



Family Profile No. 26, 2023

## Age Variation in Never Married and Never Cohabited, 2008 & 2017

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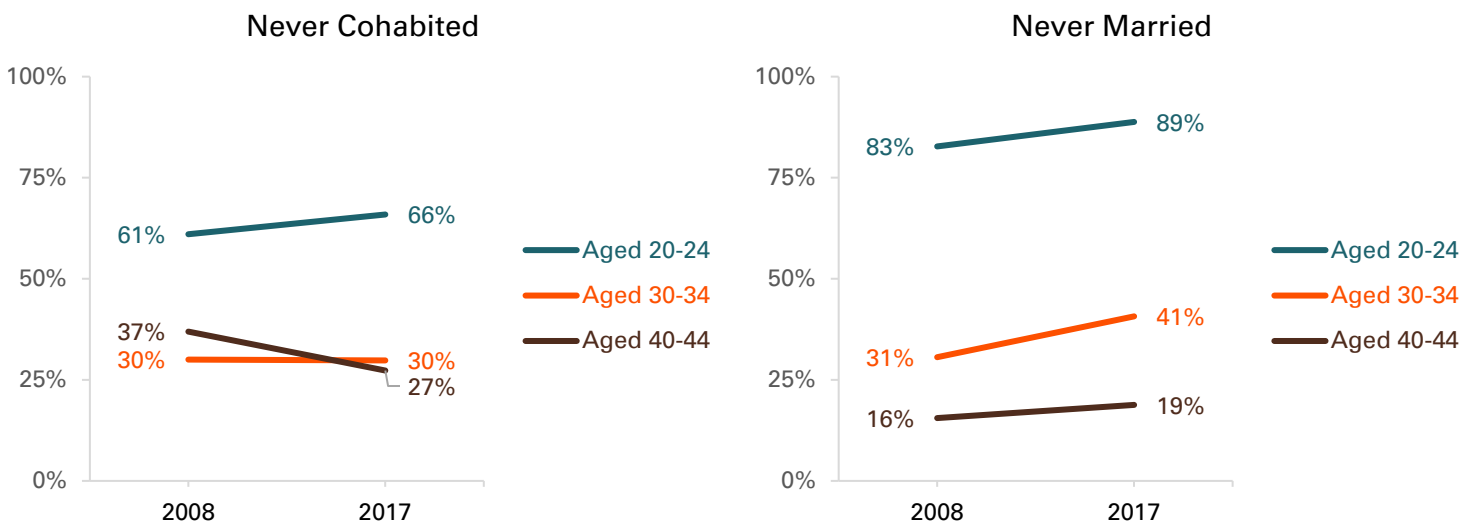
Trends in cohabitation and marriage suggest that a steady share of adults have ever cohabited, and a declining share of adults have ever married ([Manning et al. 2021](#)). In 2021 the U.S. reached a record high in the percentage of 40-year-olds who had never married; over the last twenty years it grew from 15% in 2000 to 25% in 2021 ([Fry 2023](#)). This trend is reflected in a rising age of the never-married population from 26.6 in 2000 to age 28.3 among females in 2020 ([Marino 2023](#)). At the same time, the percentage of females aged 40-44 who have never cohabited declined from 40% to about 30% over the last 20 years ([Manning et al. 2021](#)). Using data from the National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2010 cycles weighted to the year 2008 and 2015-2019 cycles weighted to the year 2017, this Family Profile presents age variation (20-24-, 30-34-, and 40-44-year-old) in the percentages of males and females who have never cohabited and never married (in other words never formed a coresidential union) in the United States. The NSFG is one of the only data sets that asks respondents whether they have ever cohabited and not just about current cohabitation status; however, the questions are limited to marriages and cohabitations to someone of the “opposite-sex.”

### Age Variation in Percentages of Adults who Never Married and Never Cohabited, 2008 and 2017

The age variation in the percent of adults who had never married or never cohabited reflects patterns in the timing of marriage and cohabitation.

- In 2017, about two-thirds (66%) of 20–24-year-olds had never cohabited compared to two-fifths (61%) in 2008. The share of those who have never married also increased, from 83% in 2007 to 89% in 2017.
- Among those aged 30-34 about 3-in-10 had never cohabited regardless of time-period. The percentage who had never married increased from 31% to about 41%.
- The share of individuals in their early forties who had never cohabited declined from 37% in 2008 to 27% in 2017. Conversely, the share to have never married increased from 16% in 2008 to 19% in 2017.

Figure 1. The Share of Adults Who Had Never Cohabited and the Share Who Had Never Married by Age Group, 2008 & 2017



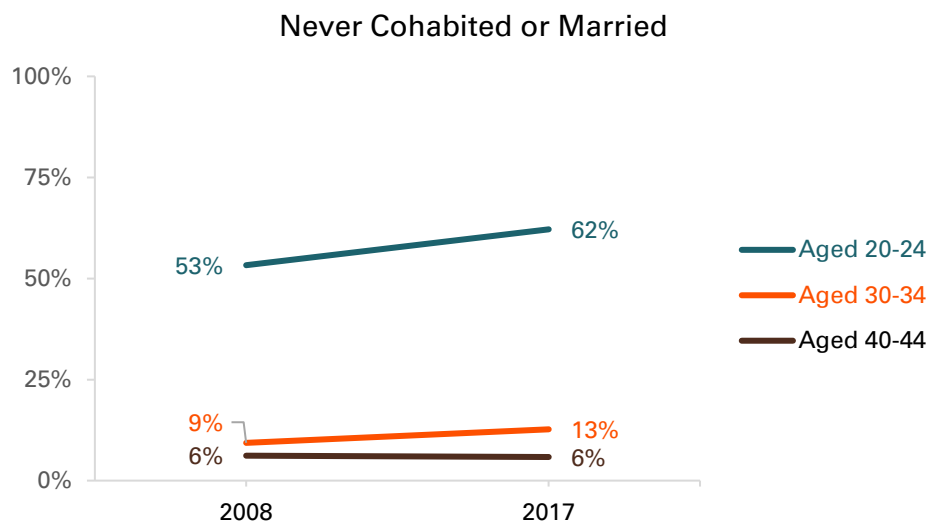
Source: NCFMR analyses of NSFG 2006-2010 and 2015-2019 male and female data files

## Age Variation in the Percentage of Adults who Never Formed a Coresidential Relationship, 2008 and 2017

Most individuals eventually lived with a spouse or cohabiting partner, and cohabitation has largely offset the shifts in marriage trends.

- Most 20-24 years have never spent time living with a spouse or cohabiting partner in both time periods. The level was higher in 2017 (62%) than in 2008 (53%).
- The percentage of individuals who had never married or cohabited was much lower among those in their early thirties compared to those in their early twenties. However, the share among those in their early thirties increased over time from 9% in 2008 to 13% in 2017.
- By their early forties about 6% of individuals had never married or never cohabited. This level has remained consistent over the time period.

Figure 2. The Share of Adults Who Had Never Cohabited or Married by Age Group, 2008 & 2017



Source: NCFMR analyses of NSFG 2006-2010 and 2015-2019 male and female data files

### Data Sources:

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). National Survey of Family Growth Public-Use Data and Documentation. Hyattsville, MD: CDC National Center for Health Statistics.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/index.htm>

### References:

Manning, W. D., Brown, S. L., & Payne, K. K. (2021). Does Cohabitation Compensate for Marriage Decline? *Contexts*, 20(2), 68-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15365042211012076>

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