

Remarriage Trends in the United States

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A remarriage occurs when a previously married person marries again. This fact sheet reviews information regarding remarriage patterns, trends and issues in the United States. Please note that this fact sheet is limited because the national surveys and databases that allowed for analyses of marriage patterns no longer exist (Kreider, 2005). Thus, much of this data is dated to the early 2000s. Unless otherwise noted, the information from this Fact Sheet is from information reported by R.M. Kreider in *Current Population Reports*.

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Statistics

Prevalence and Other Basic Facts

- In 2001, 10,232,000 American wives were in their second marriage (17.7% of all marriages) and 2,106,000 wives were in their third or later marriage (3.6% of all marriages).
- Many Americans have remarried at least once (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007):
 - 12% of men have married twice
 - 13% of women have married twice
 - 3% of Americans have married three or more times

- The median time between a divorce and a remarriage (2nd marriage) second marriage is 3.5 years.
- The median age at second marriage is 35.1 for men and 32.7 for women.
- About half of women in remarriages give birth to at least one child (Wineberg 1990)

Probabilities of Remarriage

- Of all divorced people aged 25 and over, 55% of men and 44% of women have remarried
- The remarriage rate for women ages 45 to 64 is half the rate for similarly aged men.

Racial and age differences occur after divorce; a woman's location also relates to divorce rates. Interestingly, there are no significant differences in remarriage rates between women with and without children (Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health Statistics, 2002):



- Five years after divorce:
 - 58% of white women have remarried
 - 44% of Hispanic women have remarried
 - 32% of black women have remarried
- Ten years after divorce:
 - 81% of women who were under age 25 at their divorce remarried
 - 68% of women at age 25 or older at their time of divorce remarried
- A woman's tendency to remarry is related to her location. Those who live in:
 - Southern states are more likely to get remarried
 - Communities with higher unemployment, poverty and welfare use rates are less likely to remarry
 - Rural areas are more likely to remarry
 - Central cities are less likely to remarry

Trends

Remarriages have always existed in American society, but until recently, the majority of remarriages followed the death of a spouse rather than a divorce (Cherlin, 1992). From colonial times to as late as the 1920s, more remarriages followed widowhood than divorce. By 1987 only 9% of men and women remar-

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ried due to the death of a spouse. Studies show that between 1950 and 1989, the probability of remarriage within 5 years of divorce decreased from 65% to 50%. Another trend began during this time frame: the probability that a woman's second marriage dissolved within 5 years increased from 16% to 22% (Cherlin, 1992).

Divorce Rates

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A woman's age at the time of her remarriage is also associated with the likeliness of that marriage ending in divorce. The following information is from the Centers for Disease Control/National Center for Health Statistics (2002): 47% of women who remarry before age 25 end their remarriages, compared with 34% of women who remarry at age 25 or above. In addition,

women who remarry before age 25 are more likely to divorce after ten years of their remarriage.

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About 40% of remarriages involve children from a previous relationship (Coontz, 1992). According to 2002 data from the National Center for Health Statistics, women who had children before their second marriages were more likely to see that marriage fail within ten years. The research indicates that women who reported their children were not “wanted” were more likely to see their second marriages fail within 10 years than those who said their children were “wanted”.

Finally, the National Center for Health Statistics (2002) found that the tendency for a woman’s second marriage to fail is related to where she lives. Women who live in the Northeast are more likely to stay married while those residing in the Midwest are more likely to divorce. Remarriages in communities with higher poverty rates, low median family income and low portion of college-educated residents have a higher probability of failure.

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DATA SOURCES

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