

Measuring Cohabitation in National Surveys

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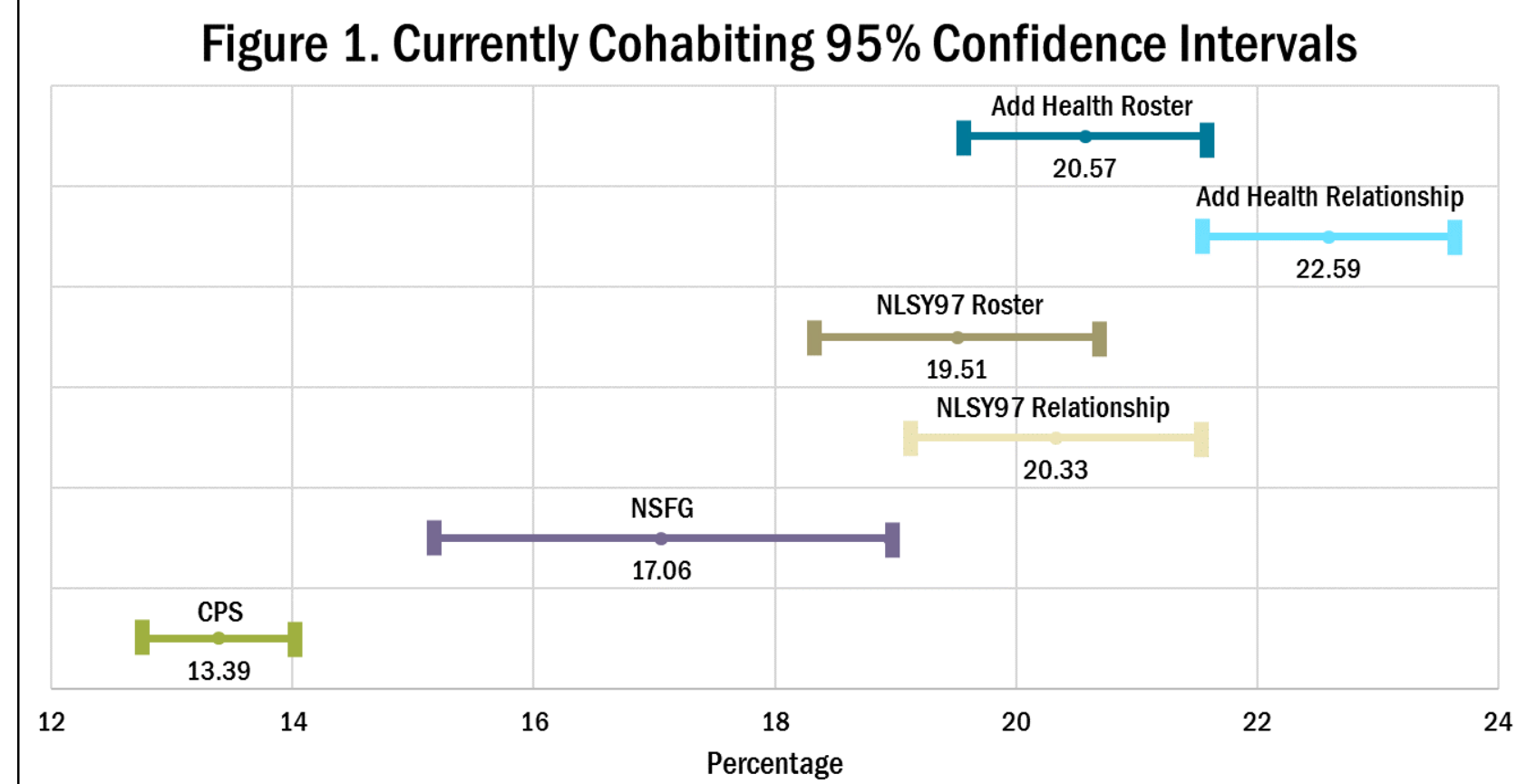
Cohabitation Measurement Across Surveys

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)**
 - Roster: “Partner/boyfriend/girlfriend” on the household roster.
 - Relationship: “How many romantic or sexual partners have you ever lived with for one month of more? By ‘lived with’ we mean that neither of you kept a separate residence while you were living together.”
 - N = 6,264; from wave 4
- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97)**
 - Roster: “Lover/romantic partner” on the household roster.
 - Relationship: “In this study we define a marriage-like relationship as a sexual relationship in which partners establish one household and live together.”
 - N = 4,349; from rounds 11 and 12
- National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)**
 - Card: Respondents are shown a card and asked to identify their marital status. Respondents who select “not married but living with a partner of the opposite sex” are considered currently cohabiting.
 - N = 1,519; from first 8 quarters of 2006-2010 NSFG
- Current Population Survey (CPS)**
 - Partner Pointers: All unmarried adults in the household asked to identify their cohabiting partner on the household roster.
 - N = 11,543; from 2007 and 2008 CPS

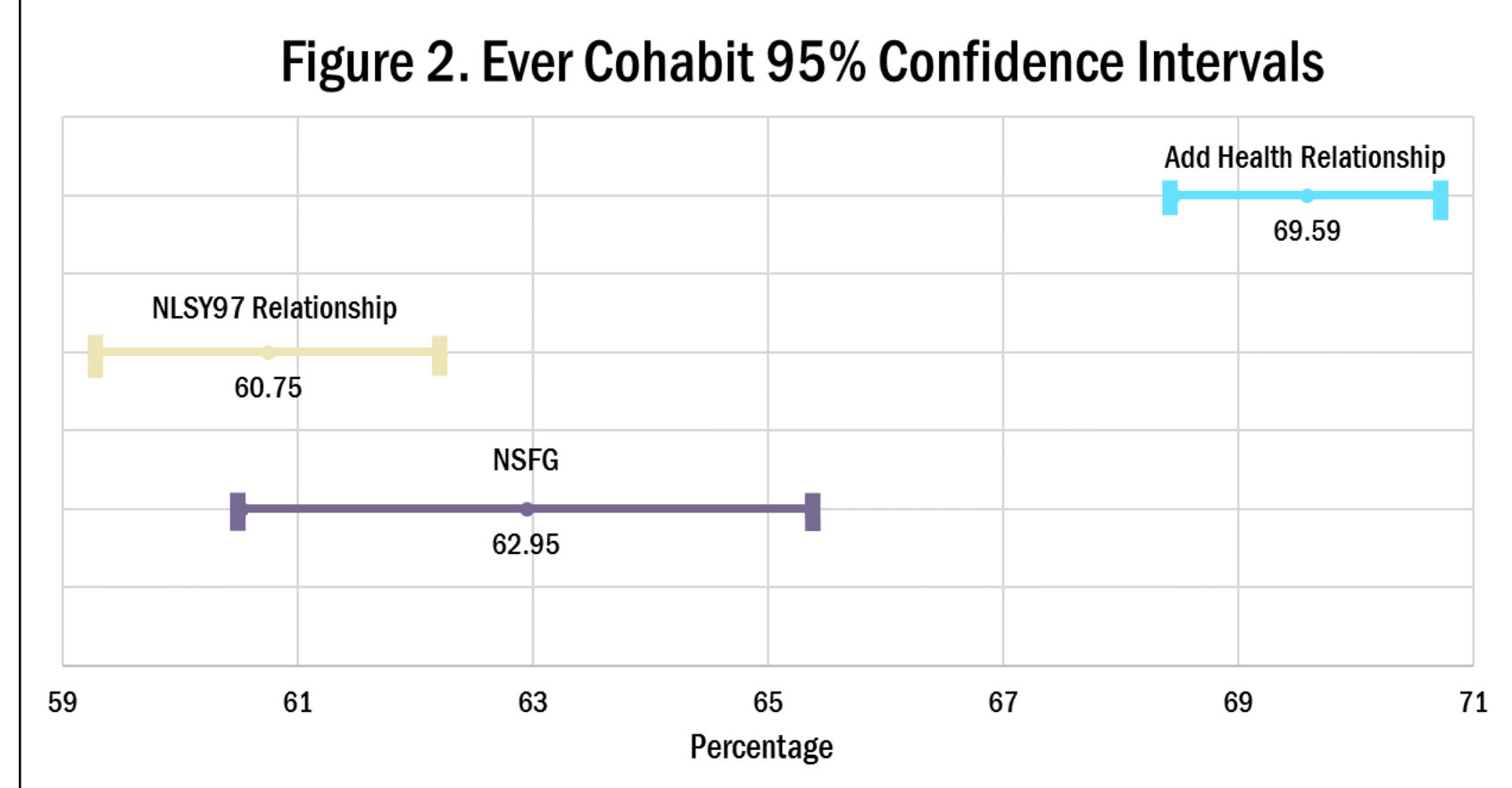
Research Questions

- How do levels of cohabitation differ across surveys and according to gender, education, and race/ethnicity?
- Are differences in reports of cohabitation due to sociodemographic compositional differences across surveys?

Cohabitation Status



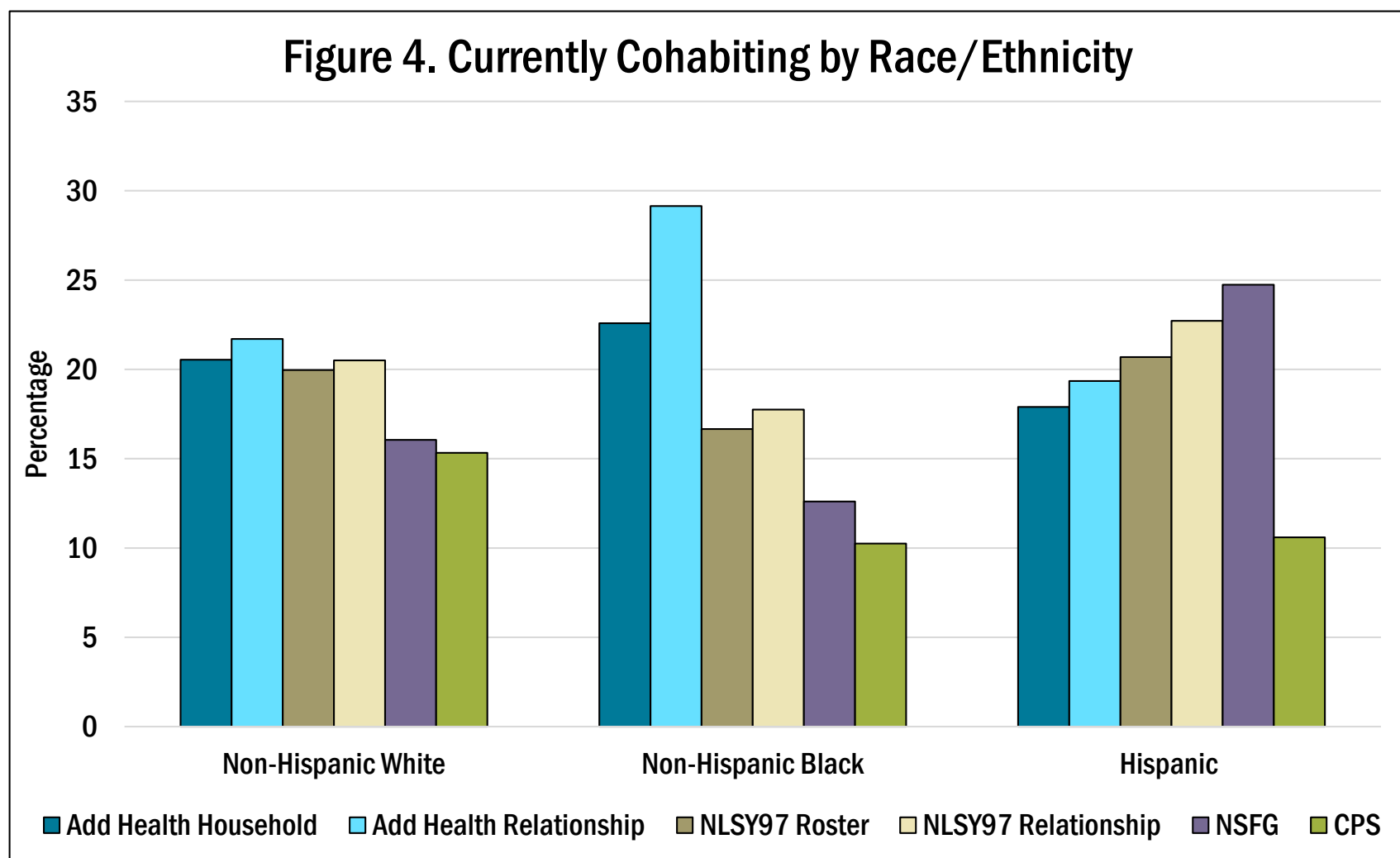
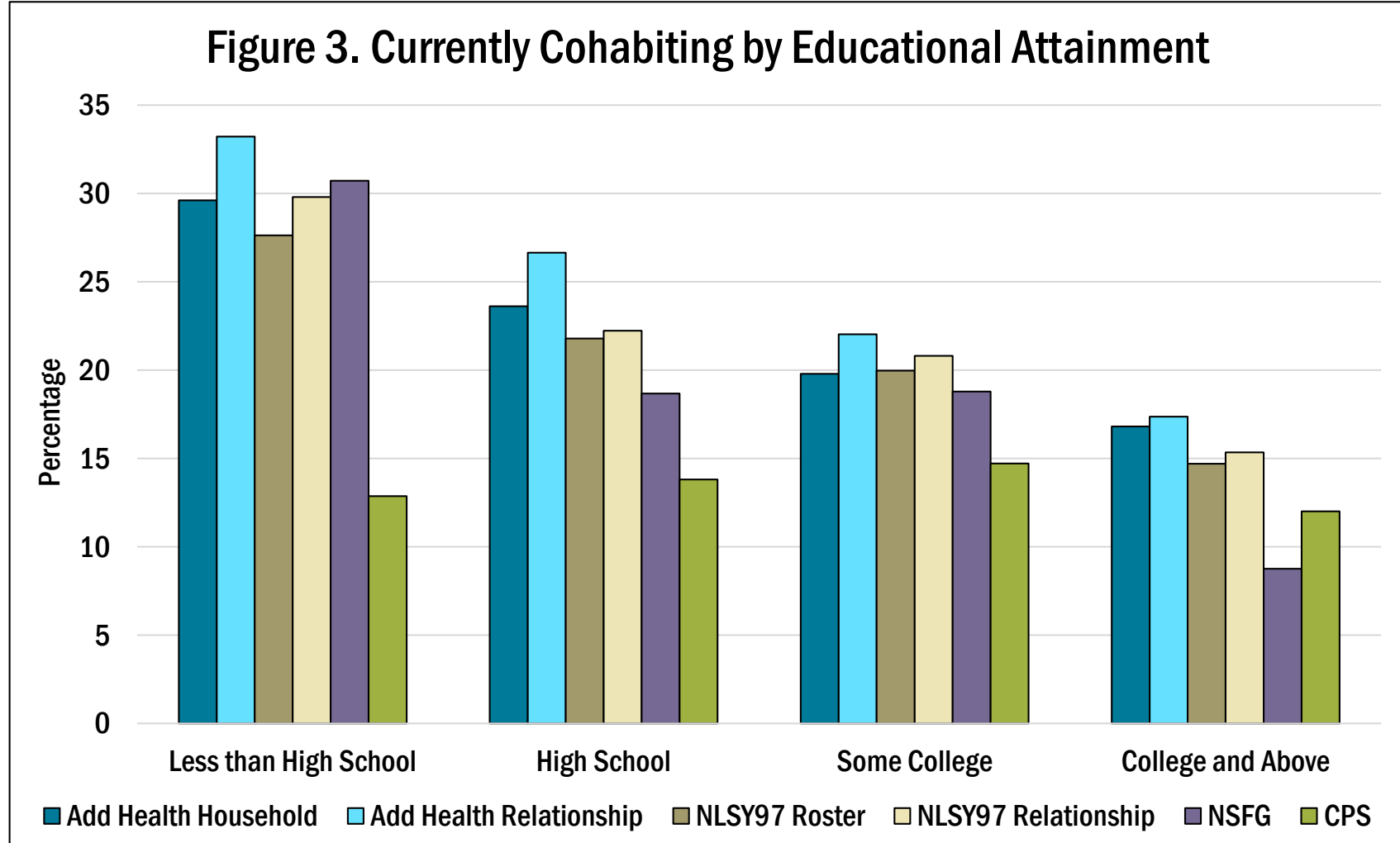
Cohabitation Experience



Sample

- 2007-2008
- Non-Institutionalized
- Aged 26 to 28
- Cohabiting with a Different Sex Partner

Cohabitation Status by Demographic Characteristics



Standardization

Predicted Percentage Currently Cohabiting Using Survey Sample Coefficients and Means Versus CPS Means

Means	Survey Sample Coefficients				NSFG
	Add Health		NLSY-97		
	Household	Relationship	Roster	Relationship	
Survey Sample	20.15	21.74	19.08	19.42	15.48
CPS	20.64	22.32	19.32	19.74	15.10

Notes: Predicted values based on logistic model of current cohabitation that includes indicators for variables shown in table 1.
Sources: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health); National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-97); National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG); Current Population Survey (CPS).

Discussion

- Measurement of cohabitation widely varies across national surveys.
- In comparison to household rosters, direct questions result in lower estimates of cohabitation.
- Estimates of current and any cohabitation experience differ across the surveys.
- Estimates of cohabitation differ by gender, education, and race/ethnicity.
- Differentials in estimates of cohabitation across surveys are due more to measurement than sample composition.
- Next steps include analyses of children’s family structure, more contemporary cohorts, and same-sex cohabitation.

Acknowledgments

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