

Generation X and Millennials Attitudes About Having & Raising Children in Cohabiting Unions



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Cohabitation has become an increasingly common family context to have and raise children. One in five children are born to cohabiting parents, and this level has doubled in the last twenty years (see FP-15-03). Meanwhile, about half of children are expected to spend time living with cohabiting parents (Kennedy and Bumpass, 2008). While we know about the trends in family living arrangements, much less is known about attitudes toward having and raising children in cohabiting unions. This profile focuses on attitudes toward having and raising children in cohabiting unions among women belonging to Generation X (born 1965-1980) and the Millennials (born 1981-2000). Variation according to a woman's relationship and fertility histories is considered using the 2008/2013 pooled National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).

NSFG Questionnaire

It is okay to have and raise children when the parents are living together but not married.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

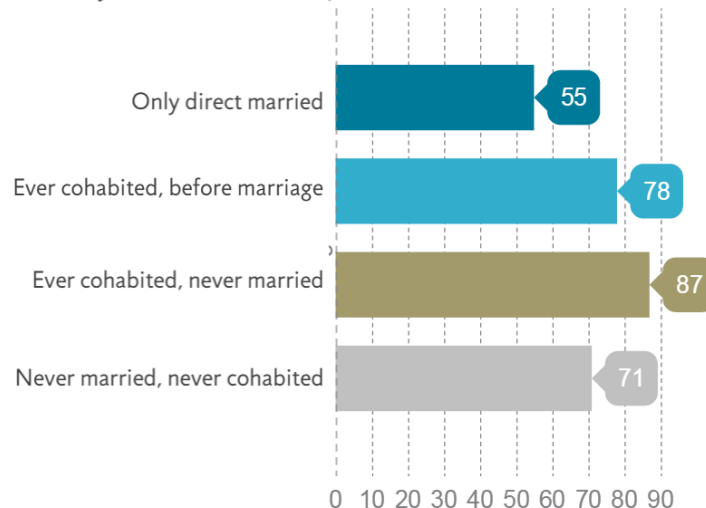
74% DK to have and raise children in cohabiting unions
WOMEN AGREE

➤ Women voice considerable support for cohabitation as a family context to have and raise children. Almost three in four (74%) women aged 15-44 agreed it was okay to have and raise children in cohabiting unions (results not shown) with little differences according to race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and age.

Relationship Histories and Support for Having and Raising Children in Cohabiting Unions

➤ Women who have ever cohabited have the highest share endorsing cohabitation as a family context to have and raise children. Just over half (55%) of women who did not cohabit prior to marrying were supportive of childbearing and rearing in cohabitation compared to over three-fourths (78%) of their counterparts who cohabited before marrying. Almost nine in ten (87%) women who ever cohabited but never married voiced support for having and raising children in cohabiting unions compared to seven in ten (71%) single women.

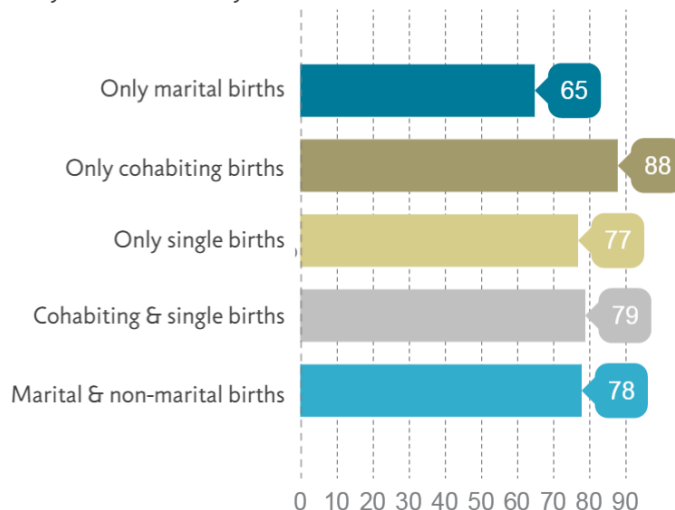
Figure 1. Support for Having and Raising Children in Cohabiting Unions, by Detailed Relationship Histories



Fertility Histories and Support for Childbearing in Cohabiting Unions

- The majority of all mothers agreed that it was okay to have and raise children in cohabiting unions. Yet 65% of mothers who only had their children in marriage endorsed cohabitation as an acceptable family context to have and raise children. In contrast, support for having and raising children in cohabiting unions is high among mothers who had ever had a nonmarital birth (81%, not shown) and even higher among mothers who only had children in cohabiting unions (88%).

Figure 2. Support for Having and Raising Children in Cohabiting Unions, by Detailed Fertility Histories



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- Thirty Years of Change in Marriage and Union Formation Attitudes, 1976-2008
- Thirty Years of Change in Family Roles and Parenthood Attitudes, 1976-2008
- Generation X and Millennials: Attitudes Toward Marriage & Divorce

References:

Data: Pooled 2008/2010 & 2011/13 National Survey of Family Growth, Female Respondents.

Kennedy, S. & Bumpass, L. L. (2008). Cohabitation and children's living arrangements: New estimates from the United States. *Demographic Research*, 19 (47), 1663-1692

Suggested Citation:

Stykes, B. (2015). Generation X and Millennials: Attitudes About Having & Raising Children in Cohabiting Unions (FP-15-13). National Center for Family & Marriage Research.

Retrieved from: <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/stykes-gen-x-millennials-fp-15-13>



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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.

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