



Family Profile No. 15, 2025

## Union and Childbearing Characteristics of Women 40-44, 2000-2024

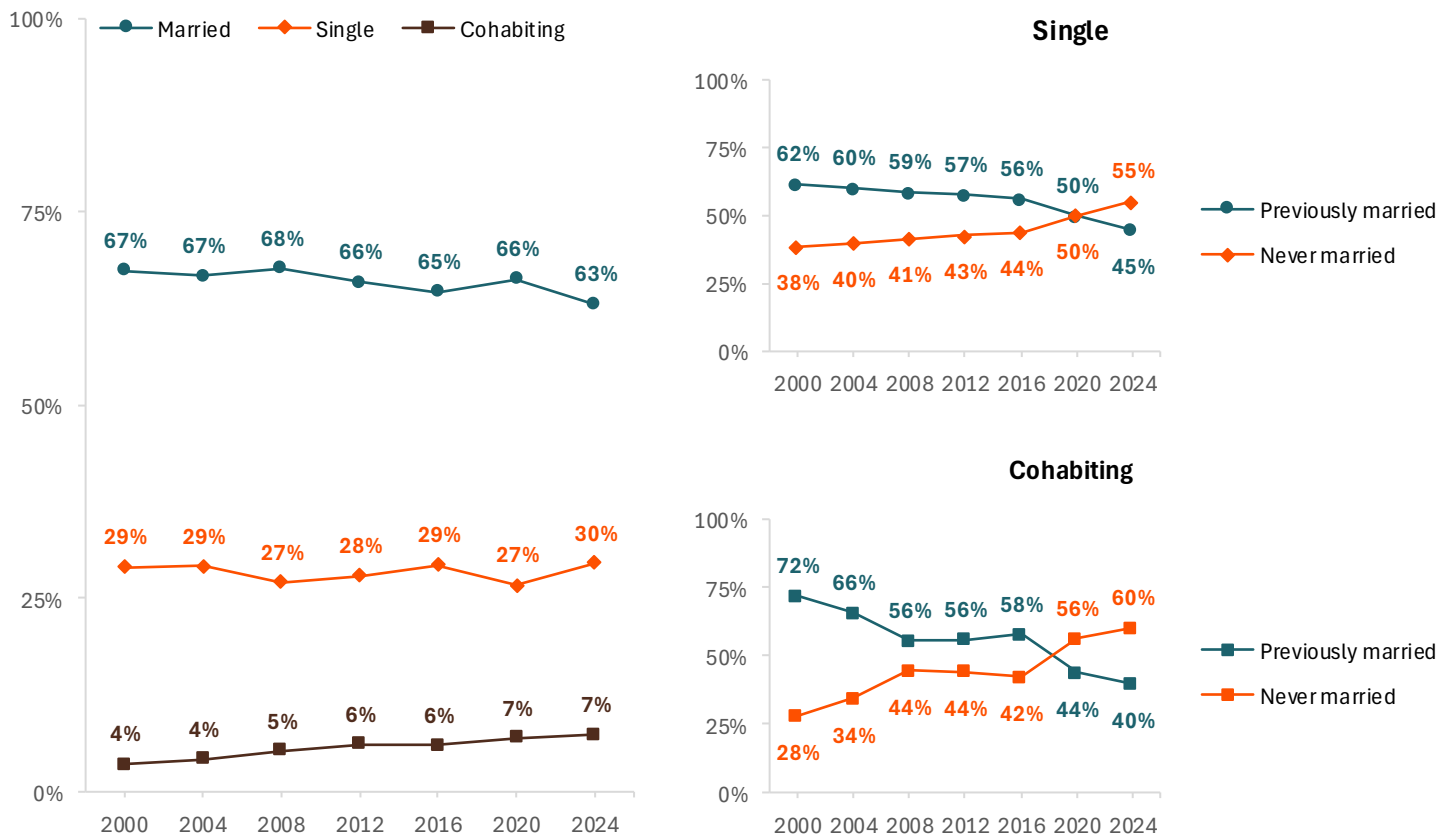
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Over the last few decades, marriage and childbearing have become less tightly linked (Hayford, Guzzo, & Smock, 2014), and cohabitation has contributed to high levels of non-marital childbearing (Lichter, Sassler, & Turner, 2014). Understanding the links between cohabitation, marriage, and childbearing behaviors is complicated given delays in the timing of both union formation and fertility. Consequently, focusing on union and childbearing characteristics of women at the end of the reproductive years may provide novel insights. In this profile, we use data from the Current Population Survey's biennial June Fertility Supplement to analyze current union status and the distribution of the number of children ever born (no children, one, two, or three or more) for women aged 40-44.

### Trends in Union Status Since 2000 Among Women Aged 40-44, 2000-2024

- More than two-fifths of women aged 40-44 were married in 2024, representing a four-percentage point decline since 2000.
- Since 2000, about one-in-three women aged 40-44 were currently single.
  - From 2000 through 2016, the majority of single women were previously married, but a growing proportion had never married, such that in 2024 over half (55%) of were never married.
- The percentage of women aged 40-44 who were cohabiting gradually increased from 4% in 2000 to 7% in 2024.
  - The pattern in the share of previously married cohabiting women was similar to the pattern among single women. From 2000 through 2016, the majority were previously married, but a growing proportion had never married, such that in 2024 three-fifths (60%) were never married.

Figure 1. Relationship Status of Women Aged 40-44, 2000-2024

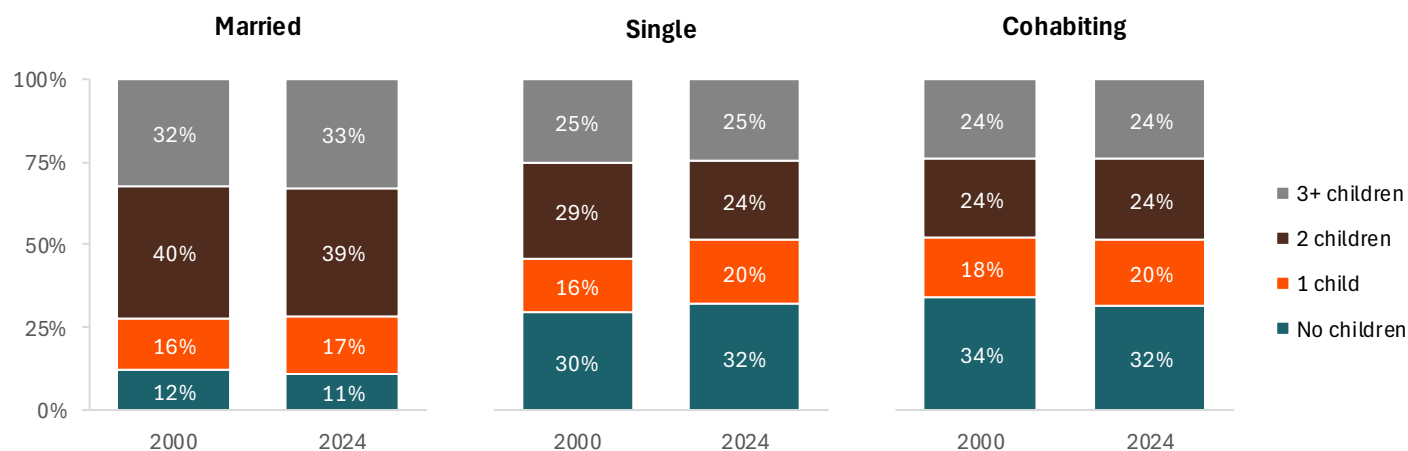


Source: NCFMR analyses of CPS Fertility Supplement, 2000-2024

## The Distribution of Children Ever Born by Union Status Among Women 40-44, 2000 & 2024

- There was little change in the distribution of children ever born among *married* women aged 40 to 44 from 2000 to 2024. About two-fifths of married women in 2000 (40%) and in 2024 (39%) had two children.
- There was a substantial decrease in the proportion of *single* women who had one child (from 29% to 24%) and an increase in the proportion who had two children (from 16% to 20%) from 2000 to 2024.
- Childlessness decreased (from 34% to 32%) slightly among *cohabiting* women since 2000, whereas the percentage with only one child slightly increased (18% → 20%).
- Regardless of union status at ages 40-44, in 2000 and 2024, the majority of women had at least one child.

Figure 2. Number of Children Ever Born to Women Aged 40-44 by Partnered Status, 2000 & 2024

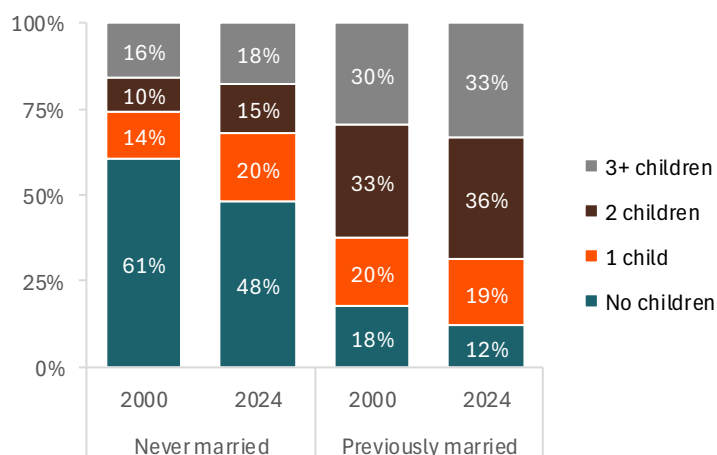


Source: NCFMR analyses of CPS Fertility Supplement, 2000 & 2024

## The Distribution of Children Ever Born by Marital Status Among Single Women 40-44, 2000 & 2024

- In 2000, the majority of never married single women were childless (61%). By 2024, however, the majority were mothers (52%).
- Most previously married single women aged 40 to 44 had at least one child, increasing from 82% in 2000 to 88% in 2024.
  - The proportion who had three or more children also increased from 30% in 2000 to 33%.
  - The proportion who were childless decreased from 18% to 12%.

Figure 3. Number of Children Ever Born Among Single Women Aged 40-44, 2000 & 2024



Source: NCFMR analyses of CPS Fertility Supplement, 2000 & 2024

### Data Sources

U.S. Census Bureau (2000 - 2024). Current Population Survey: June Fertility Supplement [Data sets]. Conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Census Bureau. [https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp\\_cps-repwgt/cps-fertility.html](https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-fertility.html)

### References

Hayford, S. R., Guzzo, K. B., & Smock, P. J. (2014). The decoupling of marriage and parenthood? Trends in the timing of marital first births, 1945–2002. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76(3), 520-538.

Lichter, D. T., Sassler, S., & Turner, R. N. (2014). Cohabitation, post-conception unions, and the rise in nonmarital fertility. *Social Science Research*, 47, 134-147.

### Suggested Citation

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