

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

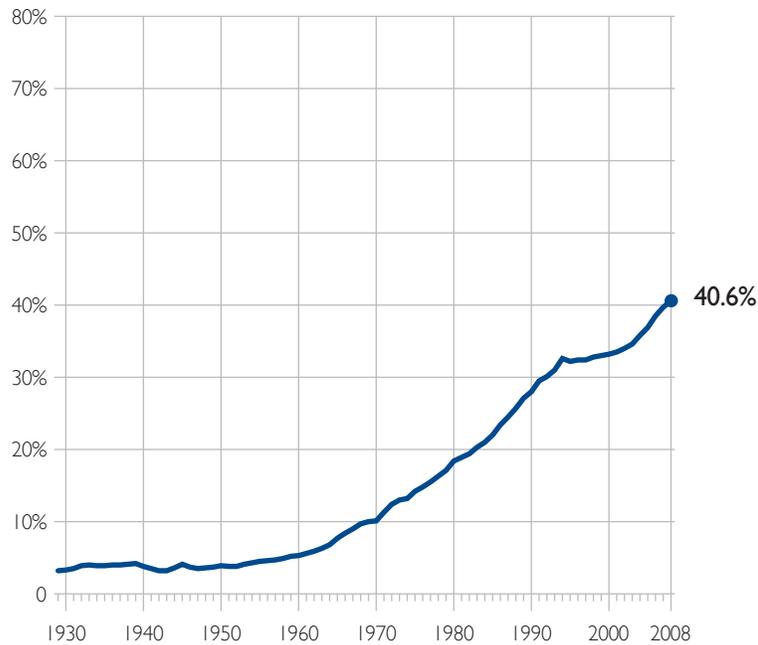
Growth of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing the U.S., 1929–2008

One of the most alarming social trends in recent decades has been the growth in the out-of-wedlock birth rate—the percentage of all births that occur to non-married women. Throughout most of U.S. history, out-of-wedlock childbearing was very rare.

When the War on Poverty began in 1963, only 7 percent of children in the U.S. were

born out of wedlock. Over the next four and a half decades, the number has risen steadily. In 2008, 40.6 percent of all births in the U.S. occurred outside marriage. The raw numbers of births are as follows: In 2008 there were 4.25 million births in the U.S. Of these 2.53 million were born to married couples and 1.7 million were born outside marriage.

Percentage of Children Born out of Wedlock



Source: U.S. Census Bureau data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

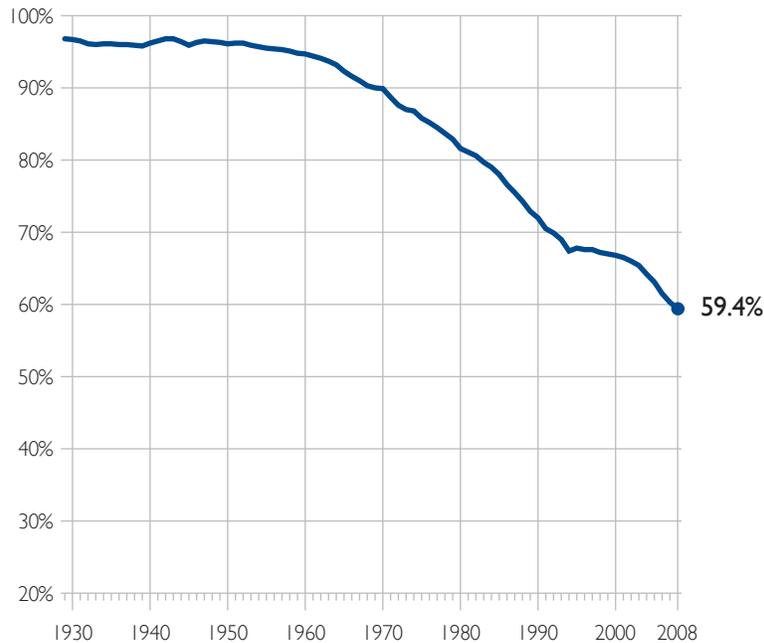
Death of Marriage in the U.S., 1929–2008

The flip side of the out-of-wedlock birth rate is the marital birth rate—the percentage of all births that occur to married parents. Through most of the 20th century, births within marriage were the overwhelming norm, with over 95 percent of births occur-

ring to married couples.

Beginning in the 1960s, the marital birth share began to fall rapidly. In 2008, only 59 percent of births in the U.S. occurred to married couples.

Percentage of Children Born to Married Parents



Source: U.S. Census Bureau data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

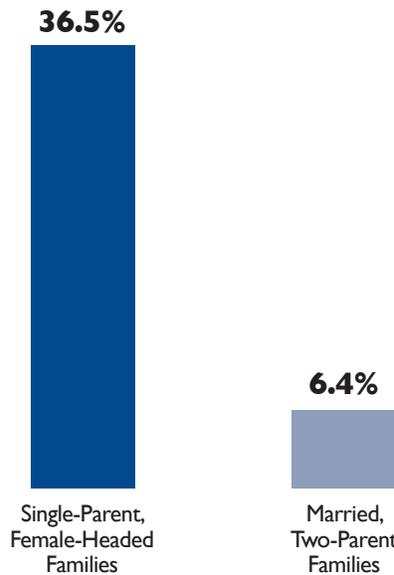
Marriage Drops the Probability of Poverty by 80 Percent

The rise in out-of-wedlock childbearing is a major cause of high levels of child poverty.

In the U.S., single-parent families with children are nearly six times more likely to be poor than are married couples. In 2008, 37 percent of single mothers with children were

poor, compared to 6 percent of married couples with children. The higher poverty rate among single-mother families is due both to the lower education levels of the mothers and the lower income due to the absence of the father.

Percentage of Families with Children That Are Poor



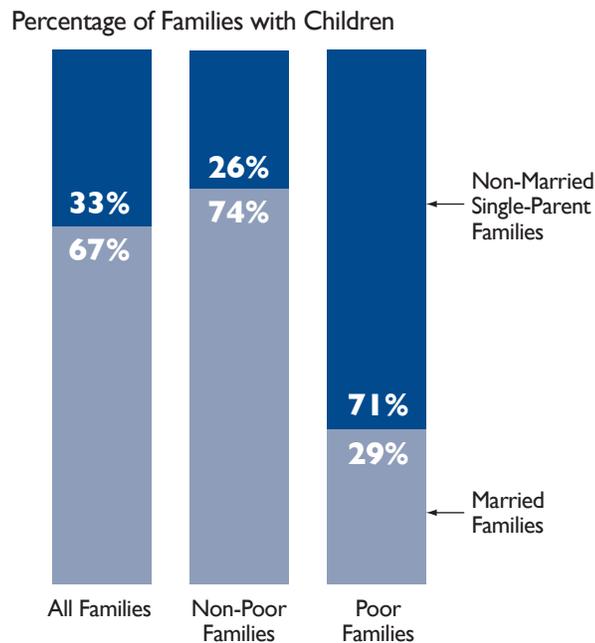
Source: American Community Survey, 2006–2008 data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

71 Percent of Poor Families with Children Are Not Married

Among all families with children in the U.S., roughly two-thirds are married and one-third are single-parent families.

Among families that are not poor, three quarters are married. By contrast, the overwhelming majority of poor families are single-parent families; 71 percent of all poor families with children are headed by single parents, while only 29 percent are married couples.



Source: American Community Survey, 2006–2008 data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

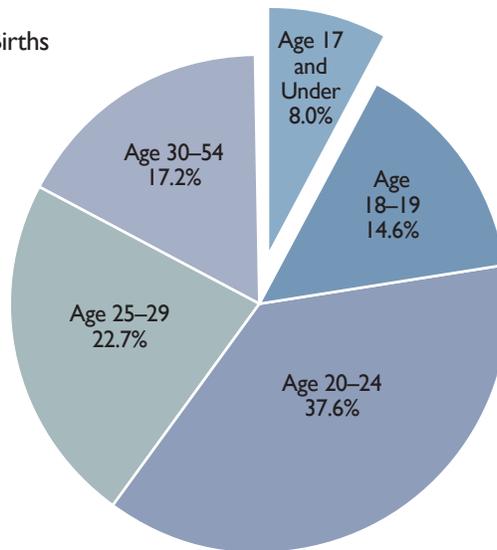
Few Out-of-Wedlock Births Occur to Teenagers

Most out-of-wedlock childbearing in the United States occurs among adult women in their 20s. Relatively few out-of-wedlock births are teen births occurring to girls under age 18. As the chart shows, only 8 percent of out-of-wedlock births in the U.S. occur to girls under age 18. By contrast, some 75 percent of out-of-wedlock births occur to young adult

women between the ages of 18 and 29. Only 17 percent of out-of-wedlock births occur to women age 30 and older.

Overall, births to girls under 18 are rare in the U.S.; only 3.3 percent of total births (both marital and non-marital) occur to girls in that age range.

Percentage of Out-of-Wedlock Births by Age of Mother



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 Births Preliminary data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

Less-Educated Women Are Most Likely to Have Births Outside of Marriage

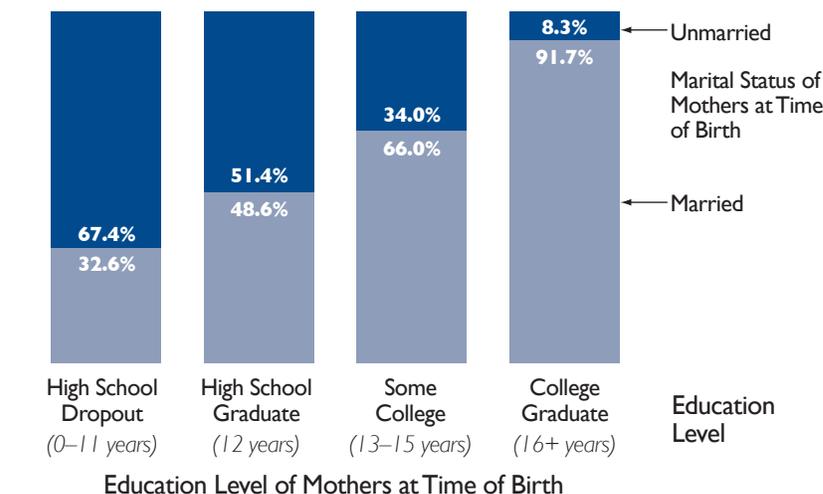
Out-of-wedlock childbearing occurs most frequently among the women who will have the greatest difficulty supporting children by themselves: those with low levels of education. As a result, the U.S. is increasingly becoming a two-caste society. Children of the least-educated women are increasingly born and raised in single-parent families, while children with better-educated mothers are born to and raised largely by married couples.

In the U.S. in the years 2006–2008, more than two-thirds of births to women who were

high school dropouts occurred outside marriage. Among women who had only a high school degree, slightly more than half of all births were out of wedlock. By contrast, among women with at least a college degree, only 8 percent of births were out of wedlock and 92 percent of births occurred to married couples.

The decline of marriage among less educated women significantly contributes to poverty and inequality in the nation.

Percentage of Mothers



Note: Totals do not include cases for which education level was not reported.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006 births data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

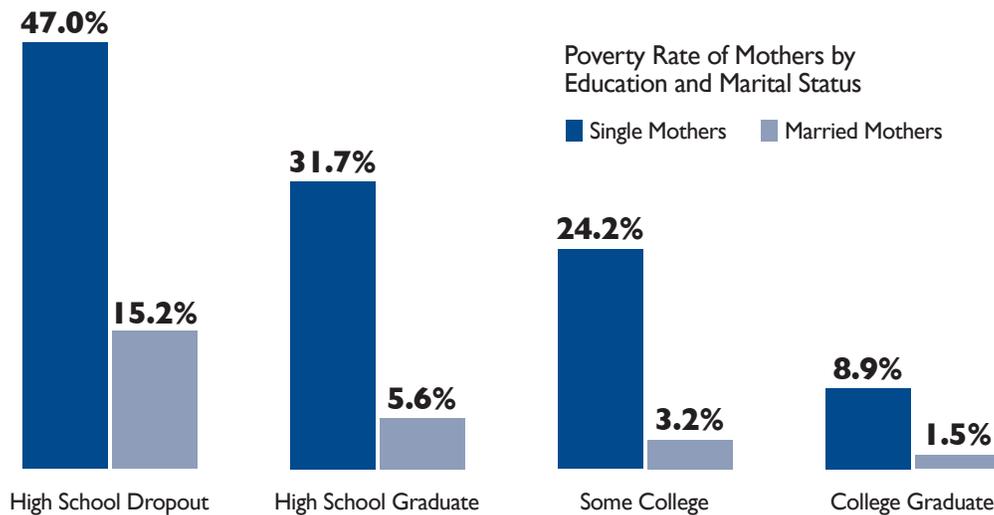
Both Marriage and Education Are Highly Effective in Reducing Poverty

The poverty rate for married couples is dramatically lower than that of single-headed households, even when compared to the rate for single parents with the same education level.

For example, the poverty rate for a single mother with only a high school degree is 31.7 percent, but the poverty rate for a married-couple family headed by an individual who

is only a high school graduate is only 5.6 percent. Marriage drops the odds of being poor by 80 percent.

Being married has roughly the same effect in reducing one's poverty as adding five to six years of education. On average, high school dropouts who are married have a far lower poverty rate than do single parents with one or two years of college.



Source: American Community Survey, 2006–2008 data.

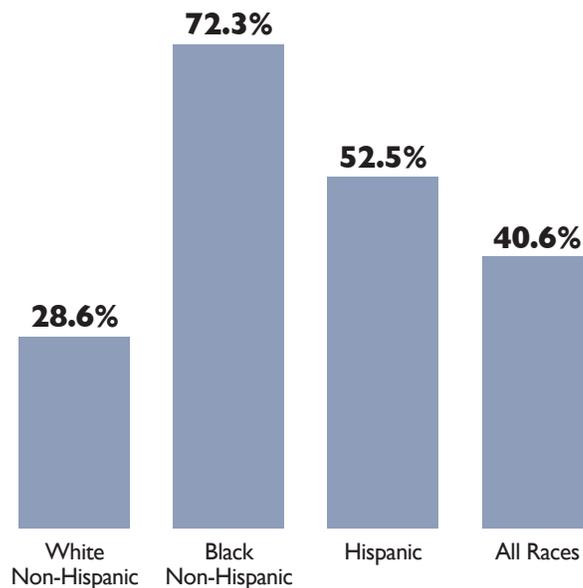
Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

Out-of-Wedlock Births by Race

Out-of-wedlock childbearing varies considerably by race.

In 2008, 40.6 percent of births in the U.S. occurred out of wedlock. Among white non-Hispanics, 28.6 percent of births were outside marriage. Among Hispanics, the figure was 52.5 percent, while among blacks it was 72.3 percent.

Percentage of Births That Are out of Wedlock



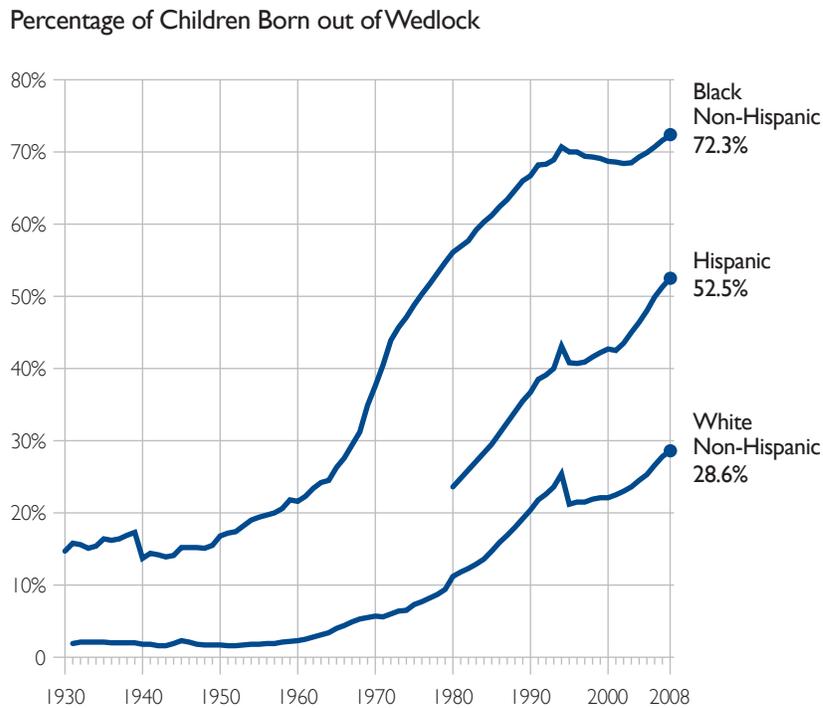
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 Births Preliminary data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

Growth of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing by Race

The black out-of-wedlock childbearing rate has always been somewhat higher than among whites. However, prior to the onset of the War on Poverty in 1963, the rates for both whites and blacks were comparatively low. In 1963, 3.1 percent of white children were born out of wedlock. By 2008, the number had risen to 28.6 percent.

In 1963, 24.2 percent of blacks were born out of wedlock. By 2008 the number had risen to 72.3 percent.

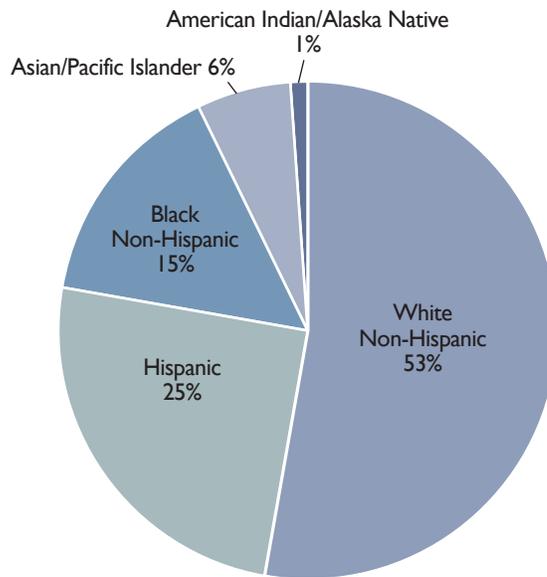


Source: U.S. Census Bureau data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

All Births: Racial Composition

In the U.S. in 2008, some 53 percent of all births occurred to non-Hispanic whites; 25 percent occurred to Hispanics and 15 percent to non-Hispanic blacks.

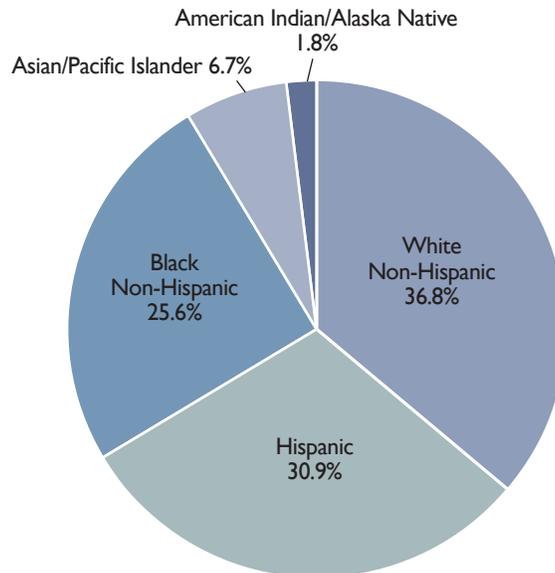


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NHS 2008 data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

Out-of-Wedlock Births: Racial Composition

Black and Hispanic women are more likely to give birth out of wedlock than are white non-Hispanic women. However, because non-Hispanic whites are far more numerous in the population, the greatest number of out-of-wedlock births occurs to that group. Of all non-marital births in the U.S. in 2008, some 37 percent were to non-Hispanic whites, 31 percent were to Hispanics, and 26 percent were to black non-Hispanic women.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NHS 2008 data.

Marriage and Poverty in the U.S.: By the Numbers

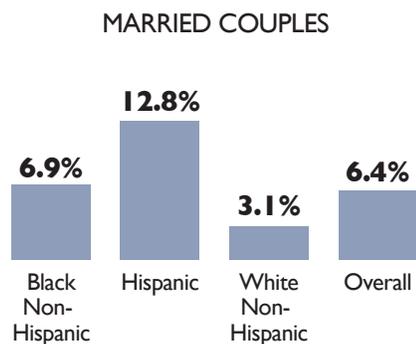
On Average, Non-Married Families Are Five Times More Likely to Be Poor

Marriage is associated with lower rates of poverty for whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Within each racial and ethnic group, the poverty rate for married couples is substantially lower than the poverty rate for non-married families.

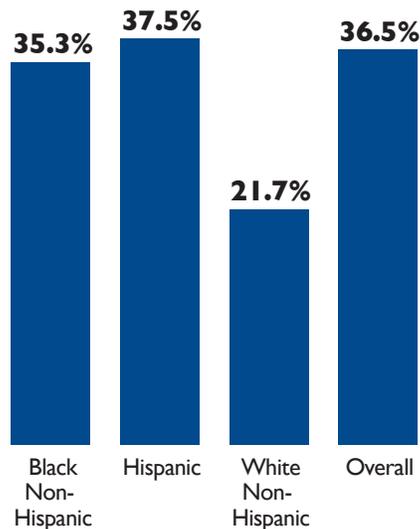
For example, in 2008, the poverty rate for black married couples was 6.9 percent, while the rate for non-married black families was

seven times higher at 35.3 percent. Among non-Hispanic white married couples, the poverty rate was 3.1 percent, while the rate for non-married white families was also seven times higher at 21.7 percent. Among Hispanic married families, the poverty rate was 12.8 percent, while the poverty rate among non-married families was three times higher at 37.5 percent.

Percentage of Families That Are Poor



NON-MARRIED, SINGLE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS



Source: American Community Survey, 2006–2008 data, 3-year estimates.