



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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U.S. Census Bureau Release Offers First Analysis of Links Between, Marriage, Fertility, and Other Socioeconomic Characteristics in Pennsylvania

MIDDLETOWN, Pa –Today, the U.S. Census Bureau released a new analysis that looks at links between marriage, fertility, and other socioeconomic characteristics, and provides the first-ever state-by-state analysis of median age at first marriage. The analysis of the multi-year marriage and fertility data from the American Community Survey (ACS) also shows how socioeconomic characteristics such as mother's income, age, work status and language spoken at home correlate with birth rates.

Median Age at First Marriage and Married Households

The analysis of family structure variables at the state level shows that there are marked geographic patterns. States with populations that had a high estimated median age at first marriage tend to have had higher proportions of unmarried-couple households and lower proportions of married-couple households. Data from a four year average, 2000-2003, shows that Pennsylvania conforms to this pattern.

The commonwealth had a relatively high median age at first marriage, the eighth oldest state among men (27.6 years) and seventh oldest among women (25.9 years), though not substantially older than the U.S. averages at 26.7 (men), and 25.1 (women) years of age. Likewise, the percentage of married couple households in Pennsylvania stood at 50.7 percent, just 0.1 percent higher than the national figure, while 4.8 percent of households consisted of unmarried partners, compared to 5.0 percent nationally. In contrast, the median ages at first marriage were 23.9 for men and 21.9 for women in the state with the highest percentage of married couples (Utah). As the report notes, however, Pennsylvania is not alone, men and women in the Northeast marry later, on average, than their counterparts elsewhere in the United States. (Table 1)

Poverty, Marriage, and Births

The report also found that geographic differences in the proportion of women with infants living below the poverty level correlated with low levels of labor force participation, high proportions of births among teenagers, and high proportions of births among unmarried mothers. For example, Southern states tended to have a higher percentage of teen births, and births among unwed mothers.

Data from the four year average, 2000-2003, showed that 20.9 percent of Pennsylvania women who gave birth the prior year were living in poverty, 2.3 percent less than the national figure. Following the national trend, almost 1 of every 2 unwed new mothers were below the poverty line in Pennsylvania (47.9 percent). In contrast, just 12.8 percent of new mothers who were



married lived in poverty. (Table 2) Teen births in the commonwealth (5.4 percent) were the 6th lowest among states in the U.S., and 2.4 percent less than the national number. Pennsylvania also had one of the higher percentages of new mothers in the workforce. Of women who gave birth in the prior year, 60.2 percent had rejoined to the workforce, compared to 56.1 percent nationally. Single mothers in Pennsylvania also returned at a higher rate (+5.7 percent) than married mothers.

Language, Citizenship, and Birth Rates

The report also found geographic correlations with the proportion of new mothers who spoke English “not well” or “not at all” and births by non-citizens. States in the Southwest (California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas) had the highest proportions of non-English speaking new mothers.

Less than three percent of Pennsylvania women who gave birth in the prior year spoke little or no English. This was well below the national average of 8.2 percent. Similarly, just 4.9 percent of new mothers in Pennsylvania were non-citizens, compared to 14.6 percent nationally.

Fertility rate data from both the ACS and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) was included in the report for comparison. NCHS, which counts total births in each state for the calendar year, reported that births in Pennsylvania averaged 56.5 per 1,000 women* from 2000-2003, sixth lowest among the states. ACS reported 62.3 births per 1,000, slightly higher than the margin of error allows.** Both showed that births in Pennsylvania were significantly lower than the national average (NCHS 65.5 per 1,000, ACS 69.6 per 1,000).

ACS

This report highlights the benefits of using the American Community Survey (ACS), including the ability to analyze data at the state and national levels and explore the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and changing family structure. In order to approximate the quality of the fully implemented ACS 2005 survey of 3 million households, 4 years (2000-2003) of ACS data are used.

The complete U.S. Census Bureau report: *Indicators of Marriage and Fertility in the United States From the American Community Survey, 2000 to 2003* may be viewed at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/mar-fert-slides.html>

Notes: * Women ages 15-44.

** All ACS statistics are survey-based estimates and accompanying confidence intervals/margin of error should be taken into consideration. To view complete tables from this report with accompanying margin of error, please visit the report online at the web address listed above.

At this time, the universe for the American Community Survey is limited to areas with populations of 250,000 or greater, and does not include group quarters. The group quarters population is composed of all people not living in households, including: the institutionalized population (such as correctional institutions, nursing homes, and juvenile institutions) and the noninstitutionalized population (such as college dormitories, military quarters, and group homes).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, National Center for Health Statistics.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.

Table 1: Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, Married Couple and Unmarried Partner Households, 4 -Year Average: 2000-2003				
Area	Estimated median age at first marriage		Married couple households	Unmarried partner households
	Men	Women	Percent	Percent
United States	26.7	25.1	50.6	5.0
Alabama	25.5	23.8	51.2	7.3
Alaska	25.7	22.8	52.2	3.0
Arizona	26.1	24.5	50.8	6.6
Arkansas	25.0	22.8	52.9	6.3
California	27.2	25.2	49.6	3.6
Colorado	26.4	24.4	51.6	5.8
Connecticut	28.9	26.4	51.9	5.4
Delaware	27.0	25.5	50.6	4.9
District of Columbia	30.1	29.9	21.7	5.9
Florida	27.1	25.2	48.7	5.5
Georgia	26.3	24.4	50.2	5.7
Hawaii	27.8	25.7	52.9	4.2
Idaho	24.6	22.8	58.3	5.8
Illinois	27.0	25.5	49.9	4.5
Indiana	26.1	24.4	52.8	4.7
Iowa	25.9	24.5	54.1	5.3
Kansas	25.5	24.4	52.8	5.0
Kentucky	25.3	22.8	53.8	4.0
Louisiana	26.0	24.8	47.2	4.1
Maine	26.6	25.6	52.5	4.8
Maryland	27.1	25.8	49.7	5.5
Massachusetts	29.1	27.4	48.7	5.0
Michigan	27.1	25.6	50.6	4.9
Minnesota	26.6	25.2	54.0	5.1
Mississippi	25.8	24.8	48.2	3.8
Missouri	25.8	24.7	51.9	5.1
Montana	26.2	24.5	53.6	4.9
Nebraska	26.0	24.4	53.4	4.4
Nevada	26.3	23.7	48.2	6.3
New Hampshire	27.2	25.7	55.0	7.2
New Jersey	28.6	26.4	53.4	4.6

Table 1 (Continued): Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, Married Couple and Unmarried Partner Households, 4 -Year Average: 2000-2003

Area	Estimated median age at first marriage		Married couple households	Unmarried partner households
	Men	Women	Percent	Percent
New Mexico	25.9	24.4	49.1	5.8
New York	28.9	27.0	45.6	5.1
North Carolina	25.8	24.5	51.5	4.1
North Dakota	26.9	25.0	52.6	4.6
Ohio	26.6	25.2	50.1	4.9
Oklahoma	24.9	22.7	52.7	4.3
Oregon	26.6	24.6	50.1	6.0
Pennsylvania	27.6	25.9	50.7	4.8
Rhode Island	27.6	26.7	47.2	5.6
South Carolina	26.4	25.2	50.1	4.1
South Dakota	25.8	24.3	53.7	4.2
Tennessee	25.7	24.0	50.9	4.0
Texas	25.7	23.5	52.8	4.3
Utah	23.9	21.9	62.9	3.4
Vermont	27.8	25.9	52.8	7.1
Virginia	27.0	25.0	52.2	4.6
Washington	26.5	24.9	50.0	5.9
West Virginia	25.9	23.9	52.5	4.7
Wisconsin	26.9	25.5	51.5	6.1
Wyoming	25.7	23.3	54.0	5.3

Table 2: Percent of Women with a Birth in the Last Year Who Are below the Poverty Level, 4 - Year Average: 2000-2003

Area	Married women		Unmarried women	
	Percent	Margin of Error	Percent	Margin of Error
United States	12.2	0.54	50.0	0.83
Alabama	17.1	1.64	53.6	2.26
Alaska	12.8	2.33	51.7	3.78
Arizona	21.9	1.61	52.5	2.12
Arkansas	14.4	1.82	51.8	2.59
California	15.4	0.94	50.9	1.41
Colorado	8.7	1.39	42.0	2.49
Connecticut	9.0	1.46	46.1	2.58
Delaware	11.9	2.29	45.4	3.48
District of Columbia	24.0	3.08	54.4	3.31
Florida	15.7	1.20	50.8	1.71

Table 2 (Continued): Percent of Women with a Birth in the Last Year Who Are below the Poverty Level, 4 - Year Average: 2000-2003

Area	Married women		Unmarried women	
	Percent	Margin of Error	Percent	Margin of Error
Georgia	12.0	1.26	49.5	1.90
Hawaii	9.0	1.91	38.7	3.18
Idaho	14.8	1.98	48.7	3.29
Illinois	11.2	1.14	48.2	1.80
Indiana	11.2	1.33	49.6	2.10
Iowa	10.7	1.62	48.7	2.69
Kansas	11.2	1.70	42.8	2.72
Kentucky	15.5	1.63	59.4	2.47
Louisiana	21.2	1.69	61.7	2.11
Maine	11.9	2.11	50.5	3.52
Maryland	8.1	1.30	36.0	2.23
Massachusetts	8.1	1.26	43.6	2.27
Michigan	12.9	1.23	49.2	1.85
Minnesota	7.3	1.24	35.5	2.42
Mississippi	21.7	1.91	57.2	2.31
Missouri	12.9	1.42	47.8	2.16
Montana	15.1	2.35	54.8	3.56
Nebraska	12.6	1.86	52.9	3.12
Nevada	13.1	1.85	40.9	3.03
New Hampshire	7.7	1.89	43.3	3.45
New Jersey	10.1	1.21	39.8	2.09
New Mexico	22.2	2.04	57.2	2.62
New York	13.3	1.09	46.6	1.64
North Carolina	15.4	1.36	53.5	1.94
North Dakota	11.3	2.46	44.6	4.03
Ohio	12.9	1.20	49.5	1.83
Oklahoma	17.2	1.71	55.8	2.44
Oregon	19.6	1.76	63.0	2.58
Pennsylvania	12.8	1.23	47.9	1.91
Rhode Island	8.7	2.01	52.0	3.36
South Carolina	14.4	1.63	44.4	2.27
South Dakota	9.7	2.20	49.2	3.73
Tennessee	15.5	1.49	53.8	2.14
Texas	19.5	1.08	51.1	1.56
Utah	11.8	1.56	45.4	2.95
Vermont	13.0	2.59	59.5	3.99
Virginia	9.7	1.26	50.5	2.15
Washington	15.4	1.47	60.4	2.24
West Virginia	23.9	2.28	67.7	2.90
Wisconsin	11.0	1.40	49.9	2.26
Wyoming	14.1	2.67	55.0	4.22