

Median Age of Marriage: Differences by Gender and Educational Attainment

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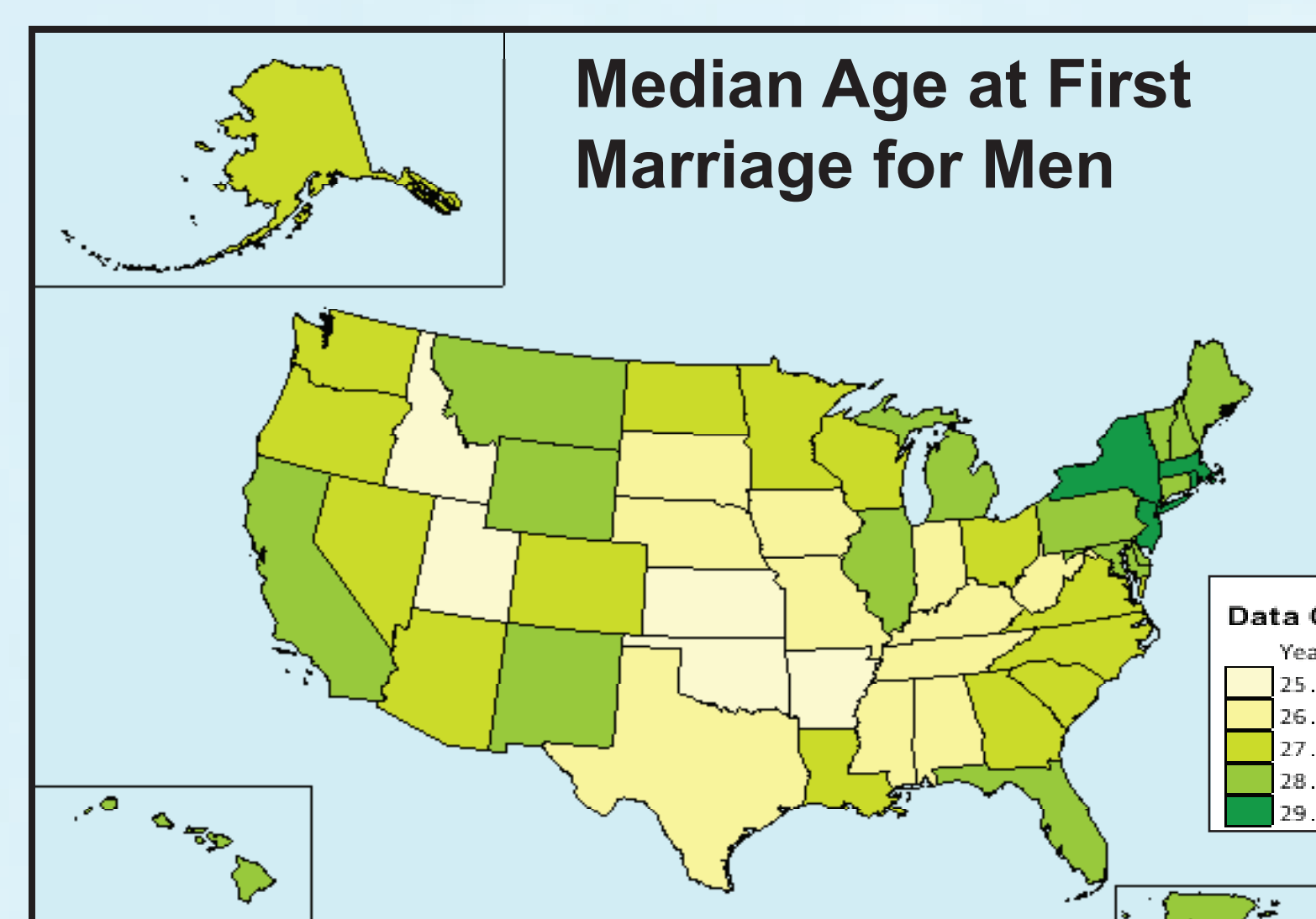
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Overview

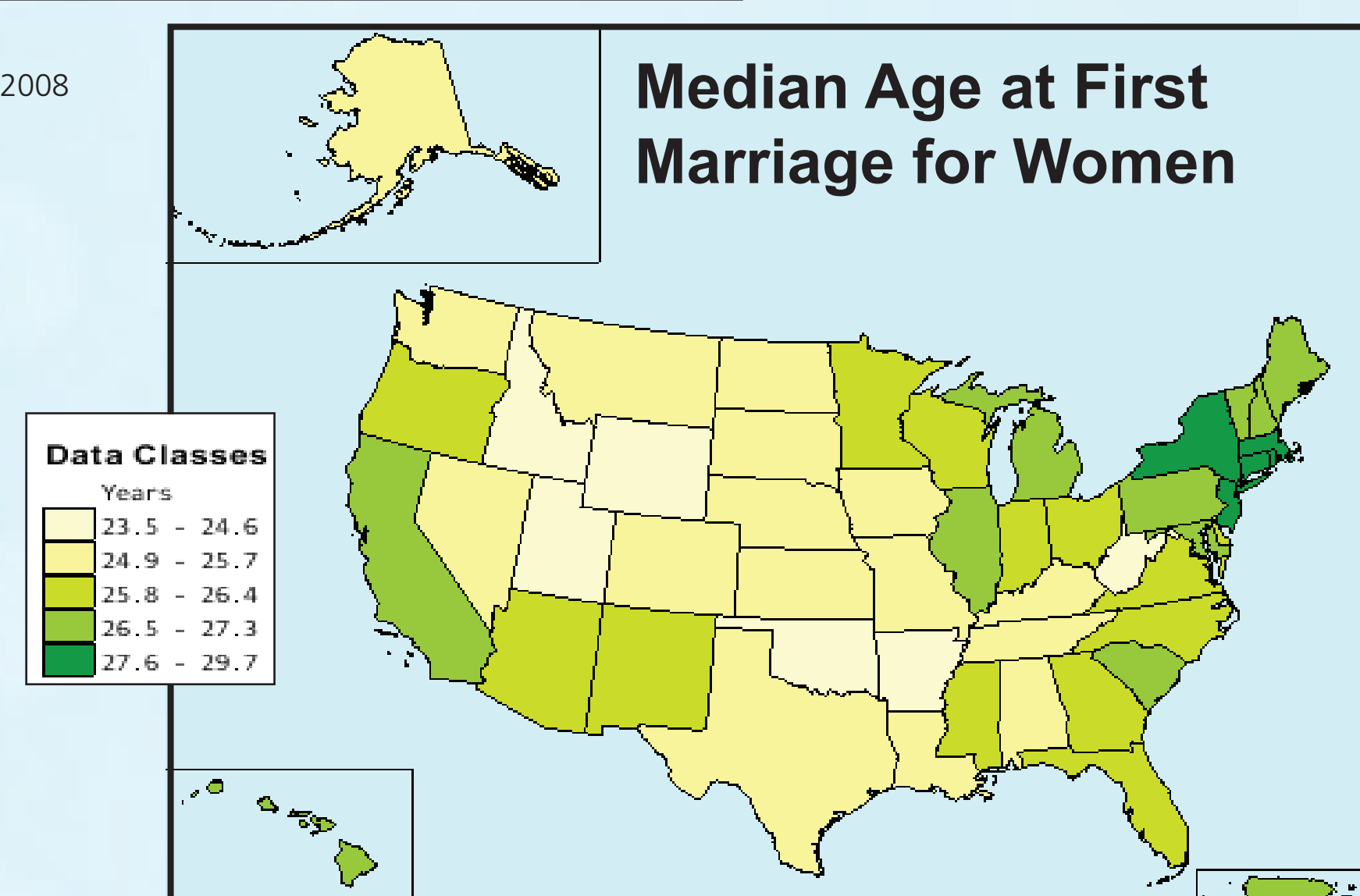
- Since the 1950's, the United States has witnessed a steadily increasing median age at first marriage (US Census Bureau: Current Population Survey, 2007).
- Recently, the increase in median age at first marriage has looked uniform across states, with an average of 26 years for women and an average of approximately 28 years for men (US Census Bureau: American Community Survey, 2008).
- Some researchers have credited this increase in median age at first marriage to the low desire of people to marry or the "marriage squeeze" (South & Lloyd, 1992).
- This presentation focuses on the increase of educational attainment and its association with marital timing. It also reviews the role of gender and geography in marriage timing.

Previous Empirical Findings on Geographical Location and Marital Timing

- Lesthaeghe & Neidert (2006) argue that there are two phases in the demographic transition in the United States.
- More importantly, they assert a key characteristic of the second demographic transition is the postponing of marriage.
- In this demographic transition, they demonstrate distinct patterns in several clusters of states.
- Lesthaeghe & Neidert (2006) find that there was a pattern of early marriage in West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas.
- A pattern of never-married women is found in New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Connecticut, and California.



Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 2008



Geographical Variation in Median Age at First Marriage

- For women, the states with the highest median ages at first marriage are located in the Northeast, with the exception of California.
- A dense collection of states with the lowest median ages are located more in the Midwest and West, but still show low median ages in the South.
- For men, the states with the highest median ages at first marriage are located in the Northeast, with the exceptions of a few states on the western border such as California and the eastern border such as Florida.
- For both women and men, southern states tend to have low median ages at first marriage.

Ranking tables for age at first marriage (highest to lowest)

Men		Women	
State	Median Age	State	Median Age
Rhode Island	30.3	Connecticut	28.2
New York	30	Massachusetts	28.2
Massachusetts	29.8	New York	28.1
New Jersey	29.8	Rhode Island	27.8
Connecticut	29.4	New Jersey	27.6
New Hampshire	29.3	Maryland	27.3
Maryland	29.2	Vermont	27.1
California	29	Puerto Rico	27.1
Florida	28.7	Hawaii	26.8
Illinois	28.6	Illinois	26.8
Maine	28.6	Pennsylvania	26.8
Michigan	28.6	California	26.7
Montana	28.6	South Carolina	26.7
Delaware	28.5	Michigan	26.6
Hawaii	28.5	Maine	26.5
Pennsylvania	28.5	New Hampshire	26.5
Puerto Rico	28.5	Florida	26.4
Vermont	28.4	Delaware	26.3
New Mexico	28.3	Ohio	26.3
Wyoming	28.3	New Mexico	26.2
Arizona	28	North Carolina	26.2
Nevada	27.9	Wisconsin	26.1
South Carolina	27.8	Arizona	26
North Dakota	27.7	Minnesota	26
Alaska	27.6	Mississippi	26
Oregon	27.6	Virginia	26
Georgia	27.5	Georgia	25.9
Washington	27.5	Oregon	25.9
Wisconsin	27.5	Indiana	25.8
Colorado	27.4	Nevada	25.7
Minnesota	27.4	Washington	25.7
Ohio	27.4	Colorado	25.6
Virginia	27.4	Louisiana	25.6
North Carolina	27.3	Missouri	25.6
Louisiana	27.2	Alaska	25.5
Alabama	26.9	Iowa	25.5
Indiana	26.9	Montana	25.5
Kentucky	26.9	North Dakota	25.4
Missouri	26.9	South Dakota	25.4
Texas	26.9	Nebraska	25.3
Iowa	26.8	Texas	25.3
Tennessee	26.7	Alabama	25.2
Nebraska	26.5	Kentucky	25
West Virginia	26.5	Tennessee	25
Mississippi	26.4	Kansas	24.9
South Dakota	26.3	West Virginia	24.6
Kansas	26.1	Wyoming	24.5
Utah	26.1	Oklahoma	24.4
Arkansas	25.9	Arkansas	24.3
Oklahoma	25.7	Idaho	23.5
Idaho	25.4	Utah	23.5

Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 2008

Previous Empirical Findings on Median Age at First Marriage & Educational Attainment

- Pursuing higher education is a significant factor in the trend of delayed marriage (e.g. Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Schmidt, 2008).
- Individuals who enter into marriage early often experience disadvantages, including lower educational attainment (Alexander & Reilly, 1981).
- Education's influence on marriage is primarily in its effect on timing, postponing it into ages after schooling is completed (Waite & Spitze, 1981).

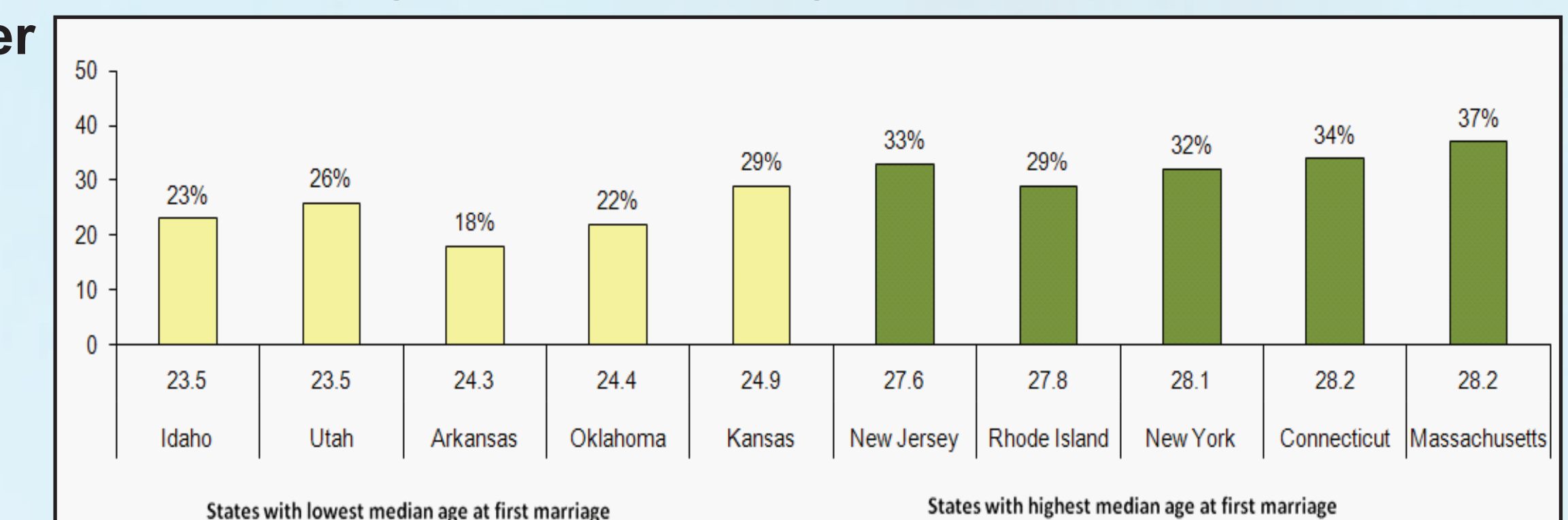
Acknowledgement

- This research is supported by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research, which is funded by a cooperative agreement, grant number 1 U01 AE00001-01, between the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Bowling Green State University.

Educational Attainment

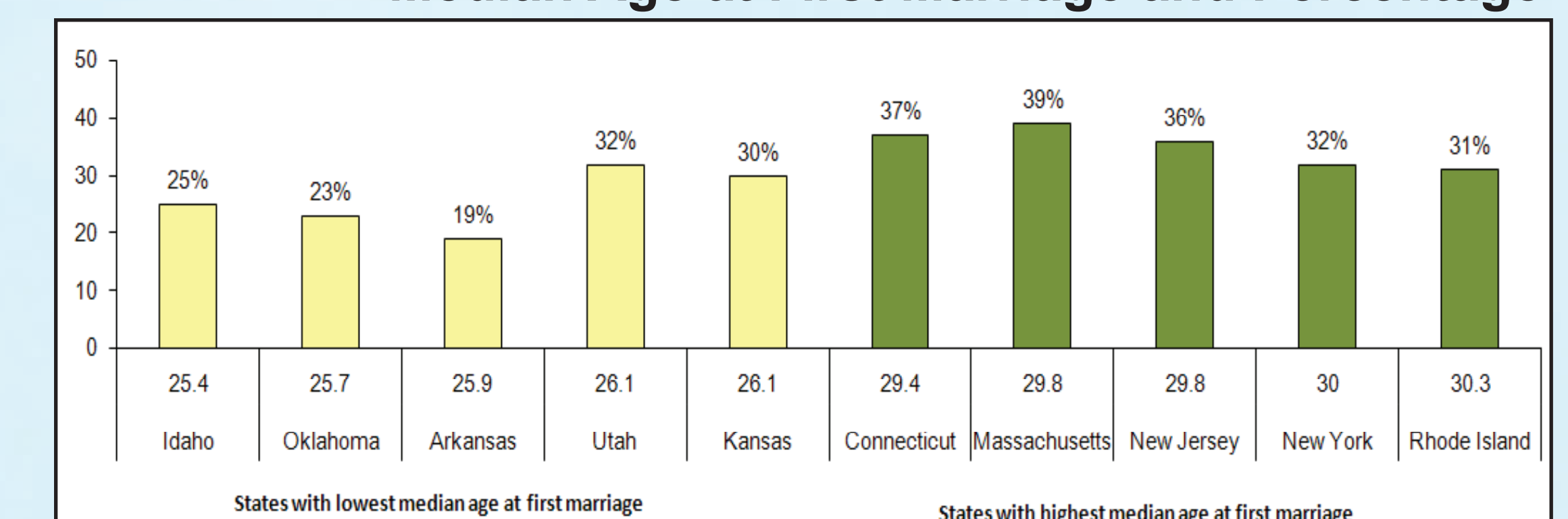
- Among females, the top five states with the highest median ages at first marriage have a higher percentage of females with a bachelor's degree than the bottom five states.
- Among males, the top five states with the highest median ages at first marriage have a higher percentage of males with a bachelor's degree than the bottom five states, with the exception of Rhode Island (31%).
- Overall, Massachusetts has the highest percentage of females with a bachelor's degree (37%) and males with a bachelor's degree (39%).
- Massachusetts has the highest median age at first marriage (28.2 years) for females and third highest for males (29.8 years).

Median Age at First Marriage and Percentage of Females with BA or Higher



Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 2008

Median Age at First Marriage and Percentage of Males with BA or Higher



Conclusions

- The most recent ACS (2008) data estimates indicate the median age at first marriage continues to increase.
- Additionally, the age gap between men and women also persists; however, these patterns differ slightly when examined at the state level.
- Southern states tend to have lower median ages at first marriage, while northeastern states and California tend to have the highest.
- With respect to educational attainment, those states with the highest proportion with a bachelor's degree also tend to be the states with the highest median age at first marriage.