

A Quarter Century Change in Nonmarital Births: Differences by Educational Attainment

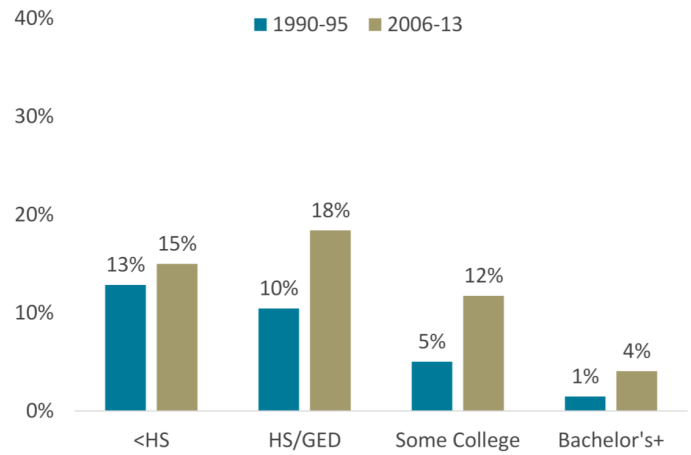


Since the 1990s, the share of births to unwed mothers has increased by 60% in the U.S, driven largely by the rapidly increasing share of births in cohabiting unions (FP-15-03). Not all of these births are to women who have never been married, due in part to high levels of divorce (FP-14-07; FP-15-18). This is the third in a Family Profile Series on changes in single and cohabiting births to never and previously married women in the U.S. This profile presents educational 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 Educational Attainment, 1990-2013

- In the 1990s, the share of women with at least one nonmarital birth decreased in a straightforward pattern with higher levels of education .
 - Women with less than a high school education had the highest percentage with a nonmarital birth (13%).
 - Women with a Bachelor’s degree (or higher) had the lowest (1%).
- Today, the highest percentage is found among those with only a high school diploma/GED (18%), whereas nonmarital births remain lowest among college-educated women (4%).
- Over time, nonmarital childbearing increased across all educational levels, with the increase more pronounced with each increasing level of educational attainment.

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

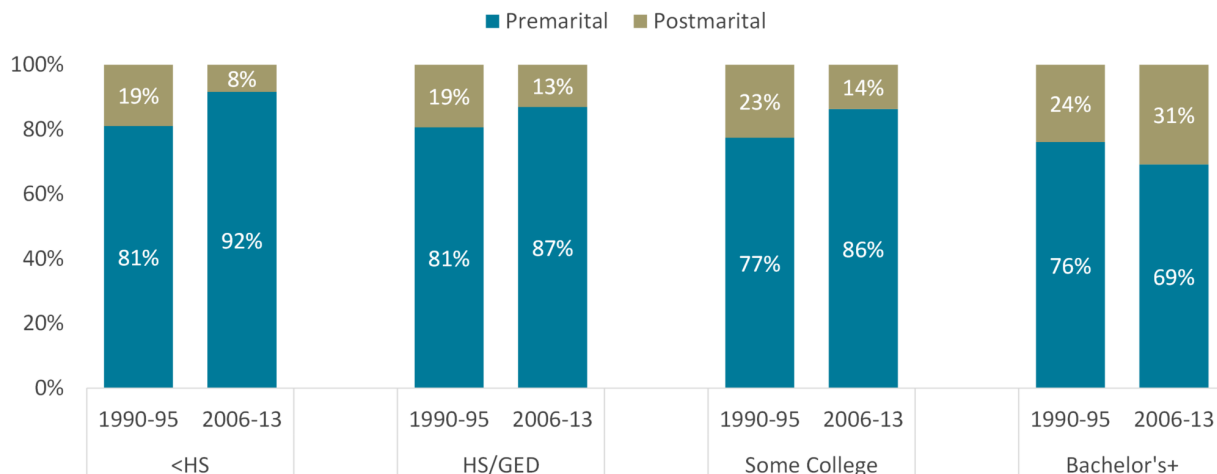


Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2011/13

Changes in Births to Never and Previously Married Women by Educational Attainment, 1990-2013

- The share of nonmarital births to previously married women (relative to never marrieds) declined at all levels of education below a college degree.
- Nonmarital births to previously married women who graduated from college increased by 29%.

Figure 2. Share of Nonmarital Births to Never and Previously Married Women by Educational Attainment



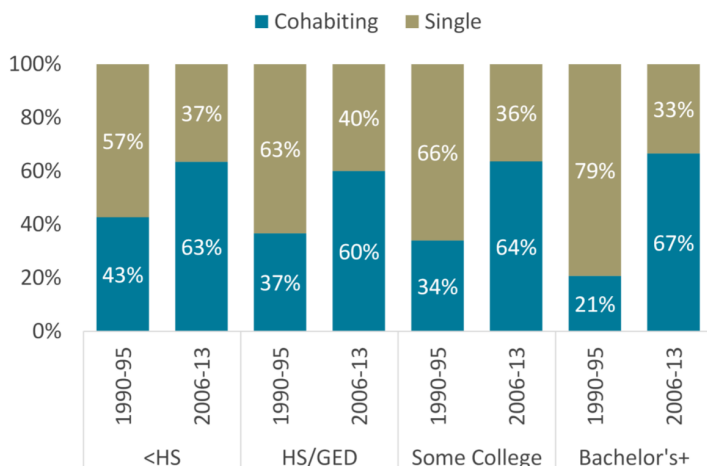
Source: National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2011/13

Changes in Relationship Context of Births to Never Married Women by Maternal Educational Attainment

Never Married Women

- In the 1990s, irrespective of maternal education, births to never married women were predominantly single births.
- Across educational levels, cohabiting births to never married women increased over time.
 - The largest increase (219%) was to college-educated mothers.
- By 2006-2013, cohabitation had become the dominant context for births to never married women across all education categories; 60-67% occurred in cohabiting unions.

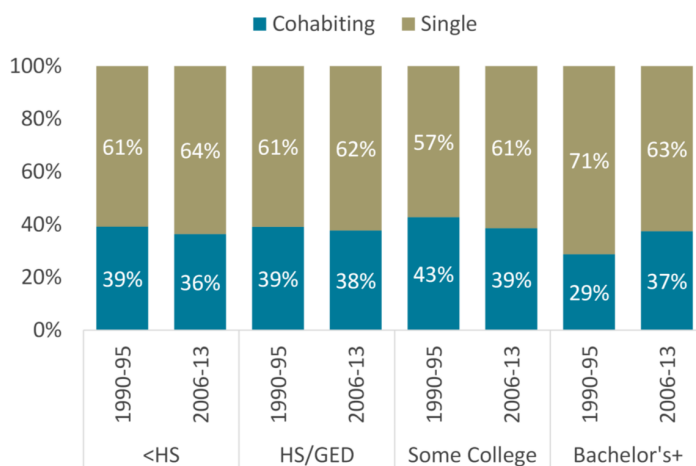
Figure 3. Share of Births to Never Married Single and Cohabiting Women by Educational Attainment



Previously Married Women

- Unlike births to never married women, postmarital fertility varied little by maternal education in the last two decades.
- In both the 1990s and 2000s, there were more postmarital single births than births to cohabiting mothers.
- For births to previously married women without a college degree, there is a slight trend towards more births among single women.
- Conversely, for births to previously married women with a college degree, an increasing percentage occurred to cohabiting women, rising 30% from 29% in the 1990s to 37% in 2000s.

Figure 4. Share of Births to Previously Married Single and Cohabiting Women by Educational Attainment



References:

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

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