



Women Who Gave Birth Within the Past 12 Months, 2022

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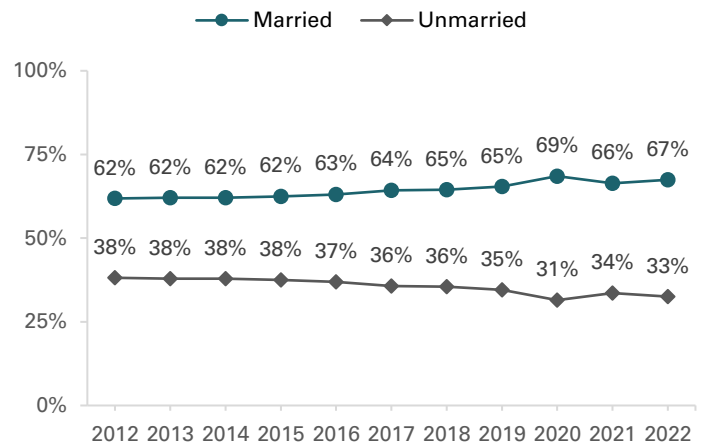
In 2024, the CDC issued a report indicating the United States' general fertility rate (i.e., the total number of births in the year divided by the female population ages 15-44) has decreased for a second year in a row to 54.4 births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 in 2023, which is a decline of 3% from 2022 (Hamilton et al., 2024). Although the fertility rate has declined in the United States, it remains important to explore the marital status of mothers who are giving birth as the share of births to unmarried women accounted for nearly one-third (31%) of all births in 2020 (Brown, 2022). Demographers have tracked the decoupling of marriage and childbearing in the United States (Hayford, Guzzo, & Smock, 2014) and although we identify this trend using the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) for women aged 15-50, we also note an increase in the share of births to married compared to unmarried mothers across a 10-year period (2012-2022). In addition to presenting the 10-year trend in births by women's marital status in the last year, we also present demographic characteristics (educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and age) of currently married and unmarried women aged 15-50 who had a birth in the last 12 months. This profile is an update of [FP-20-17](#) and [FP-22-13](#).

- Data from 2022 indicate approximately 5% of women aged 15-50 gave birth in the past year (not shown) the same as in 2020 (Brown, 2022).

Births in the Past 12 Months, 10-year Trend

- Although the decoupling of marriage and childbearing is well documented, in 2022 the share of births occurring within marriage has remained larger (67%) than the share among unmarried women (33%) and has increased since 2016.
- From 2012 to 2015 the share of births in the last year to married women was 62% and peaked in 2020 at 69%. By 2022 it had dropped slightly to 67%.
- Regarding the share of births in the last year to unmarried women their pattern was the inverse of the share among married women. From 2012 to 2022 the share of unmarried women who gave birth had a net drop of 5%, moving from 38% of all births to 33%.

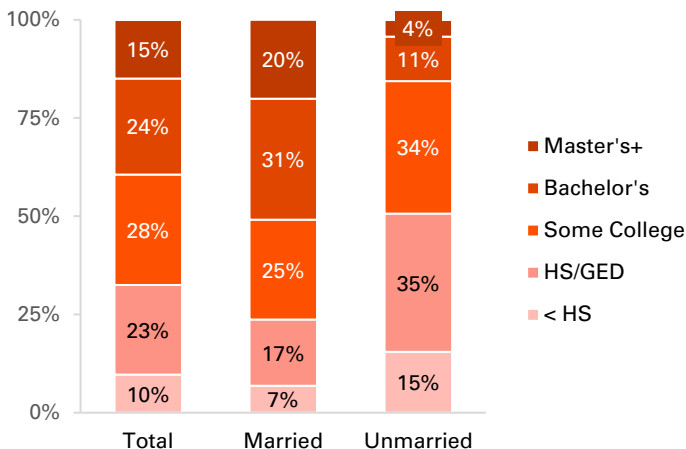
Figure 1. Marital Status and Births, 2012-2022



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

Educational Attainment

Figure 2. Marital Status by Educational Attainment, 2022



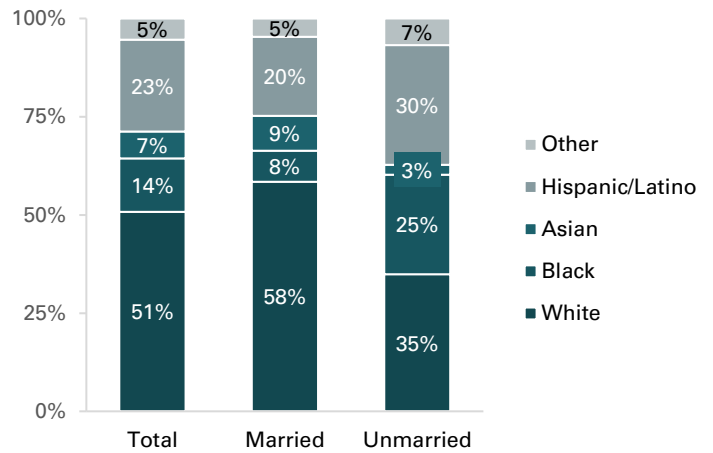
Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey, 1 year estimates, 2022

- Among married women who gave birth in the last year, the largest share had a bachelor's degree (31%) which is nearly three times more than their unmarried counterparts (11%). The difference between married mothers and unmarried mothers who had a master's degree, or more was even greater—20% versus 4%.
- Among unmarried women who gave birth in the last year, one-third (35%) had a high school diploma and about one-third (34%) had some college, accounting for the majority of unmarried women (69%). Conversely, only 42% of married mothers fell into these educational attainment groups.
- The smallest share of married or unmarried women who gave birth in the last year was among those who had less than a high school diploma at 7% and 15%, respectively.

Racial and Ethnic Variation

- Approaching three-fifths (58%) of births in the last year to married women were among White women with the second largest share occurring to Hispanic/Latino women (20%). Among their unmarried counterparts only 35% were White and 30% were Hispanic.
- Among unmarried women who had a birth in the last year, one-fourth were Black (25%) a figure that is more than three times larger than the share among married women. A larger share of Other race/ethnicity (7%) were also unmarried than those who were married, albeit to a lesser extent than among Black women.
- The share of unmarried women who gave birth in the last year who were Asian was much smaller (3%) than among their married counterparts (9%).

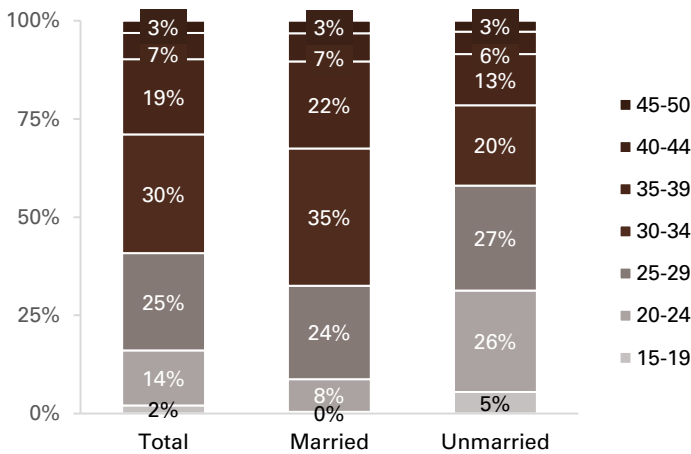
Figure 3. Marital Status by Race/Ethnicity, 2022



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

Age Group

Figure 4. Marital Status by Age Group, 2022



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

- Slightly less than one-third (32%) of married women who had a birth in the last year were below the age of 30 compared to over half (58%) of unmarried women who experienced a birth in the last year.
- The largest share of births to married mothers occurred between the ages of 30 to 34 (35%) compared to unmarried women whose largest share of births occurred between the ages of 25 to 29 (27%).

Data Source:

Ruggles, S., Flood, S., Sobek, M., Backman, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Rodgers, R., & Schouweiler, M. (2023). *IPUMS USA: Version 14.0 (14.0) American Community Survey*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V14.0>

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Brown, A. R. (2022). Women who gave birth within the past 12 months, 2020. *Family Profiles, FP-22-13*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-22-13>

Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Osterman MJK. Births: provisional data for 2023. *Vital Statistics Rapid Release*; no 35. April 2024. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc/151797>.

Hayford, S. R., Guzzo, K. B., & Smock, P. J. (2014). The decoupling of marriage and parenthood? Trends in the timing of marital first births, 1945–2002. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76(3), 520-538.

Schweizer, V. J. (2020). Women Who Gave Birth Within the Past 12 Months, 2018. *Family Profiles, FP-20-17*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-20-17>

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