

Trends in Marriage Rates

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Headline/Trends

The overall marriage rate has been declining in the last two decades, with rates falling from 9.9 in 1987 to 7.6 in 2004.¹

The period following the Second World War marked an era of high marriage rates. This era between the 1950s and early 1960s was marked by improved economic conditions, high fertility, and a social climate which encouraged an earlier onset of adult transitions. Since the 1960s, marriage rates have declined while divorce rates have increased.² The subsequent decline of marriage has been influenced by a number of social and economic factors.³

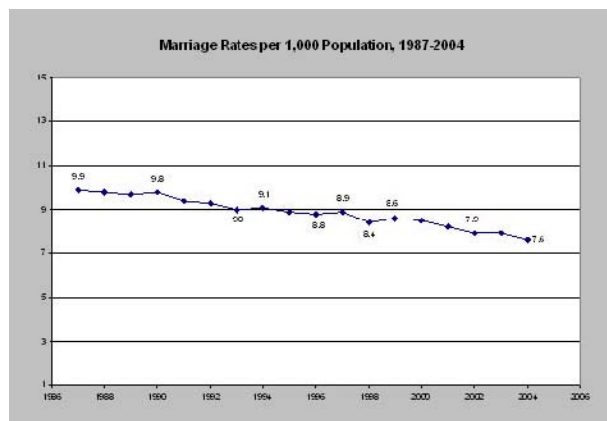
Background

Even though this indicator shows a decline in the marriage rates of Americans over the past two decades, weddings are still frequent occurrences, with over 2.2 million marriages occurring in 2004.⁴ Many factors can impact marriage rates, such as an increase in the number of adults who choose to cohabit rather than marry and the trend of delaying marriage to later ages.^{5,6}



Differences by Subgroup

Information about subgroups was not available in the data sets used for this analysis.



Definition

Marriage rates are measured as the number of people married in a given year per 1,000 people in the population and are based on state counts from registration offices. Note that this rate is calculated across all people in the population, of all ages, both married and unmarried, and thus this represents only a general measure of trends in marriage.

Data Source

Data for 2002-2004: Munson, ML, Sutton, PD. "Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 2004". *National vital statistics reports; vol 53*. National vital statistics reports; vol 52 no 22. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 2004. Data for 2000 and 1999: National Center for Health Statistics. "Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 2001." *National vital statistics re-*

ports; vol 50 no 14. Hyattsville, Maryland. 2002. Data for 1997-98: National Center for Health Statistics. "Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 1999." National vital statistics reports; vol 48 no 19. Hyattsville, Maryland. 2001. Data for 1996: National Center for Health Statistics. "Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 1998." National vital statistics reports; vol 47 no 21. Hyattsville, Maryland. 1999. Data for 1995: National Center for Health Statistics. "Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 1996." National vital statistics reports; vol 45 no 12. Hyattsville, Maryland. 1997. Data for 1987-1994. Singh, Gopal K, Mathews, T.J., Clarke, Sally C., Yannicos, Trina, and Smith, Betty L. "Annual Summary of Births, Marriages, Divorces, and Deaths: United States, 1994." Monthly Vital Statistics Report, vol 43 no 13. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 1995.

Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population, 1987-2004

Year	Marriage Rate
1987	9.9
1988	9.8
1989	9.7
1990	9.8
1991	9.4
1992	9.3
1993	9.0
1994	9.1
1995	8.9
1996	8.8
1997	8.9
1998	8.4
1999	8.6
2000	8.5
2001	8.2
2002	7.9
2003	7.9
2004	7.6

* Note: 2001-2004 marriage rates may be underestimated because of incomplete reporting in Oklahoma. All estimates, with the exception of those for 1987-1990, are provisional.

1. See National vital statistics reports (1987-2004).
2. Glick, P.C. & Sung-Ling, Lin. (1986). *Journal of Marriage & the Family*. 48(4), 737-747.
3. Furstenberg, F. (2005). *Can Marriage Be Saved? Dissent*. 52(3), 76-80.
4. Munson, M.L., & Sutton, P.D. (2005). *Births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: Provisional data for 2004*. National vital statistics reports; vol 53 no 21. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
5. Bumpass, L. L., & Sweet, J. A. (1989). *National estimates of cohabitation*. *Demography*, 26(4), 615-625.; Wu, Z. (1999). *Premarital cohabitation and the timing of first marriage*. *Canadian Review of Sociology & Anthropology*, 36(1), 109-137.
6. See the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey, March Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2004 and earlier*.