

Stepfamilies in the U.S.



National Center for
Family & Marriage Research
Bowling Green State University

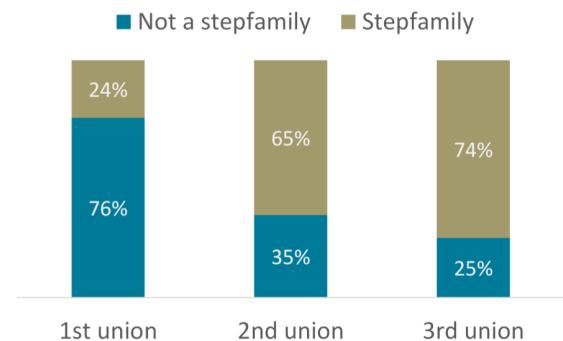
Karen Benjamin Guzzo

Stepfamilies are formed when couples bring children from prior relationships into their new union. Over the past few decades, the increase in nonmarital childbearing, growth in cohabitation and serial cohabitation, and delays in marriage have resulted in stepfamilies that are based on experiences outside of marriage (Guzzo 2014; Lamidi 2015; Manning, Brown, and Stykes 2015). As a result, many of today's unions are in fact stepfamilies. In this profile, we examine women's stepfamily status using the 2006/10 & 2011/13 continuous samples of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). In this profile, we define stepfamilies as either partner (cohabiting or marital) having a child from a prior relationship, regardless of whether the children live in the household. We examine patterns for first, second, and third coresidential unions.

Stepfamilies More Common in Second and Third Coresidential Unions among Women Aged 15-44

- Most women in their first union (cohabitation or marriage) were not forming stepfamilies. The majority (76%) involved two childless individuals.
- In nearly a quarter of first unions, however, one or both partners had a child from a prior relationship.
- Stepfamilies were much more common in second and third unions.
 - ⤵ About two-thirds of women in their second union (cohabitation or marriage) were forming stepfamilies (i.e., include children from prior relationships).
 - ⤵ Almost three-fourths of women in their third union formed stepfamilies.

Figure 1. Proportion of Unions that are Stepfamilies by Union Order

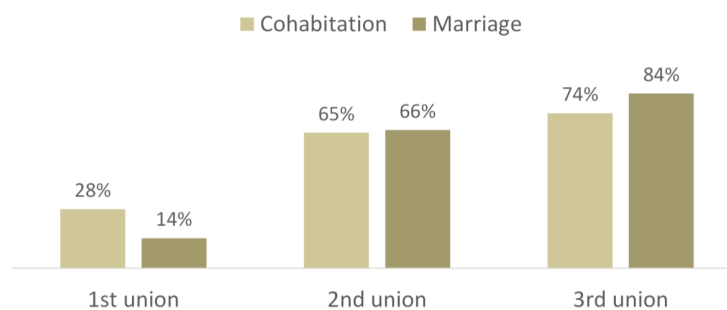


Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006/10 & 2011/13

Stepfamily Experience in Marital and Cohabiting Unions among Women Aged 15-44

- Among women in their first union, 28% of those whose union began as a cohabitation formed a stepfamily compared to 14% who married directly (without cohabiting).
- Two-thirds of women in their second union, regardless of union type (cohabitation or marriage), formed stepfamilies.
- Although most women in their third union formed stepfamilies, the levels are higher among women who married directly (84%) rather than those who cohabited (74%).
- It is worth noting that the majority of all unions began as cohabitations, but the percentage rises from 71% of first unions to 92% of third unions (not shown).

Figure 2. Stepfamilies by Union Type

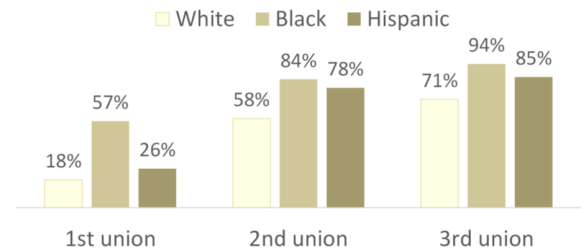


Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006/10 & 2011/13

Stepfamily Experience According to Race-Ethnicity among Women Aged 15-44

- Black women more often formed stepfamilies than White or Hispanic women.
 - Among women in their first union, over half (57%) of Black women, a quarter (26%) of Hispanic women, and 18% of White women formed a stepfamily.
- Racial-ethnic differences in stepfamily status declined among women in their second and third unions. The majority of all women's second and third unions were stepfamilies.

Figure 3. Stepfamily Status by Union Order and Race-Ethnicity

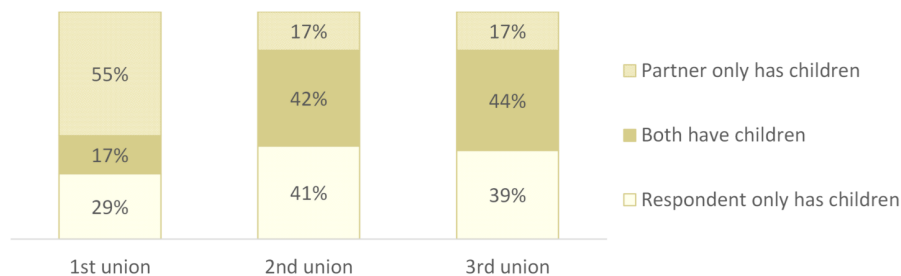


Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006/10 & 2011/13

His or Her Children in Stepfamilies

- A slight majority of women (55%) whose first relationship was classified as a stepfamily married or cohabited with a man who had children from a prior relationship. It was relatively uncommon (17%) for both partners to have children from prior relationships.
- Most women (83%) who formed stepfamilies in their second or third unions, conversely, already had a child. In about half of these situations, their spouse/partner also had children from a prior relationship and the other half married or cohabited with a man who had no children.

Figure 4. Stepfamily Composition by Union Order among Stepfamily Unions



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006/10 & 2011/13

References:

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