



Marriage Duration at Time of Gray Divorce

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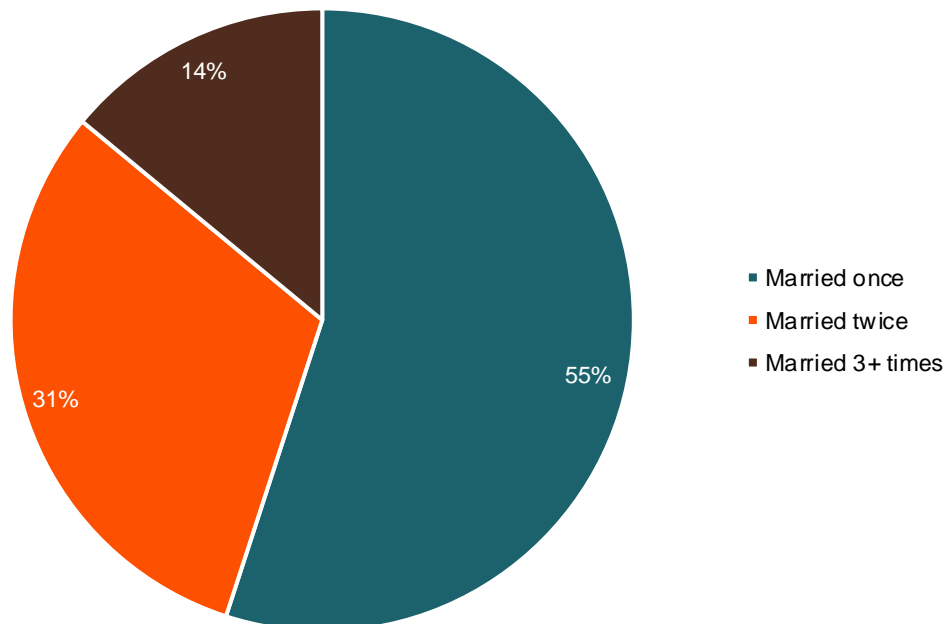
Divorce increasingly occurs among adults aged 50 and older, an event termed gray divorce (Brown & Lin, 2012). From 1990 to 2010, the rate of gray divorce doubled, a trend that belied a modest decline in the overall divorce rate during this same period. More recently, the gray divorce rate has largely stagnated, and even declined slightly for adults aged 50-64, signaling that gray divorce is largely a Baby Boomer phenomenon (Brown, Lin, & Julian, 2024). The rapid acceleration in gray divorce coupled with the aging of the married population means that a growing share of divorces in the U.S. occurs to middle-aged and older adults. Whereas only 8% of all persons divorcing in 1990 were aged 50 or older, today the share is nearly 40% (Brown et al., 2024). In this profile, we use data from the 2022 American Community Survey to examine the marital characteristics of people experiencing a gray divorce in the past year. Specifically, we track their marital history and marital duration.

Number of Times Married

- In 2022, over half (55%) of those aged 50+ who divorced last year and were currently divorced had been married one time. Nearly one-third (31%) had been married twice and 14% had been married three or more times.
- Nearly all individuals aged 50+ who divorced in the last year did not remarry quickly. Among those aged 50 and older who divorced in the last year 2.9% had also remarried in the last year, slightly larger shares among males (3.8%) versus females (1.9%) (not shown).

Figure 1. Times Married Among Those Who Divorced in the Past 12 Months

Population Aged 50+, Currently Divorced & Divorced in the Past Year

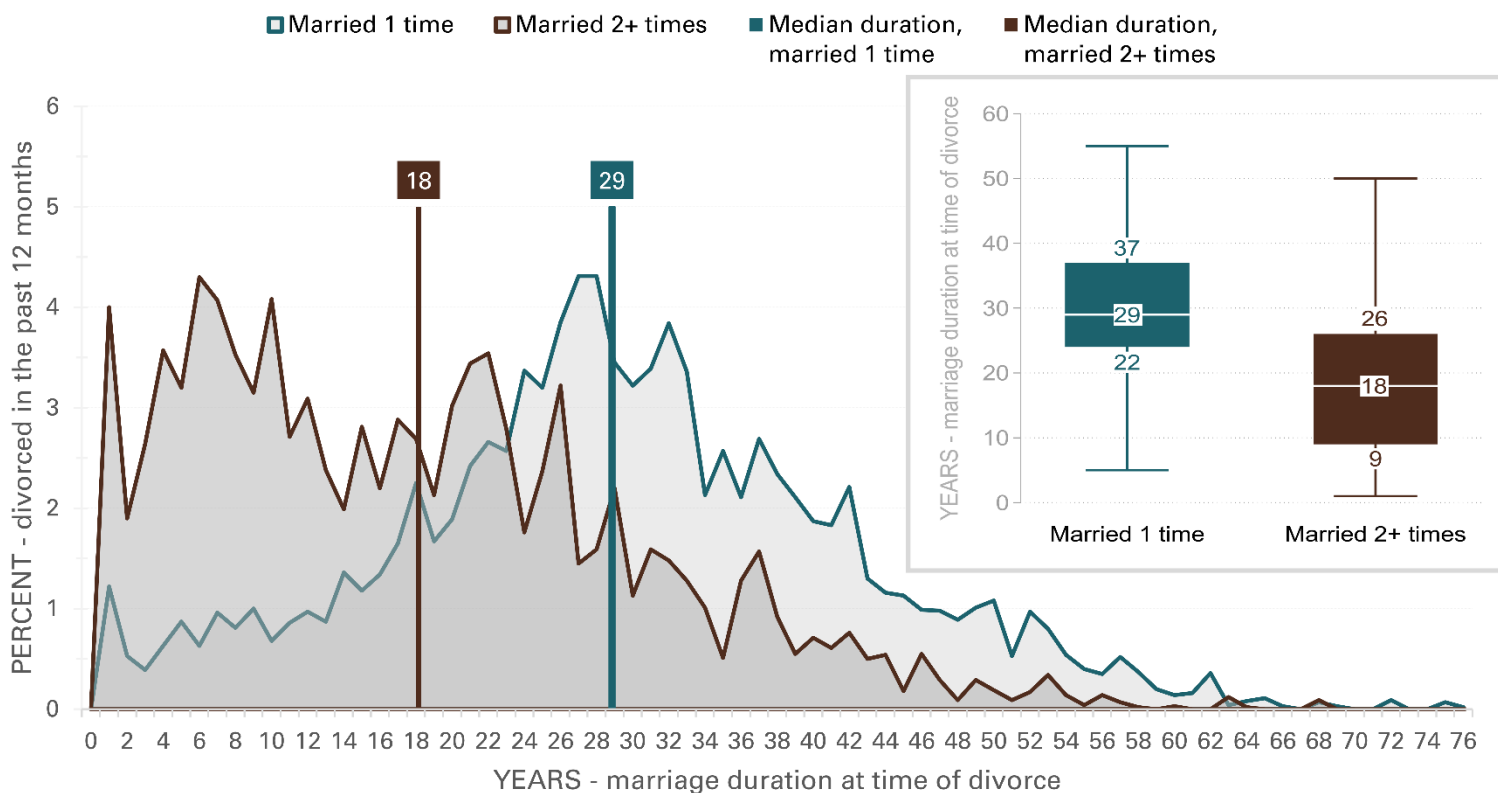


The Distribution of Marriage Duration

- The median marital duration at time of first divorce in 2022 among those aged 50 and older was 29 years. In contrast, among those in a remarriage the median duration was 18 years.
 - For those over the age of 50 and divorced for the first time in 2022, one-quarter of those divorcing had been married for 22 or fewer years (25th percentile) and one-quarter had been married for 37 years or more (75th percentile).
 - For those divorcing in 2022 from a second or higher-order marriage, one-quarter had been married for 9 or fewer years (25th percentile) and one-quarter had been married for 26 years or more (75th percentile).
- The marital duration among those who divorced was typically more than five years. For those experiencing a first divorce, a total of 3.6% had been married for five or fewer years when they divorced. The share married five or fewer years at the time of divorce among those who had been married more than once was five-times greater at 15.3%.

Figure 2a. Distribution of Marriage Duration at Time of Gray Divorce by Marriage Order

Population Aged 50+, Currently Divorced & Divorced in the Past Year



Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey, 1 year estimates, 2022

Data Source:

United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, 2022

References:

Brown, S. L., & Lin, I.-F. (2012). The gray divorce revolution: Rising divorce among middle-aged and older adults, 1990-2010. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 67(6), 731-741. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbs089>

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