



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

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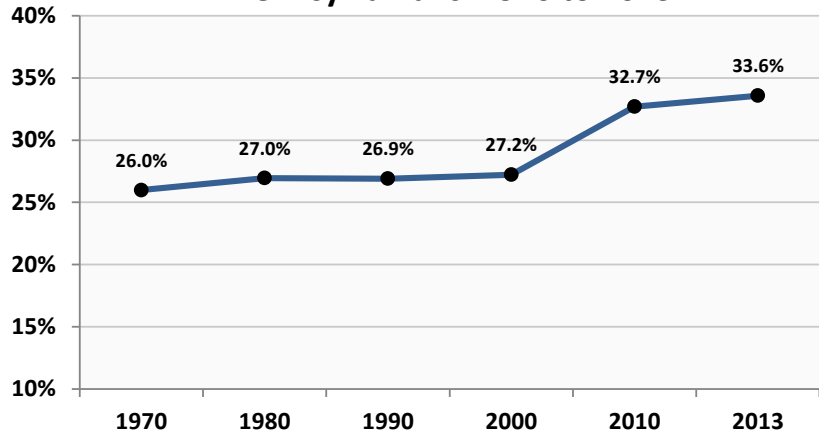
Marriage in the Keystone State over the Past Four Decades

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – Views on marriage have changed in recent decades. A few years ago, a TIME/Pew Research poll made national headlines with findings that 40.0 percent of Americans believe that marriage is becoming obsolete. That's an 11.0 percent increase from previous research in 1978. Americans are more likely to cohabit, divorce, marry late or never marry. Marriage rates have declined and marriage is being delayed. This research brief will present an analysis of trends in marital status in Pennsylvania over the past forty plus years.

Record Number Never Married

More Pennsylvanians than ever-before report never being married. The number of Pennsylvanians aged 15 years and over that have never been married increased by more than 1.3 million people from 2.2 million in 1970 to 3.5 million in 2013.¹ This equated to a 58.9 percent increase in those who have never been married over the time period. In 1970, just over a quarter (26.0 percent) of the population was never married. This figure rose to more than a third (33.6 percent) in 2013. A closer look at the data reveals a level trend in the never married population between 1970 and 2000, but then a noticeable jump in both the number and percent of this population is evident between 2000 and 2010. Nationally, the number of American aged 15 years and over that have never been married more than doubled from 36.3 million in 1970 to 84.3 million in 2013; a 132.2 percent increase.

Figure 1. Percent of Never-Married Pennsylvanians: 1970 to 2013



Pennsylvania also had one of the lowest marital rates for men and women nationally. In 2013, the marital rate for Pennsylvania women aged 15 years and over was 14.5 per 1,000. Men had a slightly higher rate at 16.1 per 1,000. These marital rates ranked the commonwealth 44th and 40th, respectively.

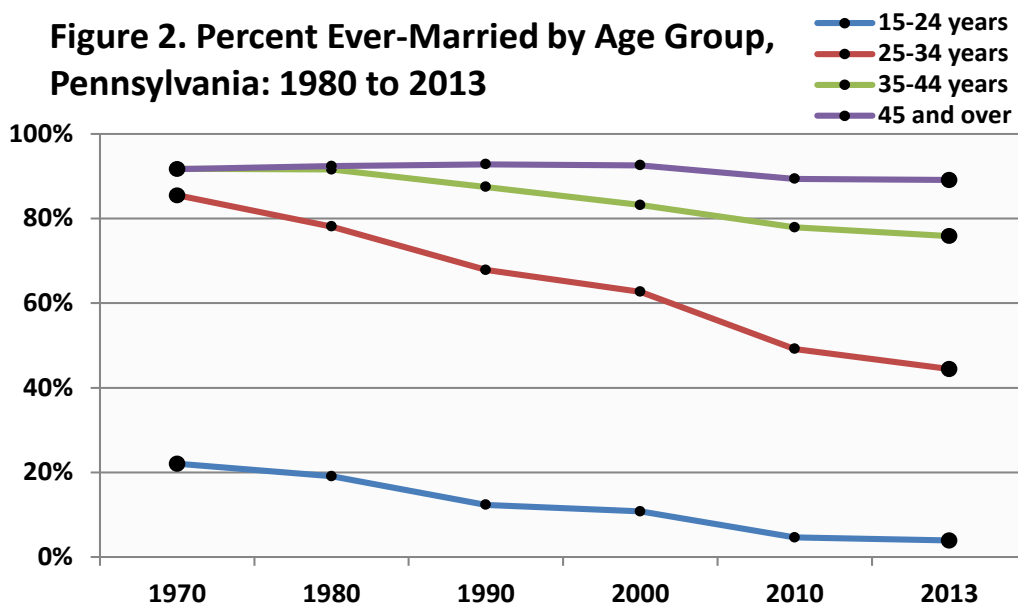
¹ The universe for marriage data in 1970 was the population aged 14 years and over. All other years used the population 15 years and over as the universe.



Married Population by Age

The rise of never-married individuals was present through the age continuum over the past several decades. Consequently, all age groups have reported a lower percentage of people reporting ever being married. Throughout the period 1970 to 2013, pre-adults and young adults aged 15 to 24 years, not surprisingly, have always reported the lowest percent of ever-married of any age group. In 2013, just 3.9 percent of Pennsylvanians aged 15 to 24 years were ever-married, down considerably from 1970 when the figure was 22.0 percent. The most rapid decline among the ever-married population was for those aged 25 to 34 years. Ever-married Pennsylvanians in this age cohort declined by 41.1 percent during the forty plus year time period. In 1970, 85.5 percent of those aged 25 to 34 years were ever-married. This percentage dropped to well under a half (44.4 percent) in 2013. In the next age cohort, those aged 35 to 44 years, the decline in the percentage of the ever-married population was not as pronounced. Between 1980 and 2013, the percentage of those ever-married changed from 91.8 percent to 75.9 percent; a 15.9 percent decline. Finally, for Pennsylvanians 45 years and over, the percent people ever reporting being married remained stable between 1980 and 2013, at approximately 9-in-10 people (see Figure 2).

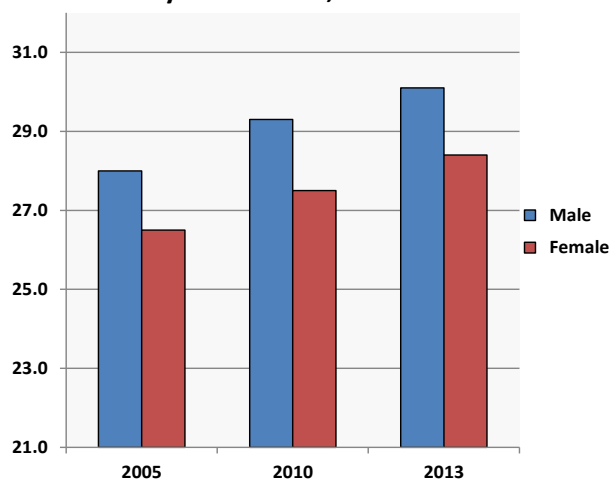
Figure 2. Percent Ever-Married by Age Group, Pennsylvania: 1980 to 2013



Median Age at First Marriage

Given the data presented in Figure 2, it is no surprise that the median age at first marriage is increasing for women and men in the commonwealth. According to the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS), the median age at first marriage was 26.5 years for women and 28.0 years for men. Eight years later, in 2013, the median age at first nuptial increased to 28.4 years and 30.1 years for men and women, respectively (see Figure 3.) The median age for Pennsylvania women tying the knot ranked 7th oldest among the states and District of Columbia, while the median age for men at initial marriage ranked 10th nationally in

Figure 3. Median Age First Marriage, Pennsylvania: 2005, 2010 and 2013

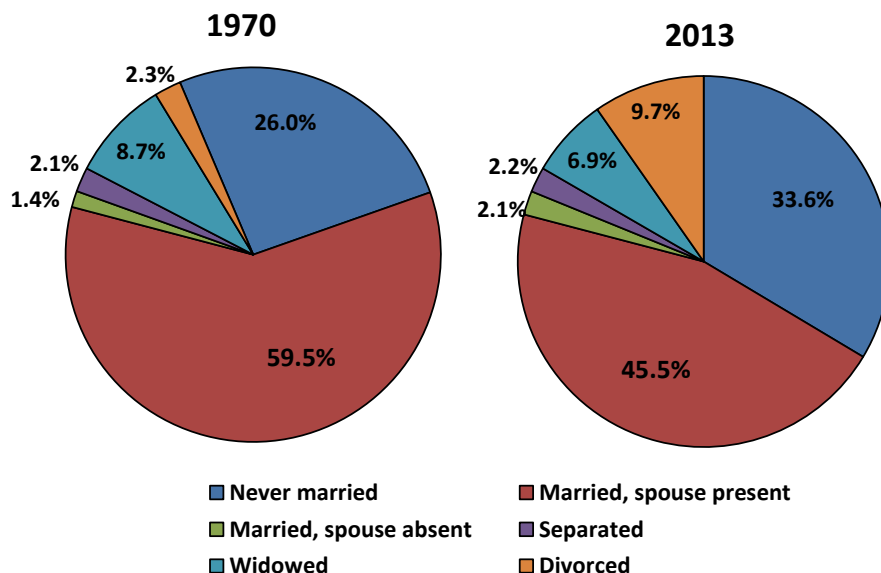


2013. The median age at first marriage was about a year younger for the nation overall for both sexes and all three time periods in Figure 3.

Marital Status

Figure 4. shows the full marital status composition of the population in 1970 compared to 2013. The pie charts illustrate the point previously made about the increasing percentage of the never-married population and a decline in the percentage reporting ever being married. The chart also reveals the changing percent of the population who were divorced, separated or widowed. Between the two time periods, the percent of the population widowed and separated remained stable. This was not the case for the population reporting a divorce. In 1970, just 2.3 percent of the population aged 14 years and over reported being divorced. By 2013, the percent divorced increased to 9.7 percent of Pennsylvanians aged 15 years and over. An analysis of the number of people divorced reveals an incredible increase. From 1970 to 2013, the number of Pennsylvanians who were divorced increase by more than fivefold from just under 200,000 people to more than one million. Divorce numbers were higher for the nation overall, increasing by 6 times over the time period.

Figure 4. Marital Status, Pennsylvania: 1970 and 2013



Select Characteristics of Married Population

In addition to providing marital data by age and sex, the American Community Survey also provides estimates on this topic by race/ethnicity and various socioeconomic characteristics. Below are some select characteristics for the married population in Pennsylvania:

- The Asian race group had the largest percentage (58.1 percent) of married people of all racial and ethnic groups in Pennsylvania in 2013. White Alone, Non-Hispanics followed with 51.3 percent. All other race/ethnic groups had well below half reporting being married. In 2013, Hispanics were at 34.5 percent, while Blacks came in at 24.1 percent, the lowest of any race/ethnic group.
- Of Pennsylvanians 15 years and over reporting ever being married, 17.2 percent have been married twice and 3.2 percent have been married three or more times.

- Nearly half (54.2 percent) of all males in the labor force were married in 2013. The percent of married women to all women in the labor force was 48.5 percent.
- The median family income for married-couple families increased from \$77,905 in 1999 to \$79,541 in 2013; a \$1,636 increase. Overall, the median family income for all commonwealth families declined by \$2,252 between 1999 and 2013.
- Nearly 4-in-10 women aged 15 to 50 who had a birth in the past twelve months were not married (never-married, divorced, widowed) in 2013. More than half (51.9 percent) of these women lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty level in 2013.
- In general, marriages in the Keystone State last almost two years longer compared to the nation as a whole in 2013. The median duration of a current marriage in Pennsylvania was 22.3 years versus 19.5 years for the United States.
- Same-sex marriage in Pennsylvania became legal on May 20, 2014; therefore, presently, the American Community Survey can only report estimates on the number of unmarried same-sex partner households in the state. In 2013, 18,615 same-sex partner households were reported in Pennsylvania. This accounted for 0.4 percent of all households in the state.

Future of Marriage Data from the ACS

The U.S. Census Bureau, in an effort to reduce the burden of households receiving the American Community Survey (ACS), recently released results of the ACS Content Review. The goal of the review is to inform recommendations about which questions could be retained in their current form, which could be removed from the survey, and which could be candidates for further research. One surprise of the review was the announcement of the Bureau's intent to drop six questions from the ACS, including five questions relating to marriage and divorce and one question on undergraduate education. For data users interested in family demography or education, the elimination of these questions would be a significant loss. Historical analyses on the topic of marriage, like the one presented in this brief, will no longer be able to rely on estimates from the nation's largest, continuous survey of the U.S. population.

ACS data users and the public at large are encouraged to send feedback on the recommendations made in the [Federal Register Notice](#). To ensure consideration, written comments must be submitted on or before December 30, 2014. All written comments should be directed to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at jjessup@doc.gov).

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census; 2005, 2010 and 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Historical Census data access via the Minnesota Population Center. *National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Editors: For additional data; contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic; contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.

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