

Changes in Marriage Rates Since 1940

What's the main conclusion?

The overall marriage rate has been declining over the past 20 years. In 1987, 9.9 out of every 1,000 people got married. In 2005, that rate dropped to 7.5 out of every 1,000 people.

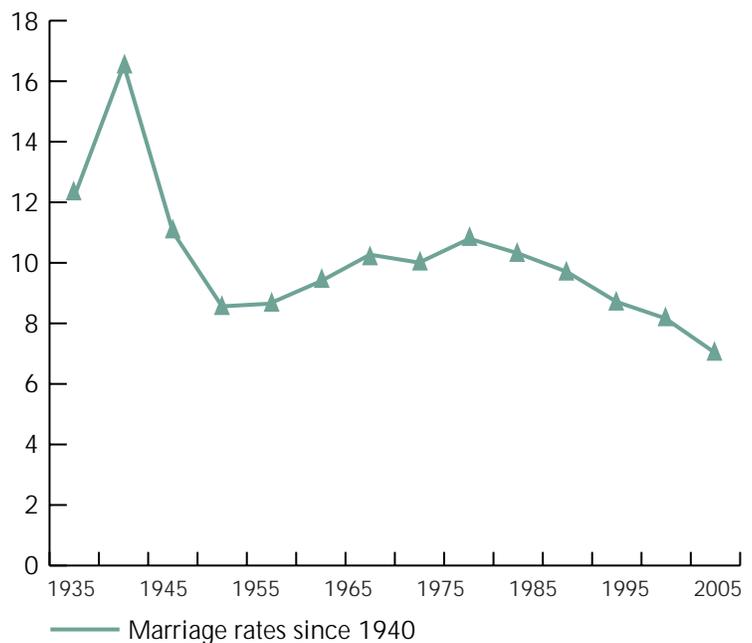
What else do the data tell us?

- The period immediately following World War II witnessed a peak in marriage rates in 1946. After that peak, marriage rates declined precipitously then began to even out somewhat around the 1960s.
- In the last 20 years, marriage rates have declined and divorce rates have increased. The decline in marriage rates has been influenced by a number of social and economic factors, including delayed marriage due to continuing education and more job opportunities for women and a relaxation of social attitudes about marriage and divorce.
- Social and economic factors that affect specific race and ethnic groups also can affect marriage rates. For example, the availability of men with stable employment is related to higher rates of marriage.

How should we interpret these data?

- Even though the marriage rate among Americans has declined over the past two decades, many weddings are still taking place. In 2005, more than 2.2 million marriages were celebrated.
- Many factors can affect marriage rates, such as an increase in the number of adults who choose to live together rather than marry. In the past few decades, young adults also have been delaying marriage until they are older (see *Changes in the Age at First Marriage Since 1940*), and that can affect marriage rates.

Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population, 1940-2005



Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Do population groups differ on this issue?

Information about differences across subgroups was not available for this analysis.

Defining the terms

Marriage rate = The number of people married in a given year per 1,000 people in the population (all ages, both married and unmarried). The rate is based on state counts from registration offices.

For more detailed information on this topic, visit www.healthymarriageinfo.org