

Charting Marriage & Divorce in the U.S.: The Adjusted Marriage Rate, 2008-2020

Author: Krista K. Westrick-Payne

Beginning in 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau began asking respondents of the American Community Survey about events experienced in the past 12 months including marriages and divorces. In the same year, they also began asking respondents to report on the number of times they had been married. In conjunction with information on respondents' marital status, the NCFMR has been calculating and reporting on marriage and divorce rates in the U.S. since these variables were first made available to the public. In a special release series, we provide single year estimates charting marriage and divorce rates spanning the years 2008-2020. In this release, we focus on the adjusted marriage rate. Please note, the standard 2020 ACS 1-year data products will not be released due to the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection and data quality (for more information click [here](#)). As such, the estimates in this report for the year 2020 were derived from NCFMR analyses of ACS 1-year Experimental PUMS data.

Adjusted Marriage Rate

The adjusted marriage rate is computed using the following equation:

$$\left[\frac{\text{number married in the past 12 months}}{\text{(number married in the past 12 months + the currently unmarried population aged 15 or older)}} \right] \times 1,000$$

Table 1. Marriages in the Last Year and Marriage Rates: United States, 2008-2020

Year	Number of Women ¹	Rate per 1,000 unmarried women 15 years of age and over ²	MOE	Number of Men ¹	Rate per 1,000 unmarried men 15 years of age and over ²	MOE	Total Number ¹	Rate per 1,000 unmarried men and women 15 years of age and over ²	MOE
2020	2,031,107 ³	28.1 ³	N.C.	2,033,481 ³	30.7 ³	N.C.	4,064,588 ³	29.3 ³	N.C.
2019	2,231,263	30.5	+/- 0.38	2,261,617	33.9	+/- 0.48	4,492,880	32.1	+/- 0.30
2018	2,268,129	31.3	+/- 0.37	2,293,282	34.7	+/- 0.43	4,561,411	32.9	+/- 0.28
2017	2,319,672	32.2	+/- 0.36	2,348,243	35.7	+/- 0.42	4,667,915	33.9	+/- 0.27
2016	2,286,230	31.9	+/- 0.36	2,321,487	35.6	+/- 0.41	4,607,717	33.6	+/- 0.27
2015	2,298,977	32.3	+/- 0.36	2,348,113	36.3	+/- 0.37	4,647,090	34.2	+/- 0.26
2014	2,241,036	31.9	+/- 0.35	2,280,174	35.9	+/- 0.37	4,521,210	33.8	+/- 0.25
2013	2,155,669	31.2	+/- 0.37	2,215,659	35.4	+/- 0.45	4,371,328	33.2	+/- 0.29
2012	2,156,833	31.5	+/- 0.33	2,208,051	35.8	+/- 0.43	4,364,884	33.5	+/- 0.27
2011	2,096,359	31.1	+/- 0.37	2,144,467	35.3	+/- 0.48	4,240,826	33.1	+/- 0.30
2010	2,113,521	31.9	+/- 0.34	2,142,639	36.0	+/- 0.41	4,256,160	33.8	+/- 0.26
2009	2,208,971	34.0	+/- 0.37	2,286,750	39.0	+/- 0.45	4,495,721	36.4	+/- 0.29
2008	2,227,084	34.8	+/- 0.37	2,327,018	40.5	+/- 0.44	4,554,102	37.5	+/- 0.29

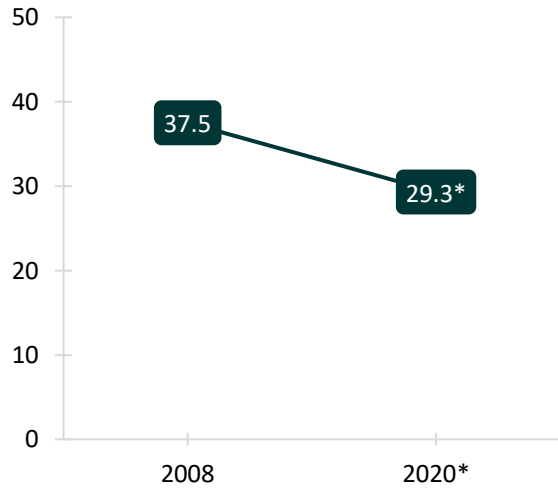
Note: MOE = Margin of Error. The MOE is a measure of sampling error and expresses the maximum range in which the rate is expected to differ from the actual population. The MOE is calculated for the derived estimates at the 90% confidence level.

Sources: ¹The numerator is from table B12501. MARRIAGES IN THE LAST YEAR BY SEX BY MARITAL STATUS FOR THE POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER. Universe: Population 15 years and over. 2008-2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates. ²The denominator is from table B12001. SEX BY MARITAL STATUS FOR THE POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER. Universe: Population 15 years and over. 2008-2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates. ³All estimates related to the year 2020 were drawn from NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey, 1-year Experimental PUMS data, as such MOEs are not reported because comparable estimation to prior years is not possible.

Adjusted Marriage Rate

- The marriage rate has declined since 2008 for men and women aged 15 and older in the U.S.—a drop of 21.9% overall.

Figure 1. Adjusted Marriage Rate, 2008 & 2019



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2008 & 2019; American Community Survey, 1-year Experimental PUMS, 2020

Data Citations:

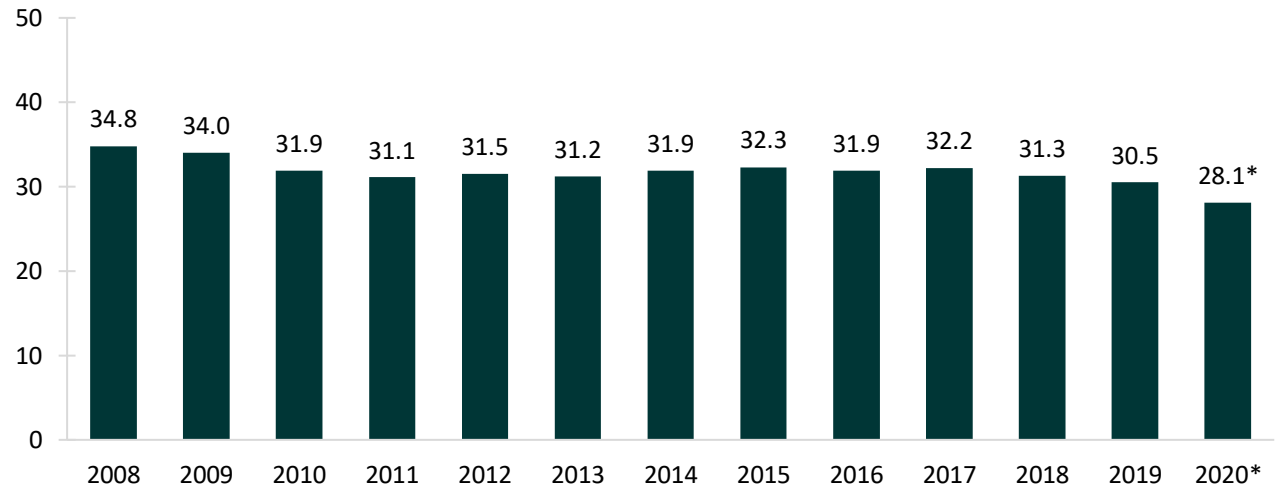
1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008- 2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, Table B12501. Marriages in the Last Year by Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15 Years and Over.
2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008- 2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, Table B12001. Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15 Years and Over.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey, 1-year Experimental PUMS

Suggested Citation:

Westrick-Payne, K. K. (2022). Charting marriage & divorce in the U.S.: The adjusted marriage rate, 2008-2020. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research.

Women's Adjusted Marriage Rate

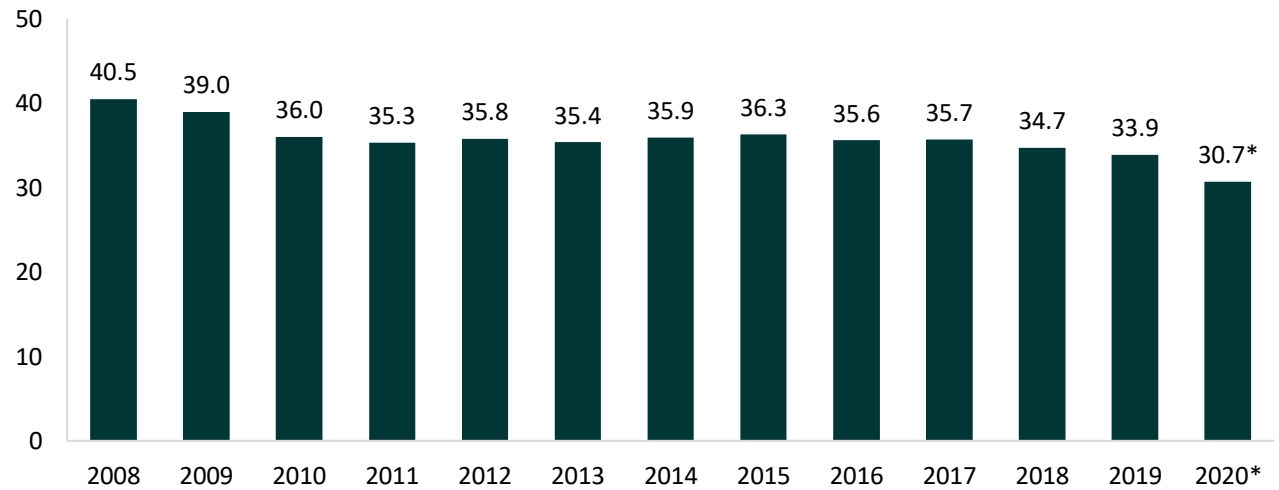
Figure 2. Women's Adjusted Marriage Rate, 2008-2020*



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2008-2019; American Community Survey, 1-year Experimental PUMS, 2020

Men's Adjusted Marriage Rate

Figure 3. Men's Adjusted Marriage Rate, 2008-2020*



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2008-2019; American Community Survey, 1-year Experimental PUMS, 2020