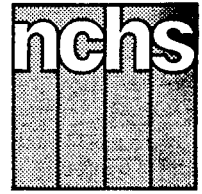


Advance Data



From Vital and Health Statistics of the National Center for Health Statistics

Cohabitation, Marriage, Marital Dissolution, and Remarriage: United States, 1988

Data from the National Survey of Family Growth

by Kathryn A. London, Ph.D., Division of Vital Statistics

Introduction

The living arrangements of women of childbearing age in the United States have been changing dramatically: Cohabitation has become more widely practiced; men and women have been deferring marriage; the U.S. divorce rate, despite having declined in recent years, remains at a very high level; and the rate at which people remarry after divorce or widowhood has fallen.

Data from a recent survey of American women, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), illustrate these changes. More than a third of women 15–44 years of age in 1988 had lived with a boyfriend or partner at some time without being married to him. Only about 40 percent of women under age 30 years had married. More than a third of first marriages among women 15–44 years of age had already ended in separation, divorce, or widowhood, and among women

who had been married for the first time in 1974 or earlier, the proportion of disrupted first marriages approached half. Only 16 percent of women whose first marriages ended in widowhood or divorce in 1980–84 had remarried within a year, compared with more than 33 percent of women whose first marriages ended in 1965–69. These findings are based on data from the 1988 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).

The National Survey of Family Growth is conducted periodically by NCHS on topics related to childbearing, contraceptive practice, and other aspects of maternal and child health. Previous cycles of the survey were conducted in 1973, 1976, and 1982. In Cycle IV of the NSFG, conducted in 1988, interviews were completed with 8,450 women 15–44 years of age in the noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Women of all marital statuses were interviewed. At the time of the survey, 50.3 percent were married,

5.2 percent were not married but living with a partner, 2.8 percent were separated, 7.8 percent were divorced, 0.7 percent were widowed, and 33.3 percent had never been married. Further details about the sample design and reliability of the data presented in this report are given in the technical notes.

The changes in family patterns described above, along with the growing proportion of births occurring outside of marriage (1), mean that, compared with earlier decades, adults and children spend more of their lives outside of married-couple households. Both men and women can now expect to spend more than half of their lives unmarried (2,3). Recent estimates of the proportion of children expected to live in a single-parent household at some time before reaching adulthood range from about half to more than 70 percent (4,5). Because these changes in family patterns affect the health and well-being of adults and children, it is important to document



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the trends in cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Cohabitation

Until recently, U.S. data on cohabitation—sharing living quarters with a sexual partner without a formal marriage—were largely unavailable or limited in scope. The NSFG is one of only a few nationally representative surveys to include information on cohabitation. The 1982 NSFG produced some information on cohabitation, and the 1988 NSFG added questions about the respondent's first cohabiting union and up to two additional cohabiting unions that were followed by marriage. See the technical notes for a discussion of the cohabitation questions asked in the 1988 NSFG.

Only about 5 percent of women 15–44 years of age were cohabiting at the time of the NSFG, as noted earlier, but many more women had cohabited at some time. A quarter of the NSFG respondents reported that they had cohabited before first marriage, including women who had cohabited but had not been married (table 1). Women who were 25–29 years of age at the time of the survey were more likely to report that they had cohabited before first marriage than were either younger or older women. That older women were less likely to have cohabited than women 25–29 years of age suggests that cohabitation has become more common over time. Lower rates of cohabitation among the youngest women are to be expected because they have had less time to establish cohabiting relationships.

Some women had not cohabited before first marriage but did cohabit sometime after their first marriage ended, bringing the total of women who had ever cohabited to more than a third (33.5 percent). Of women 25–34 years of age, nearly half had cohabited at some time. The majority of women who had cohabited (except women 40–44 years of age) had done so before marriage. Almost all of the younger women who had cohabited had done so before marriage. More

Table 1. Number of women 15–44 years of age and percent who cohabited before marriage, ever cohabited, and ever married, by race, age, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1988

[Based on a sample of the noninstitutionalized population. See technical notes for discussion of the survey design and estimates of sampling variability]

Race, age, and Hispanic origin	Number in thousands	Cohabited before first marriage ¹	Percent	
			Ever cohabited	Ever married
Total ²				
All ages	57,900	25.4	33.5	63.6
15–19 years	9,179	8.2	8.4	3.7
20–24 years	9,413	30.3	32.4	38.6
25–29 years	10,796	39.1	45.1	71.0
30–34 years	10,930	33.3	44.9	84.4
35–39 years	9,583	23.9	38.4	89.5
40–44 years	7,999	12.3	26.3	92.5
White				
All ages	47,077	25.0	33.6	66.8
15–19 years	7,313	9.2	9.3	4.4
20–24 years	7,401	31.6	34.2	42.9
25–29 years	8,672	37.9	44.7	75.5
30–34 years	9,010	32.6	44.9	86.8
35–39 years	7,936	22.4	37.7	91.7
40–44 years	6,745	11.0	25.3	93.7
Black				
All ages	7,679	29.3	35.0	47.1
15–19 years	1,409	*3.7	*3.7	*1.5
20–24 years	1,364	28.6	29.0	23.6
25–29 years	1,459	44.3	47.8	47.7
30–34 years	1,406	42.0	52.1	69.0
35–39 years	1,170	34.3	45.0	75.1
40–44 years	872	19.4	32.8	83.5
Hispanic origin				
Hispanic	5,557	25.5	32.9	62.1
Non-Hispanic	52,343	25.4	33.5	63.8

¹Includes women who had cohabited but had not married.

²Includes white, black, and other races.

NOTES: For definitions of terms see technical notes. Because of rounding of estimates, figures may not add to totals.

of the older women had cohabited later. This is to be expected, because many of the younger women had not yet married in the first place, and most had not yet dissolved a marriage.

When all first cohabiting unions are considered (either before first marriage or sometime later), the data show that slightly more than half resulted in marriages (some of which subsequently dissolved), 37.2 percent dissolved without marriage, and 10.0 percent were ongoing at the time of the survey (figure 1). Cohabitation was less likely to progress to marriage among black than among white women. More than half (54.4 percent) of white women's first cohabiting unions were followed by marriage, compared with 42.1 percent of black women's.

When only women who had ever been married are considered, it can

be seen that more than a quarter of first marriages were preceded by cohabitation (table 2). Broken down by race, about a quarter of white women and nearly a third of black women lived with their first (or only) husband before marriage. A comparison of tables 1 and 2 shows that in general the subset of ever-married women were more likely than average to have ever cohabited, although this was not true for women ages 35 years and over.

Marriage

Although it is possible that cohabitation is a substitute for marriage for some women, most women still marry eventually. Nearly two-thirds of women 15–44 years of age in 1988 had been married at least once (table 1). Naturally, a much smaller proportion of the younger

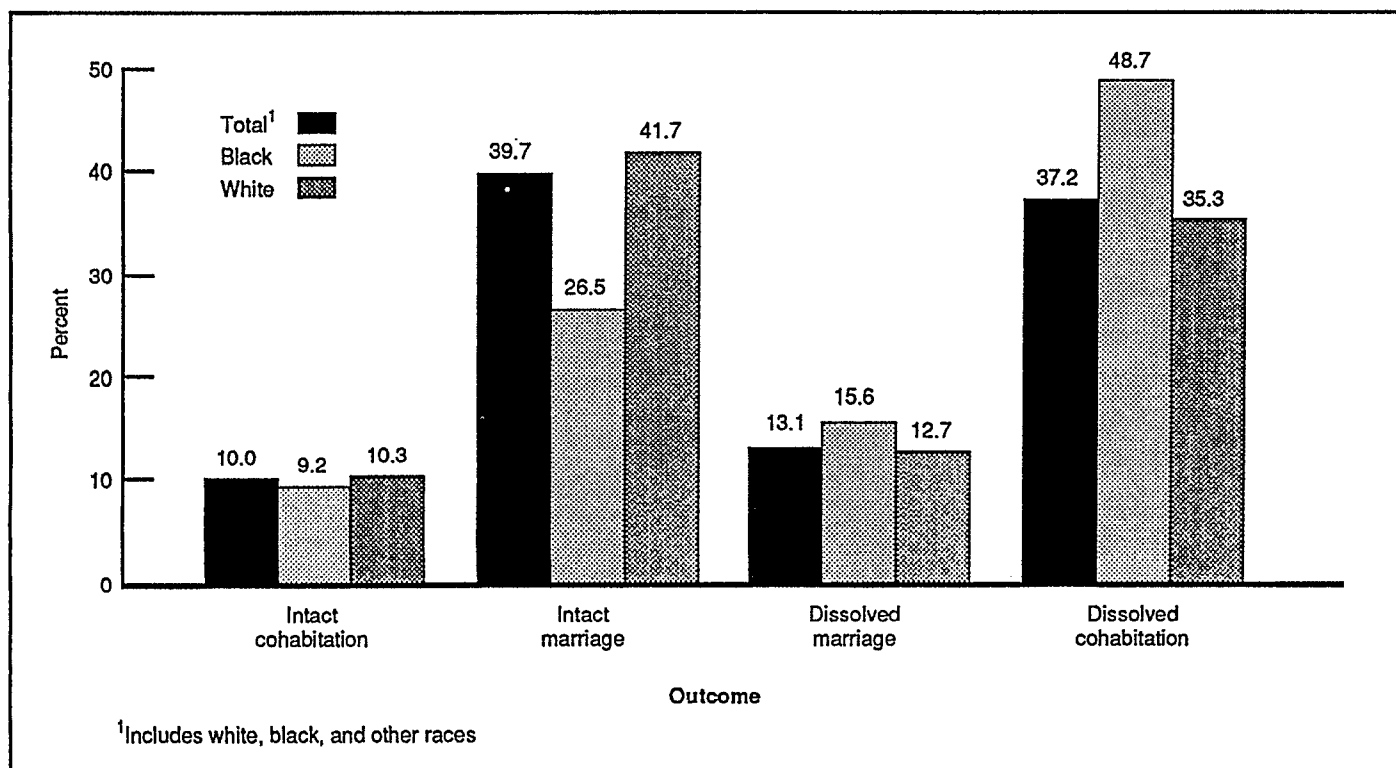


Figure 1. Percent distribution of first cohabitations of women 15-44 years of age by outcome of cohabitation, according to race: United States, 1988

Table 2. Number of ever-married women 15-44 years of age, percent who cohabited with their first husbands before marriage, and percent who ever cohabited, by race, age, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1988

[Based on a sample of the noninstitutionalized population. See technical notes for discussion of the survey design and estimates of sampling variability]

Race, age, and Hispanic origin	Number in thousands	Cohabited with first husband before marriage	
		Percent	Ever cohabited
Total¹			
All ages	36,842	25.7	39.9
15-19 years	340	*29.3	*34.3
20-24 years	3,631	36.5	44.0
25-29 years	7,669	36.7	47.3
30-34 years	9,220	29.5	45.4
35-39 years	8,581	20.0	37.9
40-44 years	7,401	10.7	26.1
White			
All ages	31,465	24.9	39.5
15-19 years	319	*28.3	*33.6
20-24 years	3,176	36.2	44.1
25-29 years	6,546	35.5	46.9
30-34 years	7,824	29.0	45.2
35-39 years	7,277	19.1	37.6
40-44 years	6,322	9.7	25.1
Black			
All ages	3,614	31.7	45.6
15-19 years	21	*44.6	*44.6
20-24 years	322	44.0	46.4
25-29 years	695	42.5	52.2
30-34 years	970	36.5	53.9
35-39 years	878	25.9	41.0
40-44 years	728	15.7	33.2
Hispanic origin			
Hispanic	3,452	24.0	37.1
Non-Hispanic	33,390	25.9	40.2

¹Includes white, black, and other races.

NOTES: For definitions of terms see technical notes. Because of rounding of estimates, figures may not add to totals.

women had been married (less than half of the women ages 20-24 years and almost none of the youngest women), and four-fifths or more of women in the age groups 30 and over had been married.

However, the trend over the last two decades has been toward postponing marriage. U.S. vital statistics data show that the marriage rate for never-married women has fallen by more than 25 percent since 1970. Further, the average age at first marriage has risen steadily since the mid-1970's (6). The NSFG data also reflect the postponement of marriage; only about 40 percent of respondents under age 30 years had ever been married.

The NSFG data show that black women were much less likely than white women to have married (table 1). Two-thirds of white women had married at least once, but fewer than half of black women had. Within each age group, black women were less likely to have married than white women. Looking at women ages 40-44 years gives some indication of the proportion of women who will ever marry, because the majority of women in this age group who will

ever marry already have done so. By this age, 93.7 percent of white women had married, compared with only 83.5 percent of black women.

Hispanic and non-Hispanic women differed very little in the proportion who had married. Slightly more than 60 percent of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents had been married at least once.

Dissolution of first marriage

Marital dissolution was common; more than a third of first marriages had already ended in separation, divorce, or widowhood (table 3), and of course marriages that were intact at the time of the survey will dissolve eventually. Among women who had been married in 1974 or earlier, the proportion of marriages that already had ended approached half.

Note that the proportions of marriages that were dissolved are biased downward in some cohorts (italicized in table 3) because not all

of the women in the cohort had completed the indicated number of years since first marriage by the time of the survey. For instance, all women who married for the first time in 1980–84 had been married at least 3 years before the survey date, but the remaining cells are biased downward because only some of the women had been married 4 or 5 years before the survey date.

The longer a marriage had survived, the less likely it was to dissolve. The data for women who were married in 1965–69 illustrate this pattern. All of these women had married at least 18 years before the survey and thus had been exposed to the risk of marital dissolution for the full range of durations shown in table 3. Some 5.9 percent of these marriages ended within a year. An additional 3.9 percent ended in the following year, bringing the total to 9.8 percent dissolved within 2 years. For the most part, the number of additional dissolutions declined with each year after marriage. Yet, even

after 15 years, marriages continued to dissolve in substantial numbers. Of course, at very long marital durations, marital dissolution rates should increase rather than decrease over time, because more of the dissolutions are due to widowhood and fewer are due to separation or divorce. However, for women 15–44 years of age, dissolution by widowhood is relatively uncommon (figure 2).

Black women's marriages were more likely to have dissolved than white women's at each duration since first marriage. Among black women, more than half of all first marriages already had ended by the survey date, except among those most recently married (1980–84). However, dissolution was common among white women, too, approaching 50 percent among white women who had married in the periods 1965–69 and 1970–74.

Black women and white women 15–44 years of age were about equally likely to have been widowed in their

Table 3. Number of ever-married women 15–44 years of age and cumulative percent whose first marriage was dissolved by separation, divorce, or death, by years since first marriage, race, year of first marriage, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1988

[Based on a sample of the noninstitutionalized population. See technical notes for discussion of the survey design and estimates of sampling variability]

Race, year of first marriage, and Hispanic origin	Number in thousands	Years since first marriage							
		All years	1	2	3	4	5	10	15
Total¹		Cumulative percent dissolved at time of interview							
All years ²	36,842	35.6	4.9	9.1	13.1	16.8	20.0	28.8	33.0
1980–84	8,043	23.6	4.9	9.6	13.9	<i>18.0</i>	<i>20.7</i>
1975–79	7,777	35.6	4.3	9.0	14.7	18.1	22.1	<i>33.8</i>	...
1970–74	7,575	46.7	4.7	8.1	13.1	19.4	23.7	36.7	<i>44.6</i>
1965–69	6,561	48.1	5.9	9.8	12.8	15.9	18.5	31.9	41.7
White									
All years ²	31,465	35.0	4.8	8.9	13.0	16.8	19.7	28.3	32.3
1980–84	6,809	22.9	5.2	9.9	14.1	<i>18.2</i>	<i>20.2</i>
1975–79	6,659	34.6	4.2	8.9	15.1	18.2	22.1	<i>32.9</i>	...
1970–74	6,523	46.2	4.4	7.7	12.7	19.4	23.8	36.9	<i>43.8</i>
1965–69	5,714	47.0	6.1	9.8	12.6	15.8	18.3	30.9	40.5
Black									
All years ²	3,614	46.9	7.0	12.8	17.5	22.1	26.8	38.5	44.8
1980–84	768	38.1	<i>*5.2</i>	11.9	17.0	<i>24.0</i>	<i>31.2</i>
1975–79	674	50.4	<i>*6.8</i>	13.6	18.1	24.3	31.1	<i>47.3</i>	...
1970–74	766	55.8	<i>*5.8</i>	11.5	17.3	21.9	27.0	42.1	<i>54.7</i>
1965–69	598	61.7	<i>*6.3</i>	10.5	16.5	19.5	23.1	40.6	54.8
Hispanic origin									
Hispanic	3,452	37.0	4.7	8.0	14.0	18.5	21.4	28.5	33.7
Non-Hispanic	33,390	35.5	4.9	9.2	13.1	16.7	19.8	28.9	32.9

¹Includes white, black, and other races.

²Includes first marriages beginning before 1965 and between 1985 and interview.

NOTES: For definitions of terms see technical notes. Because of rounding of estimates, figures may not add to totals. Figures in italics reflect incomplete experience of all or some women in the marriage cohort.

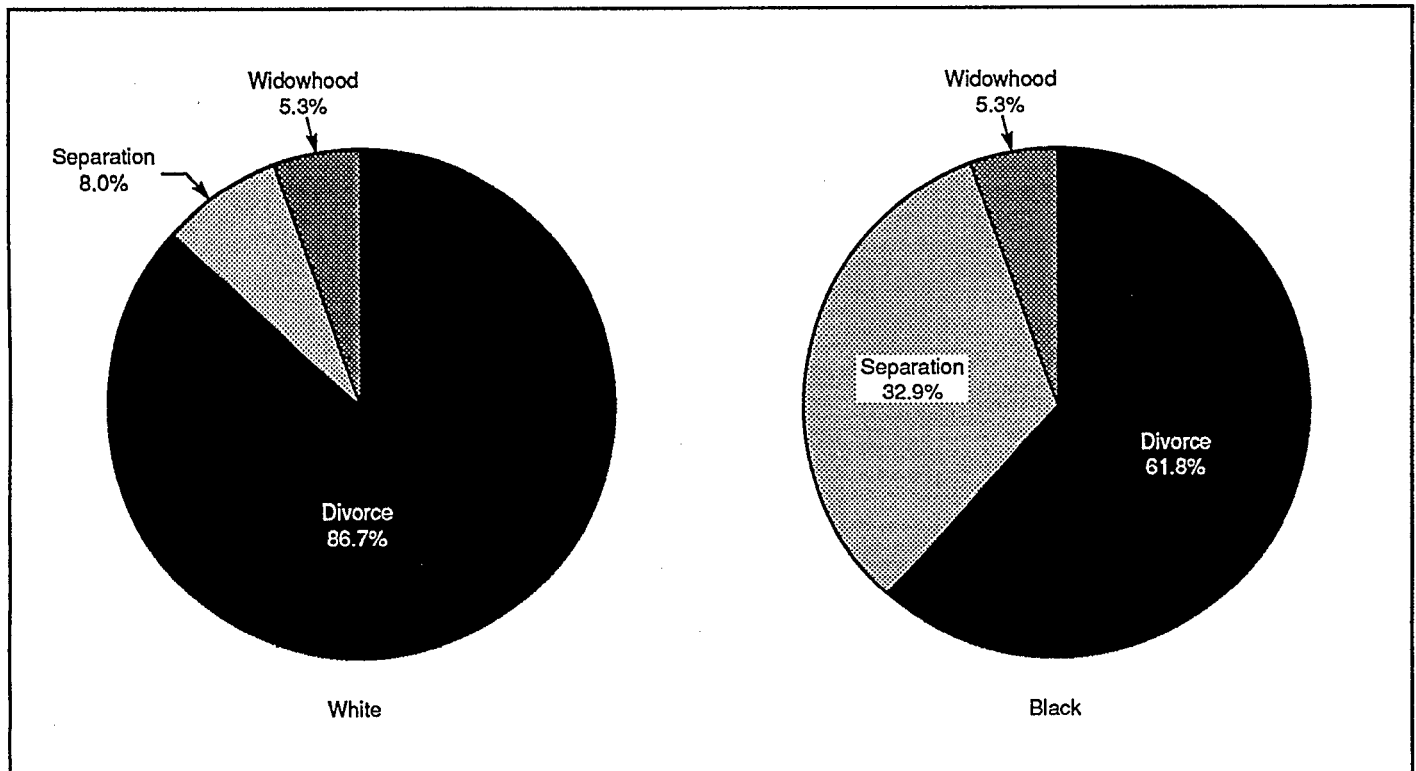


Figure 2. Percent distribution of dissolved first marriages of women 15–44 years of age by type of dissolution, according to race: United States, 1988

first marriages, but black women were much more likely than white women to have been separated rather than divorced (figure 2). Eight percent of white women, compared with nearly 33 percent of black women, reported being separated from their first husbands.

Remarriage

After their first marriages dissolved, most women remarried, and remarried fairly quickly (table 4). Nearly half of all women whose first marriages ended in widowhood or divorce had remarried within 5 years.

In table 4, women whose first marriages were dissolved by divorce or death of a spouse are grouped in dissolution cohorts according to the years in which the marriages were dissolved. Women in earlier dissolution cohorts were more likely to have remarried. More than 80 percent of women whose marriages ended during the periods 1965–69 and 1970–74 had remarried by the interview date. One reason that these women were more likely to have remarried is simply that they

had more time in which to remarry. Women whose marriages ended in 1965 had more than 20 years in which to remarry, compared with only 4 years for women whose marriages ended in 1984.

Nevertheless, the probability of remarriage seems to have declined over time. Nearly a third of the women in the dissolution cohort of 1965–69 had remarried within a year, compared with only 16 percent of those in the dissolution cohort of 1980–84. This pattern was consistent across all race categories, taking into account the amount of time the women were eligible to remarry: For each racial group, an increasingly small proportion of each subsequent dissolution cohort had remarried within each of the first 5 years after the marriage ended. As in table 3, the percents having remarried are biased downward in some of the cells, because the cohort had not completed the indicated number of years since dissolution of first marriage at the time of the survey. The affected percents appear in italics in table 4.

Black women were less likely than white women to remarry. Nearly 60 percent of white women had remarried after their first marriage ended, but only 34 percent of black women had remarried. This pattern was evident at every duration after dissolution. Note that table 4 is restricted to women whose first marriages ended in divorce or widowhood. Thus, if all marital dissolutions including separations were considered, then black women would have an even lower remarriage rate compared with white women.

Hispanic women were less likely than non-Hispanic women to remarry. Some 57.9 percent of non-Hispanic women remarried after their first marriage, compared with 44.7 percent of Hispanic women. Within each category of duration since dissolution of the first marriage, Hispanic women were much less likely to have remarried. A larger percentage of Hispanic than of black women had remarried, both within each dissolution category and overall, but the differences between Hispanic and black women were not statistically significant.

Table 4. Number of women 15–44 years of age whose first marriage was dissolved by divorce or death of a spouse and cumulative percent who remarried, by years since dissolution, race, year of dissolution, and Hispanic origin: United States, 1988

[Based on a sample of the noninstitutionalized population. See technical notes for discussion of the survey design and estimates of sampling variability]

Race, year of dissolution, and Hispanic origin	Number in thousands	Years since dissolution of first marriage					
		All years	1	2	3	4	5
Total¹		Cumulative percent remarried at time of interview					
All years ²	11,577	56.8	20.6	32.8	40.7	46.2	49.7
1980–84	3,504	47.5	16.3	28.1	36.4	41.1	45.4
1975–79	3,235	65.3	21.9	36.0	44.7	52.7	55.4
1970–74	1,887	83.2	24.9	38.6	47.9	56.4	61.2
1965–69	1,013	89.9	32.6	48.7	60.2	65.0	72.8
White							
All years ²	10,103	59.9	21.9	35.2	43.5	49.4	53.0
1980–84	3,030	51.4	18.2	31.1	40.3	45.2	49.8
1975–79	2,839	69.5	23.2	38.5	46.9	55.6	58.4
1970–74	1,622	87.5	24.9	39.8	49.8	59.3	64.3
1965–69	893	91.0	34.7	52.3	64.9	69.3	76.9
Black							
All years ²	1,166	34.0	10.9	16.5	19.6	22.7	25.0
1980–84	380	19.7	*4.7	*10.6	*12.9	14.8	14.8
1975–79	301	32.3	*11.4	*15.6	18.5	22.2	24.9
1970–74	227	59.0	22.3	29.4	35.3	38.7	42.3
1965–69	98	81.2	*20.9	*27.3	*31.3	40.8	52.1
Hispanic origin							
Hispanic	942	44.7	12.5	16.6	22.7	27.8	29.9
Non-Hispanic	10,635	57.9	21.3	34.3	42.3	47.8	51.5

¹Includes white, black, and other races.²Includes first marriages dissolved before 1965 and between 1985 and interview.

NOTES: For definitions of terms see technical notes. Because of rounding of estimates, figures may not add to totals. Figures in italics reflect incomplete experience of all or some women in the marriage cohort.

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Symbols

- - - Data not available
- . . . Category not applicable
- Quantity zero
- 0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05
- * Figure does not meet standard of reliability or precision

Suggested citation

London KA. Cohabitation, marriage, marital dissolution, and remarriage: United States, 1988. Advance data from vital and health statistics; no 194. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 1990.

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Technical notes

Survey design

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) is a periodic survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) to collect data on fertility and infertility, family planning, and related aspects of maternal and infant health. Fieldwork for Cycle I was conducted in 1973 by the National Opinion Research Center. Fieldwork for Cycles II, III, and IV was conducted by Westat, Inc., in 1976, 1982, and 1988.

For Cycle IV of the NSFG, personal interviews were conducted from January through August 1988 with a national sample of 8,450 women who were 15–44 years of age as of March 15, 1988. Data have been weighted to be representative of the noninstitutionalized population of the United States, and black women were oversampled in order to yield reliable estimates by race. Further details on the sample design of Cycles I–III of the NSFG are given in (7–9).

Interviews for Cycle IV were conducted in households that had participated in another NCHS survey, the National Health Interview Survey, from 1985 through 1987. Respondents were interviewed in person in their own homes by trained female interviewers. The interviews covered the respondent's pregnancy history; past and current use of contraception; ability to bear children; use of medical services for family planning, infertility, and prenatal care; marital history and associated cohabiting unions; occupation and labor force participation; and a wide range of social, economic, and demographic characteristics.

Reliability of estimates

Because the statistics presented in this report are based on a sample, they may differ from the statistics that would have resulted if all 58 million women represented by the NSFG had been interviewed. The standard error of an estimate is a measure of such differences. The standard error of an estimated

number or percent is calculated by substituting in the following equations the appropriate values of A and B from table I:

$$SE(N) = \sqrt{(A + B/N) N}$$

and

$$SE(P) = \sqrt{\frac{B P (100 - P)}{X}}$$

where N = the number of women

P = the percent

X = the number of women in the denominator of the percent.

The parameters shown in table I were used to generate table II, which shows preliminary estimates of standard errors for percents of total or white women, and table III, which shows preliminary estimates of standard errors for percents of black women.

Table I. Preliminary estimates of the parameters A and B for estimating standard errors for women, by race

Race	Parameter	
	A	B
Total or white.	-0.00018	10,738
Black.	-0.000626	5,181

The chances are about 68 in 100 that a sample estimate would fall within one standard error and about 95 in 100 that it would fall within two standard errors of a statistic based on a complete count of the population represented by the NSFG.

Differences among percents discussed in this report were found to be statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level using a two-tailed *t*-test with 39 degrees of freedom. This means that, in repeated samples of the same type and size, a difference as large as the one observed would occur in only 5 percent of the samples if there were, in fact, no difference between the percents in the population.

In the text, terms such as "greater," "less," "increase," and "decrease" indicate that the observed differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level using a two-tailed normal deviate test. Statements using the phrase "the data suggest" indicate that the difference was significant at the 0.10 (10-percent) level but not at the 0.05 (5-percent) level. Lack of comment in the text about any two statistics does not mean that the difference was tested and found not to be significant.

Table II. Preliminary estimates of standard errors for percents of total or white women: 1988 National Survey of Family Growth

Base of percent	Estimated percent						
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 80	30 or 70	40 or 60	50
	Standard error in percentage points						
100,000.	4.6	7.1	9.8	13.1	15.0	16.1	16.4
500,000.	2.1	3.2	4.4	5.9	6.7	7.2	7.3
1,000,000.	1.5	2.3	3.1	4.1	4.7	5.1	5.2
5,000,000.	0.6	1.0	1.4	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.3
10,000,000.	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.6
30,000,000.	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9
50,000,000.	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
58,000,000.	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7

Table III. Preliminary estimates of standard errors for estimated percents of black women: 1988 National Survey of Family Growth

Base of percent	Estimated percent						
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 80	30 or 70	40 or 60	50
	Standard error in percentage points						
100,000.	3.2	5.0	6.8	9.1	10.4	11.2	11.4
500,000.	1.4	2.2	3.1	4.1	4.7	5.0	5.1
1,000,000.	1.0	1.6	2.2	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.6
5,000,000.	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.6
7,500,000.	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3

The relative standard error (or coefficient of variation) of a statistic is the ratio of the standard error to the statistic and usually is expressed as a percent of the estimate. In this report, statistics with relative standard errors of 30 percent or larger are indicated with an asterisk (*). These estimates may be viewed as unreliable by themselves, but they may be combined with other estimates to make comparisons of greater precision.

Statistics in this report also may be subject to nonsampling error, that is, errors or omissions in responding to the interview, recording answers, and processing data. The data have been adjusted for nonresponse by means of adjustment to the sample weights assigned to each case. Other types of nonsampling error were minimized by a series of quality control measures.

Definition of terms

Cohabitation—Women were classified as currently cohabiting if they reported that their marital status was “not married but living with a partner or boyfriend.” Women were classified as having cohabited before their first marriage and as ever having cohabited based on a series of questions on whether they had lived with their husbands before they got married and whether they had ever lived with a partner or boyfriend

without being married to him. Women who asked for clarification were told, “By living together, we mean both of you having the same usual address.”

Hispanic origin—In the 1988 NSFG, a respondent was classified as being of Hispanic origin if she reported that her only or principal national origin was Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican American, Central or South American, or other Spanish. For 3 percent of respondents, origin was not ascertained, so values were imputed. In tables where data are presented for women according to race and Hispanic origin, women of Hispanic origin are included in the statistics for white and black women if they were classified as such by race.

Marital dissolution—Dissolution of formal marriage includes death of the spouse, separation because of marital discord, and divorce. In the case of divorce, the date that a woman and her husband separated is used to compute the number of years between first marriage and dissolution.

Marital status—Respondents were classified by marital status as married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. In Cycles I and II, informally married women—women who volunteered that they were sharing living quarters with their sexual partner—were classified as currently married. These women

constituted about 2 percent of currently married respondents in Cycle I and 3 percent in Cycle II. In Cycles III and IV, such women were classified according to their legal marital status. In all cycles, women who were married but separated from their spouses were classified as separated if the reason for the separation was marital discord; otherwise, they were classified as currently married. Formal marital status is used throughout this report. Thus, for example, the number of years between first marriage and dissolution refers to the time elapsed between the date of the first formal marriage and the date of dissolution; remarriage is entry into a second formal marriage.

Race—Race refers to the race of the woman interviewed and is reported as black, white, or other. In the 1988 NSFG, race was classified according to the woman’s own report of the race that best described her.

Cooperating agencies

Cycle IV of the National Survey of Family Growth was supported in part by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, and the Office of Population Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health. These agencies also participated in the design of the questionnaire.

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DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 91-1250