

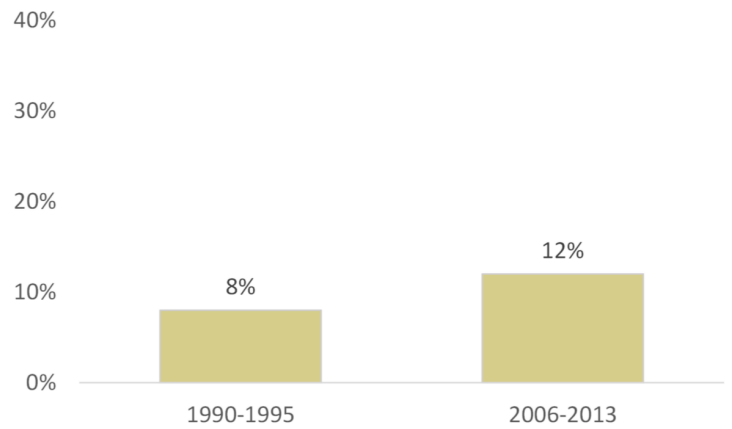
# A Quarter Century Change in Nonmarital Births



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In 2014 there were 1.6 million births to unmarried women, an increase of nearly half a million since 1990 (Martin et al. 2015, Ventura & Bachrach 2000). 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 first in a Family Profile Series on changes in single and cohabiting births to never and previously married women in the U.S. The estimates are based on births that occurred within two time periods (1990-1995 and 2006-2013) corresponding to five years before two data cycles of National Survey of Family Growth (1995 and 2011/2013). The share of women aged 15-44 who had nonmarital births increased by half, from 8% in 1990-1995 to 12% in 2006-2013 (Figure 1). Recently, one in eight women had a nonmarital birth.

Figure 1. Share of Women aged 15-44 who had Nonmarital Births, 1990-1995 and 2006-2013



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

## Changes in Births to Never and Previously Married Women, 1990-2013

- In the past two decades, the majority of births to unmarried women occurred to never married as opposed to previously married women (Figure 2).
- The share of nonmarital births occurring to never married women (versus previously married) has increased since the early 1990s (80% vs. 87%) (Figure 2).
- Conversely, nonmarital births to previously married women declined from one in five (20%) births in 1990-1995 to just over one in ten (13%) births in 2006-2013 (Figure 2).
- These shifts reflect an increase in the share of cohabiting births to never married women in the past two decades (Figure 3).

**60%** ↑  
*share of births to unwed mothers*

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

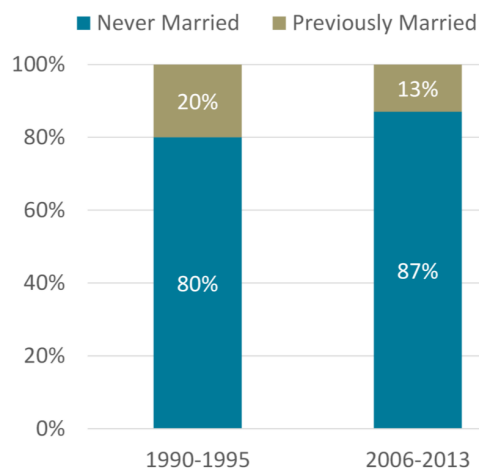
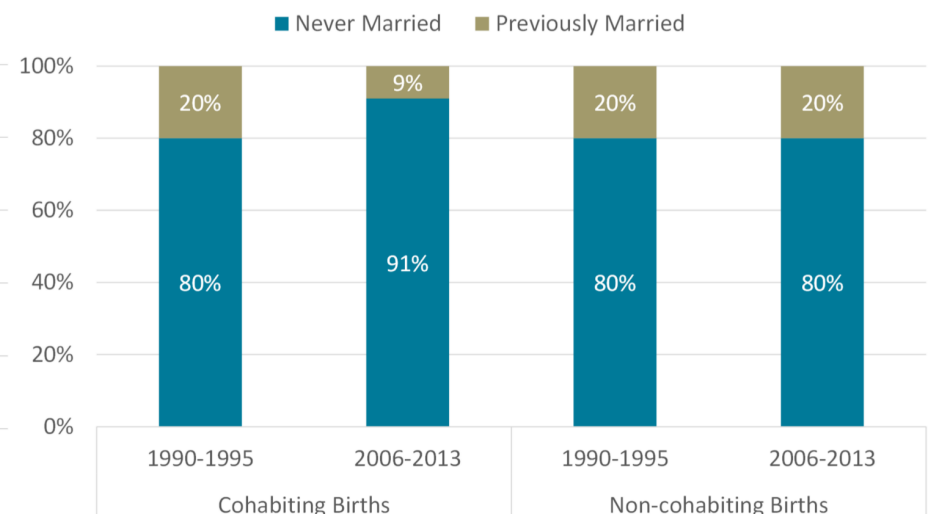


Figure 3. Share of Cohabiting and Non-cohabiting Births to Never and Previously Married Women



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

## Changes in the Relationship Context of Nonmarital Births: Then and Now

- Two decades ago, the relationship contexts of births to never and previously married women were similar. Regardless of marital status, two-fifths of all nonmarital births were to cohabiting women (Figure 4 & 5).
- Recently, the context of births to never married women has changed. Cohabitation has become the dominant context for nonmarital births among women who have never been married, increasing from 38% in the early 1990's to 62% among more recent births. In contrast, the majority of postmarital births continue to be born to single women.

Figure 4. Births to Never Married Women (AKA Premarital Births)

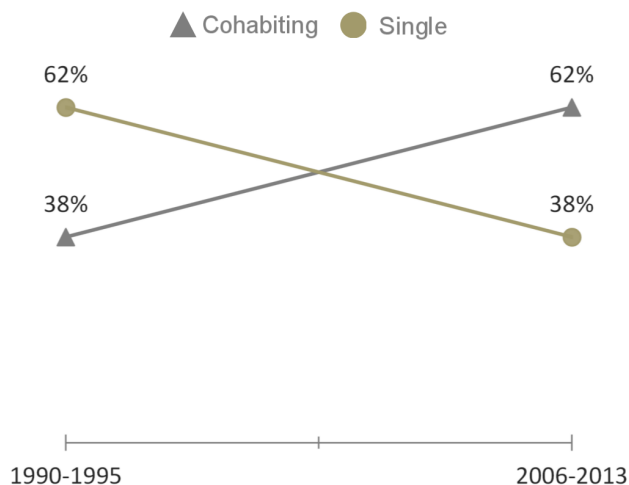
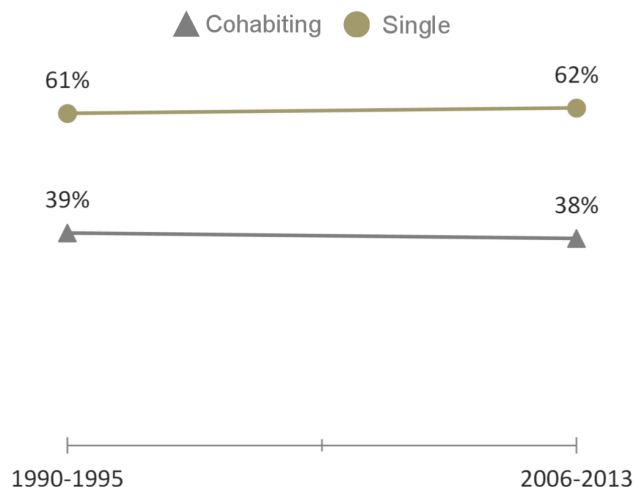


Figure 5. Births to Previously Married Women (AKA Postmarital Births)



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

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