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Office of Family Assistance

NRFC Quick Statistics



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Fathers and Marriage

Percentage Married Among Males Ages 18 and Older by Parental Status: 1991-2001

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	64	63	63	63	63	62	61	62	62	62	61
Resident Father	92	91	91	91	90	89	89	89	89	89	89
Nonparent	45	45	46	44	45	45	44	44	45	45	45

Note: Estimates calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the 1991-2001, March Supplement, Current Population Survey
Source: Child Trends. (2002). "Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers." Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

- The percentage of men who are married declined modestly between 1991 and 2001 from 64 percent to 61 percent.
- Between 1991 and 2001, most resident fathers were married. During this period, the percentage of married resident fathers, however, fell slightly from 92 percent in 1991 to 89 percent in 2001.
- Less than half of all men without children in the household were married during this time period (between 44 and 46 percent over the ten year period).

Percentage Married Among Males Ages 18 and Older by Poverty Status: 1991-2001

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	64	63	63	63	63	62	61	62	62	62	61
Poor (0 to 99% poverty)	48	46	46	46	45	42	43	42	43	42	41
Nonpoor											
100 to 199% of poverty	59	58	57	58	57	56	54	55	55	55	54
200 to 299% of poverty	65	65	65	63	63	62	62	60	60	60	59
300% or more of poverty	67	67	68	67	67	67	66	67	66	66	66

Note: Estimates calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the 1991-2001, March Supplement, Current Population Survey
Source: Child Trends. (2002). "Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers." Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

- As income rises, so does the probability that a man is married. In 2001, only 41 percent of poor men (0 to 99% of poverty level) were married, compared to 66 percent of men living at or above 300 percent of the poverty level.
- The percentage of men living at or above 300 percent of the poverty line who were married fluctuated very little over the 10 year period (between 66 and 68 percent).

**Percentage Married Among Males Ages 18 and Older by Educational Achievement:
1991-2001**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	64	63	63	63	63	62	61	62	62	62	61
Less than high school	61	60	59	58	58	56	56	56	55	55	55
High school diploma or GED	63	64	64	62	62	62	61	61	60	61	59
Vocational/technical or some college	58	58	59	58	59	58	57	57	58	58	57
College graduate	72	71	71	71	71	71	72	72	72	72	72

Note: Estimates calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the 1991-2001, March Supplement, Current Population Survey
Source: Child Trends. (2002). "Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers." Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

- Between 1991 and 2001, men who were college graduates were more likely to get married than men with less education (72 percent compared to less than 60 percent in 2001)

Demographic and Human Capital Characteristics by Marital Status for Parents in a Romantic Relationship at Time of Birth, for Children Born 1998-2000

	Married	All Unmarried
Mother's Race*		
White	41.9%	13.8%
Black	24.8%	54.7%
Hispanic	25.4%	28.3%
Other	7.9%	3.2%
Father's Age (mean years)	31.7	26.8
Mother's Education*		
Less than High School	16.6%	40.5%
High School	19.9%	33.7%
Some College	28.8%	22.8%
College	34.6%	3.1%
Father Employed	91.4%	74.9%
Father's Health Limits Work	3.2%	6.3%

*Mother and Father's race and education are highly correlated

Source: Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University. "Diversity Among Unmarried Parents." Fragile Families Research Brief No. 10, 2002.

Note: Analyses use data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study which is representative of all non-marital births and nearly representative of marital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000.

- Compared to married fathers, unmarried fathers are younger on average by about five years.
- Unmarried fathers are less likely to be employed (74.9 percent) than married fathers (91.4 percent) and are more likely to have health problems that limit their ability to work (6.3 percent for unmarried as opposed to 3.2 percent for married).

- Unmarried mothers are more likely to be black (54.7 percent) and less likely to be white (13.8 percent) than married mothers (24.8 percent and 41.9 percent, respectively). Because mother's and father's race are highly correlated, it is likely that this is true for unmarried fathers as well.
- Unmarried mothers are more likely to have less than a high school education (40.5 percent) than married mothers (16.6 percent). Mother and father's education levels are highly correlated so this is likely also true for unmarried fathers.

Responses to the Statement, "It is better to get married than to go through life being single," Among Men Ages 15-44, by Marital or Cohabiting Status, 2002

Marital or cohabiting status	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All	61,147	21.7%	44.3%	3.8%	24.9%	5.4%
Currently Married	25,808	26.3%	46.7%	4.4%	19.6%	3.1%
Currently Cohabiting	5,653	16.1%	37.8%	4.7%	33.6%	7.9%
Never Married, Not Cohabiting	25,412	18.9%	43.0%	3.2%	27.7%	7.2%
Formerly Married, Not Cohabiting	4,274	17.6%	46.3%	2.9%	27.7%	5.6%

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, most men aged 15-44 (66.0 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is better to get married than to go through life being single.
- Currently married men were the most likely to agree or strongly agree (73.0 percent) that it is better to get married than to remain single.

Responses to the Statement, “It is better to get married than to go through life being single,” Among Men Ages 22-44, by Educational Attainment, 2002

	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All*	61,147	21.7%	44.3%	3.8%	24.9%	5.4%
No high school diploma or GED	6,355	27.9%	47.5%	2.1%	19.6%	3.0%
High school diploma or GED	15,659	21.7%	41.8%	4.5%	26.7%	5.3%
Some college, no bachelor's degree	13,104	21.1%	42.1%	3.4%	27.0%	6.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11,901	22.3%	42.6%	5.6%	22.6%	6.9%

*Education data is limited to men aged 22-44. “All” category includes men 15-44.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, most men aged 15-44 (66.0 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is better to get married than to go through life being single.
- Three out of four men (75.4 percent) with less than a high school education agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is better to get married than to go through life being single.
- About one in three men with a high school diploma/GED or higher disagreed or strongly disagreed that it is better to be married than single.

Responses to the Statement, “It is better to get married than to go through life being single,” Among Men Ages 15-44, by Race/Ethnicity, 2002

	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All*	61,147	21.7%	44.3%	3.8%	24.9%	5.4%
Hispanic or Latino	10,188	30.0%	47.2%	2.1%	16.6%	4.2%
Non-Hispanic White	38,738	18.5%	45.0%	4.5%	26.2%	5.9%
Non-Hispanic Black	6,940	26.4%	38.2%	2.8%	27.4%	5.2%

*Includes men of other or multiple race and origin groups and not shown separately.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, most men aged 15-44 (66.0 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is better to get married than to go through life being single.
- Hispanic or Latino men were more likely than non-Hispanic white or non-Hispanic black men to agree or strongly agree that getting married is better than living life single (77.2 percent compared to 63.5 percent and 64.6 percent, respectively).

Responses to the Statement, “Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems,” Among Men Ages 22-44, by Educational Attainment, 2002

	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All*	61,147	7.7%	36.5%	1.9%	39.5%	14.4%
No high school diploma or GED	6,355	6.7%	45.7%	1.5%	37.9%	8.3%
High school diploma or GED	15,659	11.0%	37.9%	1.7%	36.1%	13.4%
Some college, no bachelor's degree	13,104	6.5%	31.9%	1.5%	42.1%	18.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11,901	6.2%	36.5%	2.4%	41.1%	13.9%

*Education data is limited to men aged 22-44. “All” category includes men 15-44.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, more men aged 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed (53.9 percent) than agreed or strongly agreed (44.2 percent) with the statement that divorce is the best solution when a couple cannot work out their marital problems.
- More than half of men with less than a high school education agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that divorce is the best solution when a couple cannot work out their marital problems (52.4 percent).

Responses to the Statement, “Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems,” Among Men Ages 15-44, by Marital or Cohabiting Status, 2002

Marital or cohabiting status	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All	61,147	7.7%	36.5%	1.9%	39.5%	14.4%
Currently Married	2,5808	6.5%	35.9%	1.1%	39%	17.4%
Currently Cohabiting	5,653	9.9%	38.4%	3.9%	36.2%	11.5%
Never Married, Not Cohabiting	25,412	7.7%	35.7%	2.2%	41.4%	13%
Formerly Married, Not Cohabiting	4,274	12.1%	42.7%	1.9%	34.5%	8.8%

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, more men aged 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed (53.9 percent) than agreed or strongly agreed (44.2 percent) with the statement that divorce is the best solution when a couple cannot work out their marital problems.
- Formerly married, not cohabiting men were the most likely to agree or strongly agree (54.8 percent) that divorce is the best solution.
- Currently married men were the most likely to strongly disagree that divorce is the best solution (17.4 percent).

Responses to the Statement, “Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems,” Among Men Ages 15-44, by Race/Ethnicity, 2002

	Number of Men (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All*	61,147	7.7%	36.5%	1.9%	39.5%	14.4%
Hispanic or Latino	10,188	12.0%	43.5%	1.5%	34.2%	8.8%
Non-Hispanic White	38,738	6.1%	37.2%	2.2%	38.7%	15.8%
Non-Hispanic Black	6,940	12.4%	31.6%	1.6%	38.8%	15.6%

*Includes men of other or multiple race and origin groups and not shown separately.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, more men aged 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed (53.9 percent) than agreed or strongly agreed (44.2 percent) with the statement that divorce is the best solution when a couple cannot work out their marital problems.
- Non-Hispanic white men were less likely than Hispanic or non-Hispanic black men to strongly agree that divorce is usually the best solution (6.1 percent compared with 12.0 percent and 12.4 percent respectively).
- Hispanic or Latino men were the most likely across racial/ethnic groups to agree or strongly agree that divorce is usually the best solution (55.5 percent), compared with 43.3 percent for non-Hispanic white men and 44.0 percent for non-Hispanic black men.

Marriage Expectations Among Unmarried Parents by Relationship Status (Children Born 1998-2000)

	Mothers	Fathers
All unmarried parents		
No chance	18.8%	7.6%
A little chance	9.5%	5.9%
50/50 chance	18.6%	18.2%
Pretty good chance	21.2%	25.2%
Almost certain chance	31.9%	43.1%
Cohabiting parents		
No chance	2.8%	1.9%
A little chance	4.8%	3.5%
50/50 chance	17.0%	13.3%
Pretty good chance	25.1%	25.6%
Almost certain chance	50.3%	55.7%
Romantic, not cohabiting		
No chance	12.0%	8.7%
A little chance	12.9%	6.8%
50/50 chance	25.4%	23.1%
Pretty good chance	25.9%	27.2%
Almost certain chance	23.9%	34.2%
Not Romantic		
No chance	75.8%	35.0%
A little chance	14.6%	16.3%
50/50 chance	7.6%	26.8%
Pretty good chance	1.0%	15.5%
Almost certain chance	1.0%	6.5%
Sample size	1,756	1,276

Source: Waller, M. (2001). High hopes: Unwed parents' expectations about marriage.
Children and Youth Services Review, 23(6/7), 457-484.

Note: Analyses use data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study which is representative of all non-marital births and nearly representative of marital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000.

- Overall, new, unmarried parents expect to marry the other parent of their child. More than 7 out of ten mothers (71.7 percent) and 8 out of ten fathers (86.5 percent) report a 50/50 percent chance of marriage or higher.
- More fathers than mothers report an almost certain chance of marriage (43.1 percent for fathers and 31.9 percent for mothers) and fewer fathers (7.6 percent) report no chance of marriage compared to mothers (18.8 percent).
- More than half of fathers in cohabiting relationships reported an almost certain chance of marriage (55.7 percent), compared to fathers in a romantic, not cohabiting relationship (34.2 percent) or a non-romantic relationship (6.5 percent).

- Fathers in cohabitating relationships appear slightly more likely than mothers to report an almost certain chance of marriage (55.7 percent for fathers and 50.3 percent for mothers).

**Expectations of Marriage for Parents in a Romantic Relationship at Time of Birth,
by Relationship Status and Other Selected Demographic Characteristics
(Children Born 1998-2000)**

	Married	All Unmarried	Cohabiting/ High Chance of Marriage	Cohabiting/ Low Chance of Marriage	Visiting**/ High Chance of Marriage	Visiting/ Low Chance of Marriage
Mother's Race*						
White	41.9%	13.8%	20.4%	9.9%	8.7%	7.0%
Black	24.8%	54.7%	41.9%	53.4%	68.0%	70.3%
Hispanic	25.4%	28.3%	34.4%	33.6%	20.0%	19.8%
Other	7.9%	3.2%	3.4%	3.1%	3.2%	2.9%
Father's Age (mean years)	31.7	26.8	26.9	27.7	25.7%	27.0%
Mother's Education*						
Less than High School	16.6%	40.5%	38.1%	47.7%	36.2	45.5
High School	19.9%	33.7%	34.3%	29.9%	36.7%	31.87%
Some College	28.8%	22.8%	24.0%	20.6%	24.2%	19.9%
College	34.6%	3.1%	3.6%	1.8%	2.9%	2.8%
Father Employed	91.4%	74.9%	81.9%	75.8%	70.3%	63.2%
Father's Health Limits Work	3.2%	6.3%	6.3%	8.6%	4.0%	7.3%

*Mother and Father's race and education are highly correlated.

**Visiting refers to unmarried parents that are in a romantic relationship but not living together.

Source: Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University. "Diversity Among Unmarried Parents." Fragile Families Research Brief No. 10, 2002.

Note: Analyses use data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study which is representative of all non-marital births and nearly representative of marital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000.

- Fathers in cohabiting relationships with a reported high chance of marriage are more likely to be employed (81.9 percent) than fathers in cohabiting relationships with a low chance of marriage (75.8 percent) or those in a visiting relationship (70.3 percent and 63.2 percent).
- Cohabiting and visiting parents with high expectations for marriage have higher education levels (based on mother's education) than those with low expectations for marriage.

Marriage Expectations and Union Transitions for Parents that were Romantically Involved but Unmarried at Time of Child's Birth (Children Born 1998-2000)

Expectations about marrying partner at time of child' birth	
Mother optimistic, father pessimistic	9.2%
Father optimistic, mother pessimistic	16.0%
Both optimistic	60.9%
Neither optimistic	13.9%
Union transitions 12–18 months after child's birth	
Married at follow-up	11.7%
Romantic relationship at follow-up	59.5%
No romantic relationship at follow-up	28.8%

Source: Waller, M., & McLanahan, S. (2005). "His" And "Her" Marriage expectations: Determinants and consequences. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 67, 53-67.

Note: Analyses use data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study which is representative of all on-marital births and nearly representative of marital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000.

- Overall, a high proportion of parents (60.9 percent) expected to marry their partner at the time of their child's birth, and the majority of parents share this expectation with their partner (60.9 percent).
- When partners disagree regarding marriage expectations (25.2 percent of all cases), fathers were more likely than mothers to be optimistic.
- Only about one in ten (11.7 percent) of couples had actually married at the follow-up interview, 12-18 months after the birth of their child. Nearly three in ten couples (28.8 percent) were no longer romantically involved.