



U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

NRFC Quick Statistics



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Fathers and Cohabitation

Percent of Poor, Unmarried Mothers and Fathers That Agree with Statements Regarding Cohabitation for Parents with Children Born 1998-2000

	Mothers	Fathers
Cohabiting Produces Benefits of Marriage	58%	66%
Cohabiting Without Marriage Okay	66%	78%
Cohabiting Reduces Chances of Divorce	55%	66%
Single Parent Can Raise Child as Well as Married Couple	87%	64%

Source: Mincy, Ron et al. Fragile Families in Focus: Executive Summary. Chart VIII. Baton Rouge, LA: TANF Executive Office of Oversight and Evaluation, 2004: 12.

Note: Analyses use data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study which is representative of all non-marital births and nearly representative of marital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000.

- More than three quarters of poor unmarried fathers (78 percent) believe that cohabiting without marriage is okay. Mothers are also likely to agree with this statement but less so than fathers (66 percent).
- More than two-thirds of poor, unmarried parents agree that a single parent can raise a child as well as a married couple. Fathers, however, are less likely to agree with this statement than mothers (64 percent for fathers and 87 percent for mothers).
- More than half of poor unmarried fathers (66 percent) agree that cohabiting reduces the chances of divorce.

Percentage of Adults Ages 18 to 65 who Agree or Strongly Agree That it is All Right for a Couple to Live Together without Intending to get Married, by Parental Status: 1994 & 1998

	Males		Females	
	1994	1998	1994	1998
Total	49	51	37	38
Parent	40	44	35	32
Nonparent	66	64	47	57

Note: Estimates calculated by Child Trends based on analyses of the 1994 and 1998 General Social Surveys.
Source: Child Trends. (2002). "Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers." Washington, D.C.: Child Trends.

Responses to the Statement, “A young couple should not live together unless they are married,” Among Men Ages 15-44, by Age, 2002

	Number (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All (15-44 years)	61,147	9.0%	23.1%	2.1%	52.6%	13.3%
15-19 years	10,208	7.3%	25.0%	.9%	55.1%	11.7%
20-24 years	9,883	8.8%	18.7%	1.2%	55.9%	15.5%
25-29 years	9,226	8.5%	23.5%	1.5%	51.6%	14.8%
30-34 years	10,138	10.5%	22.2%	2.6%	49.9%	14.8%
35-39 years	10,557	8.2%	27.1%	3.5%	50.3%	10.9%
40-44 years	11,135	10.4%	21.7%	2.6%	52.6%	12.7%

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, nearly two-thirds (65.9 percent) of men ages 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “a young couple should not live together unless they are married.”
- About one in the three men (32.1 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that couples should not live together unless married.
- Men’s attitudes regarding cohabitation did not differ greatly across age groups.

Responses to the Statement, “A young couple should not live together unless they are married,” Among Men Ages 22-44, by Educational Attainment, 2002

	Number (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagre e	Strongly Disagre e
All*	61,147	9.0%	23.1%	2.1%	52.6%	13.3%
No high school diploma or GED	6,355	5.2%	31.1%	3.7%	49.7%	10.3%
High school diploma or GED	15,659	10.0%	24.3%	2.4%	51.9%	11.4%
Some college, no bachelor’s degree	13,104	10.8%	22.1%	1.9%	53.7%	11.6%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	11,901	10.4%	17.9%	2.2%	49.8%	19.7%

*Education data is limited to men aged 22-44, “All” category includes men 15-44.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, nearly two-thirds (65.9 percent) of men ages 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “a young couple should not live together unless they are married.”
- Men with higher levels of education appear to be more supportive of cohabitation but differences are small.

Responses to the Statement, “A young couple should not live together unless they are married,” Among Men Ages 15-44, by Race/Ethnicity, 2002

	Number (000s)	Strongl y Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagre e	Disagre e	Strongl y Disagre e
All*	61,147	9.0%	23.1%	2.1%	52.6%	13.3%
Hispanic or Latino	10,188	7.5%	32.6%	2.3%	48.7%	9.0%
Non-Hispanic White	38,738	8.8%	19.1%	2.1%	54.4%	15.6%
Non-Hispanic Black	6,940	10.7%	27.0%	1.9%	51.4%	9.1%

*Includes men of other or multiple race and origin groups and not shown separately.

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, nearly two-thirds (65.9 percent) of men ages 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “a young couple should not live together unless they are married.”

- Seven out of ten non-Hispanic white men (70 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that couples should not live together unless married, slightly higher than other racial/ethnic groups.
- Among Hispanic men, 40.1 percent agreed or strongly agreed that couples should not live together outside of marriage, slightly higher than other racial/ethnic groups.

**Responses to the Statement, “A young couple should not live together unless they are married,” Among Men Ages 15-44,
by Reported Importance of Religion in their Lives, 2002**

	Number (000s)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All*	61,147	9.0%	23.1%	2.1%	52.6%	13.3%
Very important	23,586	18.0%	36.9%	2.4%	36.2%	6.5%
Somewhat important	20,010	3.9%	18.4%	2.1%	63.6%	12.0%
Not important	17,403	2.6%	9.7%	1.6%	61.9%	24.2%

*Includes men with missing information on importance of religion

Source: Martinez GM, Chandra A., Abma JC, Jones J, Mosher WD. *Fertility, Contraception, and Fatherhood: Data on Men and Women From Cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(26). 2006.

- In 2002, nearly two-thirds (65.9 percent) of men ages 15-44 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “a young couple should not live together unless they are married.”
- Over half of men (54.9 percent) who report religion as being very important agreed or strongly agreed that couples should not live together unless they are married. This is true for only 12.3 percent of men who report that religion is not important.
- Nearly 7 in 8 men (86.1 percent) who rate religion as not important disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that couples should not live together unless they are married.

Number of Unmarried Couple Households by Presence of Children Under Age 15, 1960-2000

	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
Total number of unmarried couple households (000s)	439	523	1,589	1,983	2,856	3,308	3,661	3,958	4,236	4,736
Number of unmarried couple households with children under 15 years	197	196	431	603	891	1,121	1,270	1,442	1,520	1,675
Percent total unmarried couples households with children under 15 years	44.9%	37.4%	27.1%	30.4%	31.3%	33.8%	34.6%	36.4%	35.9%	35.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *Current Population Reports*, P20-537. Table UC-1. Washington, DC.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2001 in (2002). *Father Facts 4*. Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative. Pg 76.

- The total number of unmarried couple households and unmarried couple households with children under 15 years increased between 1960 and 2000.
- The percentage of total unmarried couple households with children under 15 years decreased between 1960 and 1980 and then increased from 1980 to 2000.
- In 2000, about one in three (35.4 percent) unmarried couple households had children under 15 years of age.