

# A Quarter Century of Change in Nonmarital Births: Racial/Ethnic Differences



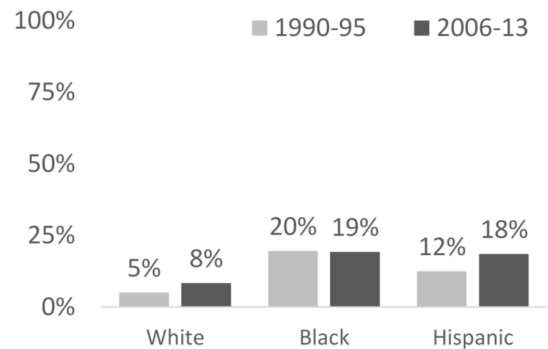
Esther Lamidi

Since the 1990s, the share of births to unwed mothers has increased by 60% in the U.S., driven largely by the rapidly increasing share of births in cohabiting unions (FP-15-03). Not all of these births are to women who have never been married, due in part to high levels of divorce (FP-14-07; FP-15-18). This is the second in a Family Profile Series on changes in single and cohabiting births to never and previously married women in the U.S. In this profile, we estimate racial/ethnic variations in women's experiences of unmarried childbearing and in the share of nonmarital births that occurred to never and previously married women within five years of two data cycles of National Survey of Family Growth (1995 and 2011/2013).

## Changes in Nonmarital Fertility among Women Aged 15-44 by Race/Ethnicity, 1990-2013

- Over the last two decades, the racial/ethnic gap in nonmarital fertility has narrowed.
  - Two decades ago, the share of women with a nonmarital birth ranged from 5% for Whites to 12% for Hispanics to 20% for Blacks.
  - Now, it ranges from 8% for Whites to 18% for Hispanics and 19% for Blacks.
- Over the two time periods (1990-1995 and 2006-2013), the share of women with nonmarital births increased among Whites (60%) and Hispanics (50%) but declined slightly among Blacks.

Figure 1. Share of Women Aged 15-44 Who had Nonmarital Births by Race/Ethnicity, 1990-1995 and 2006-2013

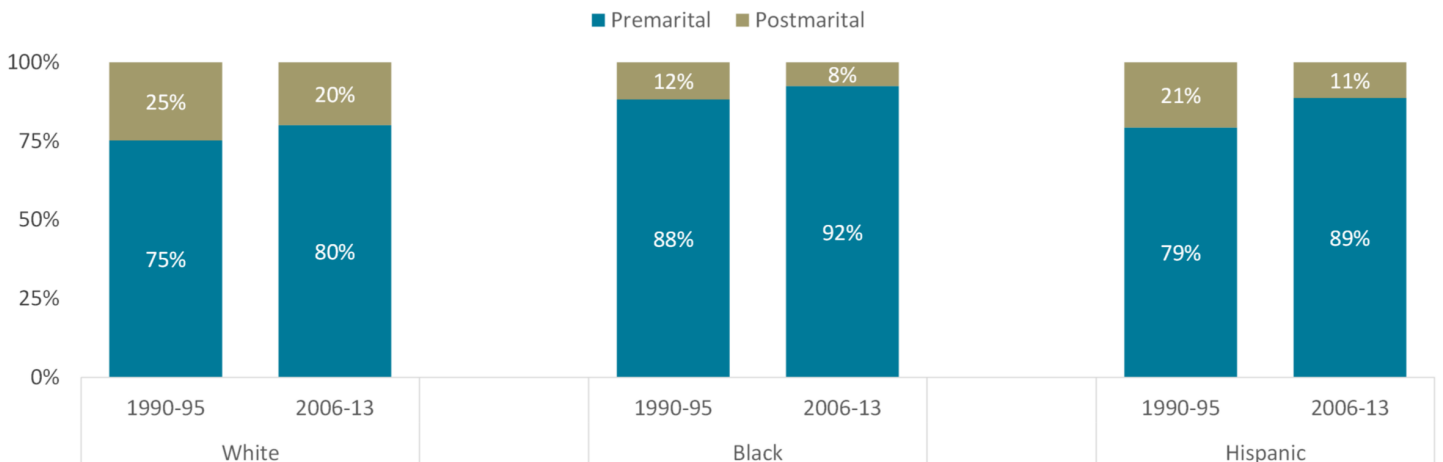


Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2011/13

## Changes in Births to Never and Previously Married Women by Race/Ethnicity, 1990-2013

- In both the 1990s and the 2000s, postmarital (nonmarital) fertility was most prevalent among White and least common among Black women (Figure 2).
- The share of nonmarital births to previously married (versus never married) women declined across all racial/ethnic groups.
- Hispanics experienced the greatest proportional decline in postmarital births (from 21% to 11%).

Figure 2. Share of Nonmarital Births to Never and Previously Married Women by Race/Ethnicity



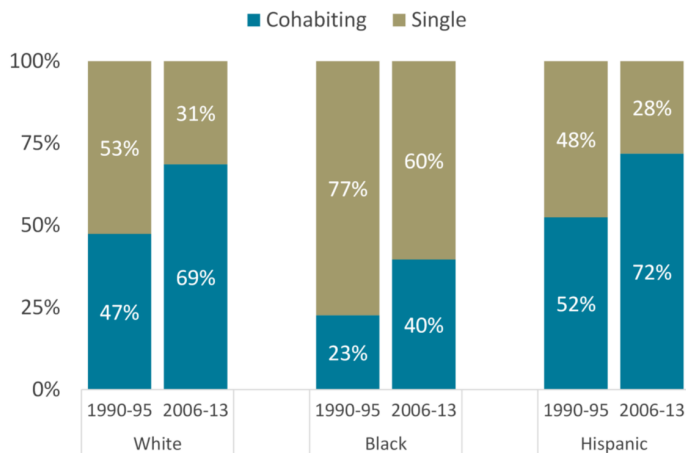
Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2011/13

## Changes in Relationship Context of Births to Never Married Women by Maternal Race/Ethnicity

### Never Married Women

- Across maternal race/ethnicity, births to never married women are increasingly occurring within cohabiting unions (Figure 3).
- About half of all births to never married Hispanic and White women in the 1990s were cohabiting births. By the 2000s, cohabitation accounted for more than two-thirds of such births.
- Although the majority of births to never married Black women in both time periods were single births, Blacks experienced the greatest proportional increase (74%) in cohabiting births to never married women.

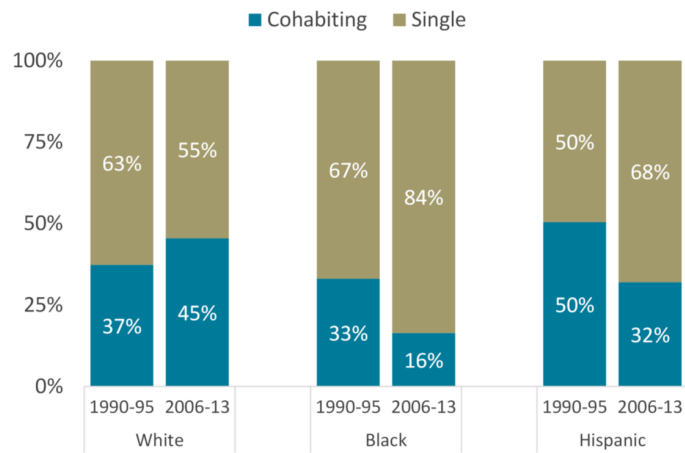
Figure 3. Share of Births to Never Married Single and Cohabiting Women by Race/Ethnicity



### Previously Married Women

- Conversely, the share of postmarital births to cohabiting White women increased by 22%. Previously married White mothers more often have children in cohabitation than do Black or Hispanic previously married mothers.
- Change in the relationship context of postmarital births varies by maternal race/ethnicity. Cohabiting births to previously married Black and Hispanic women declined.

Figure 4. Share of Births to Previously Married Single and Cohabiting Women by Race/Ethnicity



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2011/13

### References:

- Eickmeyer, K. J. (2015). Divorce rate in the U.S.: Geographic variation, 2014. *Family Profiles*, FP-15-18. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/eickmeyer-divorce-rate-us-geo-2014-fp-15-18.html>
- Lamidi, E. & Payne, K. K. (2014). Marital status in the U.S., 2012. *Family Profiles*, FP-14-07. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCfMR/documents/FP/FP-14-07-marital-status.pdf>
- Manning, W. D., Brown, S. L., & Stykes, B. (2015). Trends in births to single and cohabiting mothers, 1980-2013. *Family Profiles*, FP-15-03. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCfMR/documents/FP/FP-15-03-birth-trends-single-cohabiting-moms.pdf>

### Suggested Citation:

Lamidi, E. (2016). A quarter century of change in nonmarital births: Racial/Ethnic differences. *Family Profiles*, FP-16-04. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/lamidi-nonmarital-births-racial-ethnic-fp-16-04.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](mailto:ncfmr@bgsu.edu)