



## Cohabitation in Middle and Later Life, 2022

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The popularity of cohabitation for US adults of all ages has continued to grow in recent years. For older men and women (aged 50+) in 2000, the number of cohabitators was about 1.2 million, or 1.6% of adults in that group (Brown, Bulanda, & Lee 2005). As of 2022, this number has almost quadrupled to 4,205,505. We find that among older adults more men (2,216,977) are cohabiting than women (1,988,528). This sex difference is especially pronounced when comparing cohabitation rates (number of cohabitators per 1,000 unmarried and separated). The cohabitation rate is higher among older men at 118.2 than women at 67.17. This rapid growth is evidence cohabitation has become a more common experience for today’s older adults. A majority of older cohabitators are Non-Hispanic White (69%) with the next closest racial/ethnic group being 14% of older adult cohabitators being Hispanic. 10% were non-Hispanic Black, 4% were non-Hispanic Other race, and 3% were non-Hispanic Asian. Drawing on 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data, we examine variation in cohabitation trends for older US adults by geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics. First, we present state variation in cohabitation rates which represent the number of older adult cohabitators per 1,000 unmarried and separated older adults. Second, we examine how poverty rates and marital histories of cohabitators compare to those who are single and married. This Family Profile is an update to [FP-16-20](#).<sup>1</sup>

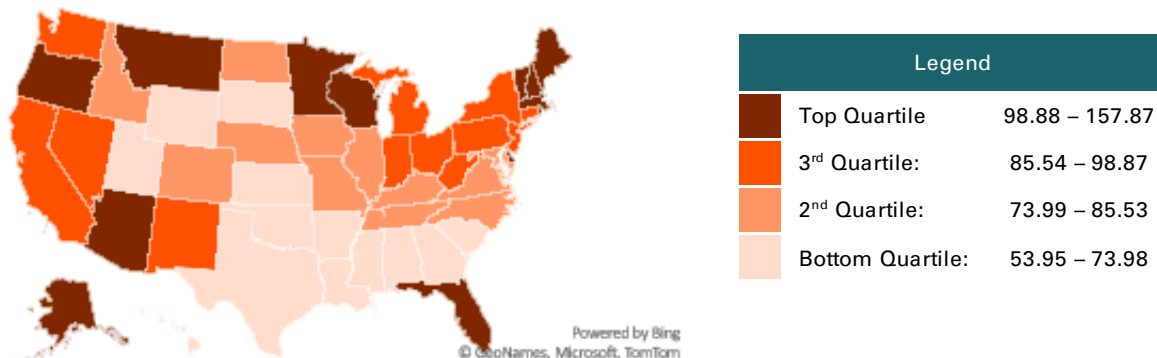
### Older Cohabitation Rates by State

- In 2022, the cohabitation rate for older US adults was approximately 87 cohabitators per 1,000 unmarried and separated individuals, but there was substantial variation by state.
- The highest older adult cohabitation rate for 2022 was seen in Vermont, where there were about 159 older adult cohabitators per 1,000 unmarried and separated older adults.
- Alabama reported the lowest older adult cohabitation rate in 2022 with approximately 52 older adult cohabitators per 1,000 unmarried and separated older adults.

**Table 1. Highest and Lowest Cohabitation Rates, 2022**

Rank	State	Rate
1	Vermont	157.87
2	Maine	148.68
3	New Hampshire	133.00
4	Delaware	114.20
5	Florida	111.53
<b>United States</b>		<b>88.02</b>
47	Wyoming	65.55
48	Utah	60.54
49	Mississippi	58.60
50	Kansas	58.35
51	Alabama	53.95

**Figure 1. Cohabitation Rates of Individuals Aged 50 or Older, by State, 2022**



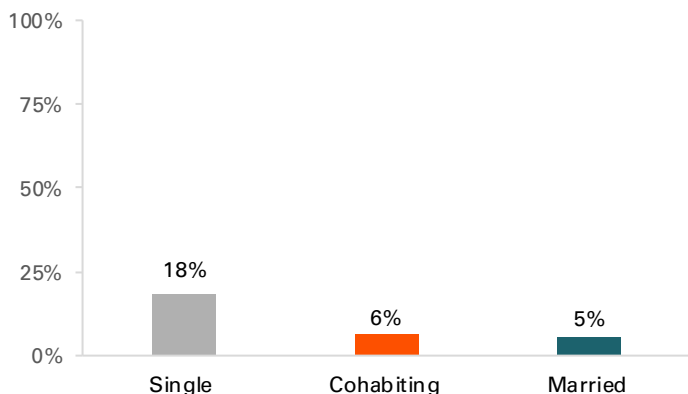
Source: NCFMR analyses of IPUMS-USA, American Community Survey, 1 year estimates, 2022

<sup>1</sup> Following Stepler (2017), those who are separated are included in the denominator for these estimates of cohabitation rates. This approach differs from that used in FP-16-20 and thus those estimates are not directly comparable to the ones presented here.

## Poverty Status of Persons Aged 50 and Older

- More single older adults reported being at or below the poverty line<sup>2</sup> in comparison to those who were cohabiting or married.
  - Almost 1 in 5 single older adults (18.2%) reported being at or below the poverty line in 2022.
  - In 2022, the share of cohabiting older adults at or below the poverty line (6.3%) was slightly greater than the share of married older adults at or below the poverty line (5.4%).

**Figure 2. Percentage of Older Americans Living in a Household at or below the Poverty Line, by Union Status, 2022**

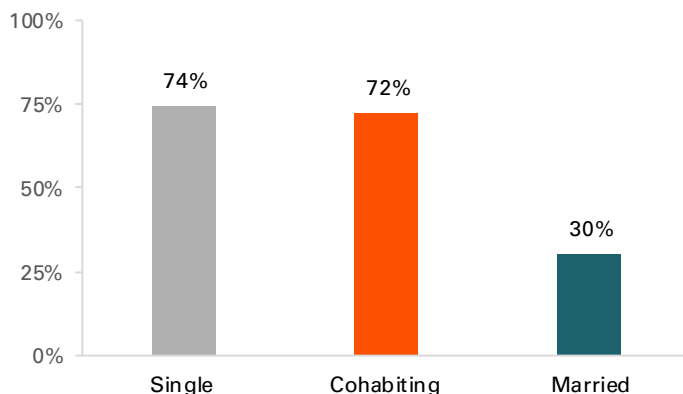


Source: NCFMR analyses of IPUMS-USA, American Community Survey, 1 year estimates, 2022

## Marital Status of Persons Aged 50 and Older

- Almost 3 in 4 older adults who were single or cohabiting in 2022 reported being married at least once in the past.
- The share of single older adults who have been previously married (74.46%) was slightly greater than the share of previously married cohabiting older adults (72.23%) in 2022.
- Approximately 30% of married older adults have been married at least twice.

**Figure 3. Percentage of Older Adults Previously Married, by Union Status, 2022**



Source: NCFMR analyses of IPUMS-USA, American Community Survey, 1 year estimates, 2022

### Data Source:

Flood, S., King, M., Rodgers, R., Ruggles, S., Warren, J. R., Warren, D., Chen, A., Cooper, G., Richards, S., Schouweiler, M., & Westberry, M. (2024). IPUMS USA: Version 15.0 American Community Survey. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>

### References:

Brown, S. L., Bulanda, J. R., & Lee, G. R. (2005). The significance of nonmarital cohabitation: Marital status and mental health benefits among middle-aged and older adults. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 60(1), S21–S29. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/60.1.S21>

Hemez, P. & Brown, S. L. (2016). Cohabitation in middle and later life. Family Profiles, FP-16-20. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/hemez-brown-cohabitation-middle-later-life-2014-fp-16-20.html>

Steppler, R. (2017, April 6). Number of U.S. adults cohabiting with a partner continues to rise, especially among those 50 and older. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/06/number-of-u-s-adults-cohabiting-with-a-partner-continues-to-rise-especially-among-those-50-and-older/>

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<sup>2</sup> The IPUMS variable “POVERTY” assigns all members of each *family* the same code, rather than each *household*, meaning that a cohabiting partner’s income is not included in the computation.