

High School Seniors' Ideal Time for Marriage

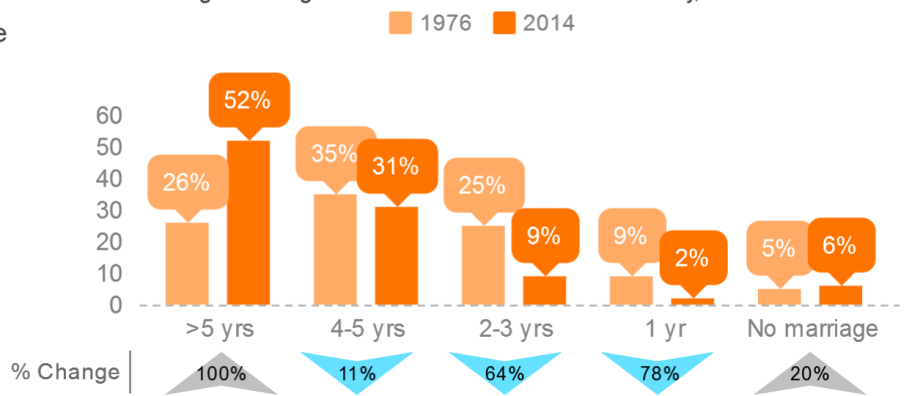


Over the past 40 years, high school seniors' expectations to marry have remained nearly universal. Only 5% of high school seniors in 1976 and 6% in 2014 did not want to marry. Their reported ideal time to marry, however, has changed. High school seniors are increasingly inclined to say their ideal time to marry is later, with the majority (52%) reporting they expect to marry "over five years from now," which means the mid-twenties or later. This profile is one in a new three-part series using Monitoring the Future data to examine almost 40 years of change in high school seniors' expectations and attitudes regarding marriage and cohabitation. The focus of this profile is on high school seniors' response to the question "if it were just up to you, what would be the ideal time for you to get married?" Additionally, we examine variation by parental educational attainment, race and ethnicity, gender, and region of the United States.

High School Seniors' Ideal Time to Marry

- In 2014, the majority of high school seniors reported that they wanted to marry over five years from now (52%).
- The percentage change was greatest for the "over five years from now" category, which doubled from 1976 to 2014. This corresponds with actual changes in marriage timing, as the median age at first marriage for women rose from 21.3 in 1976 to 27.9 in 2014 (FP-16-07, not shown).

Figure 1. High School Seniors' Ideal Time to Marry, 1976 and 2014



Source: Monitoring the Future, 1976 & 2014

High School Seniors Expecting Marriage Over Five Years from Now

Parental Educational Attainment

- A parental education gradient persists in the ideal timing of marriage. As parents' education rises, the share of high school seniors reporting an ideal time of marriage of five plus years also increases.
- The education gradient is closing for those with parents that have less than high school, high school, or some college education.

Race & Ethnicity

- The percentage of students expecting to marry over five years from now doubled from 1976 to 2014 for both Whites and Non-Whites.
- In 2014, at least half of Black, White, and Hispanic high school seniors expected to marry over five years from now. Black students (57%) have the largest share expecting to wait at least five years for marriage.

Figure 2. High School Seniors Expecting Marriage Over Five Years from Now, by Parental Educational Attainment, 1976 & 2014

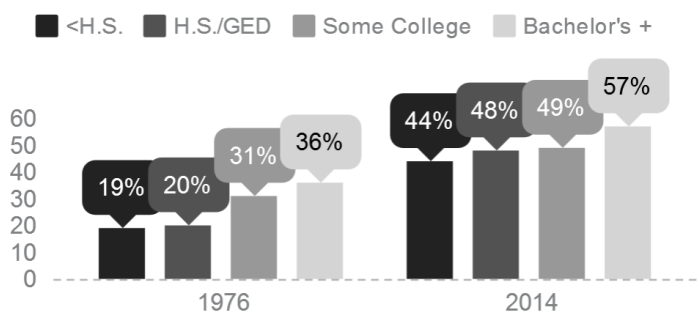
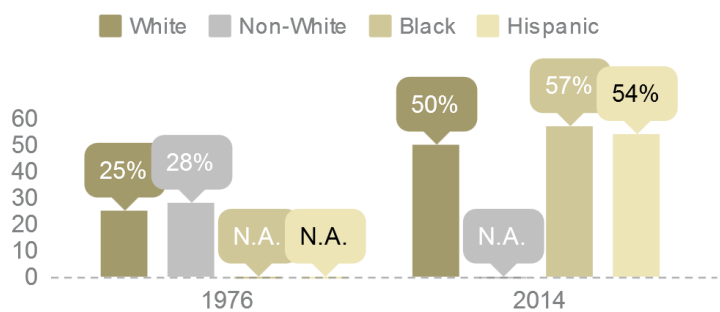


Figure 3. High School Seniors Expecting Marriage Over Five Years from Now, by Race & Ethnicity, 1976 & 2014

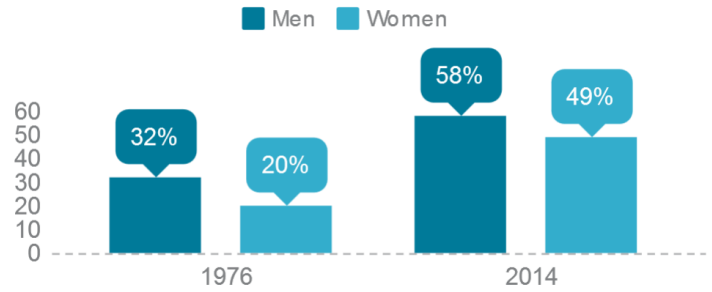


Source: Monitoring the Future, 1976 & 2014

Gender

- A larger share of young men (compared to young women) expect to marry in five plus years in both 1976 and 2014.
- The proportional increase in expectations to marry in over five years is larger for women than men.

Figure 4. High School Seniors Expecting Marriage Over Five Years from Now, by Gender, 1976 & 2014

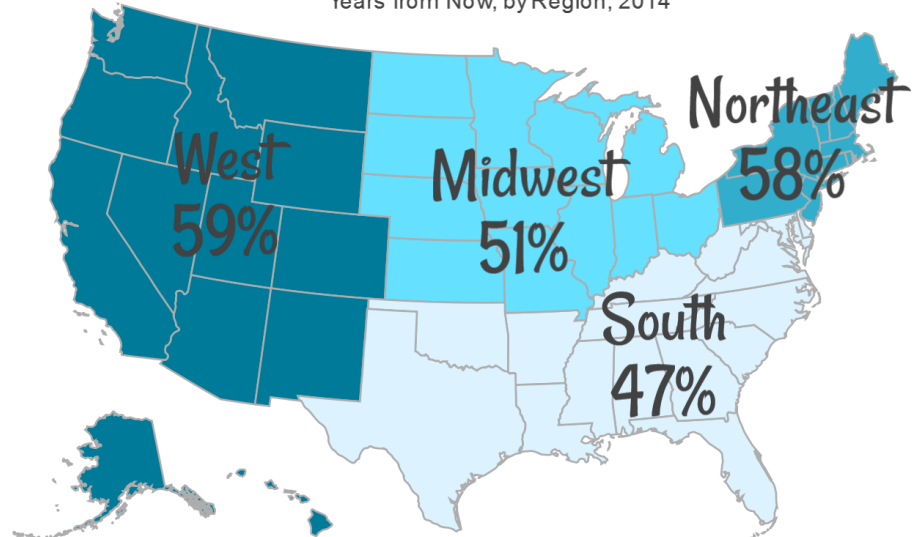


Source: Monitoring the Future, 1976 & 2014

Region

- In most regions, the majority of HS seniors expect to marry over five years from now, but the South is an exception.
- There is a 12 percentage point difference between the South (the lowest percentage) and the West (the highest percentage).

Figure 5. High School Seniors Expecting Marriage Over Five Years from Now, by Region, 2014



Source: Monitoring the Future, 2014

References:

- Anderson, L. & Payne, K. K. (2016). Median age at first marriage, 2014. *Family Profiles*, FP-16-07. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/anderson-payne-median-age-first-marriage-fp-16-07.html>
- Bachman, J. G., Johnston, L. D., & O'Malley, P. M. (1976). *Monitoring the future: A continuing study of the lifestyles and values of youth, 1976* (ICPSR07927-v4) [Data file and code book]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor]. doi: 10.3886/ICPSR07927.v4
- Johnston, L. D., Bachman, J. G., O'Malley, P. M., Schulenberg, J. E., & Miech, R. A. (2014). *Monitoring the future: A continuing study of American youth (12th-grade survey), 2014* (ICPSR36263-v2) [Data file and code book]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor]. doi: 10.3886/ICPSR36263.v2

Suggested Citation:

- Anderson, L. R. (2016). High school seniors' ideal time for marriage. *Family Profiles*, FP-16-15. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/anderson-hs-seniors-ideal-time-marriage-fp-16-15.html>



This project is supported with assistance from Bowling Green State University. From 2007 to 2013, support was also provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the state or federal government.

National Center for Family & Marriage Research

Family Profiles: Original reports summarizing and analyzing nationally representative data with the goal to provide the latest analysis of U.S. families. These profiles examine topics related to the NCFMR's core research themes.

<http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr.html>



005 Williams Hall
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403

☎ 419.372.3119

✉ ncfmr@bgsu.edu