

# **Marriage: Indiana's No. 1 Weapon Against Childhood Poverty**

**How the Collapse of Marriage Hurts Children  
and Three Steps to Reverse the Damage**

A Heritage Foundation Book of Charts • 2011

Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society



# Growth of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in Indiana, 1929–2009

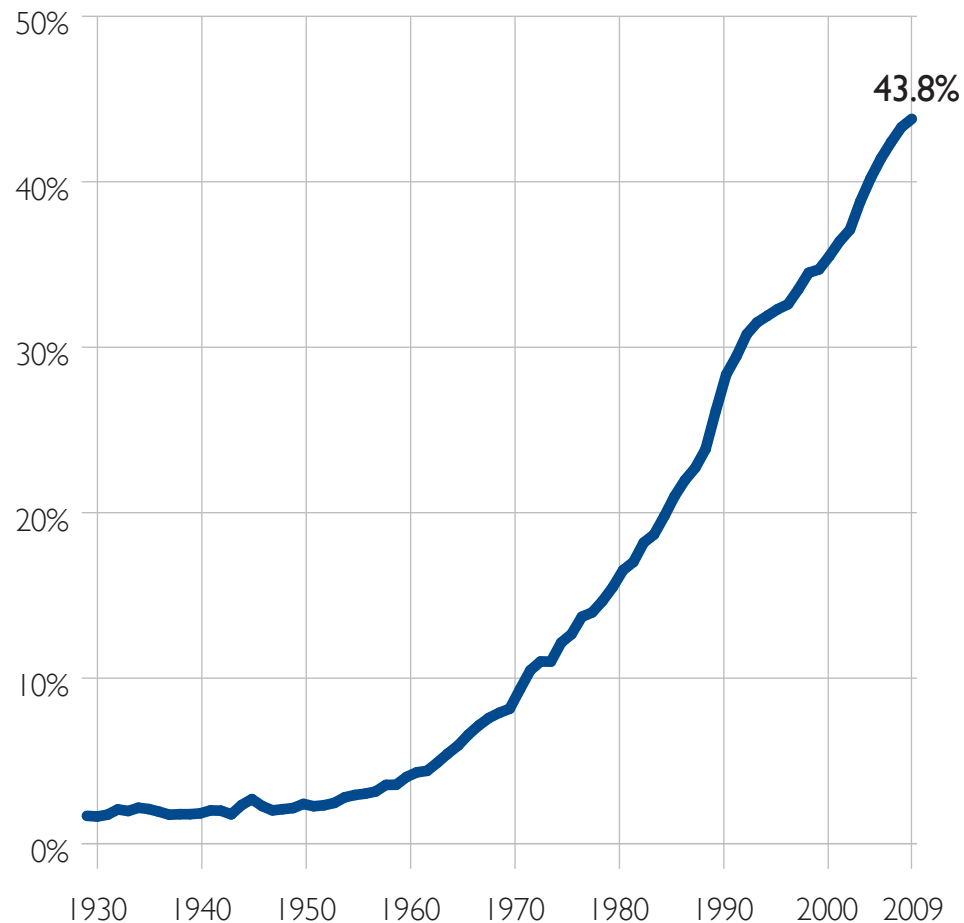
Throughout most of Indiana's history, out-of-wedlock childbearing was rare.

When the federal government's War on Poverty began in 1964, only 5.4 percent of children in Indiana were born out of wedlock. However, over the next four decades, the number rose rapidly. By 2009, more than four out of 10 births in Indiana occurred outside of marriage.

**Note:** Initiated by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the War on Poverty led to the creation of more than three dozen welfare programs to aid poor persons. Government has spent \$16.7 trillion on means-tested aid to the poor since 1964.

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK



# Death of Marriage in Indiana, 1929–2009

The marital birth rate — the percentage of all births that occur to married parents — is the flip side of the out-of-wedlock birth rate.

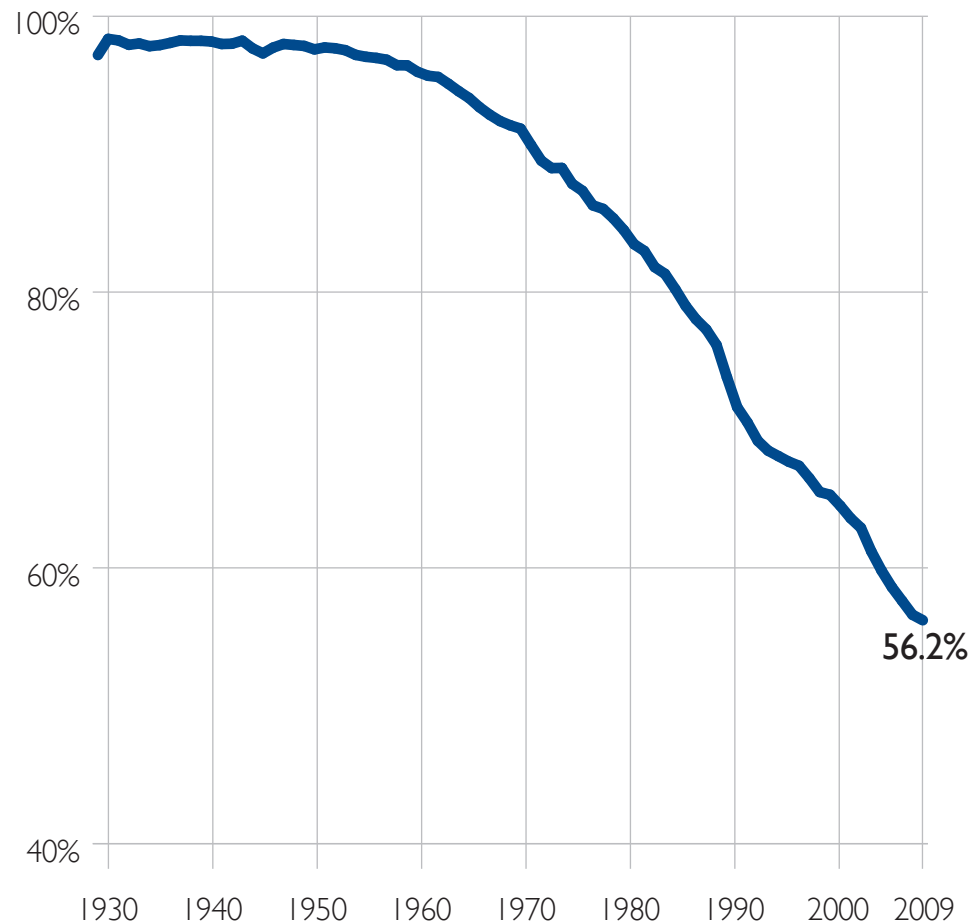
Through most of the 20th century, marital births were the norm in Indiana. In 1964, more than 94 percent of births occurred to married couples.

However, in the mid-1960s, the marital birth rate began to fall steadily. By 2009, only 56.2 percent of births in Indiana occurred to married couples.

**Note:** In any given year, the sum of the out-of-wedlock birth rate (Chart 1) and the marital birth rate (Chart 2) equals 100 percent of all births.

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN TO MARRIED COUPLES



# In Indiana, Marriage Drops the Probability of Child Poverty by 85 Percent

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

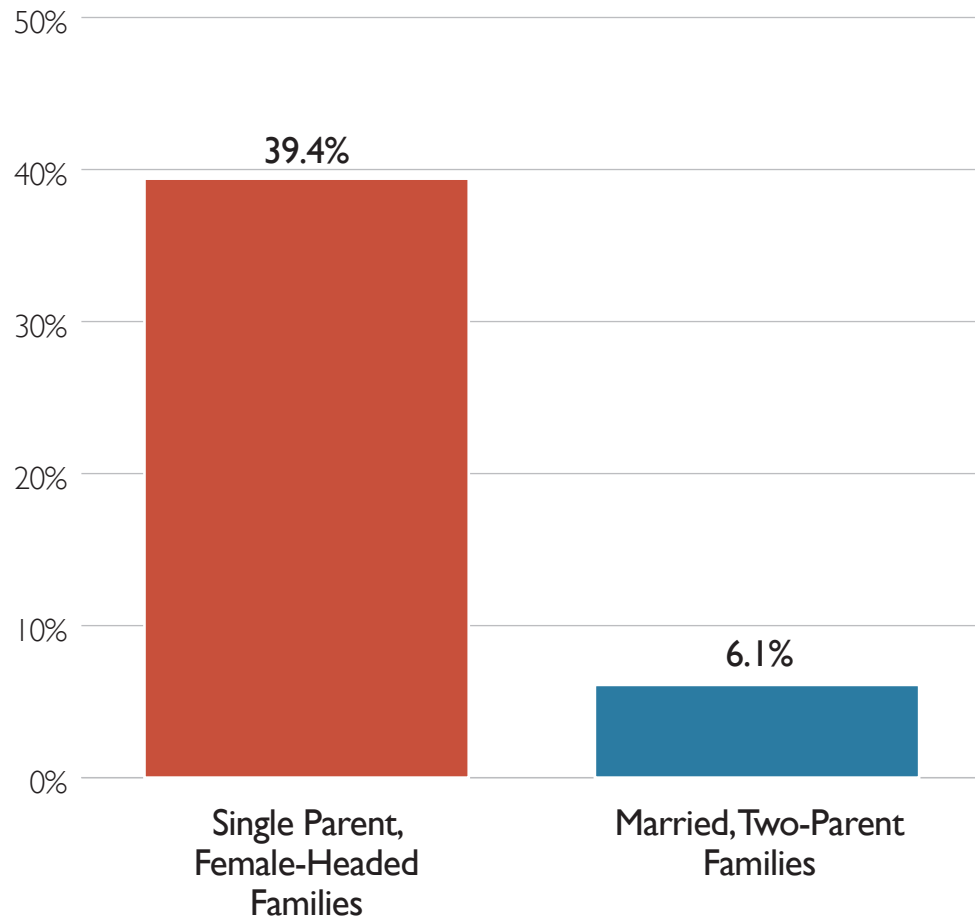
Some 39.4 percent of single mothers with children are poor compared to 6.1 percent of married couples with children.

Single-parent families with children are more than six times more likely to be poor than families in which the parents are married.

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.

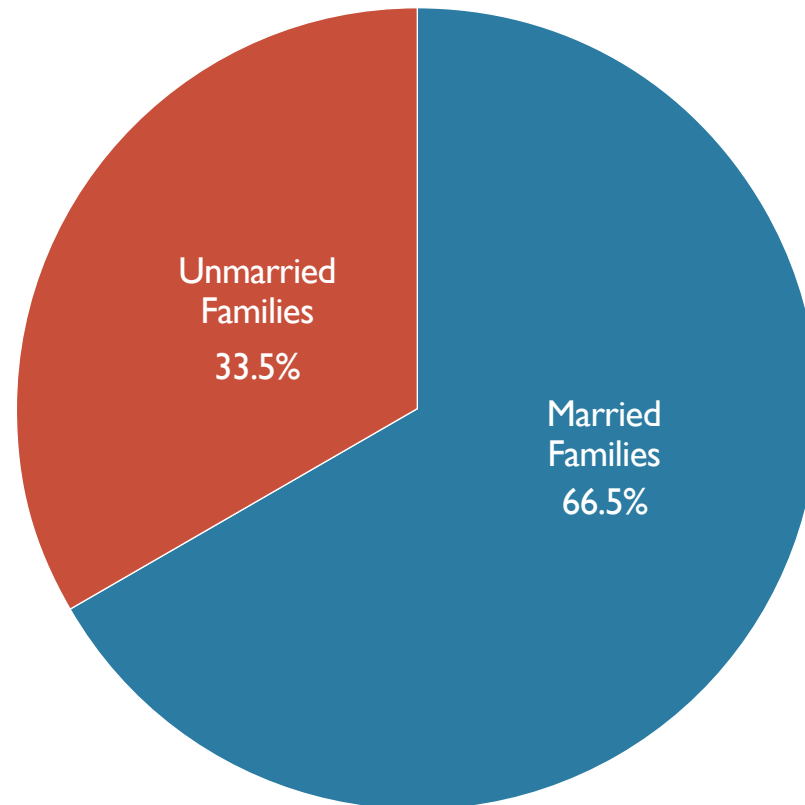
**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

**PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN THAT ARE POOR**



## One-Third of All Families With Children in Indiana Are Not Married

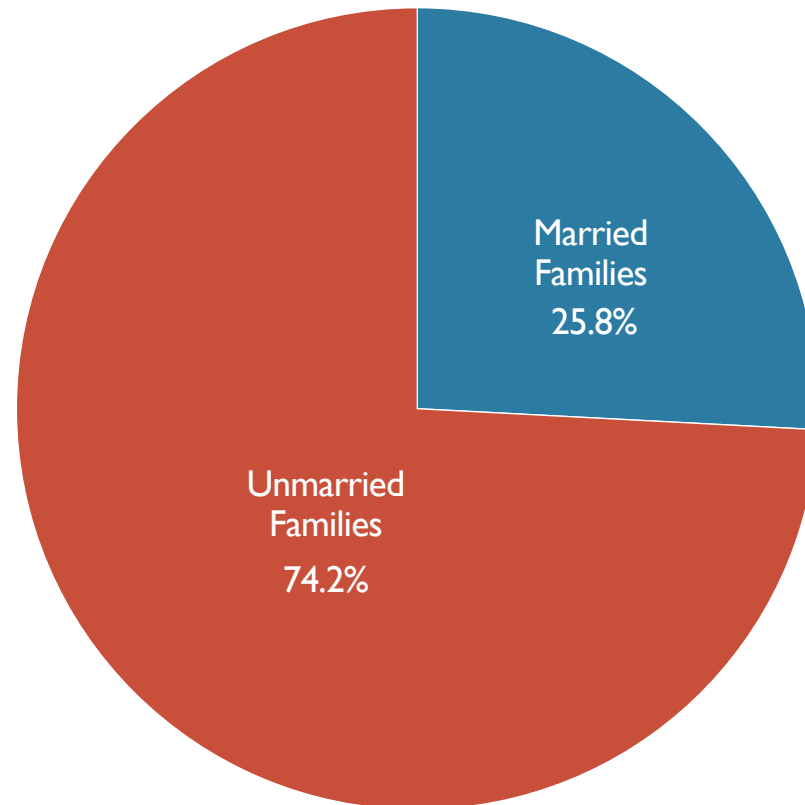
Overall, married couples head two-thirds of families with children in Indiana. More than one-third are single-parent families.



**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## In Indiana, 74 Percent of Poor Families with Children Are Not Married

Among poor families with children in Indiana, 74 percent are not married. By contrast, only one-quarter of poor families with children are headed by married couples.



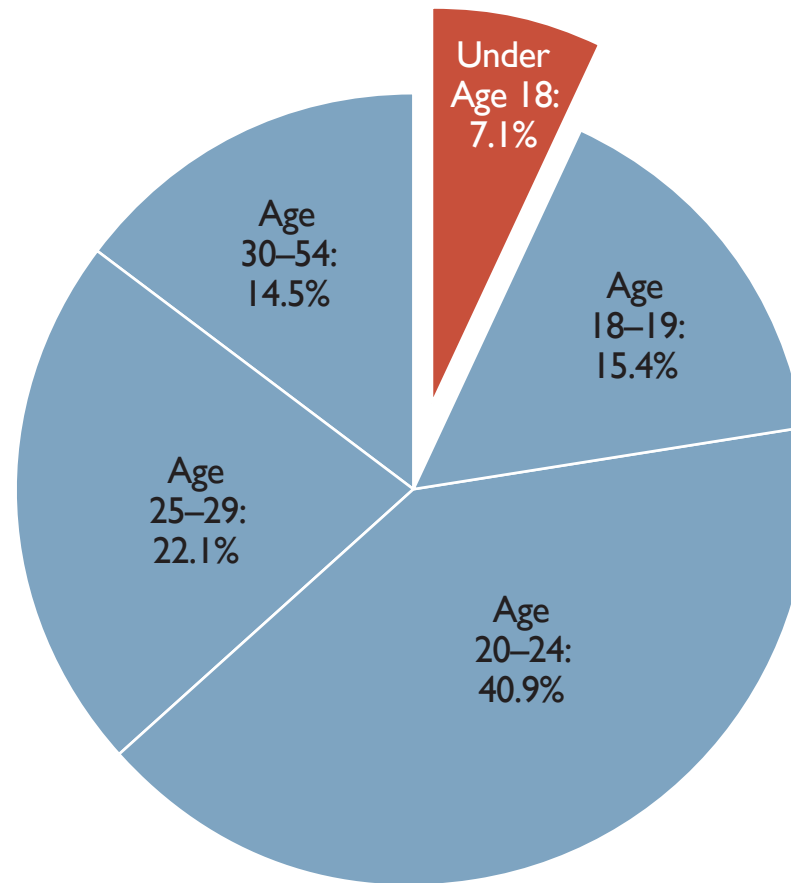
**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## In Indiana, Few Unwed Births Occur to Teenagers

Out-of-wedlock births are often confused erroneously with teen births, but only 7 percent of out-of-wedlock births in Indiana occur to girls under age 18.

By contrast, some 78 percent of out-of-wedlock births occur to young adult women between the ages of 18 and 29.

**PERCENTAGE OF OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS  
BY AGE OF MOTHER**



**Note:** Figures have been rounded.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

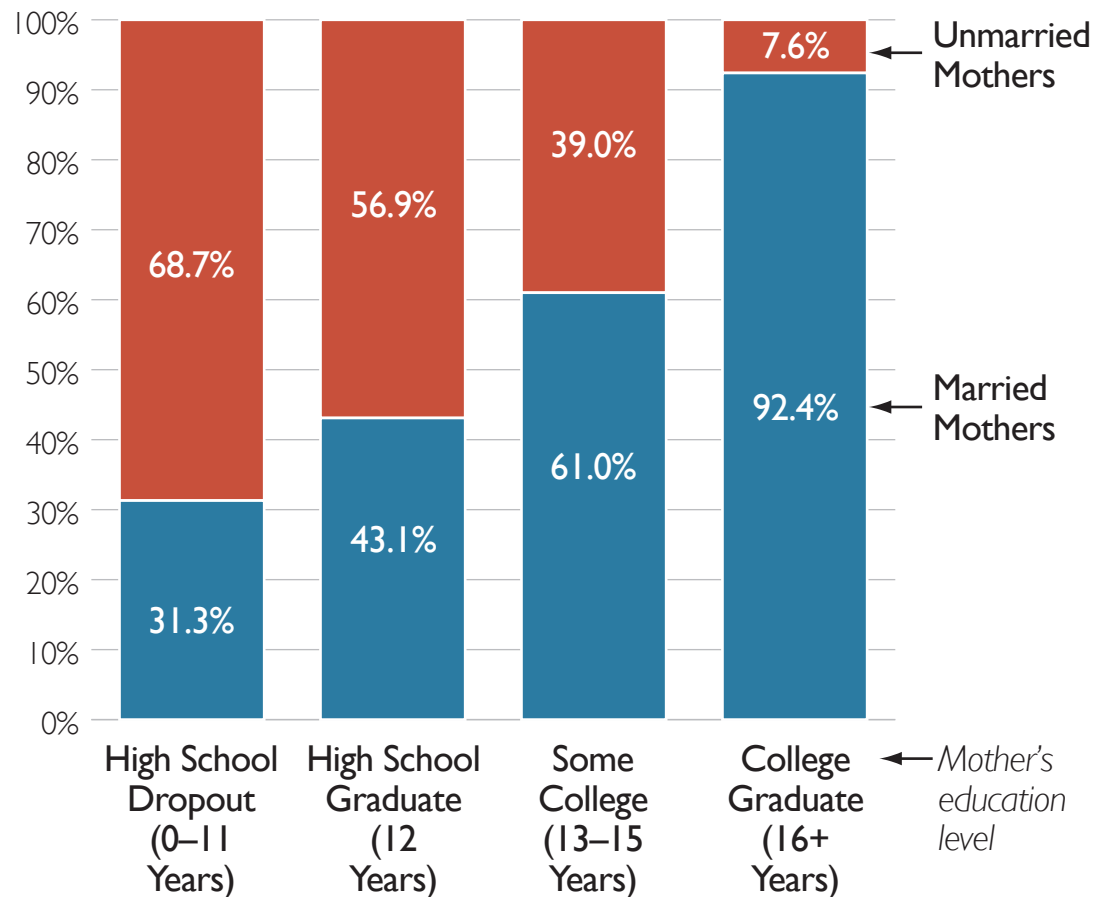
# Less-Educated Women in Indiana Are More Likely to Give Birth Outside of Marriage

Unwed childbearing occurs most frequently among the women who will have the greatest difficulty supporting children by themselves: those with low levels of education.

In Indiana, among women who are high school dropouts, more than two-thirds of all births occur outside marriage. Among women who have only a high school diploma, more than half of all births occur outside marriage. By contrast, among women with at least a college degree, only 8 percent of births are out-of-wedlock.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS THAT ARE MARITAL OR OUT OF WEDLOCK





# Both Marriage and Education Are Highly Effective in Reducing Child Poverty in Indiana

The poverty rate of married couples is dramatically lower than the rate for households headed by single parents. This is true even when the married couple is compared to single parents with the same education level.

For example, in Indiana, the poverty rate for a single mother who has only a high school diploma is 32 percent, but the poverty rate for a married-couple family headed by an individual who, similarly, has only a high school degree is far lower at 4.7 percent.

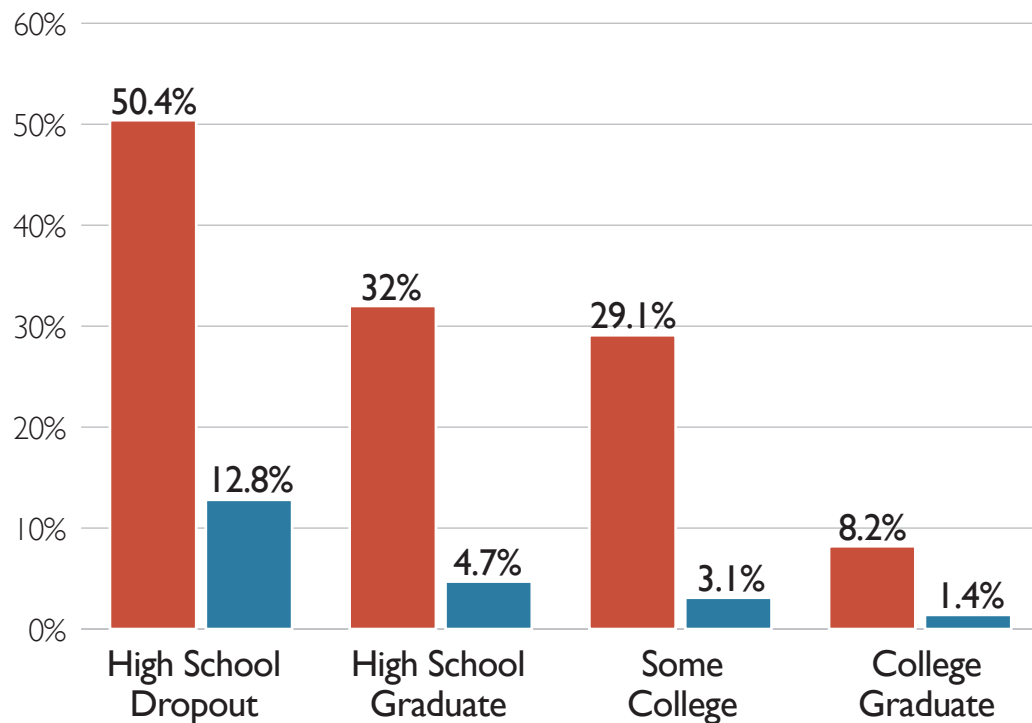
On average, marriage drops the poverty rate by around 83 percent among families with the same education level.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR

Poverty Rate of Families by Education and Marital Status of the Head of Household

■ Single  
■ Married



**Note:** Virtually none of the heads of families in the chart who are high school dropouts are minor teenagers.

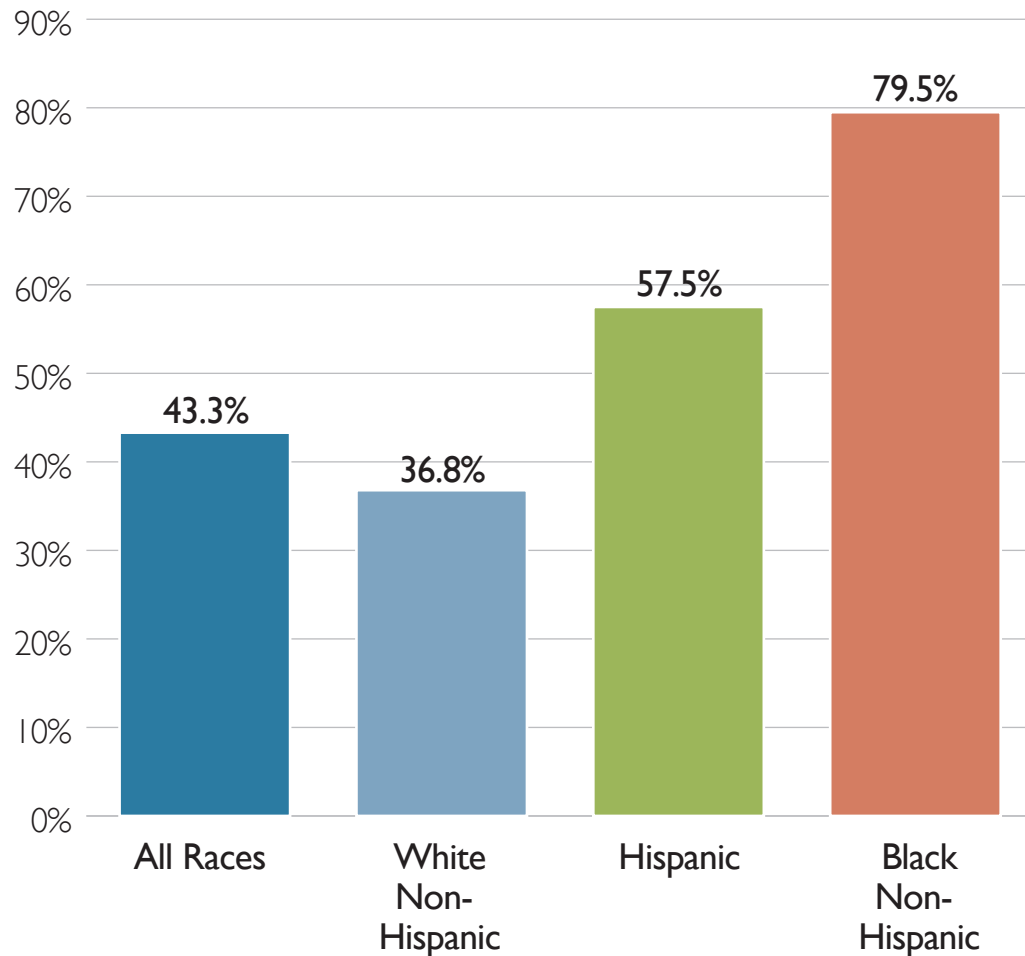
## Unwed Birth Rates Vary Strongly by Race in Indiana

Out-of-wedlock child bearing varies considerably by race.

In 2008 (the most recent year for which racial breakdown is available), more than one in three births (43.3 percent) in Indiana occurred outside marriage. The rate was lowest among non-Hispanic whites at over one in three births (36.8 percent). Among Hispanics, well over half of births were out-of-wedlock. Among blacks eight out of 10 births were to unmarried women (79.5 percent).

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

PERCENT OF BIRTHS THAT ARE OUT OF WEDLOCK



# Growth of Unwed Childbearing by Race in Indiana, 1934–2008

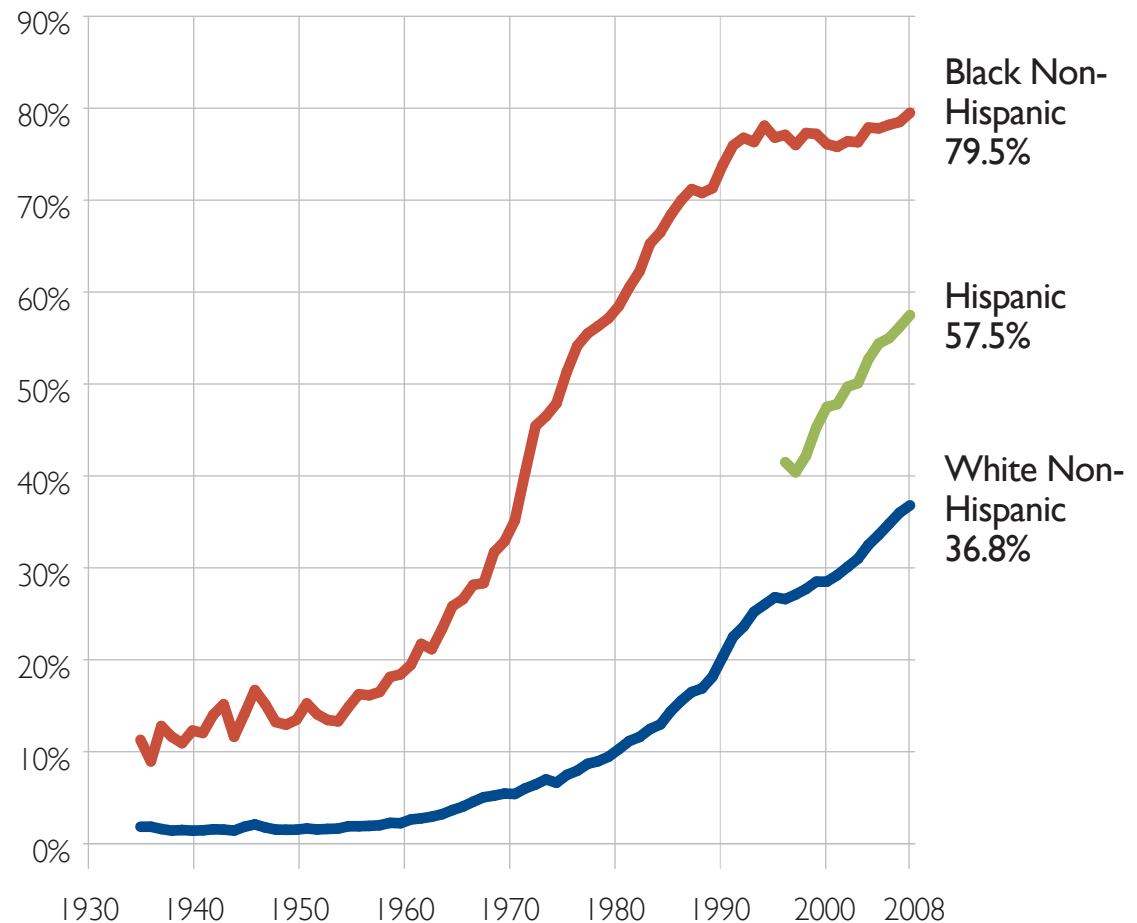
Historically, out-of-wedlock childbearing has been somewhat more frequent among blacks than among whites. However, prior to the onset of the federal government's War on Poverty in 1964, the rates for both whites and blacks were comparatively low.

In 1964, not even one in 10 (3.7 percent) white children was born outside marriage. By 2008, the number had risen to more than one in three (36.8 percent).

In 1964, about one in four black children (25.8 percent) was born outside marriage. By 2008, the number had risen to more than three in every four (79.5 percent).

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK



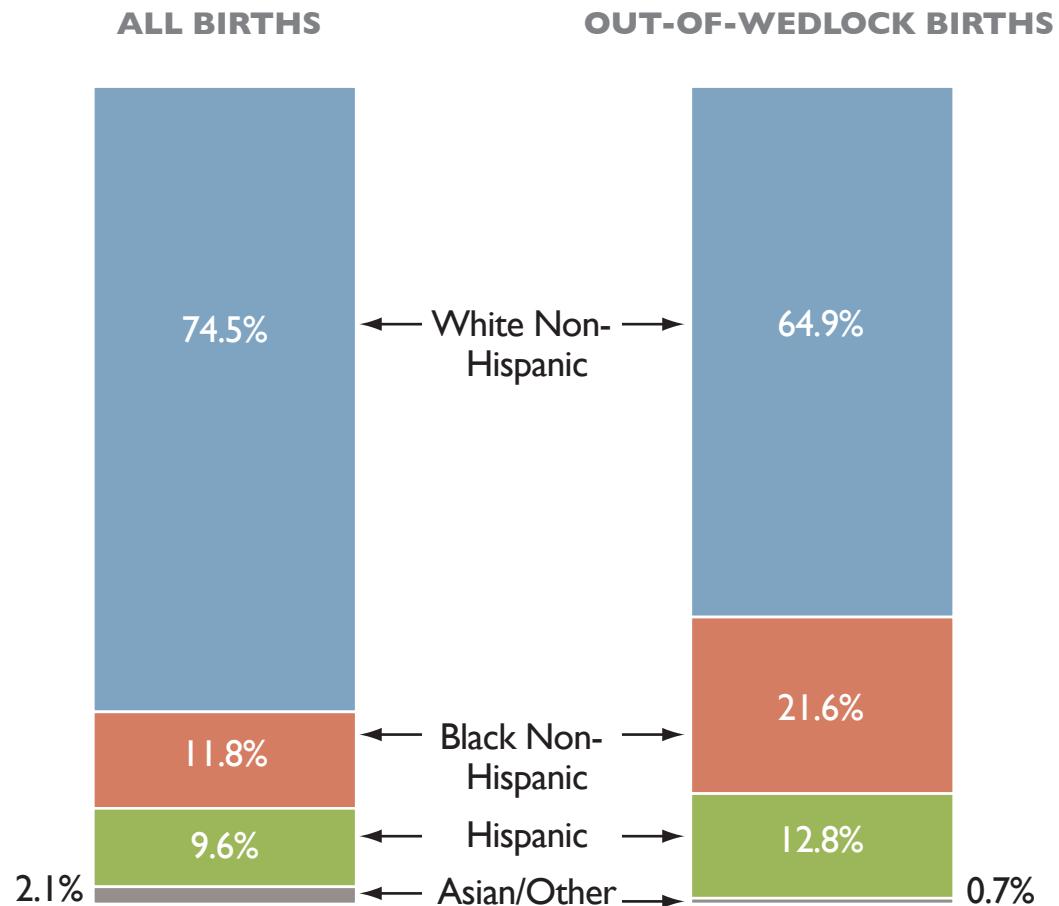
# Racial Composition of All Births and Out-of-Wedlock Births in Indiana

In Indiana in 2008, some 74.5 percent of all births occurred to non-Hispanic whites, 9.6 percent occurred to Hispanics, and 11.8 percent occurred to non-Hispanic blacks.

Because blacks and Hispanics are more likely to have children without being married, they account for a disproportionately large share of all out-of-wedlock births. Even so, the largest number of unwed births are to white non-Hispanic women.

In Indiana in 2008, 64.9 percent of all non-marital births were to non-Hispanic whites, 12.8 percent were to Hispanics, and 21.6 percent were to black non-Hispanic women.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.



**Note:** Figures have been rounded.

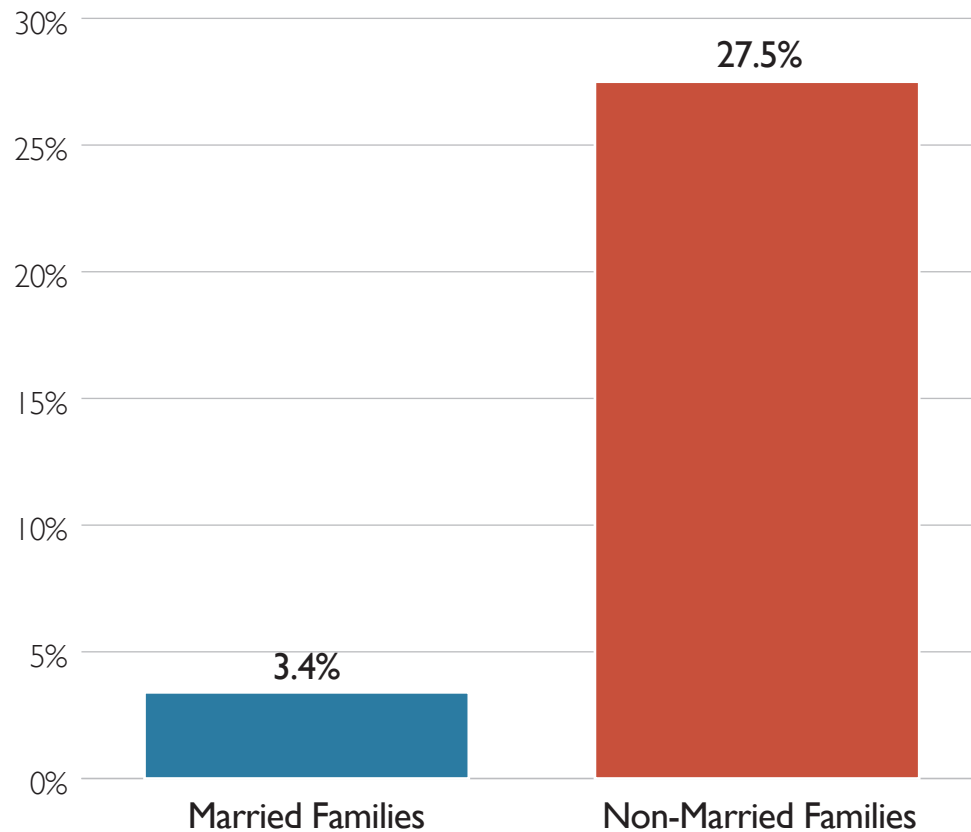
# Non-Married White Families Are Eight Times More Likely to Be Poor in Indiana

Marriage leads to lower poverty rates for whites, blacks, and Hispanics.

For example, in 2009, the poverty rate for married white families in Indiana was 3.4 percent. But the poverty rate for non-married white families was more than eight times higher at 27.5 percent.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR

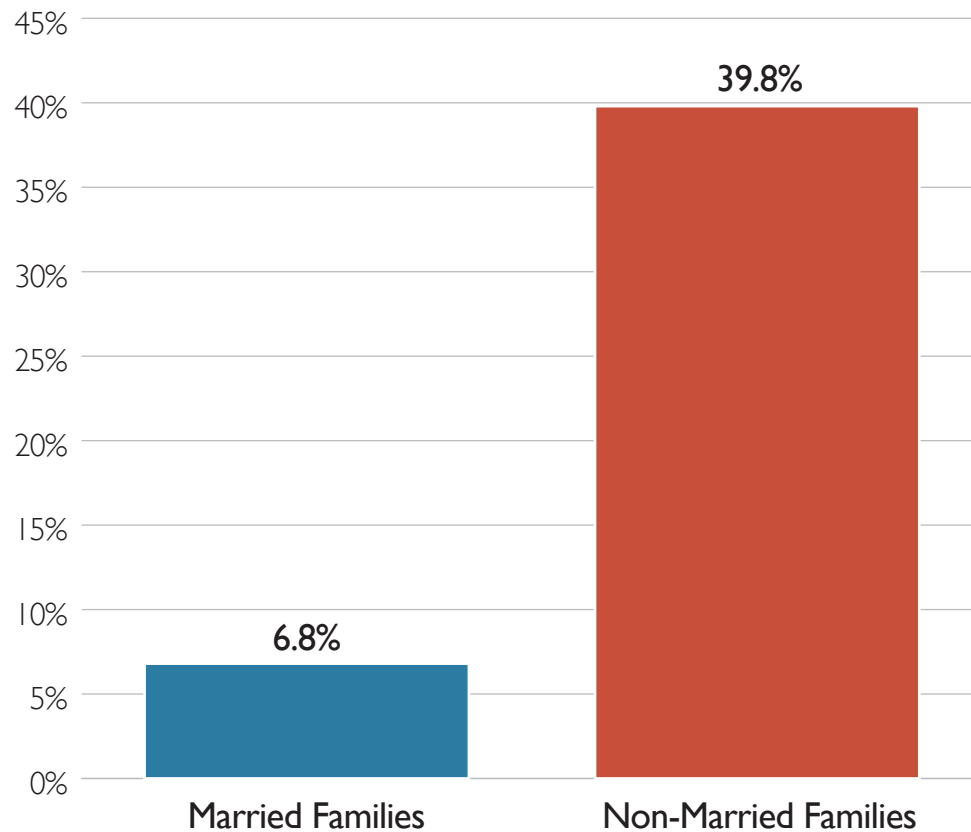


# Non-Married Black Families Are Nearly Six Times More Likely to Be Poor in Indiana

In 2009, the poverty rate for married black couples in Indiana was 6.8 percent, while the poverty rate for non-married black families was nearly six times higher at 39.8 percent.

**Source:** U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.

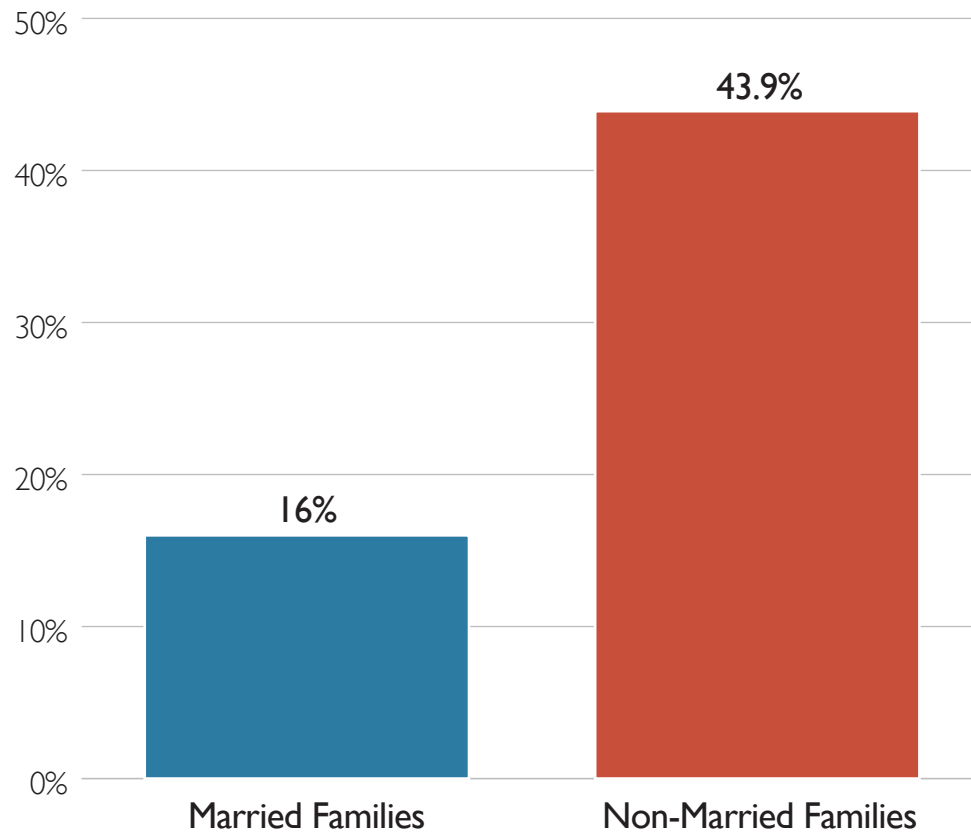
PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR



# Non-Married Hispanic Families Are Nearly Three Times More Likely to Be Poor in Indiana

In 2009, the poverty rate for Hispanic married families in Indiana was 16 percent, while the poverty rate among non-married families was nearly three times higher at 43.9 percent.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR



**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

# **Three Steps to Reduce Child Poverty through Marriage**

## **1) Provide information on the benefits of marriage in reducing child poverty and improving child well-being.**

Marriage is a highly effective institution which greatly decreases parental and child poverty while improving long-term outcomes for children. Conversely, the absence of marriage greatly increases welfare costs and imposes added burdens on taxpayers.

Unfortunately, almost no information on these topics is available in low-income communities. This information deficit should be corrected in the following manner:

- Explain the benefits of marriage in middle and high schools with a high proportion of at-risk youth;
- Create public education campaigns in low-income communities on the benefits of marriage; and,
- Require federally funded birth control clinics to provide information on the benefits of marriage and the skills needed to develop stable families to interested low-income clients.

## **2) Reduce anti-marriage penalties in means-tested welfare programs.**

## **3) Promote life-goal-planning, marriage-strengthening, and divorce-reduction programs to increase healthy marriages and reduce divorce and separation.**



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