

Marital Trends

Demographic Research Module

INTRODUCTION

The end of World War II created a dramatic increase in births. Known as the “Baby Boom”, this trend continued into the early 1960’s. During this period, five out of six women in peak childbearing years gave birth to at least two children. Americans were also marrying and staying married.

As baby boomers have matured, they have not followed their parent’s marriage and childbearing patterns. Consequently, more people have delayed marriage until their late twenties or early thirties. Couples have both delayed having children and are having fewer children. Divorces have increased as well. Clearly, there no longer seems to be a “singular” marital lifestyle that can be easily identified in American culture.

KEY CONCEPTS MARITAL TRENDS:

Currently Married (CurMrrd) – Currently Married and not separated

Widowed – Widows and Widowers who have not remarried

Divorced – Legally divorced persons who have not remarried

Separated – Legally separated or otherwise absent from the spouse due to marital discord

Never Married (NevMrrd) – Single and never married

Race/Ethnicity – Identifies the major ethnic groups, combining the race and Hispanic – origin classifications used by the Census Bureau based on a persons self-identification

Black – All people who indicated their race as black in the Census

MARITAL TREND DEMOGRAPHIC EXERCISES:

Although the high marriage and divorce rates of the fifties have decreased in later decades, it is important to examine how these trends differ by race/ethnicity and age. Are people more likely to never get married, or are they simply putting off marriage? Is a person’s racial or ethnic identity related to his or her marital status and/or the age at which he or she marries?

Learning Objectives

Skill

- Using software to access and analyze census data
- Identifying independent and dependent variables
- Employing control variables
- Quantitative writing
- Learning how to construct, read, and interpret bivariate tables displaying frequencies and percentages
- Creating visual tools representing quantitative data in the form of charts or graphs
- Using real world data to enhance and support key course concepts

Substance: *In the following six demographic exercises, you will look at*

- Marital status distribution over time
- Race and ethnic differences in marital trends
- The shift in the average age of marriage.
- Your findings should give you a clearer picture of how marriage in America is changing.

EXERCISE 1

Examine the marital status distribution of Americans from 1950 to 2008.

- Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- From there, find "**acs2008trend**" in the drop-down collections menu and select it.
- Select the "**Marital**" dataset.
- Compute Marginals
- Create a Percent Down Crosstab with Marital as the row variable and Year as the column variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.

Marital status 1950 – 2008

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
100%							
50%							
0%							

What patterns do you see emerging?

Exercise 2

Using data from 1950 – 2008, look specifically at the marital status distribution of people ages 15 – 24.

- Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- Find and select the "**acs2008trend**" collection.
- Find and select the "**Marital**" dataset
- Create a "Marginals" table.
- Then, create a Percent Down Crosstab with Year as the row variable, Marital as the column variable and Age as the control variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.
- Create a line graph with three lines, one for currently married, one for divorced, and one for never married.

Marital Status of 15-24 Year Olds, 1950-2008

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
100%							
50%							
0%							

What trends do you notice?

Exercise 3

- Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- Find and select "**acs2010**" in the collection menu.
- Find and select the **Marital** dataset.
- Click "Compute Marginals"
- Then, create a Percent Down Crosstab with Age as the row variable and Marital as the column variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.
- Using 2010 data, create a stacked bar graph showing the marital status distribution of each age group.

Marital Status by Age

	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
100%						
50%						
0%						

1. Traditionally people have married when they were 18-21 years of age. Has that pattern of behavior changed?
2. What was the dominant marital status in each age group?
3. Do your finding surprise you? And if so, how so?

Exercise 4

Examine the marital status difference between blacks and non-blacks between 1950 – 2008.

- Find and select the **"acs2008trend"** collection.
- Find and select the **"Marital"** dataset
- Create a "Marginals" table.
- Then, create a Percent Down Crosstab with Year as the row variable, Marital as the column variable and Race as the control variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.
- Create a stacked bar chart with side by side bars for blacks and non-blacks. For each year, stack by marital status.

Marital Status of Blacks and Non-blacks, 1950 to 2008

	1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000		2008	
	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
100%														
50%														
0%														

Discuss your finding and identify specific differences if they exist.

Exercise 5

Focusing on 2010, compare the marital status of distribution of Blacks, Latinos, Whites, Asians, and American Indians.

- Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- Find and select **"acs2010"** in the collection menu.
- Find and select the **Marital** dataset.
- Click "Compute Marginals"
- Then, create a Percent Down Crosstab with Race as the row variable and Marital as the column variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.

- Using 2010 data, create a stacked bar chart showing the marital status distribution by race.

Marital Status by Race/Ethnicity

	Curr Mrd	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Nev-Mrd
100%					
50%					
0%					

Identify and describe any significant findings.

Exercise 6

Using 2010 data, examine the education levels of 23-28 year old women who have never been married.

- Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- Find and select "**acs2010**" in the collection menu.
- Find and select the **Mar-W** dataset.
- Click "Compute Marginals"
- Then, create a Percent Down Crosstab with Age as the row variable, Marital as the column variable and Education as the control variable.
- Create a stacked bar chart for each year, stack by marital status.
- Create a line graph for high school and college graduates. For each age, show the percentage of those who have never been married in each education level. Make one line for high school and one line for college graduates.

Percent Never Married Women

	23	24	25	26	27	28
100%						
50%						
0%						

Identify and describe any significant findings.

EXTRA CREDIT EXERCISE

On your own, repeat the previous exercise for women of another race/ethnicity. (**acs2010** collection and the **Mar-W** dataset)

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY FINDINGS

We have now discussed the principle findings of the exercises you have completed. As you have probably noted, they indicate some clear and less clear demographic patterns of change. Accordingly, please prepare a summary of findings of these differences and changes in narrative form below. You may use additional paper(s) if necessary to complete your summary.