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Record Share of Americans Have Never Married

*As Values, Economics and Gender
Patterns Change*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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About This Report

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau and a new Pew Research Center survey, this report focuses on the rising share of U.S. adults ages 25 and older who have never married. It explores the potential factors that are associated with this trend, including changing public attitudes, demographic patterns and economic conditions. The Pew Research survey looks at the reasons that never-married adults remain single as well as the qualities they are looking for in a potential spouse. This report also looks at the marriage market for all unmarried adults, including those who are currently divorced, separated or widowed.

The report is a collaborative effort. Kim Parker, director of social trends research, and Claudia Deane, the center's director of research practices, provided editorial guidance. Parker also wrote the chapter on public views on marriage and led the survey work for this project. Wendy Wang, senior researcher, analyzed the Census Bureau data and wrote the overview and chapters 2-5. Paul Taylor, senior fellow, reviewed the report and provided editorial guidance. D'Vera Cohn, senior writer, and Gretchen Livingston, senior researcher, also reviewed the report and provided valuable comments. Anna Brown, research assistant, handled the number checking and formatting of the report. The report was copy edited by Marcia Kramer. Find related reports online at pewresearch.org/socialtrends.

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A Note on Terminology

This report focuses primarily on “never-married” adults. The meaning of that term is just as it sounds—adults who have never been married. They are part of a broader universe of adults who are not currently married. For the most part all of the adults in this broader universe are referred to as “unmarried.” They may have never been married or they may be divorced, separated or widowed. “Single” is used interchangeably with “unmarried” in this report, though we are aware that people who are unmarried and living with a partner may not think of themselves as “single.”

“Previously married adults” refer to adults who are currently divorced, separated or widowed.

All references to whites, blacks and Asians are to the non-Hispanic components of those populations. Asians also include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics are of any race.

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Record Share of Americans Have Never Married

As Values, Economics and Gender Patterns Change

BY Wendy Wang AND Kim Parker

Overview

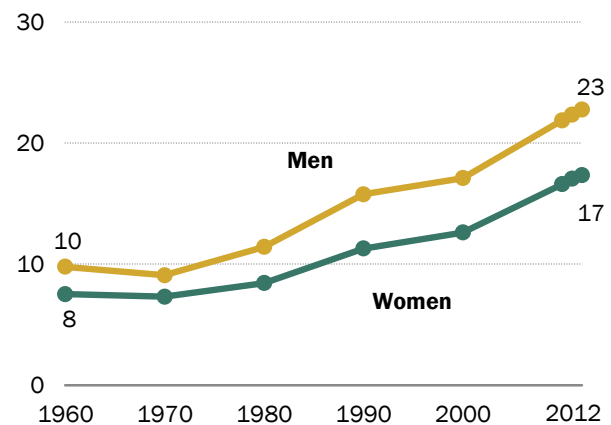
After decades of declining marriage rates and changes in family structure, the share of American adults who have never been married is at an historic high. In 2012, one-in-five adults ages 25 and older (about 42 million people) had never been married, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of census data. In 1960, only about one-in-ten adults (9%) in that age range had never been married.¹

Men are more likely than women to have never been married (23% vs. 17% in 2012). And this gender gap has widened since 1960, when 10% of men ages 25 and older and 8% of women of the same age had never married.

The dramatic rise in the share of never-married adults and the emerging gender gap are related to a variety of factors. Adults are marrying later in life, and the shares of adults cohabiting and raising children outside of marriage have increased significantly. The median age at first marriage is now 27 for women and 29 for men, up from 20 for women and 23 for men in

Rising Share of Never-Married Adults, Growing Gender Gap

% of men and women ages 25 and older who have never been married



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial census and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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¹ Much of this analysis is based on adults ages 25 and older. Adults in this age group are closer to the median age of first marriage, and most have completed their formal education. Among the broader universe of adults ages 18 and older, 29% had never been married in 2012, also an historic high (up from 15% in 1960).

1960.² About a quarter (24%) of never-married young adults ages 25 to 34 are living with a partner, according to Pew Research analysis of Current Population Survey data.³

In addition, shifting public attitudes, hard economic times and changing demographic patterns may all be contributing to the rising share of never-married adults.

This trend cuts across all major racial and ethnic groups but has been more pronounced among blacks. Fully 36% of blacks ages 25 and older had never been married in 2012, up from 9% in 1960. For whites, the share of never-married adults has doubled over that same period. In 2012, 16% of whites had never been married, compared with 8% in 1960.

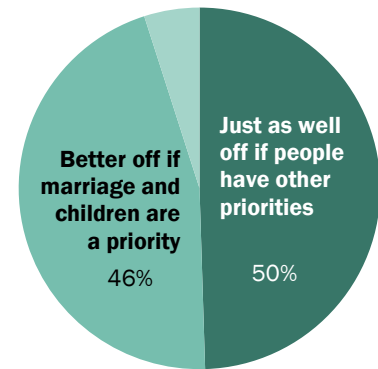
Recent survey data from the Pew Research Center finds a public that is deeply divided over the role marriage plays in society. Survey respondents were asked which of the following statements came closer to their own views: Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority, or society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children. Some 46% of adults chose the first statement, while 50% chose the second.⁴

Opinions on this issue differ sharply by age—with young adults much more likely than older adults to say society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children. Fully two-thirds of those ages 18 to 29 (67%) express this viewpoint, as do 53% of those ages 30 to 49. Among those ages 50 and older, most (55%) say society is better off if people make it a priority to get married and have children.

Despite these mixed views about the role of marriage in society, most Americans (68%) continue to believe it is important for couples to marry if they plan to spend the rest of their lives together.

Public Divided over Value of Marriage for Society

% who say society is ...



Note: Volunteered responses of "Neither," "Both equally" and "Don't know/Refused" shown but not labeled.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Jan. 23-Mar 16, 2014 (N=10,013)

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² U.S. Census Bureau table MS-2. (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>).

³ Analysis is based on March 2013 Current Population Survey. For more information about cohabitation, see Box 1.

⁴ Pew Research Center survey, Jan. 23-March 16, 2014 (N=10,013). For more information, see "Political Polarization in the American Public." (<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>)

Roughly half of all adults (47%) believe that this is very important, and an additional 21% consider it somewhat important.

While blacks are more likely than whites to have never been married (and less likely to be currently married), a much higher share of blacks (58%) than whites (44%) say that it's very important for a couple to marry if they plan to spend their lives together.

What Never-Married Adults Are Looking For in a (Potential) Spouse

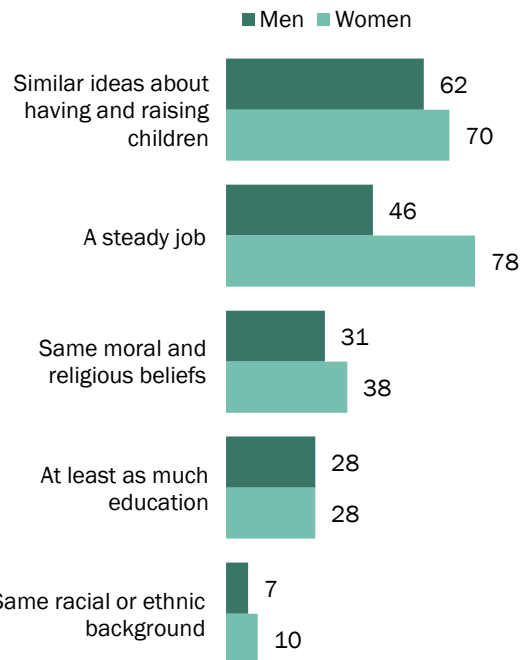
A new Pew Research survey finds that about half of all never-married adults (53%) say they would like to marry eventually. This share is down somewhat from 2010, when 61% of never-married adults said they would like to marry someday. Roughly one-third of today's never-married adults (32%) say they are not sure if they would like to get married, while 13% say they do not want to marry.⁵

But the survey also finds that, among the never married, men and women are looking for distinctly different qualities in a potential mate. Never-married women place a great deal of importance on finding someone who has a steady job—fully 78% say this would be very important to them in choosing a spouse or partner. For never-married men, someone who shares their ideas about raising children is more important in choosing a spouse than someone who has a steady job.

Never-married adults—whether male or female—place a much lower priority on finding a partner who shares their moral and religious beliefs, has a similar educational pedigree or comes from the same racial or ethnic background.

Never-Married Women Want a Spouse with a Steady Job

% of never-married adults who say ... would be "very important" to them in choosing a spouse or partner



Note: Based on never-married adults who want to marry or are not sure (n=369).

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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⁵ In the 2010 survey, 12% of never-married adults said they did not want to marry, and 27% said they were not sure.

Among those who have never been married but say they may eventually like to wed, three-in-ten say the main reason they are not married is that they have not found someone who has what they are looking for in a spouse. Nearly as many (27%) say they are not financially prepared for marriage, and 22% say they are too young or not ready to settle down. There are no significant differences between never-married men and women in this regard.

Never-Married Adults Face Changing Economic Realities

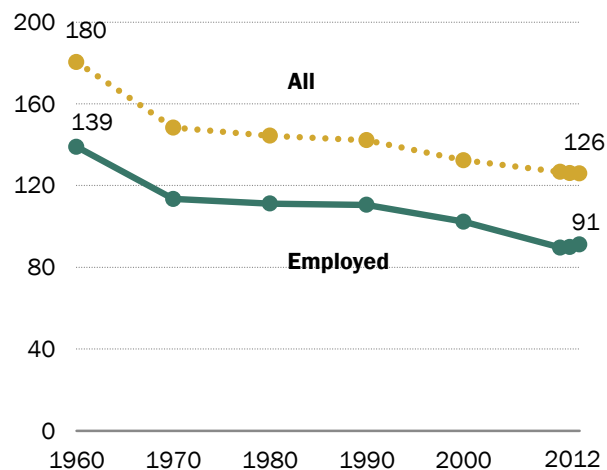
As the share of never-married adults has climbed, the economic circumstances faced by both men and women have changed considerably. Labor force participation among men—particularly young men—has fallen significantly over the past several decades. In 1960, 93% of men ages 25 to 34 were in the labor force; by 2012 that share had fallen to 82%. And among young men who are employed, wages have fallen over the past few decades. For men ages 25 to 34, median hourly wages have declined 20% since 1980 (after adjusting for inflation). Over the same period, the wage gap between men and women has narrowed. In 2012, among workers ages 25 to 34, women’s hourly earnings were 93% those of men. In 1980, the ratio was less than 70%.⁶

The new Pew Research survey findings suggest that never-married women place a high premium on finding a spouse with a steady job. However, the changes in the labor market have contributed to a shrinking pool of available employed young men.

Among never-married adults ages 25 to 34, the number of employed men per 100 women dropped from 139 in 1960 to 91 in 2012, despite the fact that men in this age group outnumber young women in absolute numbers. In other words, if all never-married young women in 2012 wanted to find a young employed man who had also never been married, 9% of them would fail, simply

For Young, Never-Married Women, the Pool of Employed Young Men Has Shrunk

of ... men per 100 women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 34



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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⁶ For more information on the gender wage gap, see Pew Research Center, Dec. 11, 2013, "On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity—For Now." (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millennial-women-near-parity-for-now/>)

because there are not enough men in the target group. Five decades ago, never-married young women had a much larger pool of potential spouses from which to choose.⁷

Despite the survey finding that few Americans say it is very important to them to find someone of the same racial or ethnic background to marry, the vast majority of new marriages (85%) take place between people of the same race and ethnicity.⁸ The pool of employed men has shrunk for both black and white young adults since 1960, but the decline has been more pronounced among blacks.

It is important to note that never-married young adults are not necessarily restricting their choice of a potential spouse to those who have never been married, nor are they limited to a spouse within their age group. Among all unmarried adults ages 25 to 34 in 2012, 15% have been divorced, separated or widowed, and these men and women are potentially in the marriage market as well.

⁷ The current situation may be more “favorable” for young men than in the past, but recent research suggests that the sex ratio is largely unrelated to men’s marriage formation, except for college-educated men. McClendon, David. 2014. “A Few Good Men? Imbalanced Sex Ratios, Marriage Markets, and Men’s Marriage Formation.” Boston, MA: Paper presented at Population Association of America Annual Meeting, May 1-3.

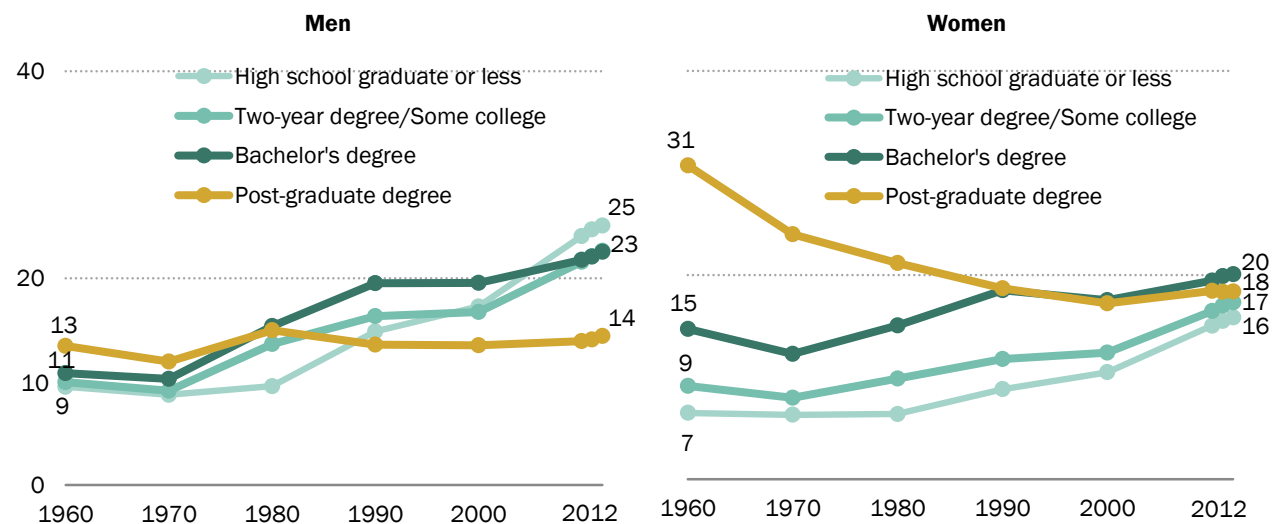
⁸ See Wendy Wang, 2012. “The Rise of Intermarriage: Rates, Characteristics Vary by Race and Gender.” Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends project, February.

Gender, Education and Marriage

The relationship between education and marital status has changed considerably over time, and the patterns among men and women have reversed. In 1960, men of various education levels were about equally likely to have never been married. Today, there is considerable disparity in the shares of never-married men along educational lines. Men with a high school education or less are much more likely than men with advanced degrees to have never married (25% vs. 14%).

Education and Marriage: Shifting Patterns for Women and Men

% of men and women ages 25 and older who have never been married, by education



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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For women, the opposite trend has occurred. In 1960, women with advanced degrees (31%) were about four times as likely to have never married as women with a high school education or less (7%). These educational gaps have closed over time, and today women of different educational backgrounds are almost equally likely to have never been married.

Over this same period, women have made significant gains in higher education. The number of young women attending college has grown steadily, and by the mid-1990s, women began to outpace men in college enrollment and college completion rates. In 2013, among women ages 25 to 29, 37% had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 30% of men in the same age range.

The changing gender patterns in the link between education and marital status have contributed to an educational mismatch between never-married men and women. Today, never-married women ages 25 and older are more educated overall than never-married men: one-third of these women have either a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared with one-quarter of never-married men ages 25 and older. In 1960, never-married men and women were much more similar in terms of their educational attainment.⁹

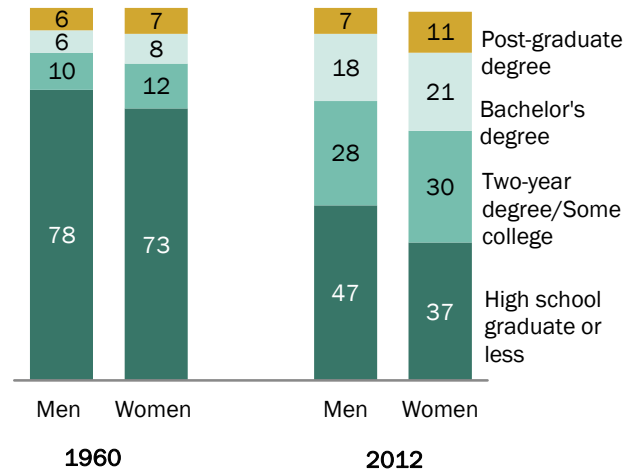
Race, Ethnicity and Marriage

The share of never-married adults has gone up for all major racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., but the rate of increase has been most dramatic among blacks. Among black adults ages 25 and older, the share who has never been married has quadrupled over the past half century—from 9% in 1960 to 36% in 2012. For whites, the share has doubled (from 8% to 16%).

Among Hispanics and Asian Americans, whose numbers have swelled in recent decades due to a large influx of immigrants, the share of adults who have never married also has increased. Among Hispanic adults, the share has doubled since 1980 (12% vs. 26%). And for Asian American adults, the share has gone up from 13% in 1980 to 19% in 2012.

The Education Gap Between Never-Married Men and Women Has Widened over Time

% of adults ages 25 and older who have never been married



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960 decennial census and 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

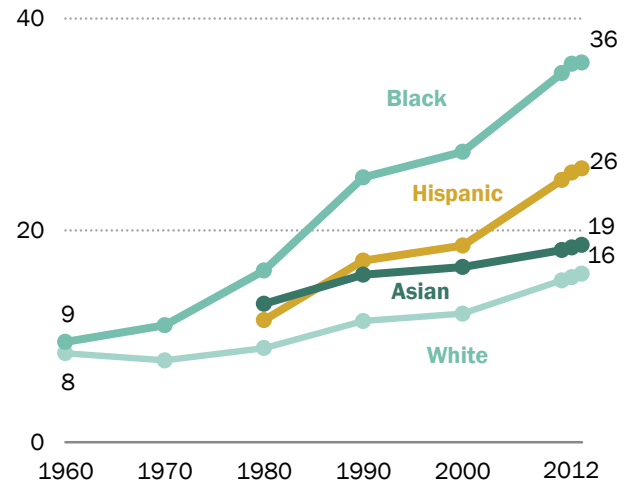
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⁹ By contrast, married men were more likely than married women to be college graduates (10% vs. 6%) in 1960, but in 2012 the share of college graduates among married men and women was roughly equal (34% vs. 33%).

In most racial and ethnic groups, men are more likely than women to have never been married. The major exception is among blacks. In 2012, roughly equal shares of black men (36%) and black women (35%) ages 25 and older had never been married. In 1960, black men were more likely than black women to have never been married (12% vs. 8%). Among whites, Hispanics and Asians, men are more likely than women to have never been married, and the gender gap among whites and Hispanics has widened in recent decades.

Rising Share of Never-Married Adults, Growing Race Gap

% of adults ages 25 and older who have never been married



Note: Data on Hispanics and Asians prior to 1980 are not plotted given the small sample sizes.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial census and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Will Today's Never-Married Adults Eventually Marry?

Today's young adults are slow to tie the knot, and a rising share may end up not getting married at all. According to Pew Research projections based on census data, when today's young adults reach their mid-40s to mid-50s, a record high share (25%) is likely to have never been married.

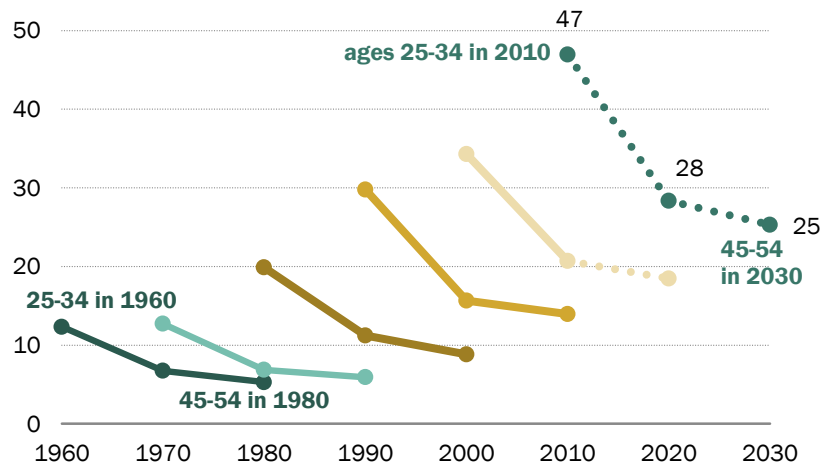
Looking at cohorts of young adults ages 25 to 34 going back to 1960, there has been a steady increase since 1970 in the share that remains never married by the time the cohort reaches ages 45 to 54.

In 1960, some 12% of adults ages 25 to 34 had never been married. After 10 years, when that group was between the ages of 35 and 44, 7% of them still hadn't wed. By 1980, when they were in their mid-40s to -50s, only 5% had still never married. The next cohort starting in 1970 followed a similar trajectory. However, each new cohort of young adults since then has had a higher share of never-married members than the cohort that came before it. If current trends continue, 25% of young adults in the most recent cohort (ages 25 to 34 in 2010) will have never married by 2030. That would be the highest share in modern history.

While it is certainly true that some adults marry for the first time after the age of 54, the chances of this occurring are relatively small. In 2012, there were 71 first-time newlyweds for every 1,000 never-married adults ages 25 to 34.¹⁰ The rate dropped to 40 per 1,000 among never-married

One-in-Four of Today's Young Adults May Never Marry

% never married, by cohort (at ages 25-34, 35-44, 45-54)



Note: The dotted lines are projected rates based on rates of the previous cohort.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Decennial Census and American Community Surveys (ACS), IPUMS

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¹⁰ "First-time newlyweds" refers to those who got married for the first time in the 12 months prior to the survey date in American Community Survey (ACS). Therefore, some newlyweds may have married in 2011, depending on the month in which they were surveyed in the 2012 ACS. The first-time marriage rate is calculated as the number of first-time newlyweds/(number of never-married adults + number of first-time newlyweds).

adults ages 35 to 44, 16 per 1,000 among never-married adults ages 45 to 54, and only 7 per 1,000 among never-married adults ages 55 and older.

The remainder of this report explores the various factors that may be contributing to the rising share of never-married adults and the changing characteristics of that population.

Chapter 1 of the report is based on a new Pew Research survey of 2,003 adults and looks at public views on marriage as well as the attitudes of never-married adults themselves, including reasons that they are not married and qualities they are looking for in a potential spouse or partner. Chapter 2 presents trends in the share of never-married Americans by gender, age and cohort. It also includes projections of the share of today's never-married young adults that will eventually marry. Chapter 3 explores the overall marriage market for all unmarried adults. Chapter 4 focuses on never-married young adults ages 25 to 34 and explores the marriage market for this age group. Finally, Chapter 5 looks at the demographic profile of never-married Americans over time as well as in comparison to their married peers.

Other key findings

- **For young adults who want to get married, financial security is a significant hurdle.** Compared with their older counterparts, young adults who have never been married are more likely to cite financial security as the main reason for not being currently married (34% of those ages 25 to 34 compared with 20% of those 35 and older).
- **Previously married adults show less interest in marriage than do never-married adults.** Only one-in-five previously married adults (21%) say they would like to marry again, while a plurality (45%) say they do not want to get married again. (An additional 31% are not sure.) There is a large gender gap on this question. Previously married women are much less likely than their male counterparts to say they would like to get married again someday (15% of women compared with 29% of men). Fully 54% of these women say they are not interested in getting remarried (30% of men say the same).
- **Never-married and previously married adults have different demographic profiles.** Compared with never-married adults, previously married adults are much older and somewhat less educated. In 2012, among those who were ages 25 and older, the median age of previously married adults was 58, while the median age for never-married adults was 35. About one-in-five divorced, separated or widowed adults (19%) are college graduates, compared with 28% of never-married adults. In addition, among those ages 25 to 64, men outnumber women by a large margin among never-married adults (125 men for every 100 women), but men are outnumbered by women among previously married adults (71 men for every 100 women).
- **Among young, never-married blacks, women outnumber men.** For blacks ages 25 to 34, there are 92 never-married men for every 100 never-married women. When employment status is taken into consideration, there are 51 employed young black men for every 100 young black women. Among never-married white, Hispanic and Asian American young adults, the ratio of employed men to women is roughly equal—100 men for every 100 women. Several decades ago, there was a surplus of young employed men among whites, and for every 100 young black women, there were nearly 90 employed black men.
- **Among never-married young adults with post-graduate degrees, women outnumber men by a large margin.** There are 77 never-married men ages 25 to 34 with post-graduate degrees for every 100 women with similar educational credentials. Among never-married young adults with a bachelor's degree, the male-to-female ratio is 102 men for every 100 women.

About the Data

Findings in this report are based mainly on two sources: data from a recent Pew Research Center survey, decennial censuses and the American Community Survey.

Public Opinion Survey data: The Pew Research survey was conducted May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014, with a nationally representative sample of 2,003 adults ages 18 and older, including 436 adults who have never been married. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 1,003 with those contacted on their cellular phones. Data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the United States. Survey interviews were conducted in English and Spanish under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.

Census data: Unless otherwise noted, all demographic analyses in this report are based on Decennial Censuses (1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000) and the American Community Surveys (2010, 2011, 2012). The data set was obtained from the IPUMS-USA database* (<http://www.ipums.org>) and constructed by the Pew Research Center.

The American Community Survey is a household survey developed by the U.S. Census Bureau to replace the long form of the decennial census program. It is collected throughout the year using mailed questionnaires, telephone interviews and visits from Census Bureau field representatives to about 3 million household addresses annually.

Analyses of unmarried Americans are based on adults ages 25 and older for consistency in comparison over time. Analyses of young adults focus on those ages 25 to 34. “Unmarried” adults comprise those who have never married and those who are divorced, separated or widowed.

Among young adults ages 25 to 34, 58% were unmarried in 2012, with the vast majority of them (85%) never having been married. Projections about the share of young adults remaining never married by 2020 and 2030 are based on the share of the previous cohort of never-married adults at the same age, assuming the same rate continues.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adults are included but are not analyzed separately.

All estimates have been weighted to reflect the actual population.

*Ruggles, Steven J., Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010. (<http://www.ipums.org>)

Box 1: Cohabitation in the U.S.

Many never-married young adults are not “single.” According to Pew Research analysis of the March 2013 Current Population Survey, about 24% of never-married Americans ages 25 to 34 currently live with a partner. According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics, among women who first cohabited at age 25 to 29, their premarital cohabitation relationship typically lasted about a year and a half (17 months). Research finds that after one year, about three-in-ten young adults get married, 9% break up the relationship and 62% continue cohabiting. By the third year, nearly six-in-ten (58%) married, 19% broke up and 23% remained in the relationship.*

According to the same data from the National Center for Health Statistics, nearly half of women ages 15 to 44 (48%) have cohabited with a partner (before marriage). Women with less than a high school diploma (70%) are more likely to have lived with an unmarried partner than those with a college degree or higher (47%). Among women who are in a cohabiting relationship, college-educated women are more likely than their counterparts who do not have a high school diploma to get married after three years (53% vs. 30%).

* Copen, Casey E., Kimberly Daniels and William D. Mosher. 2013. “First Premarital Cohabitation in the United States: 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth.” National Health Statistics Report, No. 64. April. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr064.pdf>)

Box 2: A Note About LGBT Adults

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adults are included but not analyzed separately in this study. Previous survey findings suggest that 3.5% of adults self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual.** Among 650,000 same-sex couple households identified in the 2010 Census, about 80% are cohabiting partners and 20% are married partners.*** However, [recent studies](#) suggest that the 2010 Census overestimated the population of same-sex couples. In 2010, 73% of same-sex married couples counted in the census turned out to be opposite-sex married couples.

As of September 2014, same-sex marriage is legal in 19 states and Washington, D.C. A [2013 Pew Research Center survey](#) found that 16% of LGBT adults—mostly bisexuals with opposite sex partners—reported being currently married, compared with about half of all adults. A total of 60% of LGBT survey respondents were either married or said they would like to marry one day, compared with 76% of the general public.

** Gates, Gary J. 2011. “How Many People are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender?” Los Angeles: The Williams Institute. April. (<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/how-many-people-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender/>)

*** O’Connell, Martin, and Sarah Feliz. 2011. “Same-Sex Couple Household Statistics from the 2010 Census.” U.S. Census Bureau. September. p. 26. (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/samesex/files/ss-report.doc>) [Link will download a Word document]

Chapter 1: Public Views on Marriage

At a time when norms and values around marriage are changing, the public is divided over the role marriage plays in society. In a recent Pew Research Center survey, respondents were asked which of the following statements came closer to their own views: Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority, or society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children. Some 46% of adults chose the first statement, while 50% chose the second statement.¹¹

Opinions on this issue differ sharply by age—with young adults much more likely than their older counterparts to say society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children. Fully two-thirds of those ages 18 to 29 express this viewpoint, as do 53% of those ages 30 to 49. Among those ages 50 and older, a majority (55%) say society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority.

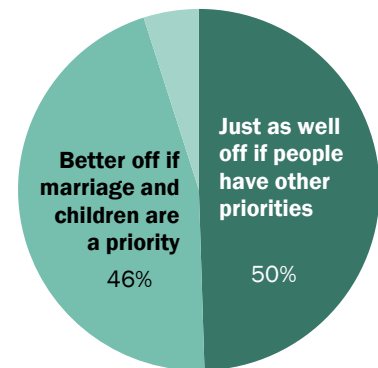
Not surprisingly, married adults are more likely than those who have never been married to say that society is better off if people prioritize marriage and having children (54% vs. 32%). Among the never married, women are less likely than men to hold this view (28% vs. 35%).

In spite of the public's ambivalence about the role marriage plays in the betterment of society, most Americans believe that it is important for two people to legally marry if they plan to spend the rest of their lives together as a couple. Roughly half of all adults (47%) say this is very important, and an additional 21% say this is somewhat important. Only three-in-ten say this is not too important (14%) or not at all important (15%).¹²

Women are slightly more likely than men to say that it's very important for couples to marry if they plan to spend the rest of their lives together (50% vs. 44%). And blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to agree with this sentiment.

Public Is Divided over Value of Marriage for Society

% who say society is ...



Note: Volunteered responses of "Neither," "Both equally" and "Don't know/Refused" shown but not labeled.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Jan. 23-March 16, 2014 (N=10,013)

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¹¹ Pew Research Center survey, Jan. 23-March 16, 2014 (N=10,013). For more information see, "Political Polarization in the American Public." (<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>)

¹² Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

Again there are large differences by age: Younger adults (those ages 18 to 29) are among the least likely to say it is very important for a couple to marry if they plan to spend their lives together (36% say so). The share saying this is very important increases steadily with age. Among those ages 65 and older, roughly two-thirds (65%) say this is very important.

Do Never-Married Adults Want to Get Married?

Roughly half (53%) of adults who have never been married say they would like to get married in the future. About a third (32%) say they are not sure if they'd like to get married, and 13% say they do not want to get married.

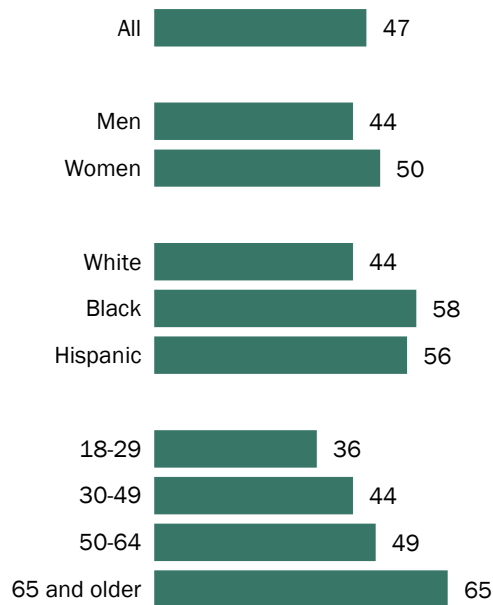
Never-married men and women have similar views on this question: 55% of men and 50% of women say they would like to get married someday. (The difference is not statistically significant.)

The younger they are, the more likely these adults are to say they want to marry in the future. Among adults younger than 30 who have never been married, 66% say they would like to get married. By comparison, 33% of those ages 30 and older say they would like to marry.

Adults who have been married before and are currently divorced, widowed or living with a partner were asked if they want to get married again. About one-in-five of these adults (21%) say they would like to. A plurality (45%) say they do not want to get married again, and an additional 31% are not sure. There is a large gender gap on this question. Women who are currently unmarried but have been married before are much less likely than their male counterparts to say they would like to get married again in the future (15% of women compared with 29% of men). Fully 54% of these women say they are not interested in getting remarried (30% of men say the same).

Age Groups Differ on Importance of Marriage

% who say it is "very important" to them that a couple legally marries if they plan to spend the rest of their lives together



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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The share of never-married adults who say they would like to marry someday has fallen in recent years. In a [2010 Pew Research survey](#), 61% of adults who had never been married said they would like to marry someday. The share saying they do not want to marry has not increased significantly since 2010, but a larger percentage now say they are not sure.

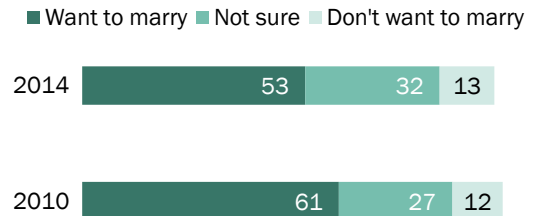
Today’s never-married adults offer a variety of explanations as to why they are not currently married. Those who have never been married but say either they would like to marry in the future or they are unsure were asked to identify the main reason they are not married. Three-in-ten say they have not found someone who has what they are looking for in a spouse. A similar share (27%) say they are not financially prepared for marriage. And 22% say they are not ready to settle down or are too young. Some 3% volunteered that they are currently in school, and 14% gave some other reason for not being married.

Among never-married adults, the reasons for not being married vary significantly across ages groups. For the youngest adults (those ages 18 to 24) the most frequently cited reason is that they are too young or not ready to settle down—33% of never-married adults in this age group say this is the main reason they are not married. Relatively few never-married adults ages 25 to 34 (13%) or ages 35 or older (11%) say this is the main reason they are not married.

Never-married adults ages 25 to 34 are more likely than their older counterparts to say the

Fewer Never-Married Adults Now Say They Hope to Wed

% of never-married adults who say they ...



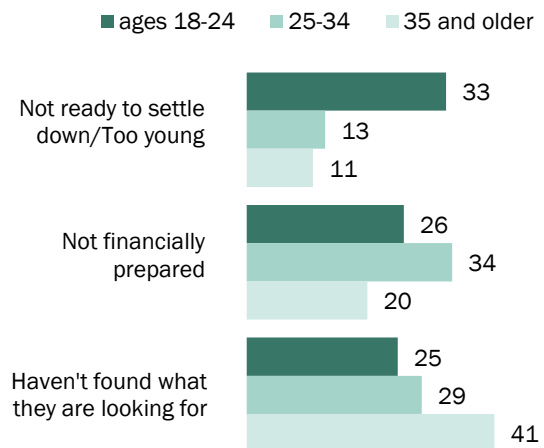
Note: “Don’t Know/Refused” responses not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center surveys, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003) and Oct. 1-21, 2010 (N=2,691)

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Reasons for Not Being Married

% of never-married adults who say the main reason they are not currently married is ...



Note: Based on those who have never been married and want to get married or are not sure (n=369). Volunteered responses of “Other” and “Don’t know/Refused” not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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Q.SD.9

main reason they are not married is that they are not financially prepared. About a third (34%) of 25- to 34-year-olds point to this as the main reason they are not married, as do 26% of those ages 18 to 24. Among those ages 35 and older, 20% say this is the main reason they are not married.

Four-in-ten (41%) older never-married adults (those ages 35 and older), say the main reason they are not married is that they have not found someone who has what they are looking for in a spouse. About three-in-ten (27%) of those under age 35 say the same.

Educational attainment is also related to reasons for not being married. Never-married adults who have not attended college are twice as likely as never-married college graduates to say the main reason they are not married is that they are not financially prepared (35% vs. 18%). Those who have some college education but do not have a bachelor's degree are similar to college graduates in this regard: 21% say not being financially prepared is the main reason they are not married.

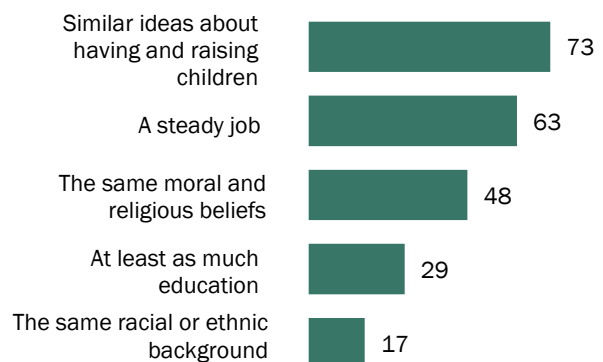
What Matters Most in a Spouse or Partner

The Pew Research survey also examined the importance of several factors in choosing a spouse. Married adults were asked how important these things were to them in choosing a spouse or partner, and unmarried respondents were asked how important these factors would be to them in choosing a spouse or partner.

Overall, the public places the greatest importance on finding someone who has similar ideas about having and raising children: 73% say this is very important in choosing a spouse or partner. Coming in a close second is finding someone who has a steady job. Some 63% of all adults consider this a very important factor in finding a spouse. Roughly half (48%) place a high degree of importance on having a spouse or partner who shares their moral and religious beliefs.

What Matters Most in Choosing a Spouse or Partner

% who say finding someone with ... was/would be "very important" to them in choosing a spouse or partner



Note: Based on all adults. Currently married respondents were asked whether each trait "was" important to them. Unmarried respondents were asked whether each trait "would be" important to them.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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Finding someone with a similar educational background is viewed as less important than these other factors (29% say it is very important to them). And finding a spouse or partner with the same racial or ethnic background is even less important (17%).

Married adults have a different perspective on some of these qualities, compared with those who have never been married but may want to be. When it comes to choosing a spouse, married adults place more importance on having similar ideas about raising children, sharing the same religious and moral beliefs, and having a similar race or ethnic background.

Among never-married adults who may want to marry in the future, 65% say having similar ideas about child rearing is a very important quality in a spouse or partner, and 59% say the same about having a steady job. There is a large gender gap on this item. Roughly eight-in-ten never-married women (78%) say it's very important that a spouse have a steady job. Only 46% of never-married men agree.

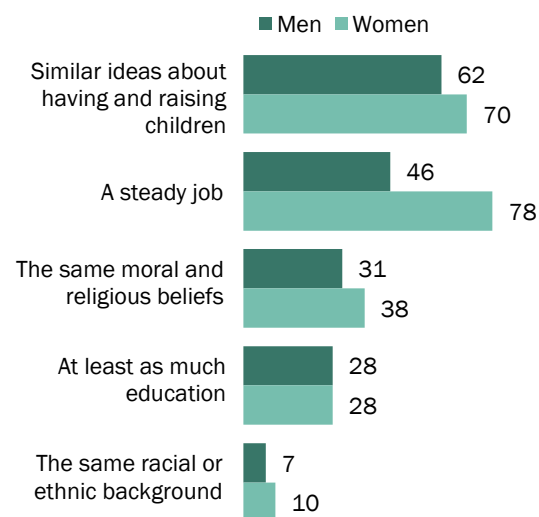
Never-married men and women are largely in agreement when it comes to the other qualities or characteristics tested in the poll.

Racial and Ethnic Divisions

Among all adults—married or unmarried—there are some significant differences across racial and ethnic groups on which traits are most desirable in a spouse or partner. Whites (59%) are significantly less likely than blacks (77%) or Hispanics (74%) to place a high priority on finding a spouse or partner with a steady job. Whites are also much less likely than blacks or Hispanics to say that finding a spouse or partner with at least as much education as they have is very important to them. Only about one-in-four (23%) whites say this is very important compared with at least four-in-ten blacks and Hispanics.

Never-Married Women Want a Spouse With a Steady Job

% of never-married adults who say finding someone with ... would be "very important" to them in choosing a spouse or partner



Note: Based on never-married adults who want to marry or are not sure (n=369).

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

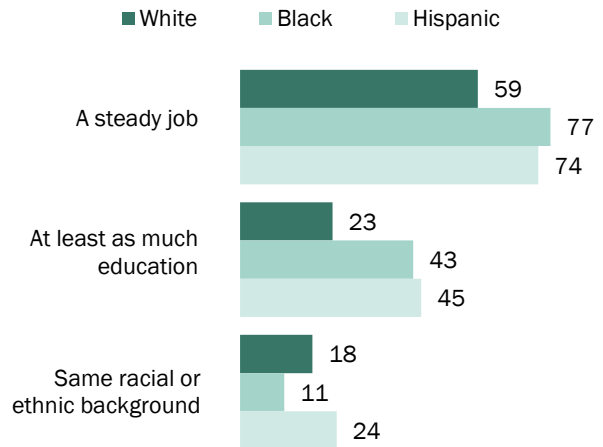
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Compared with whites and Hispanics, blacks place less importance on finding a spouse who shares their racial or ethnic background. Only 11% of blacks say this is very important to them, significantly lower than the share of whites (18%) or Hispanics (24%) who say the same.

Steady Job, Education Matter More to Blacks and Hispanics than Whites

% who say finding someone with ... was/would be "very important" to them in choosing a spouse or partner



Note: Based on all white, black and Hispanic adults (married and unmarried). Currently married respondents were asked whether each trait "was" important to them. Unmarried respondents were asked whether each trait "would be" important to them. Blacks and whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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Chapter 2: Trends in the Share of Never-Married Americans and a Look Forward

The share of never-married Americans has risen dramatically in the past five decades. Today, one-in-five Americans ages 25 and older have never been married, compared with just 9% in 1960.

Men are more likely than women to have never been married. In 2012, 23% of men and 17% of women ages 25 and older had never been married, and the gender gap has grown since 1960.

As this gender difference indicates, women are more likely than men to have *ever* been married. Among adults ages 25 and older, women are slightly less likely than men to be currently married (54% vs. 60%). However, women are much more likely than men to be currently divorced, separated or widowed (29% vs. 17%).

Share of Never-Married Adults by Age and Cohort

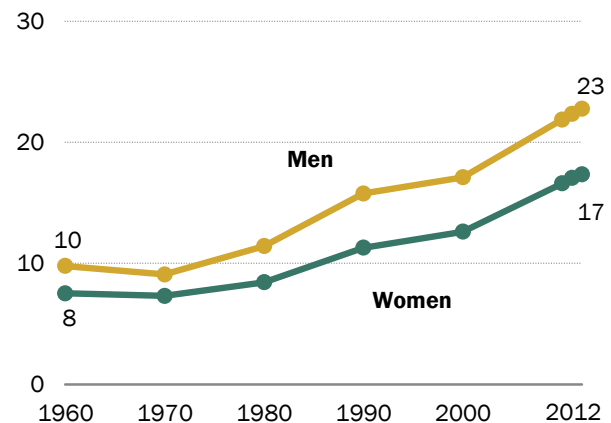
Today's young adults are slow to marry by historical standards. As of 2012, at age 25, 78% of men and 67% of women had never married. About five decades ago, only 28% of men and 13% of women had not married by age 25. The median age at first marriage is 29 for men and 27 for women today, up from 23 and 20, respectively, five decades ago.

The share of never-married adults declines with age. In 2012, 32% of men and 25% of women had never been married by age 35. And by age 45, 19% of men and 14% of women had never married. The corresponding shares in 1960 were much lower. At age 45, only 7% of men and 6% of women had never married.

Most never-married Americans will eventually marry, given that very small shares of adults were still single at age 64 in 1960 (8%) and 2012 (7%). However, 2012's 64-year-olds were born in the

Rising Share of Never-Married Adults, 1960-2012

% of men and women ages 25 and older who have never been married



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial census and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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late 1940s, and it is hard to say whether young adults today will follow in their footsteps when they reach older ages.

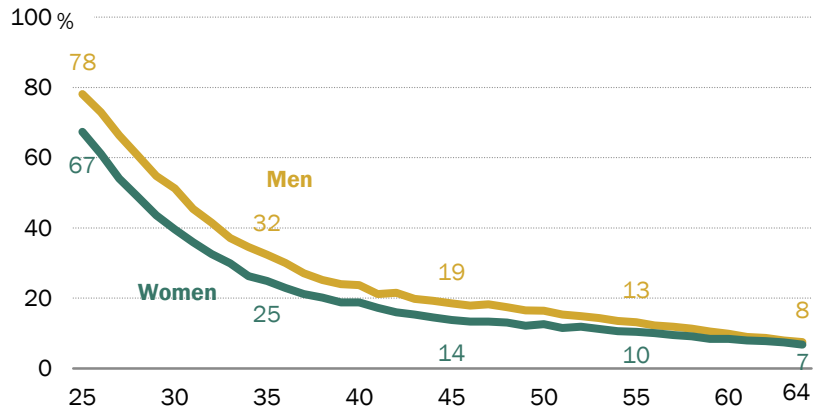
Looking at data on successive cohorts of young adults reveals a clear historical pattern: Since 1970, each new cohort of young adults had a higher share of never-married adults than the cohort that came before it. The Pew Research analysis suggests that when today's young adults reach their mid-40s to mid-50s, a record high share (roughly 25%) is likely to have never been married.

In 1960, 16% of men ages 25 to 34 had never been married. After 10 years, when this group was 35 to 44 years old, only 8% had never been married. By 1980, when this cohort was ages 45 to 54, 6% had never been married. The next cohort starting in 1970 followed a similar trajectory; by 1990, when these men were ages 45 to 54, 6% had never been married.

Compared with the previous two cohorts, a much higher

Share of Never-Married Adults Diminishes with Age

% of men and women ages 25 to 64 who have never been married, 2012

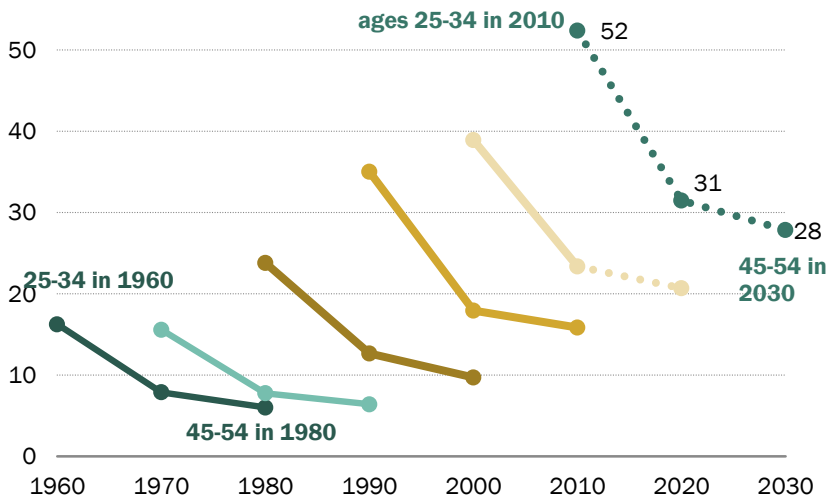


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960 decennial census, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Share of Men Never Married, by Cohort

% never married (at ages 25-34, 35-44, 45-54)



Note: The dotted lines are projected rates based on rates of the previous cohort.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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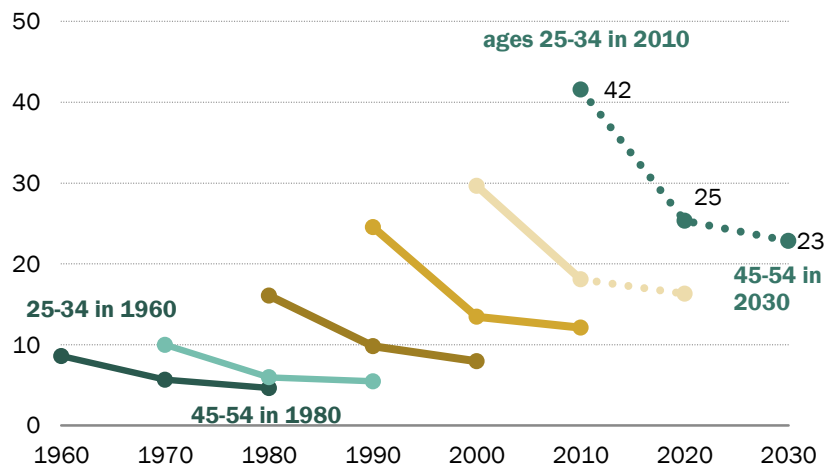
share of young men ages 25 to 34 in 1980 was never married (24%). After 10 years, the rate dropped to 13%, and by 2000 it was 10%.

From 1980 forward, each successive cohort of young men had a higher share that had never been married: 35% of young men in 1990 were never married, compared with 39% in 2000 and 52% in 2010. And by the time each cohort reached the ages of 45 to 54, a higher share had never been married than in the earlier cohorts.

If today's young men (those ages 25 to 34 in 2010) follow a similar pattern to the cohorts of young men that have preceded them, nearly three-in-ten (28%) will still have never been married by 2030, when they are 45 to 54 years old. If this is the case, today's young adults will experience the lowest marriage rate in modern history.¹³

Share of Women Never Married, by Cohort

% never married (at ages 25-34, 35-44, 45-54)



Note: The dotted lines are projected rates based on rates of the previous cohort.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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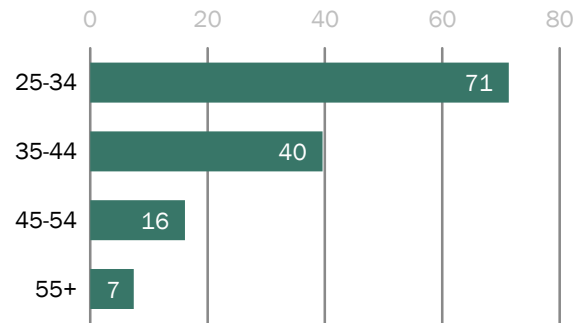
¹³ A recent study by Martin, Steven P., Nan Marie Astone, and H. Elizabeth Peters (2014) from the Urban Institute suggests the share of Millennials who marry by age 40 would be up to about 12 percentage points lower than the rate of today's 40-year-olds, and their marriage rate by 40 will be below the level of any previous generation of Americans. (<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/413110-Fewer-Marriages-More-Divergence.pdf>)

The trajectory of each cohort of young women mirrors that of young men. However, at each stage, women are less likely to have never been married. About 42% of young women ages 25 to 34 in 2010 had never been married, compared with 52% of young men. The data suggest that when this cohort reaches ages 45 to 54, 23% will still have never been married, if they follow the rate of previous cohorts.

The likelihood that a never-married adult will get married after age 54 is relatively small. In 2012, 71 out of 1,000 never-married adults ages 25 to 34 got married. The rate dropped to 40 per 1,000 among never-married adults ages 35 to 44, 16 per 1,000 among never-married adults ages 45 to 54, and only 7 per 1,000 among never-married adults ages 55 and older.

Likelihood of Marrying for First Time Falls Off by Age

of newly first-time married adults per 1,000 never-married adults, 2012



Note: "Newly first-time married" refers to those who married in the past 12 months. The first-time marriage rate is calculated as the number of first-time newlyweds/(number of never-married adults + number of first-time newlyweds).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Chapter 3: Marriage Market for All Unmarried Adults

Economist Gary Becker argued many decades ago that marriage can be analyzed within an economic framework. Marriage is voluntary, and men and women compete when they try to find the best mate.¹⁴ Borrowing Becker’s concept, this chapter looks at the “supply” side of the marriage market and focuses on the sex ratio (number of males to number of females) among unmarried adults. In other words, how many eligible men and women are there, and how do they compare in terms of key demographic characteristics?

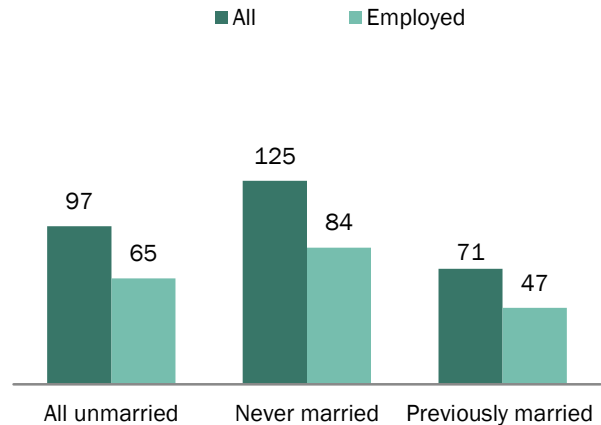
Both quantity and quality of available unmarried adults are likely to matter on the marriage market. Previous research suggests that the pool of economically attractive men is linked to marriage formation patterns.¹⁵ Taking that into consideration, this analysis also includes the ratio of employed unmarried men to all unmarried women.

Looking at the overall marriage market, which includes both never married and previously married adults (those who are divorced, separated or widowed), the sex ratio is fairly balanced.¹⁶ Among unmarried Americans ages 25 to 64, there are 97 unmarried men ages 25 to 64 for every 100 unmarried women in that age group.

Within this broader unmarried population, there are sharp differences between the pool of adults that has never been married and those who were previously married. Men outnumber women by a large margin among never-married adults (125 men for every 100 women), but men are

Never-Married and Previously Married Adults Face Different Marriage Markets

of ... men per 100 women, among adults ages 25 to 64



Note: “All unmarried” comprises those who have never been married, or who are divorced, separated or widowed. “Previously married” comprises those who are divorced, separated or widowed.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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¹⁴ Gary S. Becker. 1974. “A Theory of Marriage” p. 299-344 in *Economics of the Family: Marriage, Children, and Human Capital*, edited by Theodore W. Schultz. (<http://www.nber.org/chapters/c2970.pdf>)

¹⁵ See Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Lichter, Daniel T., et al. 1992. “Race and the Retreat from Marriage: A Shortage of Marriageable Men?” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57, Nov. 6, p. 781-799.

¹⁶ To include all groups in the analysis, separated adults are included in the previously married group, even though legally they are still married.

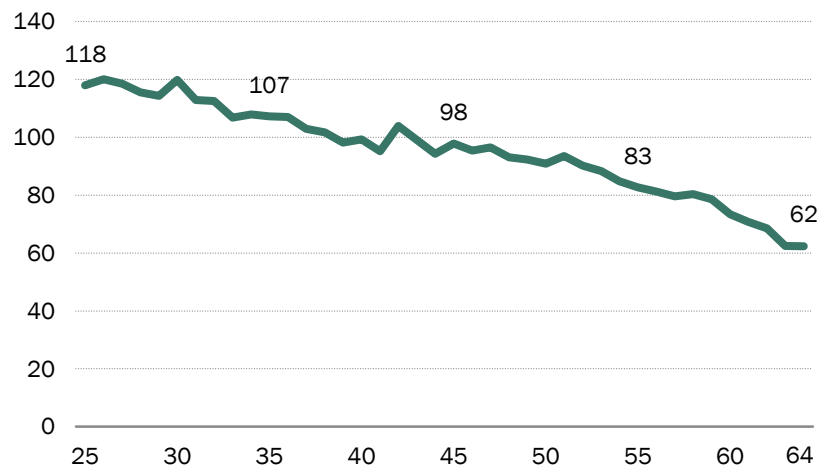
outnumbered by women among previously married adults (71 men for every 100 women). This is mainly because women are more likely than men to be divorced or widowed. In 2012, 15% of women ages 25 to 64 were divorced, compared with 12% of men in the same age group. Some 3% of women and 1% of men in this age group were widowed.

The new Pew Research survey findings suggest that today's unmarried women place a high premium on finding a spouse with a steady job: 78% of never-married women say this is very important, compared with 46% of men. And much of the research that has been done on marriage markets has focused on the ratio of employed men to women. When the employment status of unmarried men is taken into account, the number of men compared with women decreases dramatically. Among all unmarried adults, the ratio of employed men to all women goes down—for every 65 employed unmarried men, there are 100 unmarried women. Among those who have never been married, the ratio is 84 employed men per 100 women, and for those who have previously been married it is 47 employed men for every 100 women.

In addition to employment status, age is an important factor influencing the male-to-female ratio among the unmarried. At age 25, there is a surplus of men—118 for every 100 women. The male-to-female ratio declines with age. Around age 40, the number of unmarried men and women is roughly equivalent. After age 45, the number of unmarried men declines steadily, and by age 64, there are about 62 unmarried men for every 100 unmarried women.

Male-to-Female Ratio of Unmarried Adults, by Age, 2012

of men per 100 women, among unmarried adults ages 25 to 64



Note: Unmarried includes those who have never been married, or who are divorced, separated or widowed.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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This happens mainly because women are much more likely than men to be currently divorced, separated or widowed, especially after age 45. Among adults ages 45 and older, 22% of men and

37% of women are divorced, separated or widowed. The share of never-married men and women, meanwhile, is similar after age 45 (11% vs. 9%).

Ratios presented here illustrate how men and women on the marriage market compare only in terms of key demographic characteristics. The actual marriage market is much more complex than these ratios. As the Pew Research Center survey finds, only about half of never-married adults (53%) say they want to get married, and a much lower share of previously married adults (21%) say they would like to marry again. Moreover, 17% of unmarried adults ages 25 and older are currently living with a partner.¹⁷ In reality, the pool of eligible men and women on the marriage market could be much smaller than the one presented here.

In addition, individuals' choices on the marriage market are not bound by demographics. Never-married adults are not necessarily restricting their choices to those who have never been married before. Young adults might marry someone who is not in their age group. Location also matters in the mate selection process, as people often search within the area where they live, and the sex ratio and job market can be quite different from one geographic area to another.

¹⁷ Based on Current Population Survey, March 2013.

Chapter 4: Never-Married Young Adults on the Marriage Market

About half of today's 25- to 34-year-olds (49%) have never been married, a fourfold increase since 1960 (12%). The median age at first marriage is now 27 for women and 29 for men, up from 20 for women and 23 for men in 1960.¹⁸

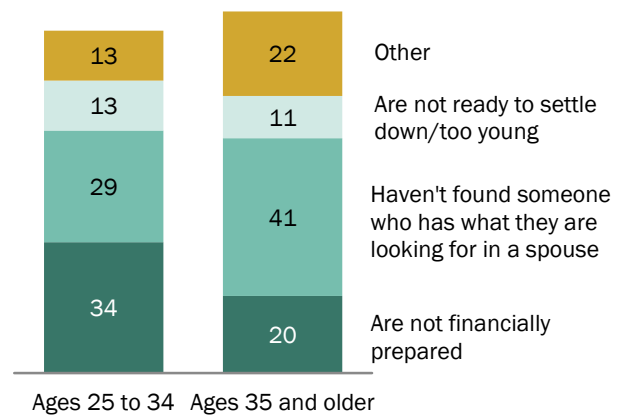
Young adults are not opposed to marriage, however. According to the new Pew Research survey, only 4% of never-married adults ages 25 to 34 say they don't want to get married. A majority of them either want to marry (61%) or are not sure (34%).

Compared with older adults who have never been married (those ages 35 and older), young adults are more likely to cite financial insecurity as the main reason they are not currently married (34% vs. 20%). An additional 29% of young never-married adults say that they haven't found someone who has what they are looking for in a spouse. Only 13% say they are too young or are not ready to settle down.

Given the median age at first marriage, young adults ages 25 to 34 are arguably the prime age group on the marriage market today. This chapter looks at never-married young adults—analyzing the male-to-female ratio among this age group as well as the ratio of employed men to women. Of course, never-married young adults could marry someone in a different age group or someone who has previously been married. These ratios aim to illustrate only how the marriage market for young adults has changed since 1960.¹⁹

Finances Are Keeping Many Young Adults from Marrying

% of never-married adults who say they are not married because they ...



Note: Based on never-married adults ages 25 and older who want to marry or are not sure (n=208). "In school" and "Engaged to be married" not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 22-25 and May 29-June 1, 2014 (N=2,003)

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¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau table MS-2. (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>)

¹⁹ For ratios among all unmarried young adults, see Appendix A.

At first glance, never-married young men outnumber never-married young women on the marriage market. In 2012, there were 126 never-married men ages 25 to 34 for every 100 never-married women in that age group. The number has gone down from 180 in 1960, but it is still well above 100.

The ratio of employed men to all women among never-married young adults is much lower than the overall male-to-female ratio. It has also dropped over time – from 139 employed men per 100 women in 1960 to 91 in 2012.²⁰

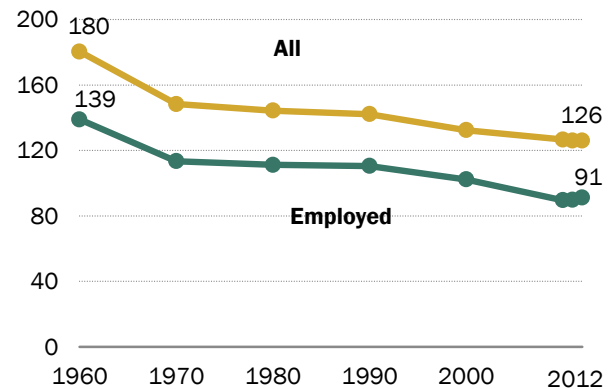
Part of this change can be attributed to overall trends in the employment status of men and women. The share of men ages 16 and older who were employed was nearly 80% in 1960 and had dropped to 64% by 2013. By contrast, the employment rate among women has risen steadily, from 36% in 1960 to a peak of 57% in 2000 and ending up at 53% in 2013.

Meanwhile, young women are more likely than young men to graduate from college nowadays. Since the 1990s, women have outnumbered men in both college enrollment and college completion rates, reversing a trend that lasted through the 1960s and '70s. By 2013, 37% of women ages 25 to 29 had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 30% of men in the same age range.

Women are also more likely to continue their education after college: 12% of women ages 25

For Young Never-Married Women, the Pool of Employed Men Has Shrunk

of ... men per 100 women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 34

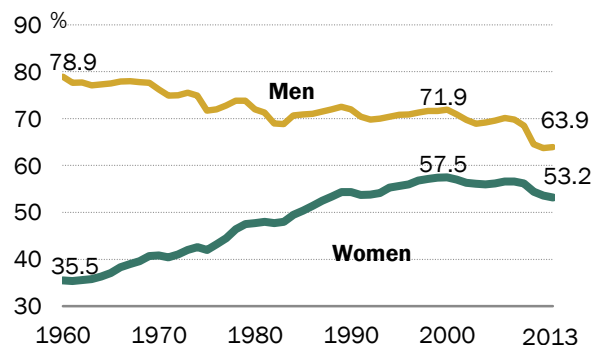


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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The Changing Role of Men and Women in the Workforce, 1960-2013

% of civilian non-institutional population ages 16 and older who are employed



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook," 2014

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²⁰ Among all employed, never-married adults ages 25 to 34, the male-to-female ratio has gone down from 184 men for every 100 women in 1960 to 124 men for every 100 women in 2012.

to 34 in 2013 had a master's, doctorate or professional degree, compared with 8% of their male counterparts.

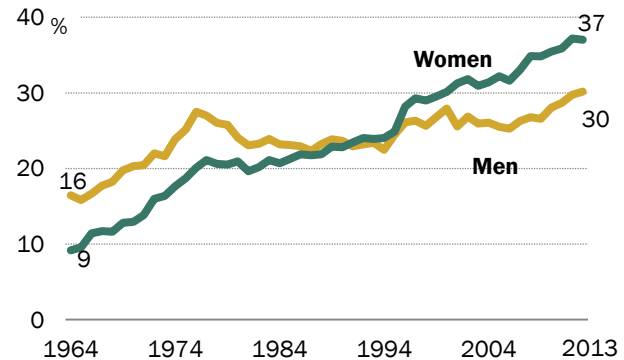
The marriage market that young adults face today reflects changes in women's educational attainment and employment status relative to men. People tend to marry people whose education level is similar to their own, and the degree of "[educational assortative mating](#)" has increased in the past few decades, especially among adults who have a college degree.

Among never-married young adults who have a post-graduate education, there are 77 men for every 100 women, and among those who have a college degree, the ratio is 102 men for every 100 women. These sex ratios are significantly different from the ratios among never-married young adults with a high school education or less, where men outnumber women by a significant margin (174 men for every 100 women).

When men's employment status is taken into account, the number of never-married young men per 100 women drops at every education level. The falloff is greatest among young men with a high school education or less. Within this educational cohort there are 174 men, but only 108 *employed* men, for every 100 women.

Young Women Outpacing Young Men in College Completion

% of adults ages 25 to 29 with at least a bachelor's degree



Note: Based on adults ages 25 to 29. Prior to 1992, those with at least a bachelor's degree refers to those with four or more years of college.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the March Current Population Survey, Integrated Public Use Micro Series (IPUMS)

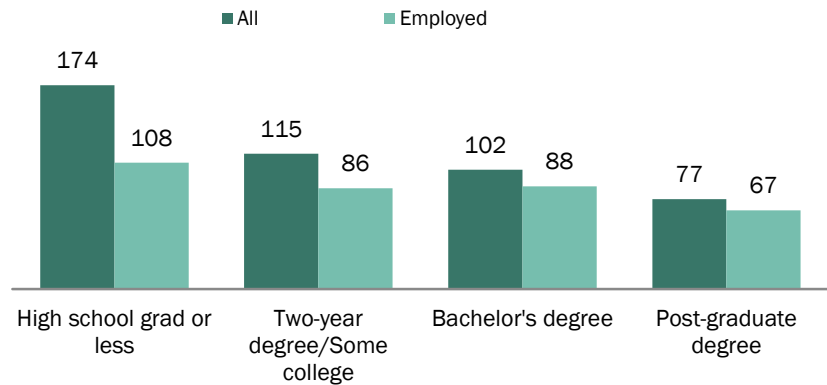
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The pool of employed men is relatively small for never-married young women with college degrees as well. For every 100 college-educated never-married young women, there are only 88 employed college-educated young men. The ratio is even more skewed for never-married young women with a post-graduate education: There are only 67 employed young men per 100 women in this education group. This may shed light on a rising share of women marrying men who are [less educated](#) than they are.

Another factor that relates to the marriage market is race or ethnicity. It is true that [interracial and interethnic marriages are on the rise](#) in the U.S., and the new Pew Research survey finds that among unmarried adults, a similar racial or ethnic background is viewed as a less important criterion for a potential spouse than finding someone with a steady job or someone with shared views about child rearing. Even so, 85% of new marriages still take place between adults whose racial or ethnic backgrounds are similar.

The Marriage Market for Never-Married Young Adults Differs by Education ...

of ... men per 100 women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 34

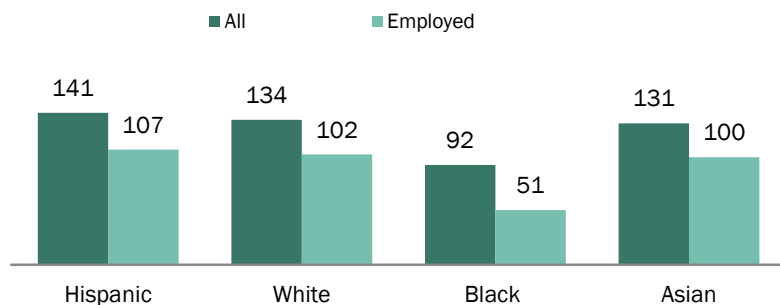


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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... And by Race

of ... men per 100 women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 34



Note: Blacks, whites and Asians are single race only and include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Never-married young men outnumber never-married women in most racial and ethnic groups except for blacks. Among never-married African Americans ages 25 to 34, there are 92 men for every 100 women. The number of never-married young men per 100 women is 141 among Hispanics, 134 among whites and 131 among Asians.

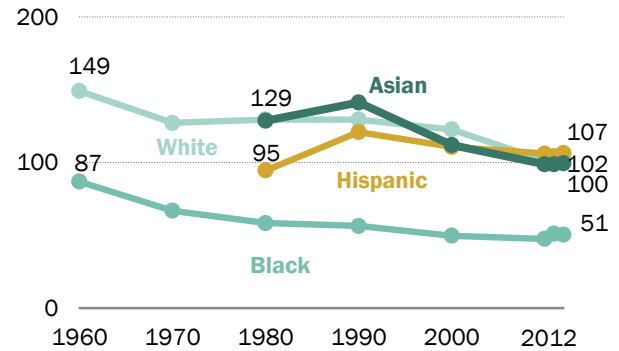
After factoring in the employment status of men, the pool of never-married young men shrinks significantly, especially for never-married black women. There are 51 never-married employed young black men for every 100 never-married young black women. The ratio is roughly even—100 men for every 100 women among Hispanic, white and Asian never-married young adults.

The pool of young employed men was much larger for both white and black never-married young adults in 1960, when there were 149 employed young white men for every 100 young white women, and 87 employed young black men for every 100 black women.

Among never-married Hispanic and Asian young adults, the number of employed men per 100 women has fluctuated over time but has gone down significantly in the past two decades. The number of employed men per 100 women went down from 141 in 1990 to 100 in 2012 for Asians and from 121 to 107 for Hispanics.

The Shrinking Pool of Young Employed Men, by Race/Ethnicity

of ... employed men per 100 women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 34



Note: Data on Hispanics and Asians prior to 1980 are not plotted given the small sample sizes. Blacks, whites and Asians are single race only and include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial census and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Chapter 5: The Changing Demographics of Never-Married Americans

As the share of never-married adults has risen, their characteristics have diverged increasingly from those of married adults.²¹ Today's never-married adults are on average younger, less likely to be white and somewhat less educated than married adults.

Five decades ago, never-married adults were similar to married adults in terms of race, ethnicity and age, and they were somewhat more educated than their married counterparts. Today's never-married adults are less likely than married adults to be employed (68% vs. 75%); just the opposite was true in 1960.²²

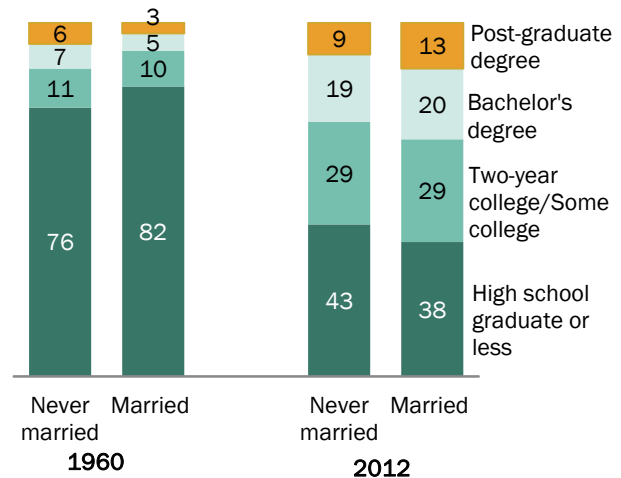
In 1960, only about one-in-ten adults ages 25 and older (9%) had never been married. They were somewhat more educated than adults who were married. About 13% of never-married adults had a bachelor's or graduate degree, compared with 8% of adults who were married. Five decades later, when the share of never-married adults has risen to 20%, married adults are more educated than their never-married counterparts. Some 28% of never-married adults in 2012 were college graduates, compared with 34% of adults who were currently married.

In both years, adults who were divorced, separated or widowed were less educated than never-married and currently married adults.

The racial and ethnic profile of never-married Americans has changed substantially over the past five decades. Today one-in-five never-married adults ages 25 and older are black, while blacks make up 7% of the married population. The gap was much smaller in 1960, when 10% of never-

The Education Gap between Never-Married and Currently Married Adults

%



Note: Among adults ages 25 and older.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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²¹ These demographic comparisons are based on a universe of adults ages 25 and older.

²² Based on adults ages 25 to 64.

married and 8% of married adults were black. By contrast, whites are overrepresented among adults who are married. About seven-in-ten married adults (72%) are white, while 54% of never-married adults are white. In addition, about 18% of never-married Americans in 2012 were Hispanic, and 5% were Asian. These shares are close to the ones among married adults (13% Hispanic and 6% Asian).

Never-married adults are younger than married adults, and the age disparity has widened over time. Among those ages 25 and older today, the median age for a never-married adult is 35. For a married adult, the median age is 51. Five decades ago, the median age was 43 for never-married adults and 44 for married adults. The median age for divorced, separated or widowed adults was 62 in 1960 and 58 in 2012.²³

Marital Status by Key Demographics, 1960 and 2012

	1960				2012			
	All	Never married	Married	Previously married	All	Never married	Married	Previously married
Gender								
Men	48	55	51	28	48	55	51	36
Women	52	45	49	72	52	45	49	64
Education								
High school graduate or less	82	76	82	89	42	43	38	50
Two-year degree/Some college	10	11	10	7	29	29	29	30
Bachelor's degree	5	7	5	2	18	19	20	12
Post-graduate degree	3	6	3	1	11	9	13	7
Race								
White	88	86	89	82	67	54	72	69
Black	9	10	8	16	11	20	7	14
Hispanic	2	3	3	2	14	18	13	12
Asian	<0.5	1	<0.5	<0.5	5	5	6	3

Note: Based on adults ages 25 and older. Blacks, whites and Asians are single race only and include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Never-Married Men vs. Women

As women have made significant gains in educational attainment and labor force participation, the gap between never-married men and women has widened in a number of ways.

²³ The median age for all adults ages 18 and older by marital status in 2012: never married, 27; divorced/separated/widowed, 57; married, 50. In 1960: never married, 25; divorced/separated/widowed, 61; married, 42.

First, never-married women ages 25 and older are more likely than their male counterparts to be college-educated. Some one-third of these women have either a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared with one-quarter of never-married men. Five decades ago, never-married men and women were much more similar in terms of their education levels.²⁴

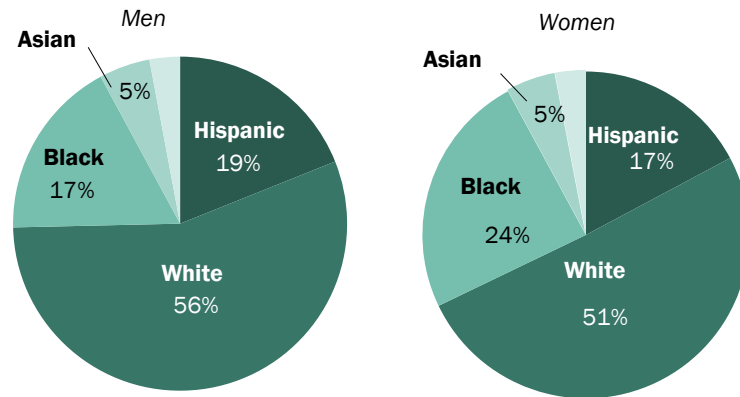
Second, among never-married adults ages 25 to 64, women are more likely to be employed than men (70% vs. 67% in 2012). Never-married women first surpassed never-married men in terms of their employment rate in 2008, when 74% of never-married women were employed compared with 72% of never-married men.

Finally, the racial characteristics of never-married men and women are somewhat different now. Today, among never-married women, nearly one-quarter (24%) are black, and about half (51%) are white. By contrast, among never-married men, some 17% are black and 56% are white. The shares of Asian and Hispanics are similar among never-married men and women.

The relative age of never-married men and women has also changed over time. Among adults ages 25 and older, the median age was 47 for never-married women and 39 for men in 1960. In 2012, never-married men and women were roughly the same age, with the median age for men of 34 and for women, 35.²⁵

The Racial Makeup of Never-Married Americans, 2012

% of never-married men and women ages 25 and older



Note: Blacks, whites and Asians are single race only and include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Mixed race and other races shown but not labeled.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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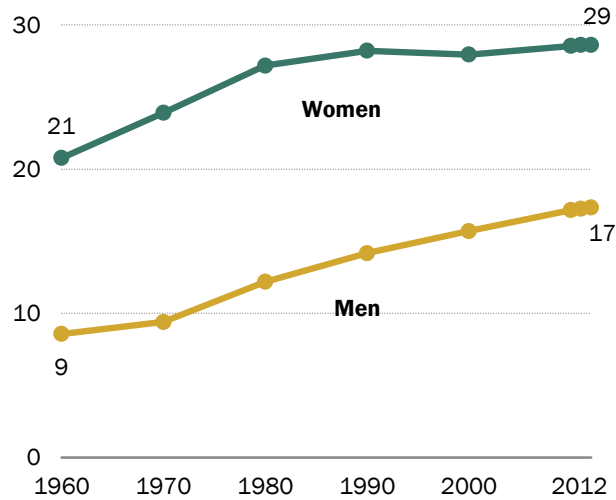
²⁴ By contrast, married men were more likely than married women to be college graduates (10% vs. 6%) in 1960, but in 2012 the share of college graduates among married men and women was about equal (34% vs. 33%).

²⁵ Among all adults ages 18 and older, the median age for single men and women in 1960 was 24 and 27, respectively, and in 2012, 27 and 26.

Appendix A: Additional Charts

Share of Americans Who Are Divorced, Separated or Widowed, by Gender

% of men and women ages 25 and older who were previously married

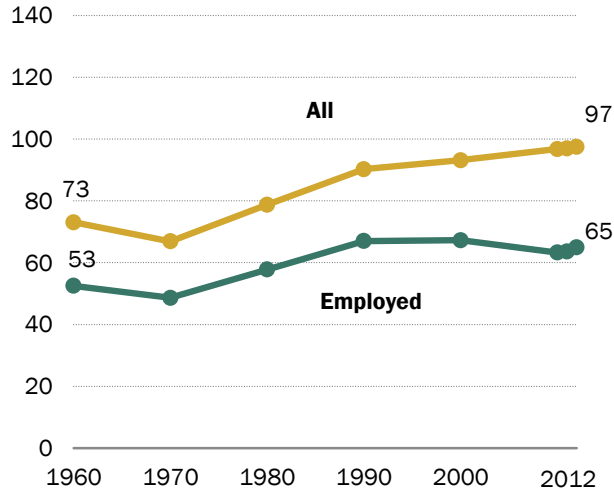


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Marriage Market for Unmarried

of ... men per 100 women, among unmarried adults ages 25 to 64



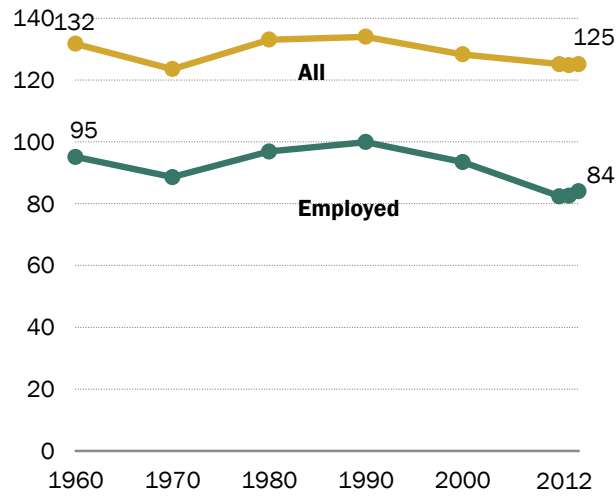
Note: "Unmarried" are those who have never been married or who are divorced, separated or widowed.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Marriage Market for Never Married

of ... never-married men per 100 never-married women, among never-married adults ages 25 to 64

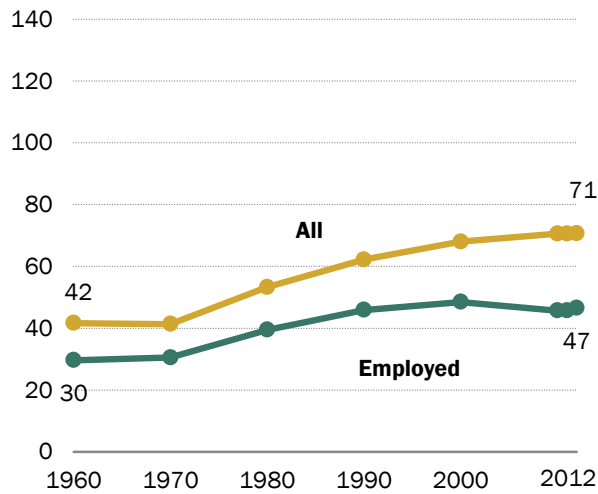


Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Marriage Market Among Previously Married

of ... men per 100 women, among previously married adults ages 25 to 64



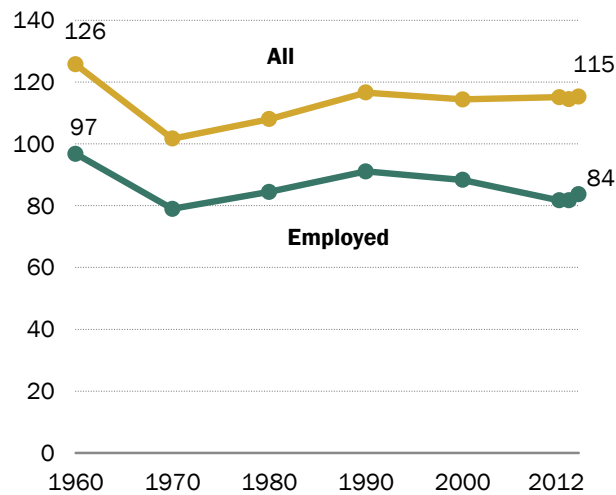
Note: "Previously married" comprises those who are currently divorced, separated or widowed.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Marriage Market Among Unmarried Young Adults

of ... men per 100 women, among unmarried adults ages 25 to 34



Note: "Unmarried" are those who have never been married or who are divorced, separated or widowed.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 1960-2000 decennial censuses and 2010-2012 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Appendix B: Survey Topline

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MAY 2014 MARRIAGE MARKET OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
MAY 22-25 & MAY 29-JUNE 1, 2014
TOTAL N=2,003 ADULTS 18+

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES GREATER THAN ZERO BUT LESS THAN 0.5% ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (*). COLUMNS/ROWS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL TRENDS REFERENCE SURVEYS FROM SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS.

ASK ALL:

MARITAL

Are you currently married, living with a partner, divorced, separated, widowed, or have you never been married? **(IF R SAYS "SINGLE," PROBE TO DETERMINE WHICH CATEGORY IS APPROPRIATE)**

50	Married
6	Living with a partner
9	Divorced
2	Separated
7	Widowed
24	Never been married
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF LIVING WITH PARTNER (MARITAL=2): [n=94]

LWP Have you ever been married?

38	Yes
62	No
0	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

IF NEVER MARRIED (MARITAL=6 OR LWP=2,9), ASK: [n=436]

SD.3 In general, what's your preference? Do you want to get married, don't you want to get married, or are you not sure if you want to get married?

53	Want to marry
13	Don't want to marry
32	Not sure if want to marry
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

IF DIVORCED OR WIDOWED (MARITAL=3,5) OR LIVING WITH PARTNER AND MARRIED BEFORE (LWP=1), ASK: [n=474]

SD.4 In general, what's your preference? Do you want to get married again, don't you want to get married again, or are you not sure if you want to get married again?

21	Want to marry
45	Don't want to marry
31	Not sure if want to marry
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Now a few questions about relationships and marriage ...

ASK ALL:

SD.7 When two people plan to spend the rest of their lives together as a couple, how important is it to you that they legally marry **(READ)**?

- 47 Very important
- 21 Somewhat important
- 14 Not too important
- 15 Not at all important
- 3 **(VOL. DO NOT READ)** Don't Know/Refused

Trend for comparison:²⁶

		<i>Gallup</i> <u>June 2013</u>	<i>Gallup</i> <u>Feb 2007</u>	<i>Gallup</i> <u>June 2006</u>
47	Very important	43	47	54
21	Somewhat important	21	23	19
14	Not too important	16	12	13
15	Not at all important	19	15	12
3	(VOL. DO NOT READ) Don't Know/Refused	1	3	1

IF NEVER MARRIED (MARITAL=6 OR LWP=2) AND WANTS TO GET MARRIED OR NOT SURE/DK (SD.3=1,3,9): [n=369]

SD.9 What would you say is the main reason you are not currently married? Is it because you ... **(READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-3, 4 ALWAYS COMES LAST)**?

- 22 Are not ready to settle down
- 27 Are not financially prepared
- 30 Have not found someone who has what you are looking for in a spouse
- 12 Or is there some other reason **(SPECIFY)**
- 3 **(VOL. DO NOT READ)** In school
- 2 **(VOL. DO NOT READ)** Engaged to be married
- 5 **(VOL. DO NOT READ)** Don't Know/Refused

ASK ALL:

SD.10 Here are some things that people look for in a spouse or partner. Please tell me for each one whether this **(IF MARITAL=1: was; IF MARITAL>1: would be)** very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important to you in choosing a spouse or partner? First, he or she **(IF MARITAL=1: had; IF MARITAL>1: should have)** ... **(READ AND RANDOMIZE)**.

- a. The same moral and religious beliefs as you
 - 48 Very important
 - 26 Somewhat important
 - 12 Not too important
 - 13 Not at all important
 - 2 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**
- b. A steady job
 - 63 Very important
 - 23 Somewhat important
 - 7 Not too important
 - 6 Not at all important
 - 2 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

²⁶ In previous years the question read, "When a man and a woman plan to spend the rest of their lives together as a couple how important is it to you that they legally marry?"

SD.10 CONTINUED ...

- c. At least as much education as you
- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 29 | Very important |
| 32 | Somewhat important |
| 19 | Not too important |
| 18 | Not at all important |
| 2 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |
- d. The same racial or ethnic background as you
- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 17 | Very important |
| 18 | Somewhat important |
| 22 | Not too important |
| 40 | Not at all important |
| 3 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |
- e. Similar ideas about having and raising children
- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 73 | Very important |
| 18 | Somewhat important |
| 3 | Not too important |
| 4 | Not at all important |
| 2 | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER**2014 POLARIZATIONS AND TYPOLOGY SURVEY****JAN. 23-MARCH 16, 2014****TOTAL N=10,013 ADULTS 18+****ASK ALL:**

Q.25h I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is **[READ AND RANDOMIZE PAIRS BUT NOT STATEMENTS WITHIN EACH PAIR]**. Next, **[NEXT PAIR] [IF NECESSARY: "Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right?"]**

- | | |
|----|--|
| 46 | Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority |
| 50 | Society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children |
| 3 | (VOL. DO NOT READ) Neither/Both equally |
| 2 | (VOL. DO NOT READ) Don't Know/Refused |