you can't split when you're single, and that price adds up with each wedding you attend. There's this unspoken rule you'll get what you give in return once you get married. But what if that never happens? Where's the return then? Don't solo accomplishments deserve to get celebrated the same way weddings do? Two years ago, I launched a very successful business and it made me wonder, would people be shocked if I threw a big party with a registry when I launched it? Why is it the norm to celebrate more traditional things like getting married or having a kid?

00:10:12

**Shani Silver**

I think we do what we're taught and I think we do what we know, not just when it comes to, you know, manners around weddings and things, but throughout life we all do what we're taught. And if you've been taught that you give wedding gifts and if you've been taught that there is nothing more worth celebrating than a wedding, and no one said this to you directly. Right. But imagine two sisters and they both sit down to dinner with their parents and one says, I just got my dream job. And the other one says, I just got engaged. What's going to delight the parents more? What's going to make them more excited? What's going to make them throw? Which daughter the bigger party with no questions asked and full expenditures of whatever within their means. Despite the fact that divorce has a 50/50 shot, and I'm guessing that this job situation will be a bit more stable, you know what I mean? We ignore these things so willingly because we've been taught to celebrate marriage so effusively.

00:11:04

**Delyanne Barros**

Like Shani, I'm also turning 40 this year. When we recorded our conversation, it was just a few days before her birthday, and it dawned on me that there's just as much to celebrate about reaching 40, if not more, than celebrating newlyweds or giving birth to a child. So I had to ask her, as she steps into this new chapter, how did she want to be celebrated?

00:11:25

**Shani Silver**

Really, the only thing that I wanted was Delta Airlines gift cards. That's it. And and by the time I had reached 40 years old, I thought about all of the weddings I'd attended just for years. For two decades, I've been giving. And I think it's okay to ask for something in return to celebrate me. You get to decide how you're celebrated. You get to register for whatever you want, if that's what you want. And you can ask for that without seeming weird or greedy, because you've given you've given so much time and love and everything to the people you care about. You are allowed to receive the same in return.

00:11:57

**Delyanne Barros**

Here's to celebrating all kinds of accomplishments. I think this is so important when it comes to recognizing everybody's worth. But there are other ways you can do this, too. Like with your coworkers, I brought up something I used to experience as a single person at my former workplace a lot. If somebody needs to cover a holiday as a single person with no kids, the eyes were always on me. They're like, Oh, Delyanne can fill in, Delyanne can pitch in because so-and-so has kids, so-and-so, you know, has a family obligation. I feel like we also bear the brunt in the workplace for that extra lift.

00:12:35

**Shani Silver**

Well, single people can certainly fill in when hands are needed, but no more so than anyone else in the company. If everyone needs that space filled, everyone can contribute to it equally. But that's typically not the way it's done. It's typically seen as, Oh, this single person has nothing going on in their lives. They can do it. Our time away from work is seen as less valuable because we are not with a partner. We are not raising children.

00:12:57

**Delyanne Barros**

Honestly, I think I even unconsciously adopted my dog just so I could have an out at work because getting a dog was one way that I could be like, Oh, I got to take my dog to the vet, or, Oh, my dog's sick. Or It's not. I'm not saying this is what people should do or that's the correct solution. But I felt like, wow, this gave me some breathing room, right? Which I think is ridiculous.

00:13:20

**Shani Silver**

Our time to ourselves is valued less than other people's time to themselves, when in reality both are equally valuable. It doesn't matter what I do in my spare time, I don't have to validate that to you. It's my time as a human being and it matters just as much as yours does.

00:13:35

**Delyanne Barros**

We're going to take a quick break, but when we come back, how our financial system helps married folks save upwards of thousands of dollars each year and why single Pringles like me will always pay more. Stay with us. This is diversifying.

00:13:58

**Bella DePaulo**

There are so many examples in which people who are couples pay less per person than people who are single.

00:14:07

**Delyanne Barros**

That's Bella DePaulo. She's the author of the book *Singled Out: How Single People Are Stereotyped, Stigmatized and Ignored and Still Live Happily Ever After*. This is something Bella has a lot of firsthand experience with.

00:14:22

**Bella DePaulo**

I'm single. I always have been single. I always will be single because I love being single. I don't love all the extra costs of being single, but I know we'll get to that.

00:14:35

**Delyanne Barros**

I wanted to hit pause on my conversation with Shani and bring Bella in really quick because she's been researching the single life for over a decade. She's looked into some of the ways society has treated single people as less than including financial and cultural structures that give married people an advantage. For example, she did a study that found evidence of housing discrimination against single people.

00:15:01

**Bella DePaulo**

We went to rental agents and we said, Suppose you have this place to rent and you could rent it to either single person, a married person, a cohabiting person, who would you prefer to rent it to?

00:15:19

**Delyanne Barros**

She and her colleagues tried this with a few different groups. Single people, roommates, cohabitating couples and married couples. Each application included the same income and qualifications. But time and time again, the rental agents preferred to rent to the married couple.

**Bella DePaulo** 00:15:38  
And we asked them, well, why? They'll say, Well, it doesn't - because they're married, which is, you know, they think that's self-explanatory.

**Delyanne Barros** 00:15:49  
Yeah, self-explanatory and straight up discriminatory.

**Bella DePaulo** 00:15:54  
And that means that a single person might lose out on their first choice, which might be the most affordable choice, and then they are stuck paying more for their housing costs.

**Delyanne Barros** 00:16:07  
Ultimately, you're getting screwed twice. You're not getting the place you want and you're having to pay more. Bella also pointed to a lot of other instances where single people have to shell out more money. For example, married people have the option of filing taxes jointly, something that can save you thousands of dollars, especially if one person makes considerably more than the other. Even when one partner isn't working, the couple will get the tax benefits of two people. We talked all about this in our tax episode, that's episode seven. Be sure to check it out if you missed it.

**Bella DePaulo** 00:16:46  
Another really big thing is Social Security. So I can work side by side with a married colleague my whole life, earn the same amount of money, the same quality work. I can even do better work. And they when they die, my married colleague dies, their Social Security goes to their spouse. Mine does back into the system. I can't give it to anyone, and no one can give their Social Security benefits to me.

**Delyanne Barros** 00:17:18  
So not only is there a cultural penalty, but you also have systems in place enforced by landlords and the government that are creating a world that is more expensive for those who are single. I asked Shani what she makes of this.

**Shani Silver** 00:17:33  
Honestly, to me that's just weird. It's weird to me that there are so many benefits that exist to people who have chosen a sexual romantic partner. They get benefits for that. I just I don't really understand why anybody deserves to know our business like that in such a way that there would be tax benefits for that. It's very odd that so much of our financial safety is tied to whether or not we have a romantic partner. It seems like a strange thing to bind tax payments to. It's a strange thing to bind health care to.

**Delyanne Barros** 00:18:07  
Yeah, for me, I'm still frustrated because as a single person, I pay a ton in taxes and I'm happy to pay taxes because it means that I made money. But I think it's unfair that I pay more in taxes simply because I'm a single person. I think that that's ridiculous and it's incredibly backwards and ancient. And if I had in my way, we would rewrite the entire tax code. But until that happens, I'm going to keep on paying the taxes because I don't want end up in jail. What are some things that single people can do to kind of hedge against some of these additional expenses, right? What are some other ways that we can push back against the system that is trying to favor married people or is favoring married people in addition to fighting the escalating costs of being single in America?

00:19:04

**Shani Silver**

The only piece of financial advice that I ever give to singles is start a savings account today. Literally start a savings account today and stop thinking that skipping lattes is going to help it build. You cannot withhold from your day to day life and think that that's going to build a savings account. You have to take money out of your incoming money, so you have to set aside a portion of each paycheck every single time and divert that immediately into your savings account before you ever see it. Because it's steady. It's consistent. You never have access to it. And for me, the best part is that you get to see that money grow. And we don't have to be talking about thousands of dollars right now. We can be talking about 50. We can be talking about 100. I think it's important for single people to see their saved money grow over time, because I think that creates optimism. And I think that creates a positive feeling and a positive association with the act of saving money. And you know that if something goes wrong in the future, you'll be okay, because you can handle that because you put in that work to start that savings account. It's very important to me to tell singles to have a savings account because there's a lot of fear around singlehood. What would I do if this happens? What would I do if this happens and I'm alone and I have no one and things like that? A savings account is one of the most comforting things I have ever done for myself, and I continue to do so.

00:20:21

**Delyanne Barros**

I agree. I think yes, savings are important. I always tell people 3 to 6 months of expenses, but investing is what's going to make the needle really, really move. And it's going to give you the life that you want, whether or not you decide to enter into a romantic partnership.

00:20:37

**Shani Silver**

It's not about having the most money ever. It's about whatever you can do. It can happen very small. It can happen over time and that's okay. That's still counts. That really counts.

00:20:54

**Delyanne Barros**

All right. So we've talked a lot about the financial downsides of being single, but are there any benefits? And we've touched on a couple of benefits, but, you know, hit me with some more because I don't want people to feel disillusioned here about being single-pringles.

00:21:08

**Shani Silver**

Oh, there are countless benefits to singlehood, and they're going to vary from person to person. For me, I like the freedom, sorry, I love the freedom. I don't have to get anyone on board with anything ever. I just do it. If I want to do a thing, I do a thing and it's a lovely life and it's so much fun. And I know that singlehood can feel lonely and boring and empty, but it fills up fast when you realize how free you are to do whatever you want. And I really encourage anyone who is single listening to pursue those good moments and those good things, those good hobbies, the things you like to do or explore or try like you have the space and the time. Don't waste it.

00:21:44

**Delyanne Barros**

I think one aspect of single life that limits a lot of people is traveling. When I share that I've traveled by myself, it blows people's mind. They're like, What? You travel by yourself? I don't know if I could ever do that. I've never even gone to like a restaurant by myself or a movie theater by myself. And I'm like, Oh, you should you should try it. It's wonderful. And it doesn't have to be, you know, something depressing or sad. It can be extremely fun and liberating.

00:22:15

**Shani Silver**

I'm going to Paris by myself in the morning. Like you're preaching to the choir at this point. I can't wait. I'm so excited. This is my 40th birthday gift to myself. Like, let's go. No gripes, no complaints, just complete customization from wheels up to wheels down. I cannot wait. I'm so excited.

00:22:32

**Delyanne Barros**

Oh, my God. That's what I'm saying. It's like it. Yes, it's more expensive. Sure, you're shouldering more expenses for the trip, but there's also so much peace that comes with that. So everything has its pros and cons, right? Everything has its pros and cons. And I'm with you. Let's embrace the pros of being single a lot more than we do. Like, let's hype that up more.

00:22:54

**Shani Silver**

I don't want us to look back on our single time with a huge sigh of relief. I want us to look back on it with joy and to value that time, because that's what it is. It's valuable and it's joyful, and we have to start telling people that because I think that's what's going to actually affect some change.

00:23:14

**Delyanne Barros**

Look, living the single life can be more expensive, but it can also be a time to lean into your independence and growth. Don't put off your goals because you're waiting for a romantic relationship. You would be doing yourself a disservice. If you want to buy a home, buy a home. Don't wait for Mr. or Mrs. Right to split the down payment. Take that trip you've been dreaming about. Treat yourself to a massage and a Michelin star dinner and make sure you're saving and investing based on what you want and not on who you may be with some day. What if you're in a relationship and ready to take the next step? Next Monday, we're switching gears to talk about the finances of family planning. Children are expensive. But what about the costs that start adding up before the kid is even born? For the next two weeks, we're focusing on the high costs of making babies and the even higher cost of child care. Diversifying is a production of CNN Audio. Megan Marcus is our Executive Producer and Haley Thomas is our Senior Producer. Our producers are Alex Stern and Eryn Mathewson. Our associate producers are Charis Satchell and Rafa Farihah, and our production assistant is Eden Getachew. Our intern is Kendall Parks. Mixing and sound design by Francisco Monroy. Artwork designed by Brett Ferdock. Original Music by Andrew Eapen. Our technical director is Dan Dzula. Rafeena Ahmad leads our audience strategy. With support from: Chip Grabow, Steve Kiehl, Anissa Gray, Abbie Fentress Swanson, Tameeka Ballance-Kolasny, Lindsay Abrams, Lisa Namerow, and Courtney Coupe. I'm Delyanne Barros. Thanks for listening.