

Older Adults Who Live Apart Together (LAT): A Comparison of Single, Dating, LAT, Cohabitation, Remarriage, and First Marriage

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Introduction

- Partnerships have become more diverse among older adults in recent decades.
- Most older singles are categorized as unpartnered but they may go out on dates or be in LAT relationships.
- LAT relationships are acceptable in European countries. Research about LAT relationships in the U.S. is limited.

LAT Relationships

- LAT is characteristically defined as a chosen, intimate relationship between partners who are committed to each other for the long term and who live in separate homes.

Debate: LAT relationships are ...

- A stepping stone to cohabitation and marriage. → Features are similar to dating relationships.
- LAT relationships are a new family form. → An alternative to cohabitation and marriage.

Current Study

- Compare LAT relationships with single, dating, cohabitation, remarriage, and first marriage.
- Distinguish the differences among daters, LATs and cohabitators.

Method

- Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS), 2011
- Analytic sample was 9,665 respondents who were aged 50 and older.
- Analytic strategy:
 - Examine demographic characteristics by relationship type.
 - Examine what factors are related to being a dater, LAT, and cohabitor by using multinomial logistic regression.

Measuring LAT relationships

“Do you go out on dates?”

- YES: “Do you regularly date one person that you consider your steady partner?”
- YES: LATs. NO: Daters.

Descriptive Results

- Nearly 3% of older adults aged 50 and older are in LAT relationships.
- Among unmarried partnered older adults, they are more often in LAT relationships (39%) than either dating relationships (31%) or cohabitation (30%).

Descriptive and Multivariate Statistics

Table 1. Mean or Percentage of Demographic Characteristics by Relationship Type

| | Single | Daters | LATs | Cohabitors | Remarrieds | First marrieds |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gender | | | | | | |
| Men | 24 | 47 | 50 | 51 | 59 | 52 |
| Women | 76 | 53 | 50 | 49 | 41 | 48 |
| Age (Mean) | 72 | 71 | 71 | 70 | 71 | 71 |
| Bachelor's degree | | | | | | |
| Yes | 26 | 40 | 28 | 28 | 32 | 32 |
| No | 74 | 60 | 72 | 72 | 68 | 68 |
| Employment | | | | | | |
| Currently employed | 26 | 40 | 38 | 36 | 34 | 31 |
| Currently not employed | 74 | 60 | 62 | 64 | 66 | 69 |
| Total Personal Income (Mean) | \$25,679 | \$38,242 | \$37,712 | \$31,673 | \$35,385 | \$28,910 |
| Total Household Income (Mean) | \$27,464 | \$40,067 | \$41,715 | \$48,646 | \$61,868 | \$51,452 |
| The presence of children | | | | | | |
| Non-resident children | 71 | 64 | 78 | 83 | 91 | 88 |
| Resident children | 13 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| Childless | 16 | 26 | 15 | 13 | 3 | 4 |
| Status of owned home | | | | | | |
| Yes | 77 | 79 | 86 | 92 | 94 | 96 |
| No | 23 | 21 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| Self-rated health (Mean) | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Previous marital status | | | | | | |
| Never married | 12 | 20 | 7 | 17 | | |
| Divorced/separated | 35 | 51 | 49 | 53 | | |
| Widowed | 53 | 30 | 45 | 30 | | |
| Sample N(%) | N=1,983 (20.5%) | N=241 (2.5%) | N=300 (3.1%) | N=234 (2.4%) | N=1,458 (15.1%) | N=5,449 (56.4%) |

Table 2. Logistic Models Predicting Unmarried Older Adults by Partnership

| | Partnered | |
|---|-----------|-------|
| | OR | SE |
| Women (ref: Men) | 0.34*** | 0.03 |
| Age | 0.93*** | 0.01 |
| Previous marital status | | |
| Divorced/separated | 1.13 | 0.25 |
| Widowed | 0.7 | 0.16 |
| (ref: Never married) | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 0.97 | 0.11 |
| (ref: No Bachelor's degree) | | |
| Currently employed | 1.14 | 0.12 |
| (ref: Not currently employed) | | |
| Owned a private residence (Ref: Not owned a private residence) | 1.86*** | 0.24 |
| Total Personal Income | 1.00* | 0.00 |
| Self-rating health | 1.27*** | 0.06 |
| The presence of children | | |
| Resident children | 0.53*** | 0.09 |
| Childless | 0.73 | 0.14 |
| (ref: Non-resident children) | | |
| _cons | 29.76*** | 24.55 |
| N | 2758 | |

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Models Predicting Unmarried Older Adults in Dating, LAT relationships, or Cohabitation

| | Daters | | Cohabitors | |
|---|---------|------|------------|------|
| | OR | SE | OR | SE |
| Women (ref: Men) | 1.25 | 0.19 | 0.97 | 0.19 |
| Age | 1.01 | 0.02 | 0.96* | 0.02 |
| Previous marital status | | | | |
| Divorced/separated | 0.38* | 0.40 | 0.07*** | 0.55 |
| Widowed | 0.24*** | 0.42 | 0.05*** | 0.56 |
| (ref: Never married/single) | | | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 1.55* | 0.20 | 1.03 | 0.22 |
| (ref: No Bachelor's degree) | | | | |
| Currently employed | 1.07 | 0.20 | 0.85 | 0.21 |
| (ref: Not currently employed) | | | | |
| Owned a private residence (Ref: Not owned a private residence) | 0.61* | 0.24 | 2.14* | 0.31 |
| Total Personal Income | 1.00 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Self-rating health | 0.95 | 0.10 | 0.97 | 0.10 |
| The presence of children | | | | |
| Resident children | 1.54 | 0.33 | 0.48† | 0.42 |
| Childless | 0.99 | 0.32 | 0.10*** | 0.52 |
| (ref: Non-resident children) | | | | |
| _cons | 2.02 | 1.53 | 229.40*** | 1.56 |
| N | 775 | | 775 | |

Descriptive Results Cont.

- LATs more often have experience of widowhood than daters and cohabitators.
- Cohabitors less often have resident children than LATs.

Multivariate Results

- Older adults who are divorced or widowed tend to be in LAT relationships rather than dating relationships or cohabitation.
- Unmarried partnered older adults who have resident children are less likely to be cohabitators than LATs.

Current Partnership Status among Older Adults by Gender

Figure 1. Current Marital Status among Older Men

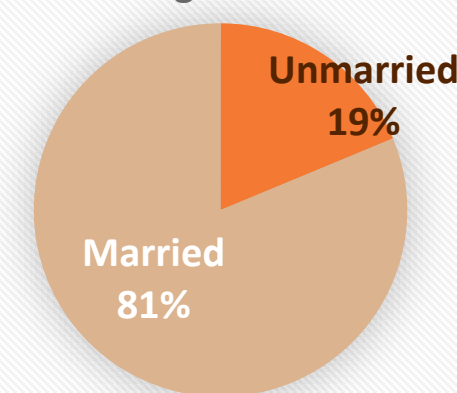


Figure 2. Current Marital Status among Older Women

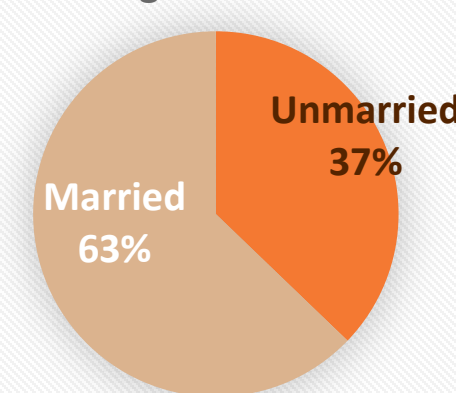


Figure 3. Unmarried Older Men by Partnership Status

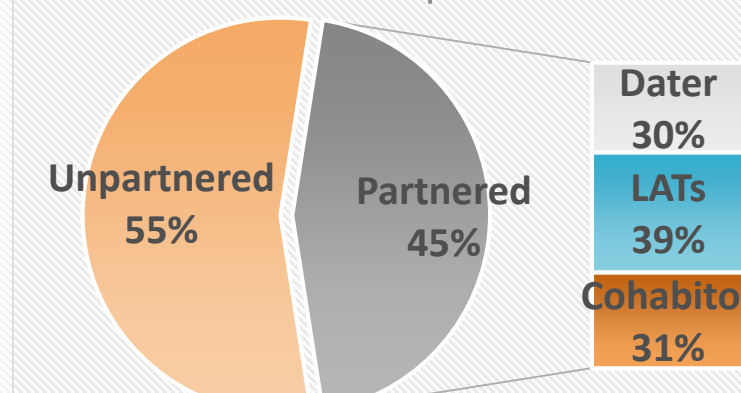
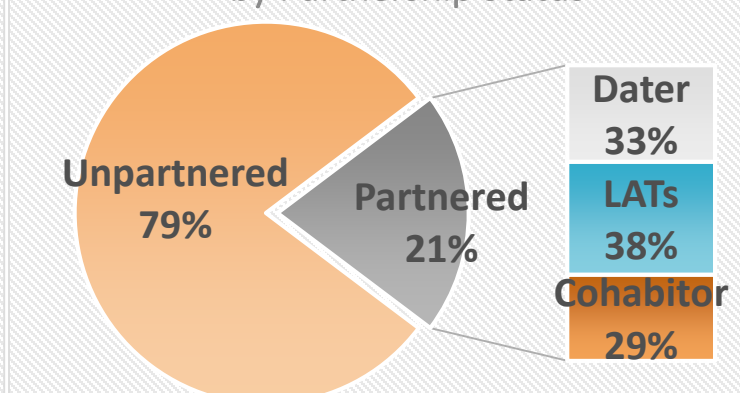


Figure 4. Unmarried Older Women by Partnership Status



Conclusions

- LAT relationships are distinct from dating and cohabitation.
 - LAT relationships have unique meanings for older adults.
- Future research may examine expectations of cohabitation and marriage among LATs.