

Research Overview

Objective:

NHMRC enlisted TRU, part of Research International, to conduct research among young adults to understand their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward marriage.

Approach:

A two-phased effort, national in scope, to identify key insights among young adults.

Phase 1: In-person exploratory marriage discussions among young adults 18–30 across the United States.

Phase 2: Online national survey among 3,672 young adults 18–30. The survey sample was balanced across age and gender (3 segments of approx. 1,200 each: 18–22; 23–26; and 27–30). Because different groups and cultures view marriage differently, we over-sampled African Americans (19%) and Hispanics (16%).

Why is this research unique?

This is the largest national survey undertaken with this age group about their attitudes on marriage. The discussions and survey attempt to get at the “why” of the issue; no one else has explored this angle with this population.

What this research means:

Young adults continue to have high aspirations—and high expectations—for marriage. However, there is a countervailing force of realistic concern and, for some, unrealistic expectations about marriage that hold young people back from getting married, and potentially sets other young people up for marriage failure. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing those concerns and expectations.

Key survey findings:

- 82% of young adults expect to be married for life.
- 75% of young adults would rather be alone than marry the wrong person.
- 70% believe they have the skills to make a relationship last forever.
- 87% believe love is THE reason to get married, and 61% believe that love is what holds the marriage together.

(continued)

Research Overview (*cont.*)

- TRU identified five attitudinal segments within the survey group:

1. The Realists (23%)

- o Marriage is a partnership (practical)
- o Highest Caucasian
- o High income and education

2. The Not Yet Set (22%)

- o Not ready (yet) for marriage
- o 70% Male
- o Most ethnically diverse

3. The True Believers (22%)

- o Marriage is the centerpiece of life
- o Divorce is not an option
- o Highest education
- o Mostly Caucasian

4. The Romantics (19%)

- o Marriage is a love story
- o Belief in one perfect partner/soul mate
- o 67% Female
- o Lowest education
- o Highest African American

5. The I Don'ts (14%)

- o Marriage is an unnecessary risk
- o Lowest marriage motivation
- o Lowest income

To date, state and local public awareness campaigns have targeted “The True Believers” (those most likely to get married and stay married). We opted to focus on three of the other segments to broaden the dialogue: The I Don'ts, The Not Yet Set, and The Romantics.

The five young adult segments: “marriage is...”

