

High School Seniors' Attitudes on Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage

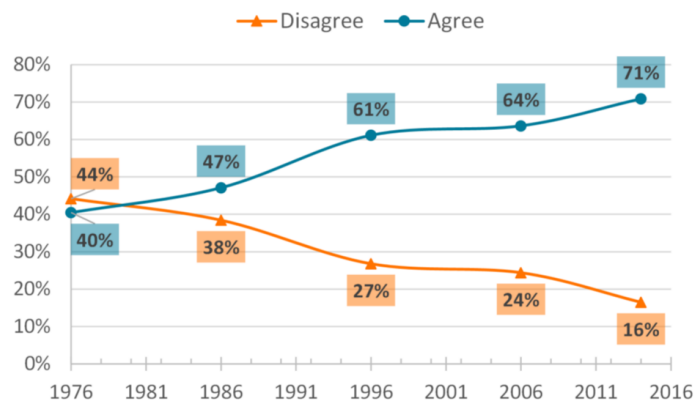
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Cohabitation has increased in the United States. In 1987, just 33% of women 19-44 ever cohabited, rising to 65% by 2014 (FP-15-01). A majority of young adults expect to cohabit in the future (Manning et al., 2014), with many couples cohabiting to assess their compatibility prior to marriage (Lamidi et al., forthcoming; Bumpass et al., 1991). This profile is the first in a new three-part series using Monitoring the Future data to examine almost forty years of change in high school seniors' expectations of and attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation and is an update to FP-10-03. The focus of this profile is high school seniors' agreement or disagreement (neutral responses are not shown) with the statement "It is usually a good idea for a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out whether they really get along." The profile examines trends over time and by parental educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Attitudes on Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage Over Time

- High school seniors' attitudes towards cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage have become increasingly favorable over the past 40 years.
- In 1976, slightly more high school seniors disagreed than agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage, with a reversal seen by the early 1980s. In 2014, the gap has widened, with the percentage who agree (71%) much larger than the percentage who disagree (16%).

Figure 1. Attitudes Towards Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage, 1976-2014

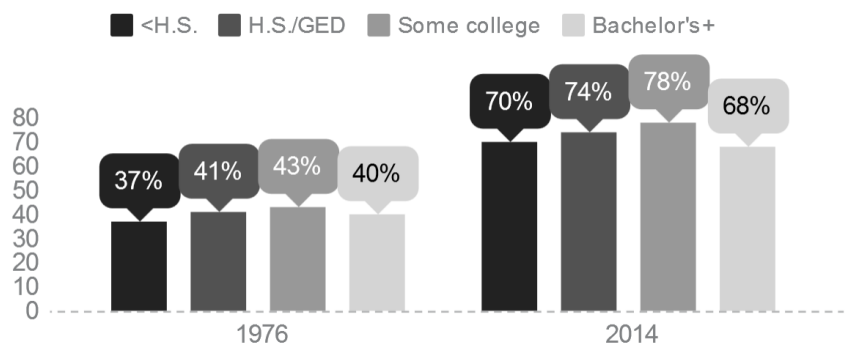


Source: Monitoring the Future, 1976-2014

Attitudes on Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Parental Educational Attainment

- Agreement with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage increased among all high school seniors regardless of parental education.
- Seniors whose parents have some college education are consistently the most agreeable with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage.

Figure 2. H.S. Seniors' Agreement with Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Parental Education, 1976 and 2014

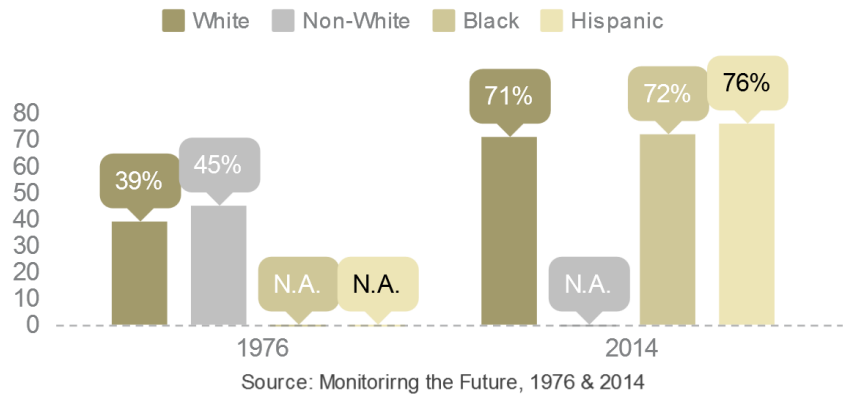


Source: Monitoring the Future, 1976 & 2014

Attitudes on Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Race & Ethnicity

- Increases in agreement with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage occurred across racial/ethnic groups presented here from 1976 to 2014.
- In 2014, Hispanics were the most agreeable with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage.

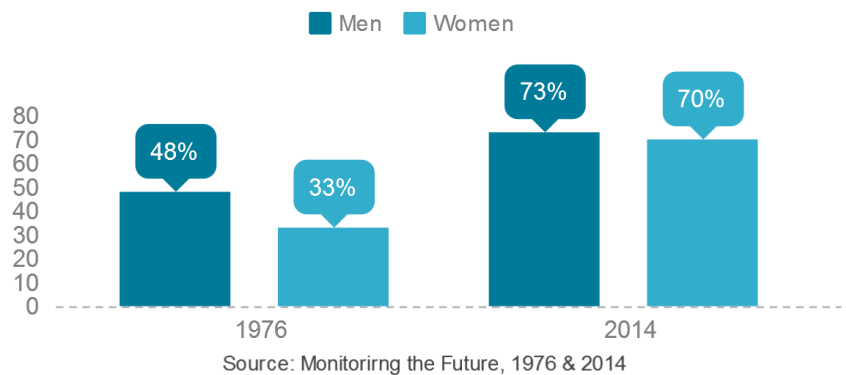
Figure 3. H.S. Seniors' Agreement with Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Race and Ethnicity, 1976 and 2014



Attitudes on Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Gender

- The gender gap is closing, with greater increases in the proportion of young women who agree with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage than young men.
- Young men have consistently been more likely to agree with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage.

Figure 4. H.S. Seniors' Agreement with Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Gender, 1976 and 2014



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Suggested Citation:

- Anderson, L. R. (2016). High school seniors' attitudes on cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage. *Family Profiles*, FP-16-13. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/anderson-hs-seniors-attitudes-cohab-test-marriage-fp-16-13.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.

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