

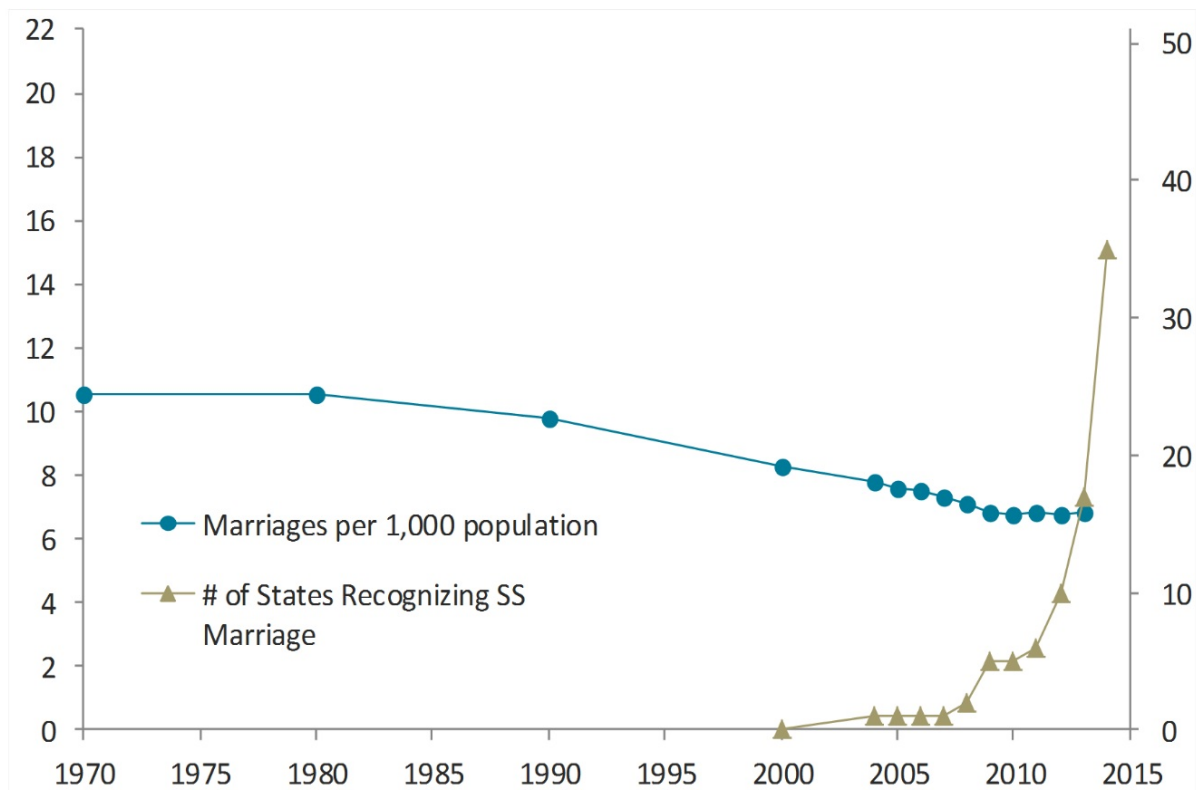
The Role of Same-Sex Marriage in the Declining U.S. Marriage Rate



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Is the legalization of same-sex marriage linked to a decline in the U.S. marriage rate? No. Nationally, the marriage rate has been on a downward trajectory since the 1970s, decades before same-sex marriage was legalized in any state. Since 2010, the marriage rate has hovered at 6.8 marriages per 1,000 population. Forty years ago the marriage rate was 50% higher, 10.5. Recently, the marriage rate has declined in virtually every state (between 2000 and 2012, the marriage rate declined in all states except three: California, District of Columbia, and Montana). The number of states with same-sex marriage has increased from only Massachusetts in 2004 to 35 in 2014.

Figure 1. Change in the U.S. Crude Marriage Rate and State Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage, 1970-2013



References:

Data: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System.
Retrieved on 04-22-15: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/state_marriage_rates_90_95_and_99-12.pdf

State Level Variation

In addition, when examined at the state level, overall marriage rates do not differ by state support or opposition to same-sex marriage. This conclusion emerges from an analysis of two groups of states that represent opposite ends of the spectrum of public opinion on the issue. At one end of the spectrum are three states (Maine, Maryland, and Washington) that approved same-sex marriage through popular vote and four states (Vermont, Connecticut, Iowa, and Massachusetts) that were early initiators of legalizing same-sex marriage. At the other end of the spectrum are four states (Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee) that created and maintained bans on same-sex marriage through popular vote. At both ends of the spectrum, all of these states have witnessed similar declines in marriage rates.

Figure 2. Change in Crude Marriage Rates among States with Continual Ban of Same-Sex Marriage

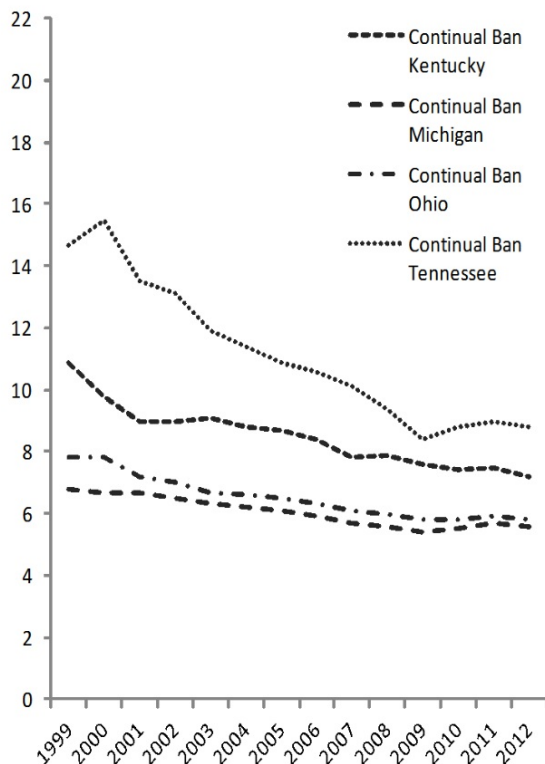
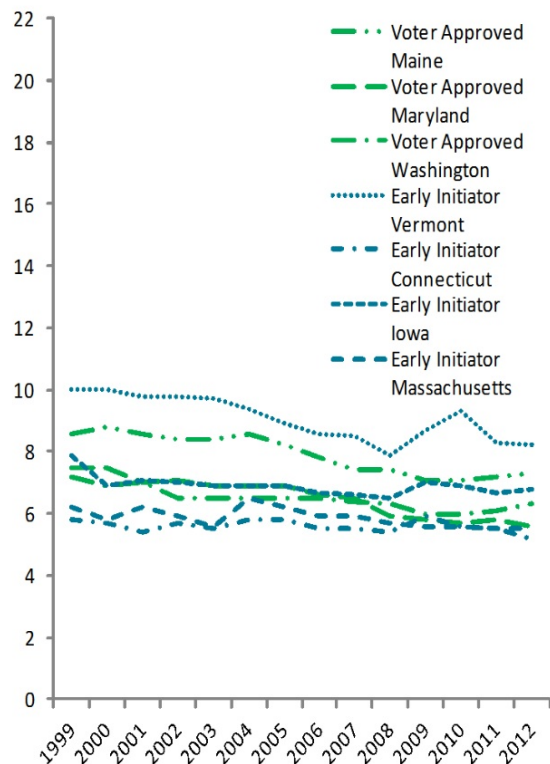


Figure 3. Change in Crude Marriage Rates among States with Legal Same-Sex Marriage



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