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Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.

The share of adults who have lived with a romantic partner is now higher than the share who have ever been married; married adults are more satisfied with their relationships, more trusting of their partners

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Table of Contents

About Pew Research Center	1
Terminology	3
Overview	4
1. The landscape of marriage and cohabitation in the U.S.	14
2. Public views of marriage and cohabitation	22
3. Why people get married or move in with a partner	31
4. How married and cohabiting adults see their relationships	39
Acknowledgments	47
Methodology	48

Terminology

References to whites, blacks and Asians include only those who are non-Hispanic and identify as only one race. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics are of any race. For the most part, the views and experiences of Asians are not analyzed separately in this report due to sample limitations. In the analysis of Current Population Survey data in chapter 1, data for Asians are shown separately. Data for Asians and other racial and ethnic groups are incorporated into the general population figures throughout the report.

References to college graduates or people with a college degree comprise those with a bachelor's degree or more. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. "High school" refers to those who have a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

All references to party affiliation include those who lean toward that party: Republicans include those who identify as Republicans and independents who say they lean toward the Republican Party, and Democrats include those who identify as Democrats and independents who say they lean toward the Democratic Party.

A person is considered to have "at least one shared child" if there is a child age 18 or younger residing in the household who is the biological child of themselves and their present spouse or partner. If a person does not have any "shared children," but does have other children ages 18 or younger in the household – for instance, a spouse's child from a prior marriage, an adopted child or a foster child – then the person is considered to have "child(ren) from other relationships."

Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.

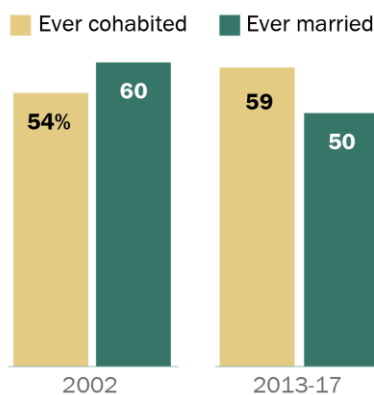
The share of adults who have lived with a romantic partner is now higher than the share who have ever been married; married adults are more satisfied with their relationships, more trusting of their partners

As more U.S. adults are delaying marriage – or forgoing it altogether – the share who have ever lived with an unmarried partner has been on the rise. Amid these changes, most Americans find cohabitation acceptable, even for couples who don't plan to get married, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. Even so, a narrow majority says society is better off if couples in long-term relationships eventually get married.

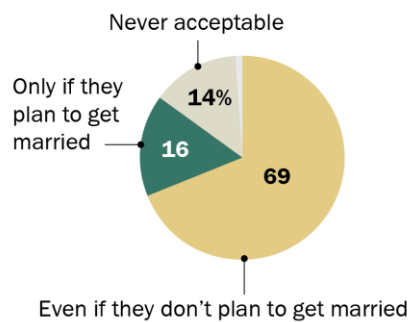
The survey also examines how adults who are married and those who are living with an unmarried partner are experiencing their relationships. It finds that married adults are more satisfied with their relationship and more trusting of their partners than those who are cohabiting.

Amid changes in marriage and cohabitation, wide acceptance of cohabitation, even as many Americans see societal benefits in marriage

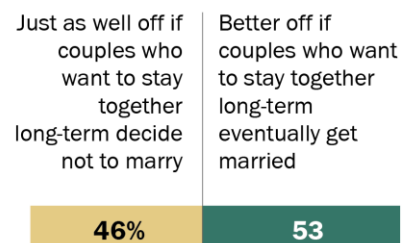
% of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ...



% of adults saying it is acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together ...



% of adults saying society is ...



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2002 and 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth; Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.

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The share of U.S. adults who are currently married has declined modestly in recent decades, from 58% in 1995 to 53% today. Over the same period, the share of adults who are living with an

unmarried partner has risen from 3% to 7%. While the share who are currently cohabiting remains far smaller than the share who are married, the share of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ever lived with an unmarried partner (59%) has surpassed the share who has ever been married (50%), according to a Pew Research Center analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).¹

Young adults are particularly accepting of cohabitation – 78% of those ages 18 to 29 say it’s acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together, even if they don’t plan to get married – but majorities across age groups share this view.

Still, even among those younger than 30, a substantial share (45%) say society is better off if couples who want to stay together long-term eventually get married. Roughly half of those ages 30 to 49 say the same, as do majorities of those ages 50 and older.

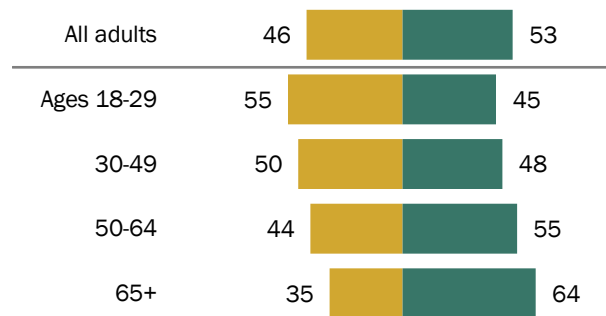
Views about marriage and cohabitation are also linked to religious affiliation. About three-quarters of Catholics (74%) and white Protestants who do not self-identify as born-again or evangelical (76%) say it’s acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together even if they don’t plan to get married. By contrast, only 47% of black Protestants and 35% of white evangelical Protestants share this view. And while half or more across these groups say society is better off if couples who want to stay together long-term eventually get married, white evangelicals are the most likely to say this (78% do so). Among those who are not religiously affiliated, fully nine-in-ten say cohabitation is acceptable even if a couple doesn’t plan to get married, and just 31% say society is better off if couples who want to stay together eventually get married.

The nationally representative survey of 9,834 U.S. adults was conducted online June 25–July 8, 2019, using Pew Research Center’s [American Trends Panel](#).² The survey includes 5,579 married adults and 880 adults who are living with an unmarried partner. It includes married and

Older adults are more likely to see societal benefits in marriage

% saying society is ...

- Just as well off if couples who want to stay together long-term decide not to marry
- Better off if couples who want to stay together long-term eventually get married



Note: Share of respondents who didn’t offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25–July 8, 2019.
“Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.”

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¹ The NSFG is administered to respondents ages 15 to 44. The analysis of NSFG data in this report includes only those ages 18 to 44.

² For more details, see the [Methodology](#) section of the report.

cohabiting adults in same-sex relationships.³ Among the other key findings:

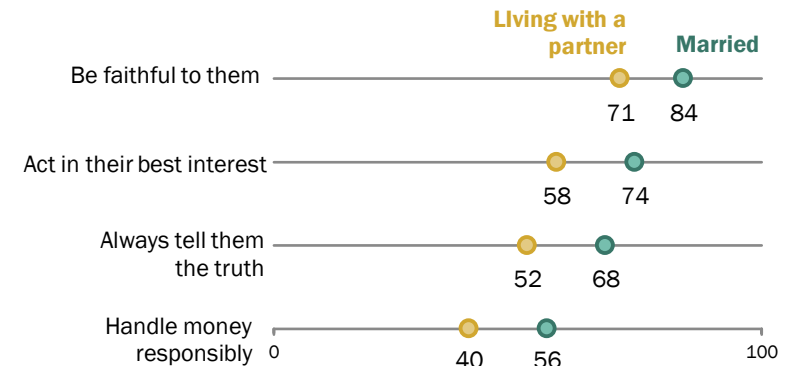
Married adults have higher levels of relationship satisfaction and trust than those living with an unmarried partner

Majorities of married and cohabiting adults express at least a fair amount of trust in their spouse or partner to be faithful to them, act in their best interest, always tell them the truth and handle money responsibly, but by double digits, married adults are more likely than those who are cohabiting to express a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner in each of these areas.

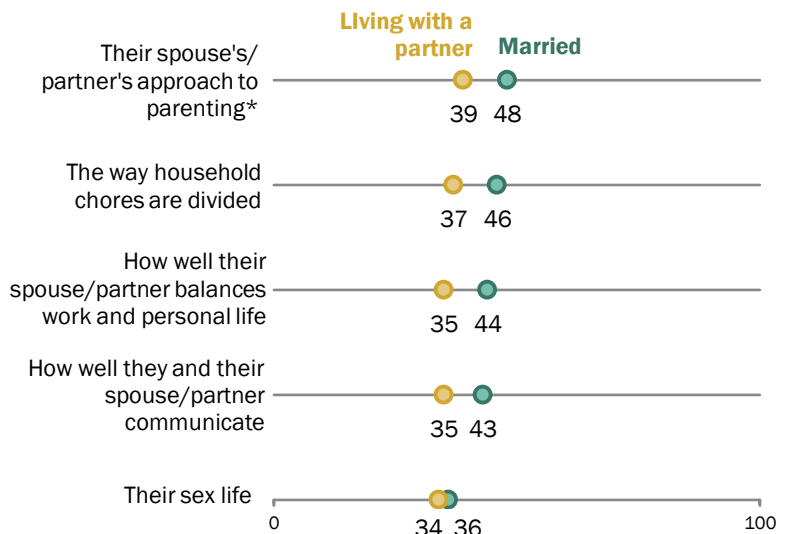
Married adults also express higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship. About six-in-ten married adults (58%) say things are going very well in their marriage; 41% of cohabiters say the same about their relationship with their partner.

Higher levels of trust and satisfaction among married than cohabiting adults

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying they trust their spouse or partner a great deal to ...



% saying they are very satisfied with ...



* Based on those with children younger than 18 in the household.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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When asked about specific aspects of their relationship, larger shares of married than cohabiting adults say they are very satisfied with the way household chores are divided between them and

³ Only 2% of married respondents and 7% of cohabiting respondents report that their spouse or partner is the same sex as them. Due to the small size of these groups, our ability to draw comparisons between those in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships is limited. Figures in this report include those in both types of relationships, unless otherwise noted.

their spouse or partner, how well their spouse or partner balances work and personal life, how well they and their spouse or partner communicate, and their spouse's or partner's approach to parenting (among those with children younger than 18 in the household). When it comes to their sex life, however, similar shares of married and cohabiting adults say they are very satisfied.

Married adults are also more likely than cohabiters to say they feel closer to their spouse or partner than to any other adult. About eight-in-ten married adults (78%) say they feel closer to their spouse than to any other adult in their life; a narrower majority of cohabiters (55%) say the same about their partner.

Even after controlling for demographic differences between married and cohabiting adults (such as gender, age, race, religion and educational attainment), married adults express higher levels of satisfaction, trust and closeness than those who are living with a partner.

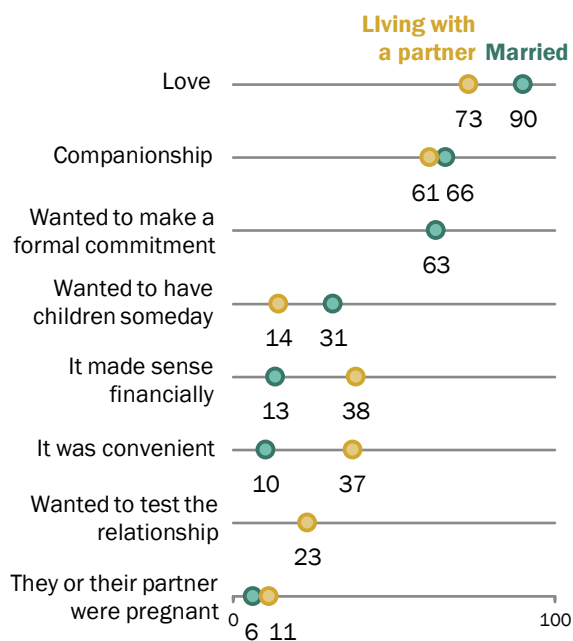
The reasons why people get married and the reasons they move in with a partner differ in some key ways

Most married and cohabiting adults cite love and companionship as major reasons why they decided to get married or move in with a partner. But about four-in-ten cohabiters also say finances and convenience were important factors in their decision: 38% say moving in with their partner made sense financially and 37% say it was convenient. In comparison, just 13% of married adults cite finances and 10% cite convenience as major reasons why they decided to get married.

About six-in-ten married adults (63%) say making a formal commitment was a major factor in their decision to get married. This is particularly the case among those who did not live with their spouse before getting married.

Love and companionship are among top reasons for marriage and cohabitation

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying each of the following was a major reason why they decided to get married or move in with their partner



Note: "Wanted to make a formal commitment" was asked of married adults only; "Wanted to test the relationship" was asked of cohabiting adults only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Among cohabiters, about a quarter (23%) say wanting to test their relationship was a major reason why they decided to move in with their partner.

Many cohabiting adults see living together as a step toward marriage

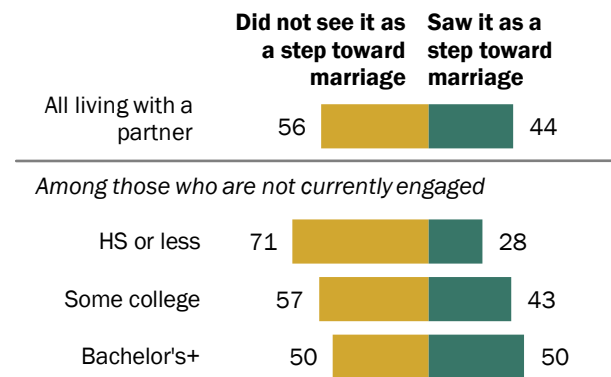
Most married adults (66%) who lived with their spouse before they were married (and who were not yet engaged when they moved in together) say they saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage when they first started living with their now-spouse. Among cohabiting adults who were not engaged when they moved in with their partner, 44% say they saw living together as a step toward marriage. Cohabitors who have gotten engaged since moving in with their partner are more likely than those who are not currently engaged to say they saw living together as a step toward marriage (63% vs. 38%).

Among cohabiters who are not currently engaged, those with at least some college education are more likely than those with less education to say they saw moving in with their partner as a step toward marriage. Half of cohabiting college graduates who are not engaged – and 43% of those with some college experience – say this, compared with 28% of those with a high school diploma or less education.

About four-in-ten cohabiting adults who are not currently engaged (41%) say they want to get married someday. Of this group, 58% say they are very likely to marry their current partner, while 27% say this is somewhat likely and 14% say it's not too or not at all likely that they will marry their partner. About a quarter of non-engaged cohabiters (24%) say they don't want to get married, and 35% aren't sure.

Non-engaged cohabiters with no college experience less likely to see cohabitation as a step toward marriage

Among adults who are living with a partner and who were not engaged when they moved in together, % saying they did/did not think of living together as a step toward marriage when they first started living together



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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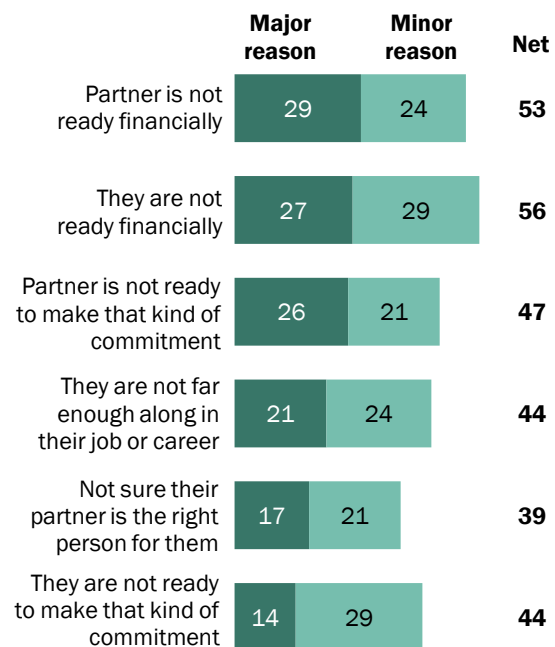
Two-thirds of cohabiters who want to get married someday cite either their own or their partner's finances as a reason why they're not engaged or married

About three-in-ten cohabiting adults who are not engaged but say they would like to get married someday say their partner's (29%) or their own (27%) lack of financial readiness is a major reason why they're not engaged or married to their current partner. About a quarter (24%) say their partner not being ready financially is a minor reason, and 29% say the same about their own finances.

Roughly four-in-ten cite not being far enough along in their job or career as a major or minor reason why they're not engaged or married to their partner. Similar shares say they (44%) or their partner (47%) not being ready to make that kind of commitment is at least a minor reason why they're not engaged or married, though more cite their partner not being ready, rather than themselves, as a major reason (26% vs. 14%).

Many cohabiters cite finances as a reason why they are not engaged or married to their partner

Among those who are living with a partner and are not engaged, but would like to get married someday, % saying each of the following is a ___ why they are not engaged or married to their current partner



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Younger adults are more likely to see cohabitation as a path to a successful marriage

About half of U.S. adults (48%) say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of having a successful marriage than those who don't live together before marriage; 13% say couples who live together before marriage have a worse chance of having a successful marriage and 38% say it doesn't make much difference.

Adults younger than 30 are more likely than older adults to see cohabitation as a path to a successful marriage: 63% of young adults say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of having a successful marriage, compared with 52% of those ages 30 to 49, 42% of those ages 50 to 64 and 37% of those 65 and older. About a third or more of those 30 and older say cohabitation doesn't have much of an impact on a couple's chance of having a successful marriage.

Adults who lived with their spouse before they were married are much more likely than those who didn't to say that couples who live together have a better chance of having a successful marriage (57% vs. 24%, respectively). About a third of married adults who didn't live with their spouse before marriage (32%) say cohabitation worsens a couple's chance of having a successful marriage, while 44% say it doesn't make much difference.

A majority of Americans say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples

Just over half of cohabiting adults ages 18 to 44 are raising children, including about a third who are living with a child they share with their current partner. A majority of Americans (59%) say that unmarried couples who are living together can raise children just as well as married couples; 40% say couples who are married do a better job raising children.

Most adults younger than 30 say couples who live together first are more likely to have a successful marriage

% saying that, compared with couples who don't live together before marriage, couples who DO live together have a ___ of having a successful marriage

	Better chance	Worse chance	Doesn't make much difference
All adults	48	13	38
Ages 18-29	63	10	26
30-49	52	12	35
50-64	42	14	44
65+	37	17	45

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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White non-evangelical Protestants (57%) and black Protestants (59%) are far more likely than white evangelicals (33%) to say cohabiting couples can raise children as well as those who are married.

There are also differences among Catholics: 73% of Hispanic Catholics – compared with 48% of white Catholics – say cohabiting and married couples can raise children equally well.

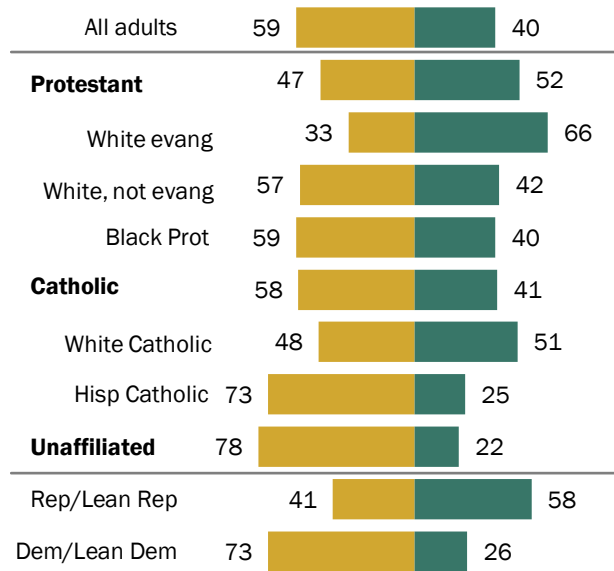
Views on this are also linked to partisanship. Overall, 73% of Democrats and those who lean Democratic say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples; 41% of Republicans and those who lean to the GOP say the same. These gaps persist even when taking religion and age, which are strongly linked to partisanship, into account.

Cohabiting adults (82%) are far more likely than those who are married (52%) to say couples who are living together but are not married can raise children as well as married couples. Cohabiters with and without children younger than 18 in the household are about equally likely to hold this view.

About six-in-ten say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples

% saying ...

- Couples who are living together but not married can raise children just as well as married couples
- Married couples do a better job raising children than couples who are living together but not married



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Most Americans favor allowing unmarried couples to have the same legal rights as married couples

About two-thirds of U.S. adults (65%) say they favor allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples when it comes to things like health insurance, inheritance or tax benefits; 34% oppose this. For the most part, views about these types of legal agreements don't vary considerably along demographic lines, although white (66%) and Hispanic (68%) adults are more likely than black adults (58%) to express support.

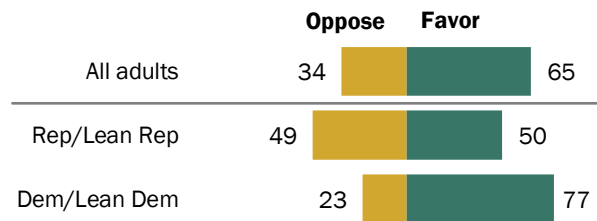
About three-quarters of Democrats (77%) favor allowing unmarried couples to enter into these types of legal agreements. In contrast, Republicans are about evenly divided, with 50% saying they favor and 49% saying they oppose this.

Most don't see being married as essential to living a fulfilling life

Relatively small shares of U.S. adults say being married is essential for a man (16%) or a woman (17%) to live a fulfilling life; 54% say being married is important but not essential for each, while about three-in-ten say being married is not important for a man (29%) or a woman (28%) to live a fulfilling life. When asked more generally about

About two-thirds favor allowing unmarried couples to have the same legal rights as married couples

% saying they ___ allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples when it comes to things like health insurance, inheritance or tax benefits

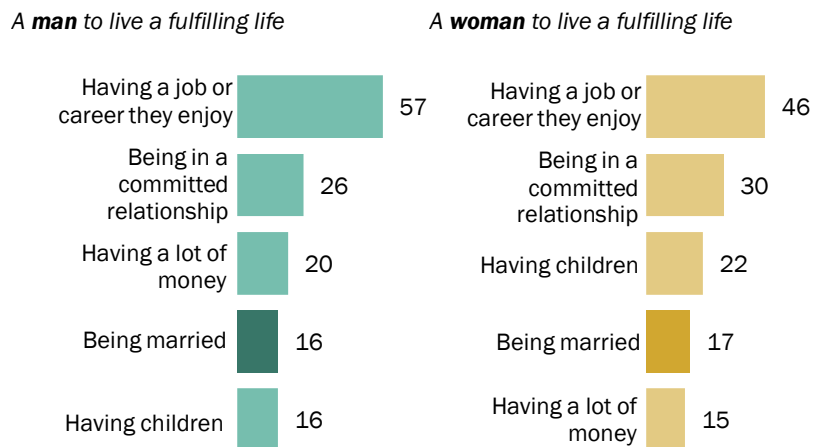


Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Small shares see being married as essential for a man or a woman to live a fulfilling life

% saying each of the following is essential for ...



Note: "Being in a committed romantic relationship" and "being married" were each asked of a random half of the sample. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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the importance of being in a committed romantic relationship, 26% say this is essential for a man and 30% say it is essential for a woman to live a fulfilling life.

Far larger shares see having a job or career they enjoy as essential in order for a man (57%) or a woman (46%) to live a fulfilling life. One-in-five say having a lot of money is essential for a man, while 15% say it is essential for a woman. When it comes to having children, 22% see it as essential in order for a woman to live a fulfilling life; 16% say this is essential for a man.

1. The landscape of marriage and cohabitation in the U.S.

The share of adults in the U.S. who are presently married remains far higher than the share cohabiting. However, an examination of their *lifetime* experiences, which captures past relationships as well as present ones, tells a different story: Among people ages 18 to 44, a larger share have cohabited at some point than have been married (59% vs. 50%). Moreover, marriage and cohabitation are intertwined, as a plurality of adults (35%) have experienced both of these types of relationships.

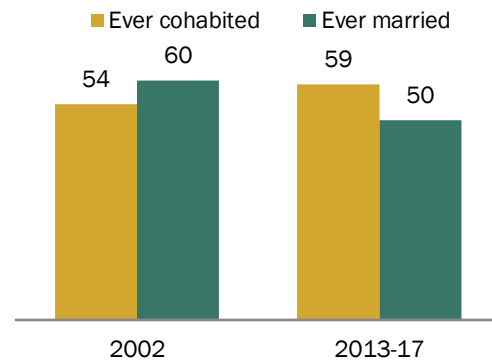
Cohabitation today takes on many different forms. The majority of people who have ever cohabited have had only one cohabiting partner, but a significant share (14%) have had a total of three or more. Just over half of cohabiters are raising children, including about a third who are living with a child they share with their partner. The nature of cohabiting relationships varies significantly by race, ethnicity and educational attainment.

As the share of people presently married has declined, an uptick in cohabitation

Today, 53% of U.S. adults ages 18 and older are married, down from 58% in 1995. Over the same period, the share of Americans who are cohabiting has risen from 3% to 7%.⁴

It's now more common to have cohabited than to have married

% of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ...



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2002 and 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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⁴ Some of the increase over this time period is related to the way in which cohabitation was [measured](#) in the surveys. The Current Population Survey (CPS) added direct cohabitation questions in 2007, which led to higher shares being identified as cohabiting. (See [Methodology](#) for details.) Therefore, while the long-term trend indicates a rise in cohabitation since 1995, the size of the increase during this period should be interpreted with caution. The share of adults who are currently married, as measured by the CPS, differs somewhat from the share measured by the decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS). [Previous Pew Research Center analyses](#) of marriage rates have relied primarily on decennial census and ACS data.

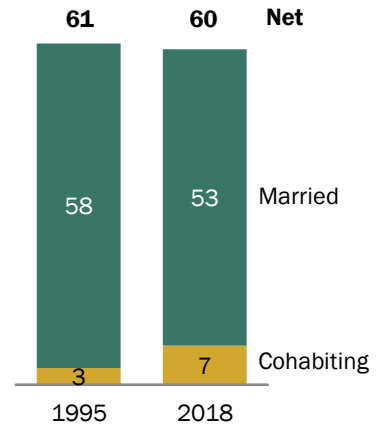
Taken together, six-in-ten Americans are either married or living with a partner, a share that has remained largely unchanged since 1995.

Over the past few decades, marriage rates have declined, particularly among younger Americans. Today, 18% of adults younger than 30 are married, compared with 31% in 1995. Among adults ages 30 to 49 and those 50 and older, 62% are married – down somewhat from 1995, when marriage rates for these age groups were 68% and 65%, respectively.

At the same time, cohabitation rates have increased across all age groups since 1995, though this growth has slowed in the past decade. Among adults younger than 30, 12% are now living with an unmarried partner, compared with 5% in 1995. By comparison, 9% of adults ages 30 to 49 and 4% of adults 50 and older are cohabiting (up from 3% and 1%, respectively, in 1995).

Since 1995, marriage has declined, while cohabitation has risen

% of adults who are ...



Note: Adults who are separated are not classified as married. In 2007, the Current Population Survey added a new cohabitation question. The 2018 estimate is based on this measure.

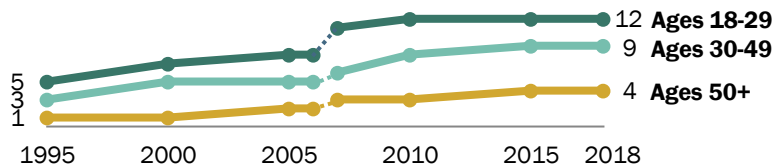
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1995 and 2018 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).

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Cohabitation rates have plateaued over past decade

% of adults who are cohabiting, by age group



Note: In 2007, the Current Population Survey added a new cohabitation question. Estimates from 2007 to 2018 are based on this measure.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1995-2018 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).

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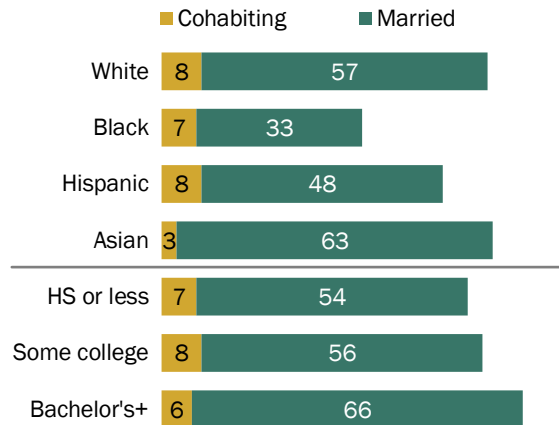
There is substantial variation in marriage rates by race and ethnicity. While 57% of white adults and 63% of Asian adults are married, fewer than half of Hispanic (48%) and black adults (33%) are. Since 1995, marriage rates have declined among white, black and Hispanic adults, but for Asian adults they have stayed roughly constant. Cohabitation rates are more consistent across racial and ethnic groups – 8% of whites and Hispanics and 7% of blacks are cohabiting, as are 3% of Asians. Cohabitation has risen more among white, black and Hispanic adults in recent decades than it has for Asian adults.

Marriage rates also vary by education. Among people ages 25 and older, those with a bachelor's degree or higher (66%) are more likely than those with some college experience (56%) or with a high school diploma or less education (54%) to be married. These differences were less pronounced in 1995, when 70% of college graduates were married, compared with 66% of those with some college and 62% of those with a high school education or less. This education gap is evident among black and white adults, while educational differences in marriage rates are smaller among Hispanic and Asian adults.

The share of adults in cohabiting relationships has risen across all educational levels. Among those ages 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or more, this increase in cohabitation offset the decline in marriage, and as a result the share of college graduates who are either married or living with a partner is unchanged since 1995. Among those with less education, however, the increase in cohabitation only partially counteracts the decline in marriage. Consequently, adults without a bachelor's degree are somewhat less likely to be either married or living with a partner today than in 1995.

Marriage rates vary widely by race and ethnicity, education

% of adults who are ____, by race/ethnicity and education



Note: Adults who are separated are not classified as married. Whites, blacks and Asians include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics are of any race. Educational analyses based on people ages 25 and older. All other analyses based on people ages 18 and older. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2018 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS). "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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A majority of adults 18 to 44 have cohabited at some point in their lives

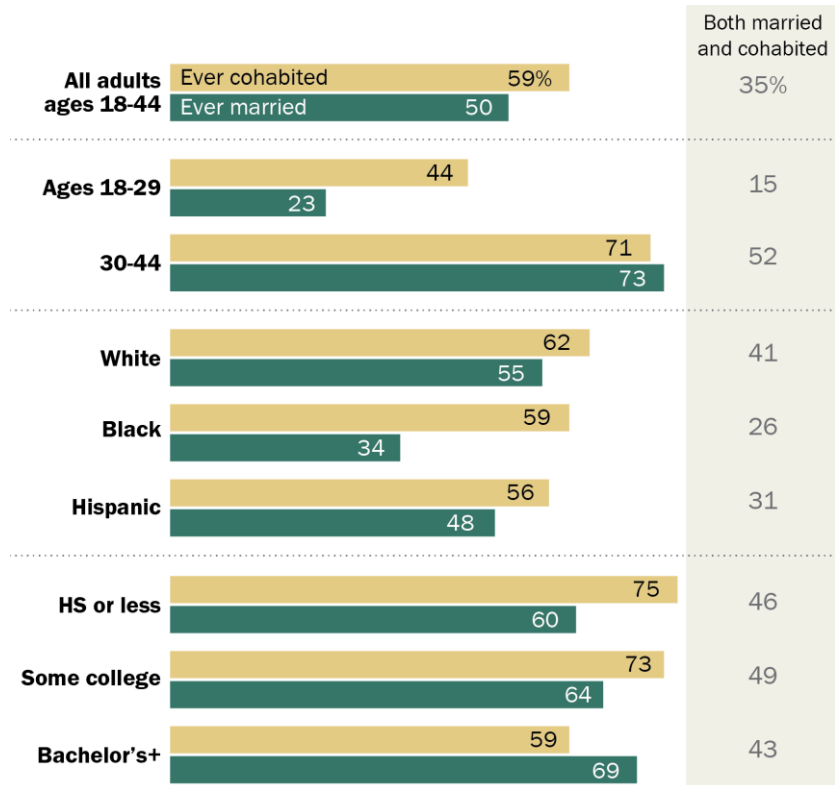
Among adults ages 18 to 44, the share who have ever cohabited (59%) is now larger than the share who have ever been married (50%). This represents a significant change from roughly a decade ago, when 54% of adults in this age group had ever cohabited and 60% had ever married, according to data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).⁵

The share of adults ages 18 to 44 who have experienced both marriage and cohabitation is 35%.⁶ About one-in-four adults (23%) have only cohabited, 15% have only married and 26% have done neither.

Young adults – those ages 18 to 29 – are almost twice as likely to have cohabited as they are to have married (44% vs. 23%), while the largest share (48%) have done neither. Meanwhile, among those ages 30 to 44, the share that has cohabited (71%) is similar to the share that has married (73%), and 52% have both cohabited and married at some point.

About one-third of people 18 to 44 have both cohabited and been married

% of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ...



Note: Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Educational analyses based on people ages 25 to 44. All other analyses based on people ages 18 to 44. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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⁵ The NSFG was first administered to both men and women, ages 15 to 44, in 2002. The remainder of the analysis in this chapter is based upon this dataset, with a focus on those ages 18 to 44. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only.

⁶ In some cases, they may have cohabited with someone who they went on to marry, while in other cases, they may have cohabited with one person and gone on to marry another.

There are differences by race and ethnicity as well. More than half (55%) of white adults ages 18 to 44 have ever been married, as have 48% of Hispanic adults. By contrast, only 34% of black adults have been married. When it comes to cohabitation history, differences across racial and ethnic groups are more modest: 62% of white adults have cohabited, compared with 59% of black adults and 56% of Hispanic adults. Some 41% of whites have both cohabited and been married, as have 31% of Hispanics and 26% of blacks.

At all educational levels, majorities have cohabited at some point, although the rates are lower among the most educated: About three-fourths (74%) of people with less than a bachelor's degree have cohabited, compared with 59% of those with a bachelor's degree or more education. Meanwhile, the share who have ever married increases with educational level, from 60% among those with a high school diploma or less to 64% for those with some college and 69% for those with a bachelor's degree or more.⁷

⁷ This marks a change from 2002, when there was no educational gap in marriage: 75% of people at each educational level had ever been married.

Majorities of cohabiters across demographic groups have only lived with one partner

A majority (62%) of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ever cohabited have only ever lived with one partner. About one-in-four (24%) have had two cohabiting relationships over the course of their life and 14% have had three or more partners.

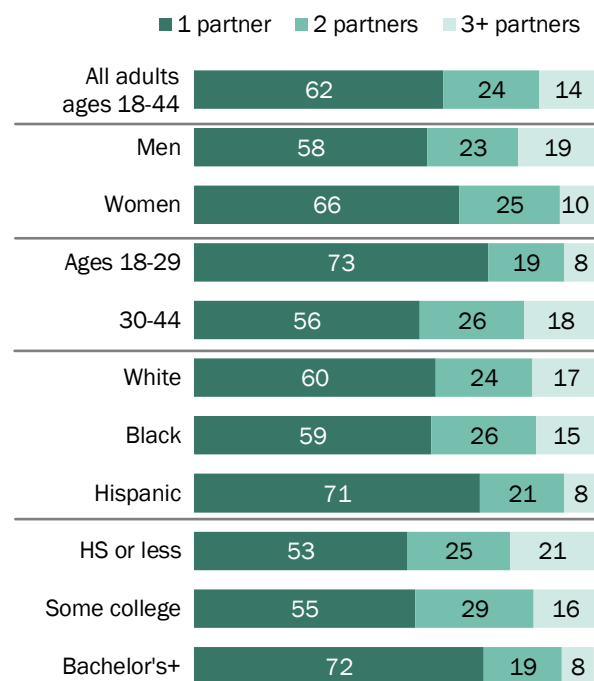
Those ages 18 to 29 who have ever cohabited are especially likely to have lived with only one partner in their life (73%), though a sizable minority (19%) have lived with two. Even among people ages 30 to 44 who have ever cohabited, a majority (56%) have had only one partner.

A relatively large share – 71% – of Hispanic cohabiters have lived with only one partner, and just 8% have lived with three or more. In contrast, about six-in-ten white and black cohabiters have only ever lived with one partner, and these groups are about twice as likely as their Hispanic counterparts to have had three or more partners.

There are gaps by education as well. While 72% of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher who have ever cohabited have done so with only one partner, the same is true of only about half of those with less education.

Most adults who have cohabited have only done so with one partner

% who have lived with a total of ____, among adults ages 18 to 44 who have ever cohabited



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Educational analyses based on people ages 25 to 44. All other analyses based on people ages 18 to 44. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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More than half of cohabiting adults have children in the home

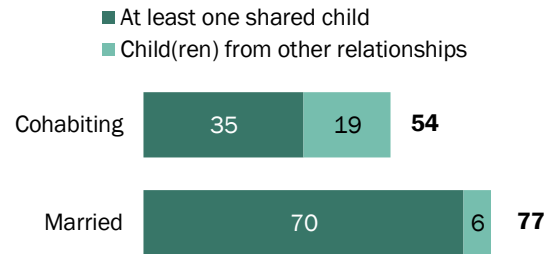
Most adults ages 18 to 44 who are presently living with a spouse or partner are also living with children. Among married adults, 77% have at least one child 18 or younger at home, while among cohabiters the share is 54%.

Married adults are twice as likely as cohabiters to be living with children they share biologically with their present spouse or partner – 70% of married adults live in this type of household, compared with 35% of cohabiters. Meanwhile, 19% of cohabiting adults are in families that include children from prior relationships only, as are 6% of married people.

These patterns differ significantly by race and ethnicity. Two-thirds of Hispanic and black adults who are cohabiting are raising a child, compared with 46% of white cohabiters. Among Hispanic cohabiters, 55% are raising a child they share with their present partner. Smaller shares of black (44%) and white (25%) cohabiters are doing the same. (Among married people, there is little variation in the share living with a child: 77% for whites and blacks and 80% for Hispanics.)

Majority of both cohabiters and married people have kids at home

% of adults ages 18 to 44 who have children younger than 19 in the home



Note: People living with children who are the biological children of themselves and their present partner are categorized as living with “at least one shared child.” Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only.

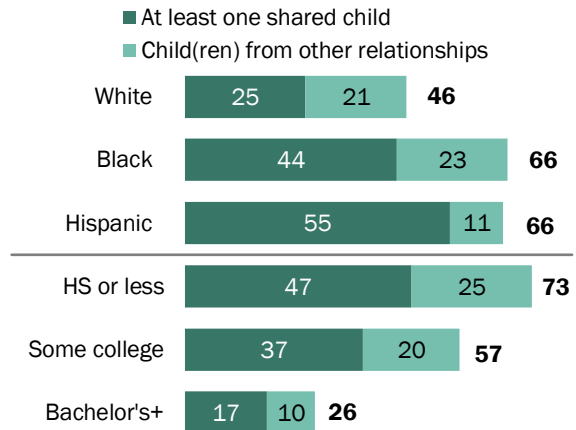
“Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.”

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The patterns also vary by educational attainment. Among cohabiters, 73% of those with a high school diploma or less education have a child in the home, compared with just 26% of those with a bachelor's degree or more. This gap persists when looking at the proportion living with shared children: 47% of those with a high school diploma or less education live with a child they share with their current partner, compared with 17% of cohabiters with a bachelor's degree or more. (Among married people, in comparison, the share with kids at home ranges from 83% among those with a high school diploma or less to 74% among those with a bachelor's degree.)

Majority of Hispanic cohabiters have had children with their current partner

% of cohabiters ages 18 to 44 who have children younger than 19 in the home



Note: People living with children who are the biological children of themselves and their present partner are categorized as living with "at least one shared child." Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Educational analyses based on people ages 25 to 44. All other analyses based on people ages 18 to 44. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2017 National Survey of Family Growth. The NSFG includes data regarding opposite-sex relationships only. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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2. Public views of marriage and cohabitation

Most Americans find it acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together, even if they don't plan to get married. A majority also says that married and cohabiting couples can raise children equally well. At the same time, the public still sees societal benefits in marriage, and many say marriage is important, though not necessarily essential, in order for a man or a woman to live a fulfilling life.

Views of marriage and cohabitation vary by age, with younger adults more likely to find cohabitation acceptable and to see it as having a positive impact on a couple's chances for a successful marriage. Opinions also differ by race and ethnicity, religious affiliation and party.

About two-thirds of adults favor allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples, a view that is particularly common among Democrats and those who lean Democratic. To the extent that the public sees advantages for those who are married versus cohabiting, they say married people generally have it easier when it comes to achieving certain goals.

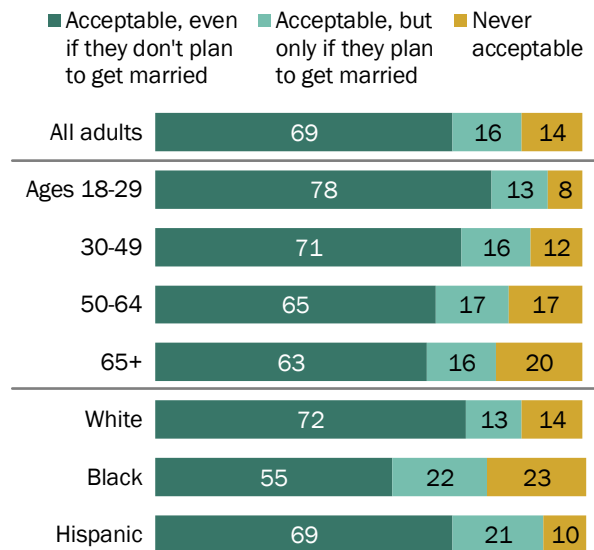
Most Americans say cohabitation is acceptable even without marriage plans

The vast majority of Americans think it's acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together. Most Americans (69%) say cohabitation is acceptable even if the couple doesn't plan to get married, while another 16% say it's acceptable, but only if the couple plans to marry; 14% say this is never acceptable.

Younger adults are more likely than their older counterparts to find it acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together. About eight-in-ten adults younger than age 30 (78%) say that cohabitation is acceptable even if the couple doesn't plan to marry, compared with 71% of those ages 30 to 49, 65% of those 50 to 64, and 63% of those 65 and older.

About seven-in-ten say cohabitation is acceptable even without plans to marry

% saying they think it is acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Views on cohabitation differ widely by race and ethnicity. Overall, black adults (55%) are less likely than white (72%) and Hispanic (69%) adults to say that cohabitation is acceptable without marriage plans.

Opinions also vary significantly by religious affiliation. Among adults who are religiously unaffiliated, 90% say it's acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together even if they don't plan to get married. Roughly three-quarters of Catholics (74%) and white Protestants who do not self-identify as born-again or evangelical (76%) say the same. Smaller shares of black Protestants (47%) and white evangelical Protestants (35%) share this view.

There are partisan differences in these views as well. About eight-in-ten Democrats and those who lean Democratic (79%) say cohabitation is acceptable without marriage plans, compared with 58% of Republicans and Republican leaners.

Among Republicans, those ages 18 to 29 stand out in their opinions on this issue. About seven-in-ten Republicans younger than 30 (71%) say that cohabitation is acceptable even if the couple doesn't plan to marry, compared with 58% of those ages 30 to 49, 57% of those 50 to 64, and 50% of those 65 and older. In contrast, Democrats' views are more uniform across age groups.

Not surprisingly, views on this issue are linked to personal experiences. The overwhelming majority of adults who are currently living with a partner (89%) say cohabitation is acceptable without marriage plans. By comparison, about two-thirds of those who are married (64%) express this view; married adults who lived with their spouse before getting married are much more likely than those who didn't live together to say this (77% vs. 46%).

Many see societal benefits in marriage

Although cohabitation is widely viewed as acceptable, the public still sees societal benefits in marriage. A slight majority of Americans (53%) say that society is better off if couples who want to stay together long-term eventually get married, while 46% say society is just as well off if they decide *not* to marry.

Again, views vary considerably by age, race and ethnicity, religious affiliation and party. Overall, adults ages 65 and older (64%) are more likely than those ages 50 to 64 (55%), 30 to 49 (48%) and 18 to 29 (45%) to say society is better off if couples who want to stay together long-term eventually get married. This pattern by age is evident among both Democrats and Republicans.

About six-in-ten black adults (61%) say society is better off if couples who plan to stay together get married in the long run; roughly half of white (52%) and Hispanic (50%) adults say the same.

White evangelicals are among the most likely to say society is better off if couples get married: 78% say this, compared with 69% of black Protestants, 57% of Catholics and 52% of white non-evangelical Protestants. By contrast, among adults who are religiously unaffiliated, just 31% express this view.

Most Republicans (69%) say that society is better off if couples who want to stay together in the long run get married at some point, while a majority of Democrats (59%) say society is just as well off if these couples don't get married.

These views also vary by marital status and personal experiences with cohabitation.

Married adults are far more likely than those who are cohabiting to say society is better off if couples get married (63% vs. 35%).

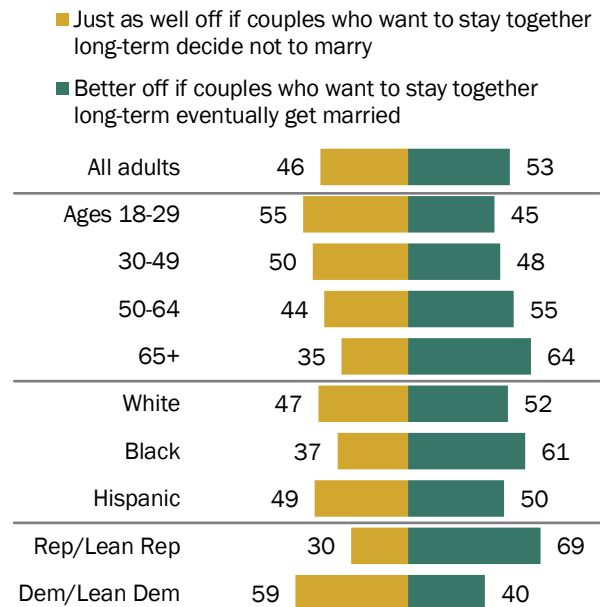
Majority says cohabiting and married couples can raise children equally well

While many Americans see societal benefits in marriage generally, when asked specifically about raising children, a majority (59%) says that couples who are living together but not married can raise children just as well as married couples. Four-in-ten say married couples do a better job of raising children than couples living together but not married.

Views diverge sharply by age here too. Two-thirds of adults younger than 50 say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples, compared with 55% of those ages 50 to 64 and 44% of those 65 and older.

Older adults are more likely to say society is better off if couples marry

% saying society is ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Partisan divides are evident on this question as well. Most Democrats believe that cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples can (73% say this). By contrast, a majority of Republicans take the opposite view: 58% say married couples do a better job.

Overall, black (64%) and Hispanic (67%) adults are more likely than white adults (57%) to say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as those who are married.

Roughly six-in-ten white non-evangelical Protestants (57%) and black Protestants (59%) say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples, compared with 33% of white evangelicals. Hispanic Catholics are far more likely than white Catholics to say this (73% vs. 48%). About eight-in-ten religiously unaffiliated adults (78%) share this opinion.

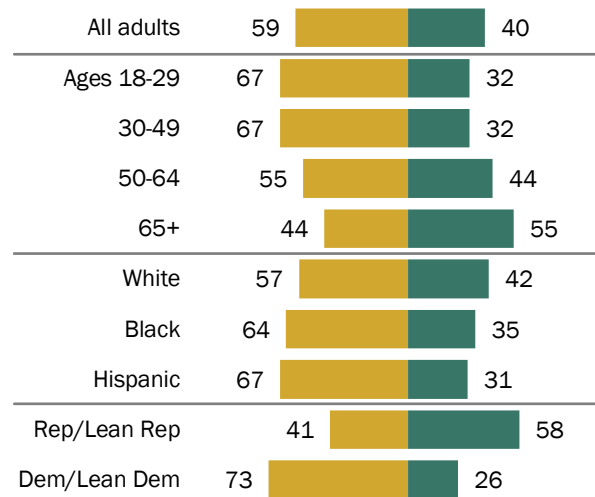
Education is also associated with views on this issue. Adults with a bachelor's degree or more education (54%) are less likely than those with some college or no college experience (61% each) to see cohabiting and married couples as equally capable when it comes to raising children.

About eight-in-ten adults who are currently living with a partner (82%) say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples. By comparison, 52% of married adults share this view, but married adults who lived with their spouse before getting married are far more likely than those who didn't live together to say this (65% vs. 34%).

About six-in-ten say cohabiting couples can raise children just as well as married couples

% saying ...

- Couples who are living together but not married can raise children just as well as married couples
- Married couples do a better job raising children than couples who are living together but not married



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Most Americans say they favor allowing unmarried couples to have the same legal rights as married couples

Roughly two-thirds of adults (65%) favor allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples when it comes to things like health insurance, inheritance or tax benefits (33% strongly favor this).

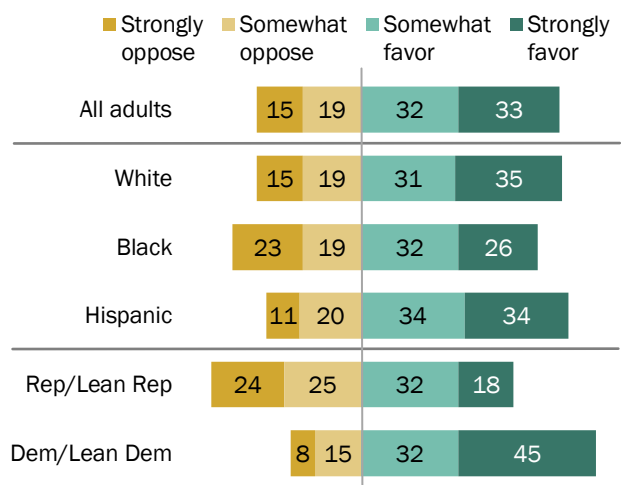
There are relatively few differences across key demographic groups on this question, but black adults express less support for giving unmarried couples the option to have the same legal rights as married couples: 58% say they favor this, compared with 66% of white and 68% of Hispanic adults.

Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to favor allowing these types of legal agreements for unmarried couples. Roughly three-quarters of Democrats (77%) favor this, including 45% who strongly favor it. By contrast, Republicans are about evenly split: 50% favor and 49% oppose this.

Views on allowing these legal agreements are closely related to whether and under what circumstances people consider cohabitation acceptable. Among those who say it's acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together even if they don't plan to get married, 77% favor allowing legal agreements to give unmarried couples the same rights as married couples. Much smaller shares of those who view cohabitation as never acceptable or acceptable only if the couple plans to marry say they favor allowing these legal agreements (20% and 42%, respectively).

About two-thirds favor allowing unmarried couples to have the same legal rights as married couples

% saying they ___ allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples when it comes to things like health insurance, inheritance or tax benefits



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Plurality of adults say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of a successful marriage

When it comes to the impact that living together might have on the success of a couple's marriage, public opinion is more positive than negative. Roughly half of Americans (48%) say that, compared with couples who don't live together before marriage, couples who do live together first have a better chance of having a successful marriage; 13% say they have a worse chance and 38% say it doesn't make much difference.

Views on this question are strongly linked to age: 63% of adults younger than 30 say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance at a successful marriage, compared with 52% of those ages 30 to 49, 42% of those ages 50 to 64 and 37% of those 65 and older.

For the most part, opinions on this don't vary much by race and ethnicity or education, but there are some differences by gender. Men are more likely than women to say couples have a better chance of a successful marriage if they live together first (53% vs. 45%). Alternatively, larger shares of women (42%) than men (33%) say it doesn't make a difference.

Views also vary by partisanship. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of a successful marriage (57% vs. 40%), while Republicans are more likely to say they have a worse chance (21% vs. 7%).

Again, personal experiences are connected to thinking on this issue. Married adults who lived with their spouse before getting married are far more likely than those who didn't to see living together first as increasing a couple's chances for marital success (57% vs. 24%). Conversely, married adults who didn't live with their spouse before getting married are among the most pessimistic about how

About half say couples who live together first are more likely to have a successful marriage

% saying that, compared with couples who don't live together before marriage, couples who DO live together before marriage have a ___ of having a successful marriage

	Better chance	Worse chance	Doesn't make much difference
All adults	48	13	38
Ages 18-29	63	10	26
30-49	52	12	35
50-64	42	14	44
65+	37	17	45
Men	53	14	33
Women	45	13	42

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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premarital cohabitation might impact a marriage: 32% say this worsens a couple's chance of having a successful marriage.

Majorities see committed relationships, marriage as important, but not essential, for living a fulfilling life

About seven-in-ten Americans say that, for a man or a woman to live a fulfilling life, being married is either essential or is important but not essential. This includes 16% who say this is essential for a man and 17% who say it's essential for a woman; 54% say being married is important, but not essential, for men and women.

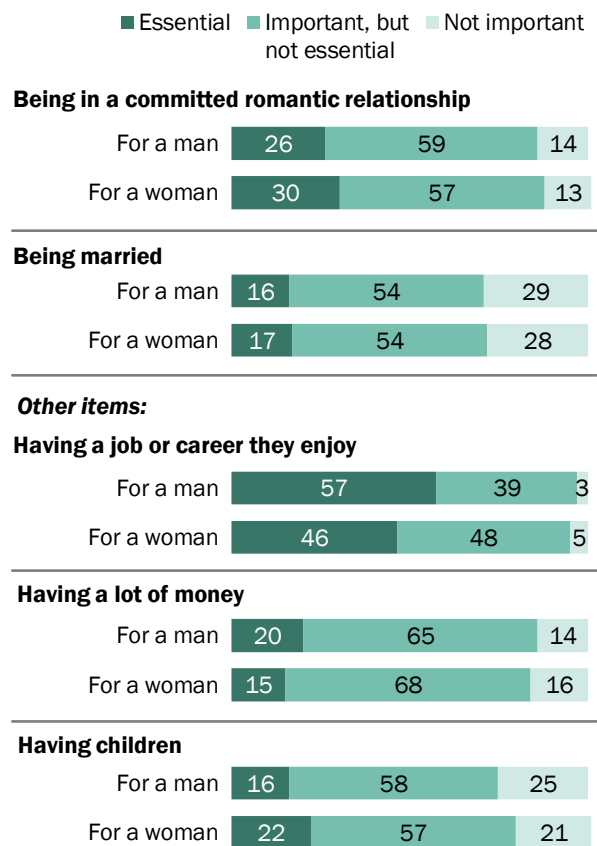
When asked more generally about being in a committed romantic relationship, larger shares see this as important in order to live a fulfilling life. Fully 85% say this is important for a man, including 26% who say it is essential; 87% say it is important for a woman, including 30% who say it is essential.⁸

The survey also asked about how important it is for a man or a woman to have children, a job or career they enjoy and a lot of money in order to live a fulfilling life. Of the items included, having a job or career they enjoy tops the list – nearly all Americans say this is important for personal fulfillment for a man or a woman.

While a 57% majority says having a job or career they enjoy is essential for a man to live a fulfilling life, fewer than half (46%) say it is essential for a woman. For the other items, differences in how essential these things are

About seven-in-ten say being married is important to living a fulfilling life

% saying each of the following is ___ for a man/woman to live a fulfilling life



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. "Being in a committed romantic relationship" and "being married" were each asked of a random half of the sample.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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⁸ Questions about "being in a committed romantic relationship" and "being married" were each asked of a random half of the sample.

seen for a man versus a woman are less pronounced.

When it comes to the importance of marriage, younger adults are more likely than their older counterparts to say that being married is *not* important for a man or a woman to live a fulfilling life. For example, 37% of adults younger than 30 say being married is not important for a man, compared with 30% of those ages 30 to 49, 27% of those 50 to 64 and 20% of those 65 and older.

In addition, there is a gender difference in views on how important being married is for a woman. Women are more likely than men to say being married is not important for a woman to live a fulfilling life (31% vs. 24%).

Married and cohabiting adults differ substantially in their opinions on this question. About four-in-ten adults who are living with a partner say being married is not important for a man or a woman to live a fulfilling life; 20% of married adults say the same.

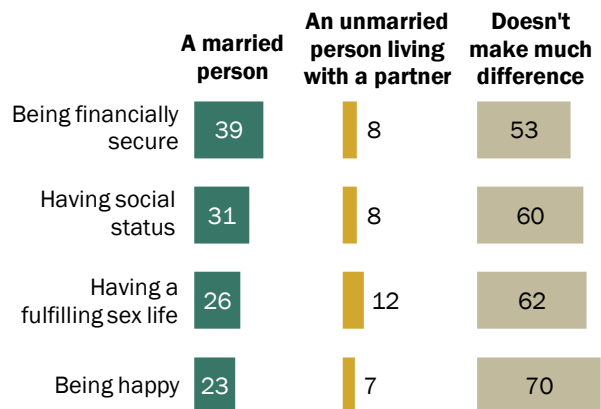
In a separate survey conducted this year, 43% of Americans agreed that the institution of marriage is becoming obsolete, virtually unchanged from when Pew Research Center last asked this question in 2010.⁹

Public sees some personal advantages in marriage over cohabitation

When asked whether married or cohabiting people have it easier when it comes to achieving certain goals, Americans generally don't see much difference. To the extent that people see a difference, married people are seen as having the advantage. About four-in-ten Americans (39%) say a married person has it easier when it comes to being financially secure, and 31% say the same about having social status. Roughly a quarter say a married person has it easier when it comes to having a fulfilling sex life (26%) and being happy (23%). About one-in-ten or fewer

Public sees some advantages for married over cohabiters, but mostly don't see a difference

% saying ___ has it easier when it comes to achieving each of the following goals



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
"Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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⁹ For details, see the [Methodology](#) section of the report.

say an unmarried person living with a partner has it easier than a married person in these areas.

On each of the four items included in the survey, married adults are more likely than those who are cohabiting to see advantages for a married person. For example, 30% of married adults say a married person has it easier when it comes to being happy; 4% say cohabiters have it easier in this regard. Conversely, among cohabiting adults, just 8% say a married person has the advantage, while 12% say a cohabiting person has it easier.

In addition, men are more likely than women to say a married person has it easier across each of these areas. Adults ages 65 and older tend to see more advantage for married people as well, compared with their younger counterparts.

Even among those who say society is just as well off if couples who want to stay together long-term decide not to marry, marriage is seen as having certain advantages, with 31% saying a married person has it easier when it comes to being financially secure and 25% saying they have an edge in terms of having social status; about one-in-ten say cohabiters have it easier in these areas (10% and 11%, respectively).

3. Why people get married or move in with a partner

The decision to get married or to move in with a partner is a personal one, but for most married and cohabiting adults, love and companionship trump other considerations, such as the desire to have children someday, convenience or finances. For a majority of those who are married – especially if they didn’t live with their spouse before marriage – wanting to make a formal commitment is also a major factor in their decision to marry.

Among married adults who lived with their spouse before getting married and who were not engaged when they moved in together, about two-thirds say they thought of living together as a step toward marriage; 44% of adults who are currently living with a partner and were not engaged when they first started doing so say they thought of it that way when they moved in together.

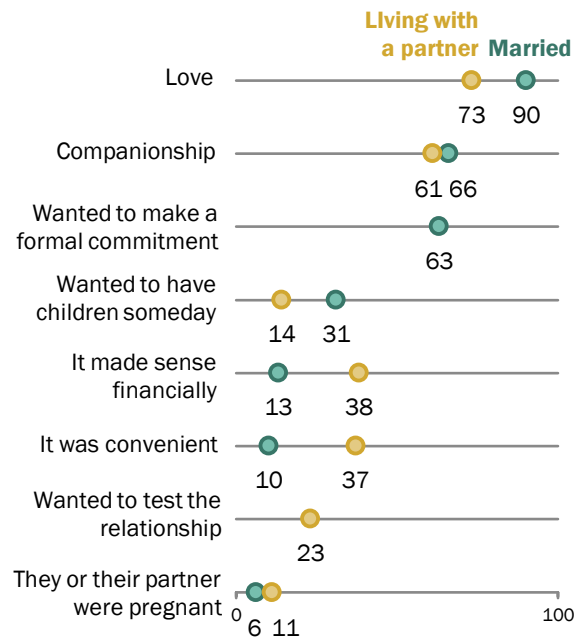
About four-in-ten cohabiters who are not engaged say they want to get married someday, and 58% in this group say they are very likely to marry their current partner. When asked why they are not currently engaged or married to their partner, many cite financial reasons.

About four-in-ten cohabiting adults cite finances and convenience as major reasons why they moved in with their partner

Among married and cohabiting adults, love is cited more than any other reason for why they decided to get married or to move in with their partner: 90% of those who are married and 73% of those living with a partner say love was a major factor in their decision. Majorities in both groups also cite companionship as a major reason why they decided to get married (66%) or to move in

Reasons for marriage and cohabitation differ considerably on some dimensions

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying each of the following was a major reason why they decided to get married or move in with their partner



Note: “Wanted to make a formal commitment” was asked of married adults only; “Wanted to test the relationship” was asked of cohabiting adults only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. “Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.”

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with their partner (61%), and 63% of those who are married say they wanted to make a formal commitment.

Making a formal commitment is seen as a more important factor by married adults who did not live with their spouse before marriage. Seven-in-ten in this group say making a formal commitment was a major reason why they decided to get married, compared with 57% of married adults who had already been living together.

More practical reasons come into play to a greater degree for cohabiting adults than for those who are married. About four-in-ten cohabiting adults say moving in with their partner made sense financially (38% say this was a major reason why they decided to move in together) or that it was convenient (37%). Far smaller shares of married adults say these were major factors in their decision to get married (13% and 10%, respectively).

In turn, married adults are about twice as likely as those living with a partner to say that the fact that they wanted to have children someday was a major reason why they decided to get married: 31% of those who are married say this, compared with 14% of cohabiters who cite wanting to have children as a major reason why they decided to move in with their partner.

Among cohabiters, women are more likely than men to say love and wanting to have children someday were major reasons why they moved in with their partner. Eight-in-ten cohabiting women cite love as a major factor, compared with 63% of cohabiting men. And while 17% of women say wanting children in the future was a major factor in their decision to move in with their partner, 11% of men say the same. There are no notable gender differences among married adults.

There are also some differences across educational groups among married and cohabiting adults. About half of cohabiters with a bachelor's degree or more education say finances (48%) or convenience (50%) were major factors in their decision to move in with their partner, compared with about a third of those with less education (36% cite finances and 33%

Cohabiting women are more likely than men to say love was a major factor in their decision to move in with partner

% of adults who are living with a partner saying love was a ___ why they decided to move in with their partner

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason
All living with a partner	73	19	8
Men	63	29	8
Women	80	11	8

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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cite convenience as major reasons). About one-in-ten cohabiters with some college or less education (13%) say a major reason for moving in together was that they or their partner were pregnant; just 4% of those with a bachelor's degree or more education say the same. Among married adults, those with a bachelor's degree or more education are more likely than those with less education to cite companionship (74% vs. 62%), wanting to make a formal commitment (70% vs. 58%) and wanting to have children someday (39% vs. 27%) as major reasons why they decided to get married.

For the most part, reasons for moving in together don't vary considerably between cohabiters who are either engaged or in an otherwise very serious relationship and those who do not describe their relationship as very serious. But those who are engaged to their partner (78%) or who are not engaged but describe their relationship as very serious (83%) are far more likely than those who are in a less serious relationship (44%) to say love was a major factor in their decision to live with their partner. Cohabiters who are engaged (21%) or in a very serious relationship (15%) are also more likely than those who are not engaged and do not describe their relationship as very serious (7%) to say wanting to have children someday was an important part of their decision to move in with their partner.

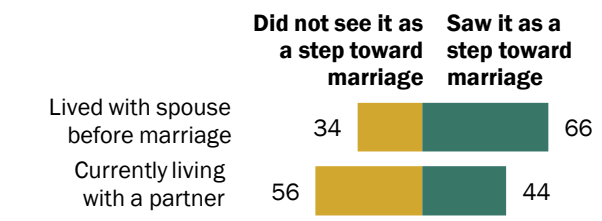
Overall, about a quarter of those who are living with a partner say they are engaged to be married (27%), while half are not engaged but describe their relationship as very serious; 23% of cohabiters are not engaged and do not describe their relationship as very serious.

Many see living with a partner as a step toward marriage

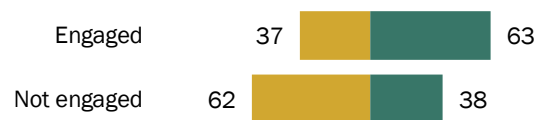
Among married adults who lived with their spouse before they were married and who were not yet engaged when they moved in together, 66% say they saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage when they first started living with their now-spouse. About four-in-ten cohabiters who were not engaged when they moved in with their partner (44%) say they thought of it this way when they started living with their partner,

Many see cohabitation as a step toward marriage

*Among married adults who lived with their spouse before marriage or adults who are currently living with a partner, % saying they did/did not think of living together as a step toward marriage when they first started living together**



Among those who are living with a partner



* All figures based on those who were not engaged when they first started living with their partner.

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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but the share rises to 63% when looking only at those who have since gotten engaged. A majority of married adults who lived with their spouse before marriage (73%) or who are currently engaged (84%) say they were not engaged when they first moved in with their partner.

Among cohabiters who are not currently engaged, half of those with a bachelor's degree or more education (50%) and 43% of those with some college say they saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage when they first started living with their partner; smaller shares of those with a high school diploma or less education (28%) say the same.

About a quarter of non-engaged cohabiters don't want to get married

About four-in-ten adults who are living with a partner and are not currently engaged (41%) say they want to get married someday, while 24% say they do not want to get married and 35% are not sure. Cohabiters who have never been married (49%) are more likely than those who are divorced or widowed (23%) to say they want to get married in the future.

About six-in-ten cohabiters who are not engaged and say they would like to get married in the future (58%) say they are very likely to marry their current partner; 27% say this is somewhat likely, while 14% say it is not too or not at all likely that they will marry their partner. About one-in-five in this group (18%) say they and their partner often talk about getting married, while 48% say they talk about this sometimes and 34% say they and their partner rarely or never talk about getting married.

About half of cohabiters who have never been married want to marry someday

% of adults who are living with a partner and not engaged saying they ...

	Want to get married someday	Don't want to get married someday	Not sure
All living with a partner and not engaged	41	24	35
Never married	49	15	36
Previously married	23	44	32

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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Many non-engaged cohabiters who want to get married someday cite finances as a reason why they're not engaged or married

Two-thirds of cohabiting adults who are not engaged but say they would like to get married someday cite either their partner or themselves not being ready financially as a major or minor reason why they are not engaged or married to their current partner. About three-in-ten (29%) say their partner not being ready financially is a major reason and another 24% say this is a minor reason why they are not engaged or married. Similarly, 27% say their own lack of financial readiness is a major reason, while 29% say it is a minor reason.

Among adults who are living with a partner and are not engaged but want to get married someday, 21% say the fact that they are not far enough along in their job or career is a major reason why they are not engaged or married to their current partner; another 24% say this is a minor reason.

These cohabiters are more likely to cite their partner (26%) than themselves (14%) not being ready to make that kind of commitment as a major reason why they are not engaged or married; 29% cite their own lack of readiness in this regard as a minor reason (21% say the same about their partner's lack of readiness), while about half say each of these is not a reason.

Among non-engaged cohabiters who want to get married someday, many cite finances as a reason why they are not engaged or married to their partner

Among those who are living with a partner and are not engaged, but would like to get married someday, % saying each of the following is a ___ why they are not engaged or married to their current partner

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason
Partner is not ready financially	29	24	47
They are not ready financially	27	29	44
Partner is not ready to make that kind of commitment	26	21	53
They are not far enough along in their job or career	21	24	56
Not sure their partner is the right person for them	17	21	61
They are not ready to make that kind of commitment	14	29	56

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.

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The survey also posed this question to cohabiters who are not engaged and *are not* sure they want to get married someday. For the most part, this group is less likely than those who *do* want to marry to cite the above reasons as explanations for why they're not currently engaged or married to their current partner. There are two exceptions, however. Cohabitors who aren't sure if they want to marry are more likely to say not being personally ready to make that kind of commitment and not being sure their partner is the right person for them are reasons why they are not engaged or married to their current partner.

In general, cohabiters don't feel much pressure to get married

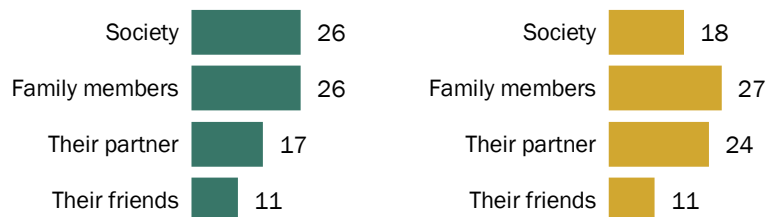
Relatively small shares of cohabiters who are not engaged say they feel pressure to marry their partner: about a quarter say they feel at least some pressure from family members (26%) or from society (26%), while even smaller shares say they feel pressure from their partner (17%) or from their friends (11%). Similar shares of engaged cohabiters who got engaged after moving in with their partner say they felt pressure to get married after they moved in together.

Adults who are living with a partner don't necessarily feel pressure to get married

% of adults who are living with a partner saying they feel/felt a lot or some pressure to marry their partner from each of the following ...

Among those who are not currently engaged

Among those who got engaged after moving in together



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.

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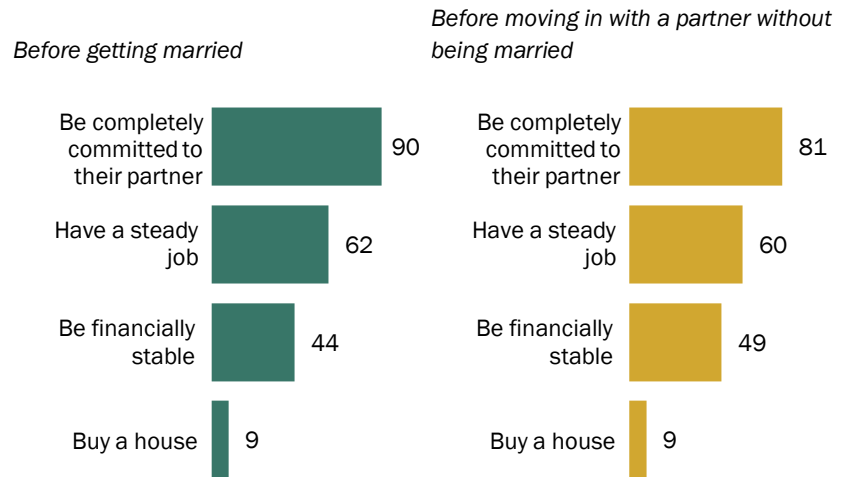
Among non-engaged cohabiters in opposite-sex relationships, men (24%) are more likely than women (12%) to say they feel at least some pressure from their partner to get married.

Americans see commitment as a prerequisite to both marriage and cohabitation

Most U.S. adults say it is very important for a person to be completely committed to their partner before getting married (90%) or moving in with a partner without being married (81%).¹⁰ About six-in-ten think it's very important for a person to have a steady job before getting married (62%) or moving in with a partner (60%), and 9% say it's very important for a person to buy a house before doing each of those things. About half (49%) say being financially stable is very important before moving in with a partner; 44% say this is very important for a person to do before getting married.

The public largely sees the same prerequisites for marriage and cohabitation

% saying it is very important for a person to do each of the following ...



Note: The questions about what a person should do before getting married and before moving in with a partner were each asked of a random half of the sample.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.

"Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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For the most part, women are more likely than men to say each of these is very important for a person to do before getting married or moving in with a partner. For example, about two-thirds of women say it's very important for a person to have a steady job before getting married (67% vs. 58% of men) or moving in with a partner (66% vs. 54%). And while about half of women say it's very important for a person to be financially stable before getting married (48%) or moving in with a partner (53%), smaller shares of men say the same (40% say this is very important before marriage and 44% say it is very important before moving in with a partner).

Adults with some college or less education are more likely than those with at least a bachelor's degree to say it's very important for a person to have a steady job (68% vs. 50%) or to be financially stable (47% vs. 38%) before getting married. Those without a college degree are also more likely than college graduates to say having a steady job is very important before moving in

¹⁰ The questions about what a person should do before getting married and before moving in with a partner were each asked of a random half of the sample.

with a partner (64% vs. 52%), but similar shares across educational attainment – about half in each group – say being financially stable is very important prior to cohabitation.

Cohabiting adults are more likely than those who are married to see being financially stable as a prerequisite for marriage: About half of those living with a partner (49%) say this is very important for a person to do before getting married, compared with 39% of married adults. Cohabiting adults are also more likely to say buying a house is very important before getting married, although small shares of cohabiters (12%) and those who are married (8%) say this. And while large majorities of both groups say it's very important to be completely committed to their partner, married adults (92%) are more likely than those who are cohabiting (81%) to say this.

When it comes to possible prerequisites for cohabitation, there are no significant differences between married and cohabiting adults when it comes to the importance of being completely committed to one's partner, having a steady job, buying a house or being financially stable before moving in with a partner.

4. How married and cohabiting adults see their relationships

Married adults are more satisfied in general with their relationship than are those who are living with a partner. And they express higher levels of satisfaction with several specific aspects of their relationship. In addition, those who are married are more likely than those who are cohabiting to say they have a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner to be faithful to them, act in their best interest, always tell them the truth and handle money responsibly.

From the division of household chores, to how well their spouse or partner balances work and personal life, to how well they and their spouse or partner communicate, married adults are more likely than cohabiters to say they are very satisfied. The only area where married and cohabiting adults are equally satisfied is in their sex life: Similar shares of both groups (about a third) say they are very satisfied with this aspect of their relationship.

Married adults are also more likely to say their spouse is the adult in their life they feel closest to than those who cohabit are to say the same about their partner; 78% of those who are married say this, compared with 55% of cohabiting adults.

The link between marriage (vs. cohabitation) and more positive assessments of the relationship, higher levels of satisfaction with specific aspects, higher levels of trust and closeness remains after controlling for demographic factors, including gender, age, race, religious affiliation and educational attainment, as well as duration of marriage or cohabitation.

Married and cohabiting adults give similar answers when asked if they or their spouse or partner do more when it comes to household chores and responsibilities, managing household finances and, among parents of children younger than 18, managing the children's schedule and activities. Among married and cohabiting adults in opposite-sex relationships, women are more likely than men to say they do more than their spouse or partner. In turn, men are more likely to say they do more or that these responsibilities are shared equally.

Married adults have a more positive view of how things are going in their relationship

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying things in their marriage/relationship are going ...

	Very well	Fairly well	Net
All married/Living with a partner	54	39	94
Married	58	37	95
Living with a partner	41	47	88

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Married adults are more likely than those living with a partner to say things are going very well in their relationship

Large majorities of U.S. adults who are married or living with a partner say things are going at least fairly well in their relationship, but those who are married are far more likely to say things are going *very* well. About six-in-ten married adults (58%) say their relationship is going very well, compared with 41% of those living with a partner.

Among cohabiters, about half of those who are engaged to their partners (51%) or who are not engaged but describe their relationship as very serious (52%) say their relationship is going very well. Just 6% of those who are neither engaged nor in a very serious relationship say the same; 53% in this group say things are going fairly well, while 41% say things aren't going too well or are not going well at all.

Assessments of how things are going in their relationship are not related to how long people have been married or living with their partner, and also do not vary significantly by gender or age. Black adults and those without a bachelor's degree are less likely to say things are going very well in their relationship, but the differences virtually disappear after accounting for the fact that these groups are less likely to be married or, if cohabiting, to be engaged or in a very serious relationship.

About half of cohabiters who are engaged or in a very serious relationship say things are going very well

% of adults who are living with a partner saying things in relationship are going ...

	Very well	Fairly well	Net
All living with a partner	41	47	88
Engaged	51	46	97
Not engaged but very serious	52	45	97
Neither engaged nor very serious	6	53	59

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

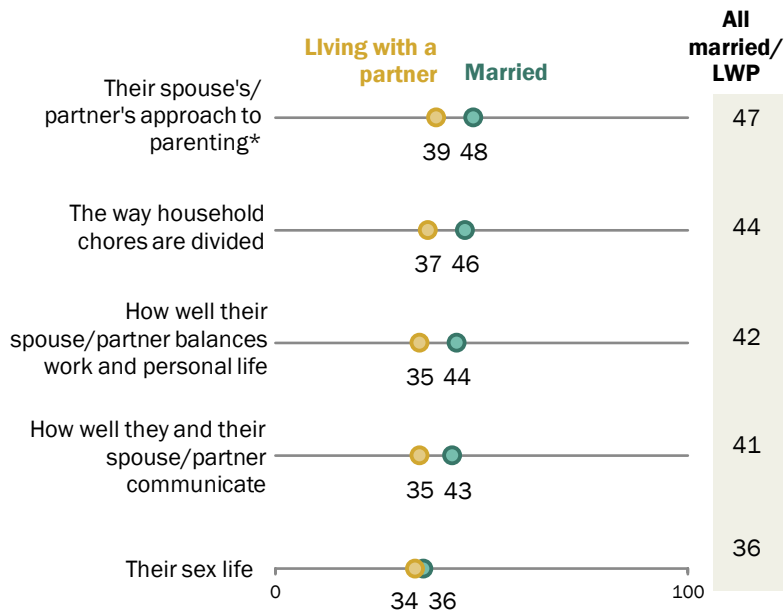
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For the most part, married adults are more satisfied with specific aspects of their relationship

Married adults are more likely than those who are living with a partner to say they are very satisfied with the way household chores are divided between them and their spouse or partner (46% vs. 37%), how well their spouse or partner balances work and personal life (44% vs. 35%) and how well they and their spouse or partner communicate (43% vs. 35%). And, among parents with children younger than 18 in the household, those who are married are more likely than those living with a partner to say they are very satisfied with their spouse or partner’s approach to parenting (48% vs. 39%). When it comes to their sex life, however, similar shares of married (36%) and cohabiting (34%) adults say they are very satisfied.

Married adults are generally more satisfied with various aspects of their relationship

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying they are very satisfied with each of the following



* Based on those with children younger than 18 in the household.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
 "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Married men (51%) are more likely than married women (40%) to say they are very satisfied with the way household chores are divided between them and their spouse. And among married fathers, 56% say they are very satisfied with their spouse’s approach to parenting, compared with 42% of married mothers. In turn, married women (39%) are more likely than married men (33%) to say they are very satisfied with their sex life.

Younger married adults are more likely than older married adults to say they are very satisfied with their sex life: 45% of married adults younger than 30 are very satisfied with this aspect of

their relationship, compared with 37% of those ages 30 to 49 and 34% of those 50 and older. For the most part, there are no gender or age differences among cohabiters in how they rate this or other aspects of their relationship. The only exception is in views of how household chores are divided between them and their partner: 56% of cohabiters ages 50 and older are very satisfied, compared with about three-in-ten of those younger than 50.

Married adults generally trust their spouse more than cohabiters trust their partner

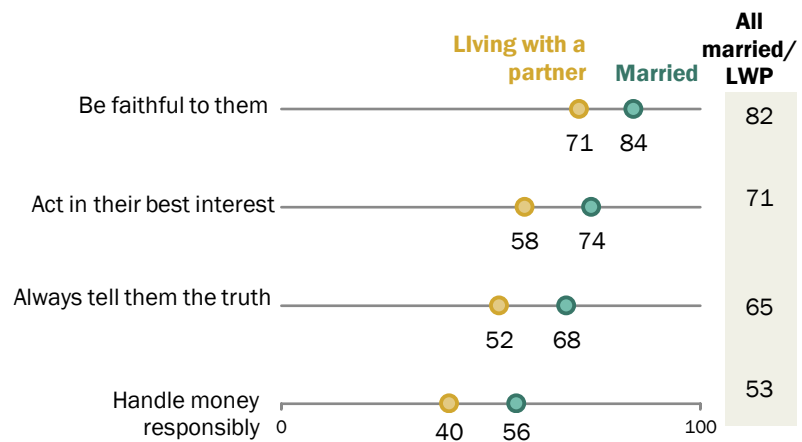
The survey also asked married and cohabiting adults how much they trust their spouse or partner to be faithful to them, act in their best interest, always tell them the truth and handle money responsibly. In each of these areas, majorities of about three-quarters or more say they trust their spouse or partner at least a fair amount. But more say they have a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner to be faithful to them than say the same about each of the other three areas. Conversely, smaller shares express a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner to handle money responsibly than to always tell them the truth, act in their best interest or be faithful. Among married and cohabiting adults,

those ages 50 and older are more likely than those younger than 50 to have a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner to handle money responsibly.

Married adults are more likely than those living with a partner to say they have a great deal of trust in their spouse or partner to be faithful to them (84% vs. 71%), act in their best interest (74% vs. 58%), always tell them the truth (68% vs. 52%) and handle money responsibly (56% vs. 40%). In each of these areas, married men are more likely than married women to express a great deal of

At least two-thirds of those who are married have a great deal of trust in their spouse to be faithful, act in their best interest and always tell them the truth

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying they trust their spouse or partner a great deal to ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.
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trust in their spouse, although majorities of both do so; no such gender difference is evident among cohabiters.

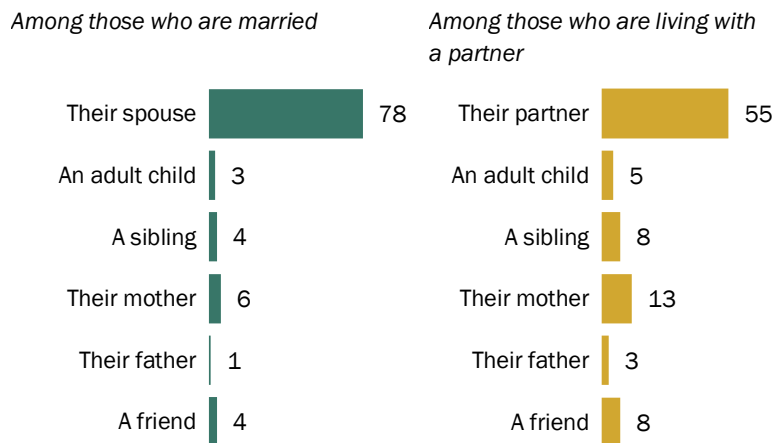
A majority of married and cohabiting adults say they feel closer to their spouse or partner than to any other adult

When asked about the adult in their life they feel closest to, about eight-in-ten married adults (78%) name their spouse. A smaller share of cohabiters, though still a majority (55%), say their partner is the person they feel closest to.

Cohabitors who are engaged to their partners (65%) or who are not engaged but say their relationship is very serious (63%) are far more likely than those who are neither engaged nor in a very serious relationship (28%) to say they feel closer to their partner than to any other adult. About one-in-five cohabiters who do not describe their relationship as very serious (19%) say a friend is the person they feel closest to, compared with 2% of cohabiters who are engaged and 6% of those who are not engaged but say their relationship is very serious.

Among those who are married, about eight-in-ten say their spouse is the person they feel closest to

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying ___ is the person they feel closest to



Note: Respondents were asked to think about the adults in their life. "Another family member" and "someone else" response categories not shown. Respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Among those who are married to an opposite-sex spouse, men (85%) are more likely than women (70%) to say their spouse is the adult they feel closest to; there is no significant gender gap among those living with a partner.

Large shares of married and cohabiting adults say most people in their family consider their spouse or partner to be part of their family

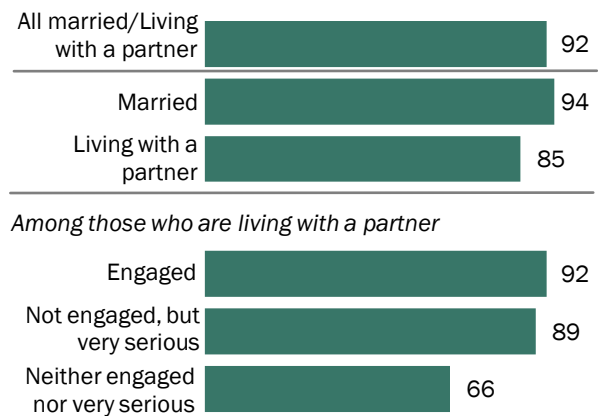
More than nine-in-ten married adults (94%) and 85% of those who are living with a partner say most people in their family would consider their spouse or partner to be part of their family.

Cohabitors who are engaged (92%) or who are not engaged but consider their relationship to be very serious (89%) are more likely than those who do not see their relationship as very serious (66%) to say most people in their family see their partner as part of the family.

Married or cohabiting adults in opposite-sex relationships are more likely than those in same-sex relationships to say most people in their family see their spouse or partner as a member of their family. Still, most adults with same-sex and opposite-sex spouses or partners say most in their family consider that person a member.

Most married or cohabiting adults say family members see their spouse or partner as part of the family

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying most people in their family consider their spouse or partner to be part of their family



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Among married and cohabiting adults, perceptions of how household responsibilities are divided vary by gender

Among married and cohabiting adults in opposite-sex relationships, women are more likely than men to say they do more than their spouse or partner when it comes to household chores and responsibilities, managing household finances and, among parents, managing their children's schedule and activities. In turn, men are more likely to say they do more than their spouse or partner or that they share responsibilities equally. Views on how responsibilities are shared are similar between those who are married and those living with a partner.

About six-in-ten women in opposite-sex relationships (59%) say they do more than their spouse or partner when it comes to household chores and responsibilities; just 9% say their spouse or partner does more, and 32% say these responsibilities are shared about equally. Among men who are in a relationship with a woman, a plurality (42%) say they and their spouse or partner share these responsibilities about equally, while 36% say their spouse or partner does more and 21% say they do more than their spouse or partner.

When it comes to perceptions of who does more in managing household finances, the views of men and women are near opposites of each other. About half of women who are married to or living with a man (52%) say they do more than their spouse or partner in this area, while 22% say their spouse or partner does more. Conversely, about half of men in opposite-sex relationships (49%) say *they* do more than their spouse or partner when it comes to managing household finances, while 25% say their spouse or partner does more. A quarter of men and women say this responsibility is shared about equally.

Women and men have different perceptions of division of labor at home

% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying that, when it comes to each of the following ...

Household chores and responsibilities

	Woman does more	Man does more	Both about equally
Men	36	21	42
Women	59	9	32

Managing household finances

	Woman does more	Man does more	Both about equally
Men	25	49	25
Women	52	22	25

*Managing their children's schedule and activities**

	Woman does more	Man does more	Both about equally
Men	62	10	27
Women	78	3	18

* Based on those with children younger than 18 in the household. Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Analysis based on those who are married to or living with a partner of the opposite sex.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019. "Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S."

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Among married or cohabiting mothers with children younger than 18 in the household, 78% say they do more than their spouse or partner when it comes to managing the children’s schedule and activities; 62% of fathers agree that their spouse or partner does more in this regard.

Women who say their spouse or partner does more when it comes to household chores or that they both share these responsibilities about equally are far more likely than those who say they do more to say they are very satisfied with the way chores are divided: 68% of those who say this is divided about equally and 65% of those who say their spouse or partner does more are very satisfied with this aspect of their relationship, compared with 20% of those who say they are mostly responsible for household chores.

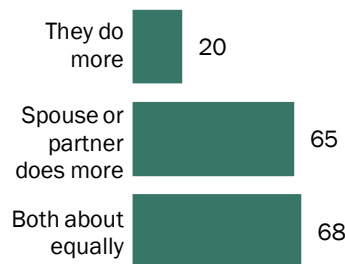
Men are more likely to be very satisfied with the way things are going in this regard when chores are divided about

equally; 63% of men who say chores are divided about equally are very satisfied with the way chores are divided between them and their spouse or partner, compared with 52% of men who say their spouse or partner does more and 19% of those who say they do more.

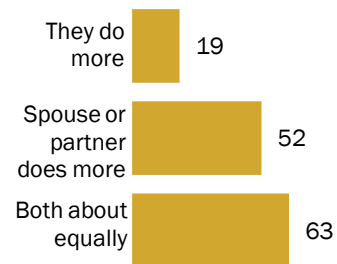
Men and women are more satisfied with the way household chores are divided when their spouse or partner does more or when both share it equally

*% of adults who are married or living with a partner saying they are **very satisfied** with the way household chores are divided between them and their spouse or partner*

Among **women** who say that, when it comes to household chores and responsibilities ...



Among **men** who say that, when it comes to household chores and responsibilities ...



Note: Analysis based on those who are married to or living with a partner of the opposite sex. Bars represent the shares in each group who say they are very satisfied with the way household chores are divided between them and their spouse or partner.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 25-July 8, 2019.

“Marriage and Cohabitation in the U.S.”

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report are drawn from the panel wave conducted June 25 to July 8, 2019. A total of 9,834 panelists responded out of 13,454 who were sampled, for a response rate of 73%. This does not include 11 panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3.5%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged onto the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 9,834 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,501
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,464
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	800
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,689
	Total	29,114	18,720	13,454

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a

postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,454 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹¹

Weighting

The ATP data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents’ original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017 some respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and test of statistical-significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel’s Hispanic sample is predominantly U.S. born and English speaking.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2018 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteer Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

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¹¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#).”

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	9,834	1.5 percentage points
Married	5,579	2.0 percentage points
Cohabiting	880	4.8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

Telephone survey methodology

The analysis of the question about whether the institution of marriage is becoming obsolete is based on telephone interviews conducted June 25 to June 30, 2019, among a national sample of 1,015 adults, ages 18 and older, living in the United States (306 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 709 were interviewed on a cellphone, including 481 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted under the direction of SSRS. A combination of landline and cellphone random-digit-dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone if that person was an adult age 18 or older.

For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cellphone sample is weighted to provide nationally representative estimates of the adult population ages 18 and older. The weighting process takes into account the disproportionate probabilities of household and respondent selection due to the number of separate telephone landlines and cellphones answered by respondents and their households, as well as the probability associated with the random selection of an individual household member. Following application of the above weights, the sample is post-stratified and balanced by key demographics such as age, race, sex, region, education and Hispanic nativity. The sample is also weighted to reflect the distribution of phone usage in the general population, meaning the proportion of those who are cellphone only, landline only, and mixed users.

The following table shows the unweighted sample size and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence in the survey:

Survey conducted June 25-30, 2019

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,015	3.35 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

Secondary data sources and methodology

Chapter 1 of this report is based primarily on two data sources: The Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).

The CPS is conducted jointly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau and produces a nationally representative sample of the non-institutionalized U.S. population. Since 2007, it has asked a direct question about the cohabitation status of all relevant household members. From 1995 to 2006, the cohabitation status of unmarried household heads only was inferred, based on whether anyone else in the household roster was listed as the unmarried partner of the household head. Because cohabitation information was only obtained for the household head, and the partner of the head; and because cohabitation was only established indirectly, the [prevalence of cohabitation was underestimated](#) in these earlier years. Therefore, the size of the rise in cohabitation since 1995 should be interpreted with caution. It's also worth noting that, prior to 2017, the CPS did not allow respondents to report being in a [same-sex marriage](#); instead the Census Bureau recoded same-sex couples as either cohabiting (starting in 2010), or as in opposite-sex marriages (prior to 2010).

The share of adults who are currently married, as measured by the CPS, differs somewhat from the share measured by the decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS). Previous Pew Research Center analyses of marriage rates have relied primarily on decennial census and ACS data.

The CPS microdata used in this report are from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) provided by the University of Minnesota. IPUMS assigns uniform codes, to the extent possible, to data collected in the CPS over the years. More information about IPUMS, including variable definitions and sampling error, is available at <http://cps.ipums.org/cps/documentation.shtml>.

The NSFG is conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, and since 2002 has produced a nationally representative sample of the civilian population of people of childbearing age. Analyses here include respondents ages 18 to 44, and are based primarily on data from the 2013-2015 and the 2015-2017 waves. (Data from these waves were combined in order to increase sample size.)

For the most part, the NSFG obtains information regarding opposite-sex relationships only. This means that any marriages or cohabitations with same-sex partners or spouses are not counted. For instance, if a respondent had ever cohabited one time, and that cohabitation was with a same-sex partner, then the respondent would not be categorized as having ever cohabited; or if a respondent cohabited once with a same-sex partner, and once with an opposite-sex partner, he or she would be classified as having had one cohabitation. By the same token, analyses of married or cohabiting people using the NSFG data include only those who have a spouse or partner of the opposite-sex. Anyone who is married or cohabiting with a same-sex partner is excluded. In both the CPS and the NSFG, respondents who are separated from their spouses are not classified as married.

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