The 20th Anniversary of Welfare Reform:
Lessons for Marriage and Families

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TITLE I. SEC. 401. Public Law 104-193

PURPOSE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The purpose of this part is to increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to—

 (1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be <u>cared for in their own homes</u> or in the homes of relatives;

 (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and <u>marriage</u>;

 (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for <u>preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies</u>; and

 (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of <u>two-parent families</u>.

Some TANF Provisions

- Promote work among single mothers

- Time limits on welfare receipt

- State bonuses for reducing nonmarital fertility

- Caps on welfare receipt for new mothers

- Restrictions on teen mothers living on their own

- Marriage education and *Healthy Marriage Initiatives*

Healthy Marriage Initiatives and Demonstration Grants

- Public advertising campaigns on the value of healthy marriages.

- Education in high schools on the value of marriage, relationship skills, and budgeting.

- Marriage and relationship skills programs that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement.

- Premarital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals who are interested in marriage.

- Marriage mentoring programs that use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.

- Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills.

- Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.

Evaluation? Successful, or Not?

"Results indicate that about 24 months after implementation of program services, the primary outcomes showed no pattern of significant differences, whether examined overall or separately within each of the three matched-community pairs."

Bir, Anupa, et al. (2012). *Impacts of a Community Healthy Marriage Initiative*. OPRE Report # 2012–34A, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Bottom line: Not Easy to Demonstrate Large or Significant Effects

"Despite its effects on work and income, the transformed safety net has had little impact on family formation and stability, at least in the ways researchers have traditionally measured these things. Welfare reform, EITC expansions, and growing access to in-kind benefits have had little influence on marriage or on nonmarital fertility."

Tach and Edin (2017), *Annual Review of Sociology*

My Own Work on Marriage

From Ziliak (2016) in *Economics of Means-Tested Transfer Programs in the United States, Volume II* (Ed., Robert Moffitt)

"Graefe and Lichter (2008) . . . [use the] 1995 and 2002 waves of the National Survey of Family Growth, which measures marital and fertility histories of a cohort of women pre-welfare reform and post. Their difference-in-difference estimates suggest that marriage rates of women whose first birth was out of wedlock compared to women with no child prior to marriage were no higher after welfare reform than before, and those women in the later cohort were more likely to marry men with weaker labor-market potential."

What's Actually Happened to US Families, Post-1996?

1. Marriage trends

2. Cohabitation

3. Nonmarital fertility
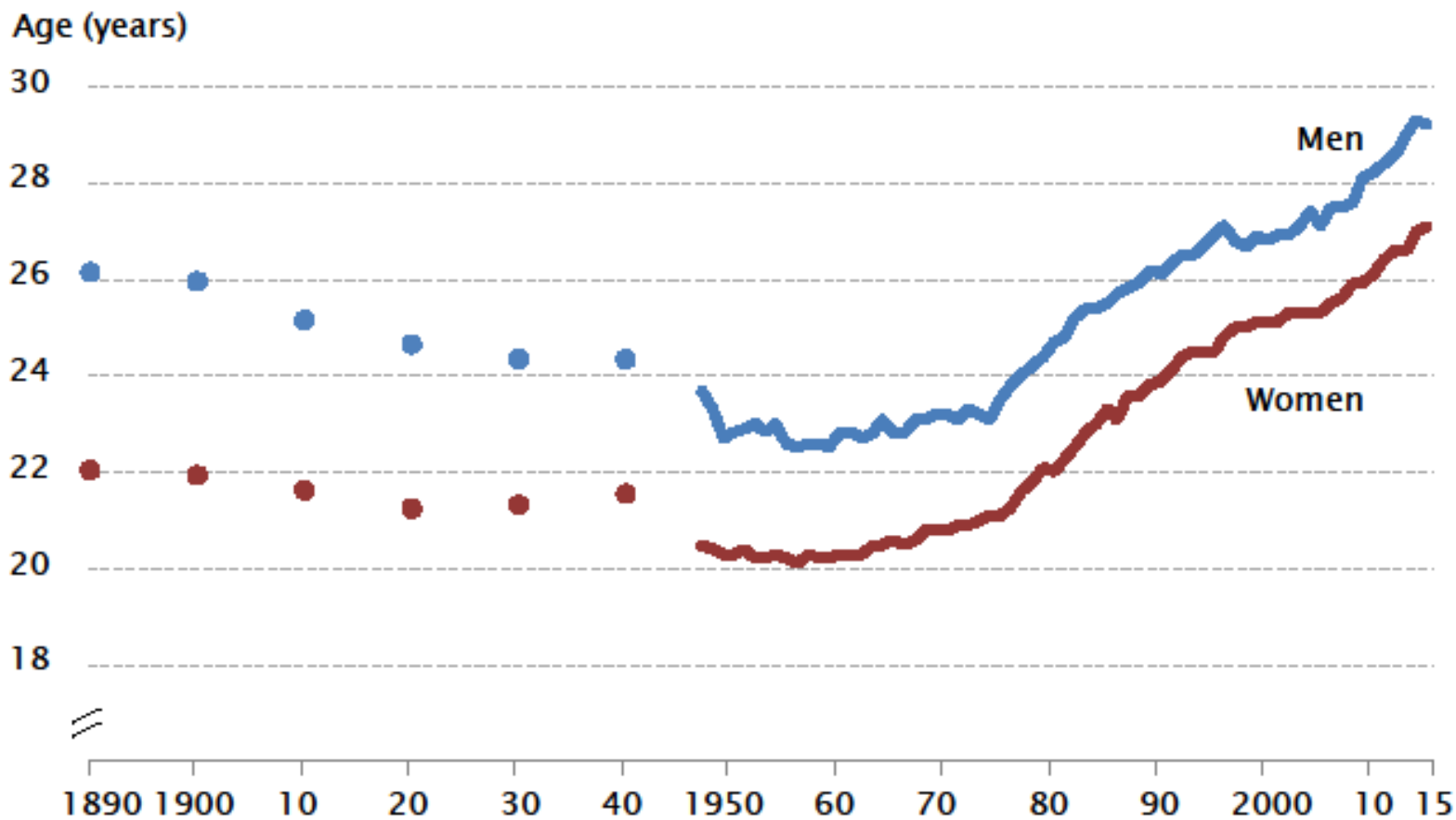
4. Children's living arrangements

1. Marriage Trends

Figure MS-1b.
Women's marital status

Percent of women
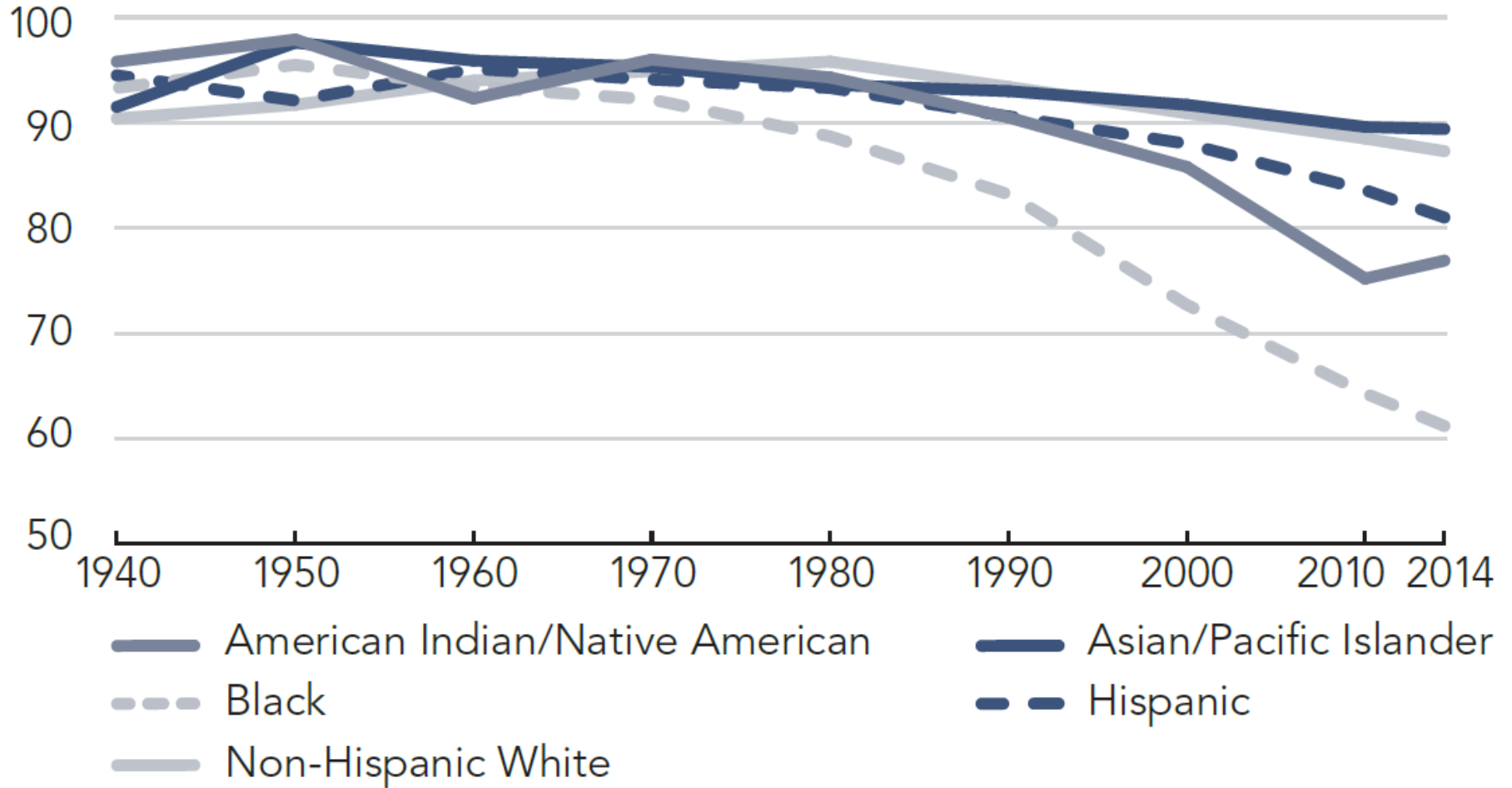
Married

Never married

Divorced

Widowed
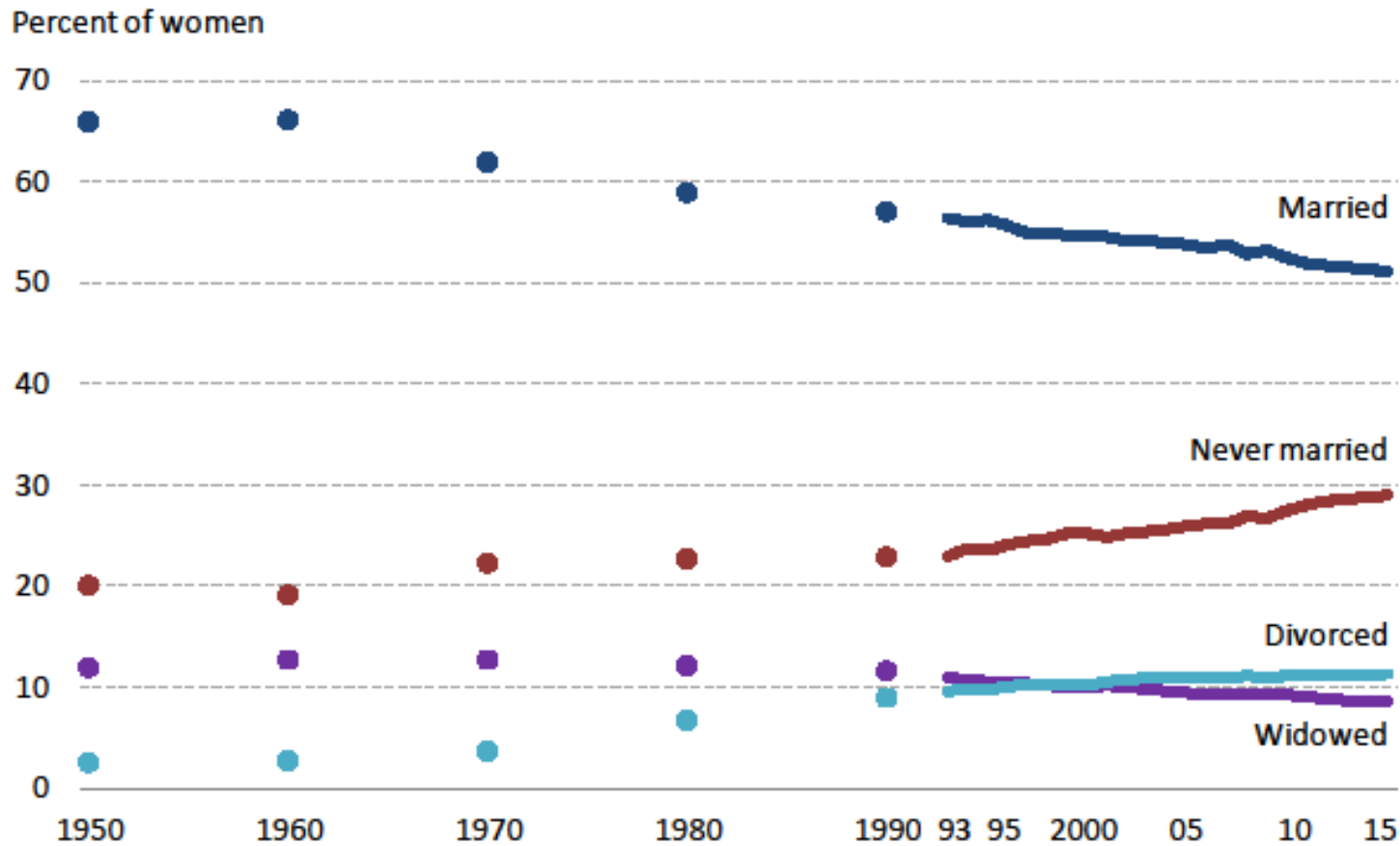
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses, 1950 to 1990, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1993 to 2015.

Note: Married includes separated and married spouse absent.

United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Figure MS-2.
Median age at first marriage: 1890 to present

Age (years)

Men

Women

1890 1900 10 20 30 40 1950 60 70 80 90 2000 10 15

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses, 1890 to 1940, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1947 to 2015.

Percentage of U.S. Women Ages 40-44 Who Had Ever Married by Race/Ethnicity, 1940-2014

Legend:
- American Indian/Native American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black
- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic White

Source: Vanorman & Scommegna (2016)

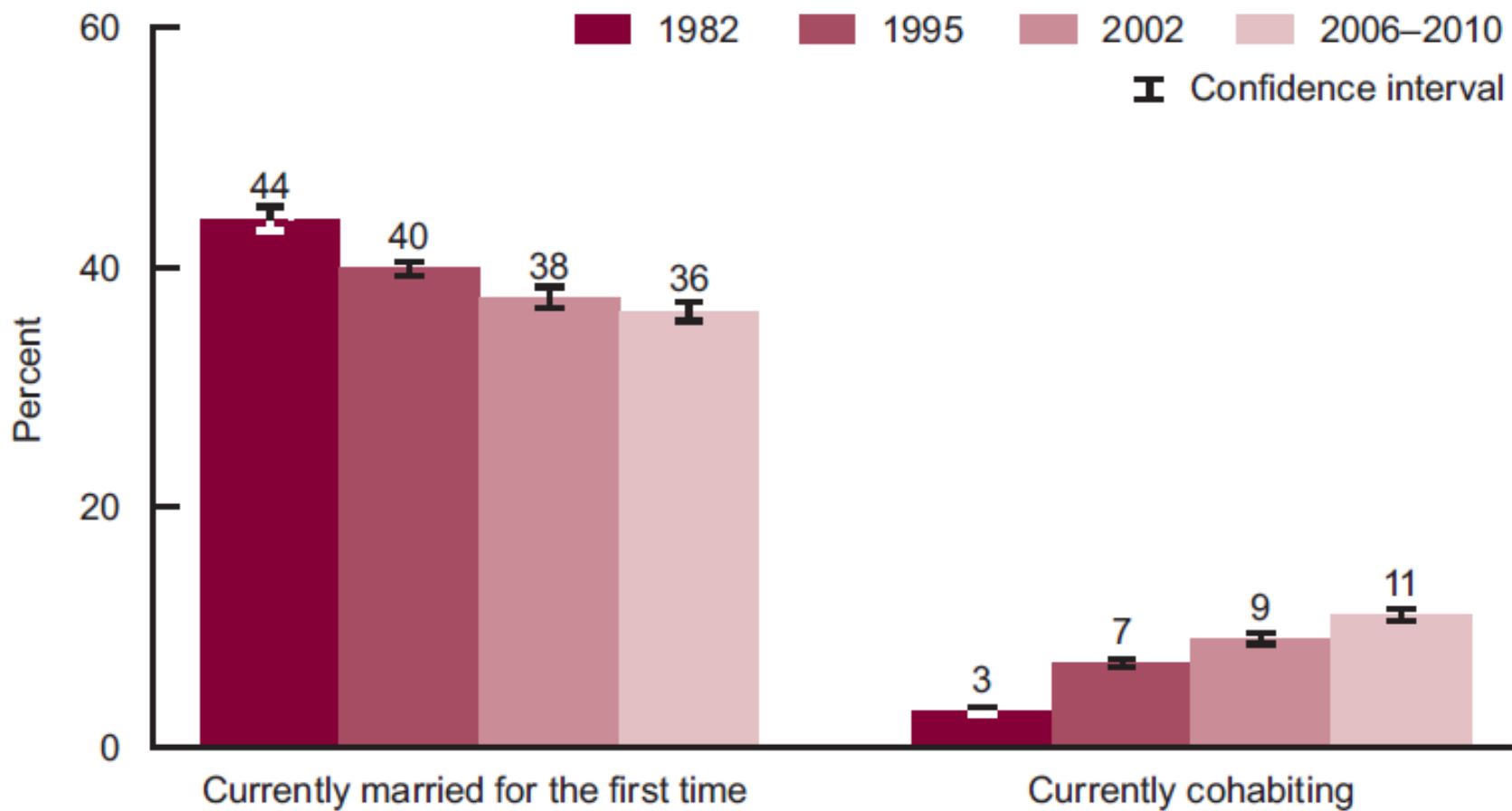Share Married by Age 30, by Educational Attainment, 1990 and 2008

% ever married by age 30
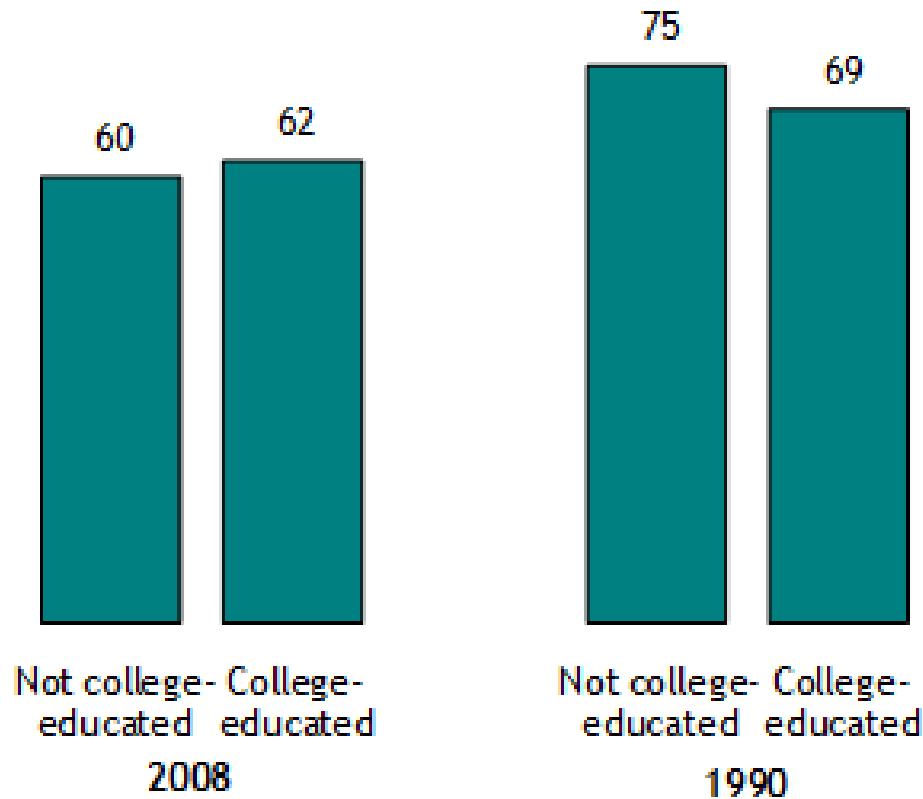
Source: Decennial Censuses and 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) Integrated Public Use Micro Samples (IPUMS)
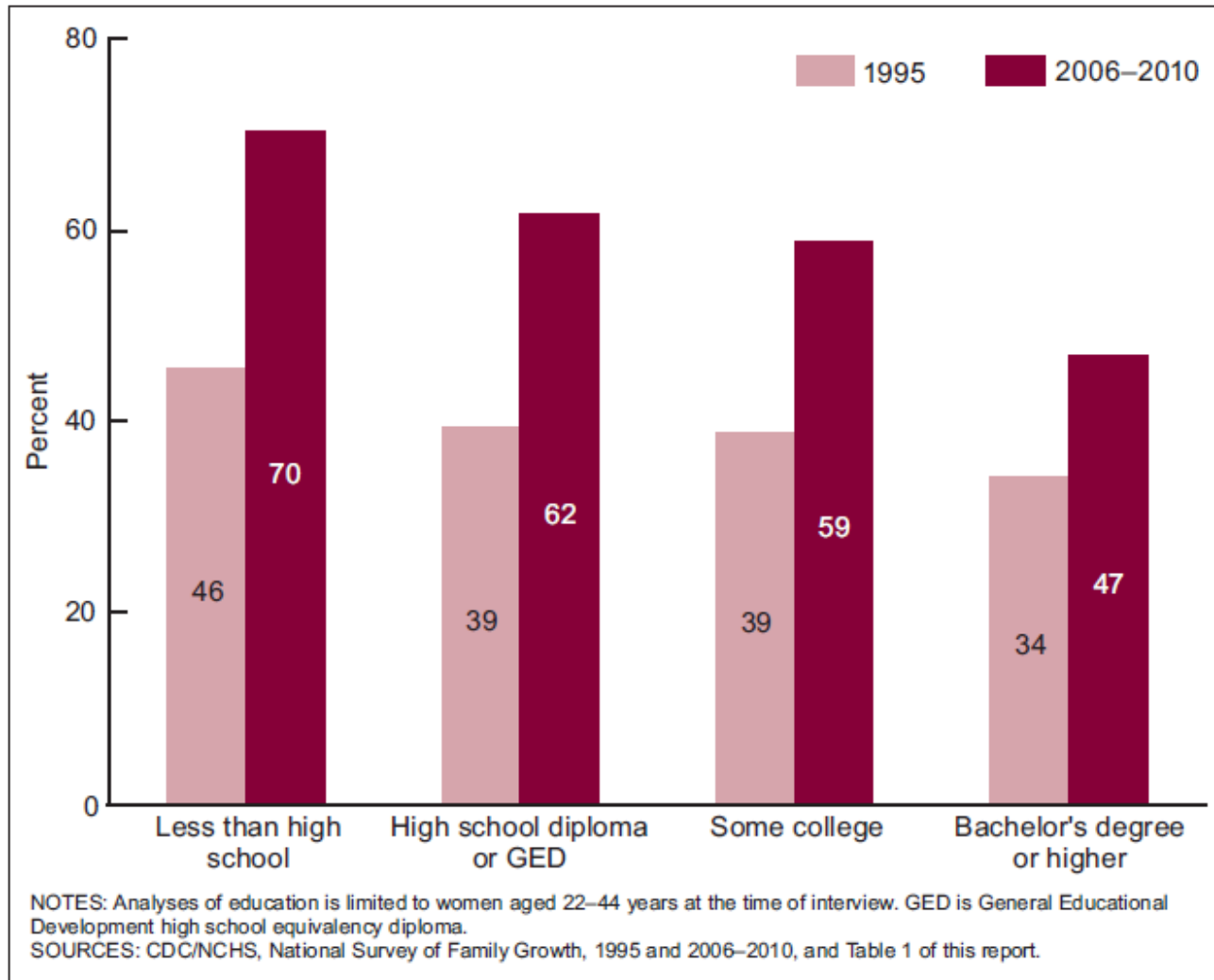
PewResearchCenter

2. Cohabitation

Figure 1. Current marital and cohabiting status among women 15–44 years of age, United States: 1982, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010

Percent of Women whose First Union was Cohabitation, Aged 22-44.

NOTES: Analyses of education is limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.
SOURCES: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995 and 2006–2010, and Table 1 of this report.

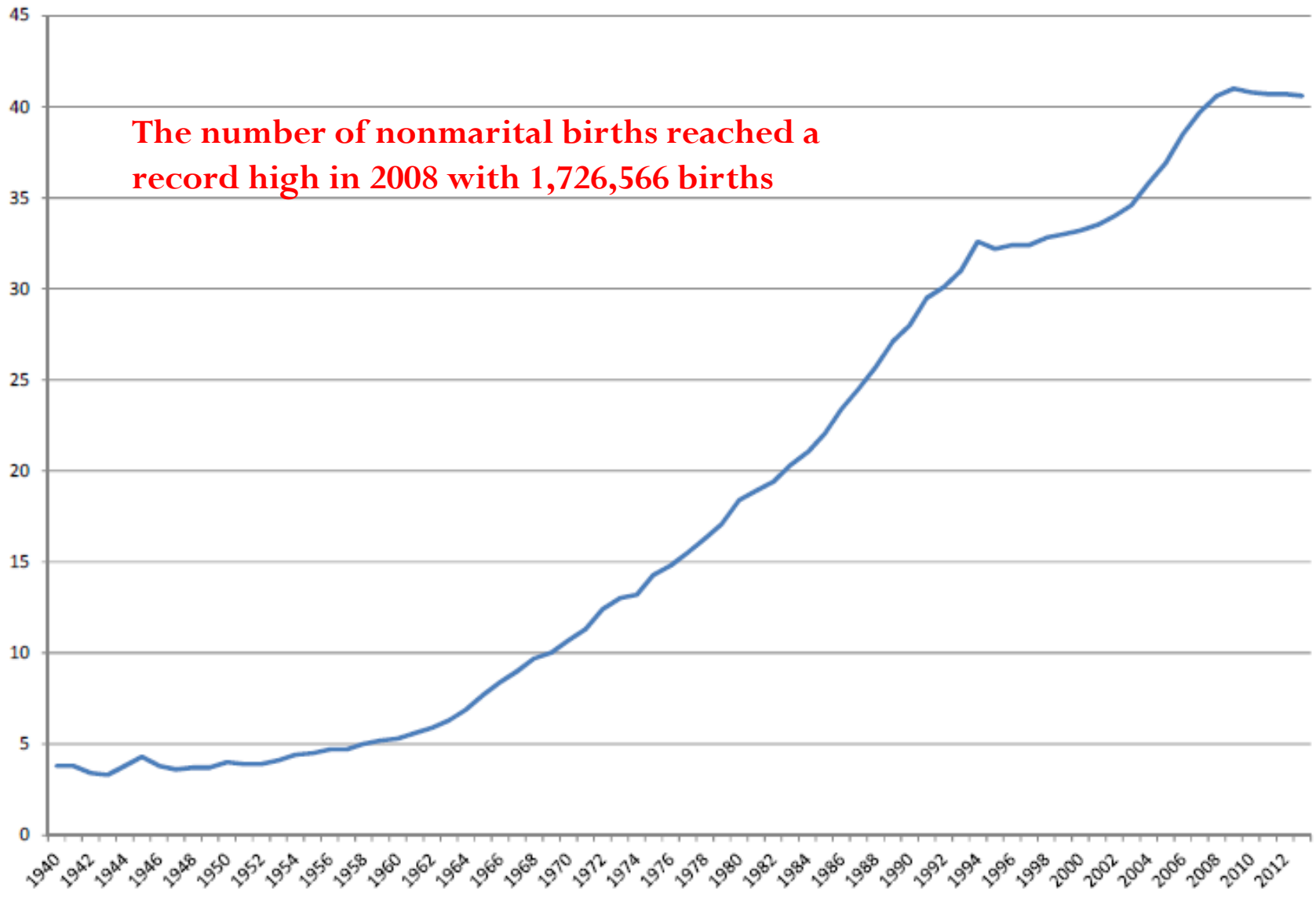Source: Copen, Daniels, and Mosher (2013)

Predicted Annual Probabilities of Transitioning from Cohabitation to Marriage
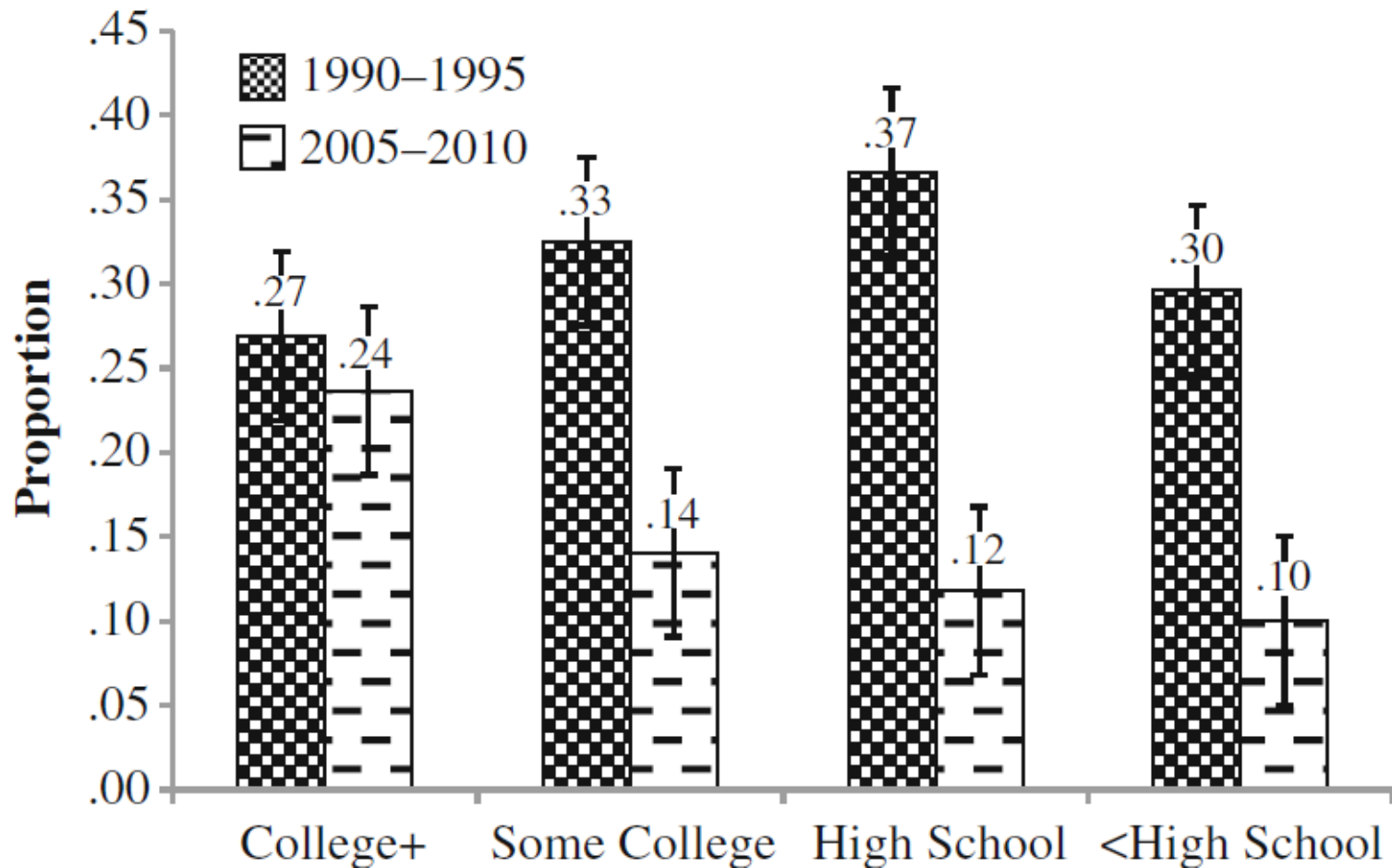
Source: Kuo and Raley (2016)

3. Nonmarital Fertility
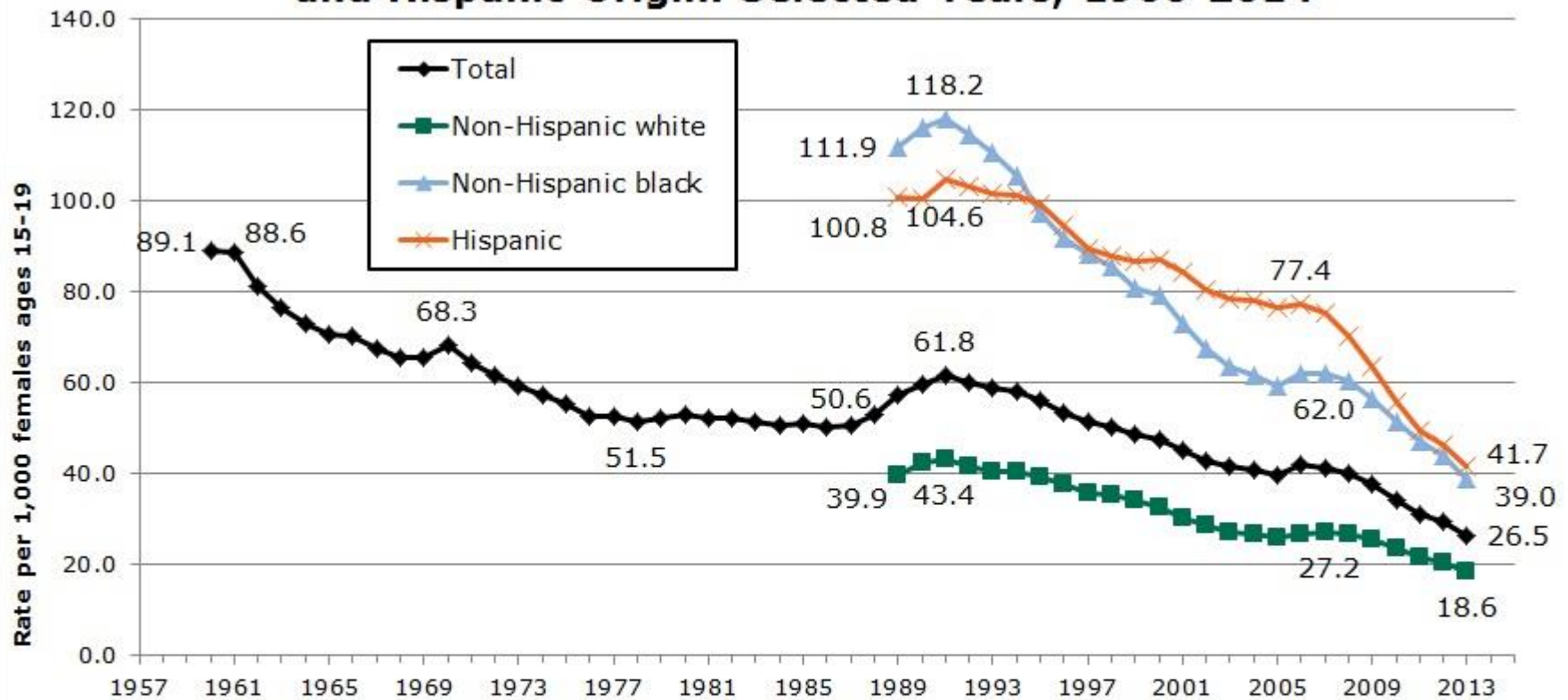
Percent of Births To Unmarried Women

The number of nonmarital births reached a record high in 2008 with 1,726,566 births

Source: Solomon-Fears, Congressional Research Service, 2014

Nonmarital Fertility Rates, 1995 & 2013

Year	Nonmarital Births (000's)	Percent of Births to Unmarried Women	Nonmarital Birth Rate
1995	1,254	32.2	43.3
2013	1,606	40.6	43.8

Figure 1

Birth Rates (per 1,000) for Females Ages 15 to 19, by Race and Hispanic Origin: Selected Years, 1960-2014*

Rate per 1,000 females ages 15-19

Legend:
- Total
- Non-Hispanic white
- Non-Hispanic black
- Hispanic

Data labels: 89.1, 88.6, 68.3, 118.2, 111.9, 100.8, 104.6, 77.4, 61.8, 50.6, 51.5, 39.9, 43.4, 62.0, 27.2, 41.7, 39.0, 26.5, 18.6

* Data for 2014 are preliminary.
Source: Data for 1960 from: National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States, 2001 With Urban and Rural Health Chartbook.* Hyattsville, Maryland: 2001, Table 3; Data fo 1970-2011: Martin J. A., Hamilton B. E., Ventura S. J., Osterman, M. J. K., & Mathews T. J. (2013). Births: Final data for 2011. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 62*(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at ttp://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_01.pdf. Data for 2012: Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Ventura, S. J., Osterman, M. J. K., Curtin, S.C., & Mathews, T. J. (2013). Births: Final data for 2012. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 62*(9). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_09.pdf. Data for 2013: Hamilton, B.E, Martin, J.A., Osterman, M.J.K., & Curtin, S.C. (2014). Births: Preliminary data for 2013. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 63*(2). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63_02.pdf.
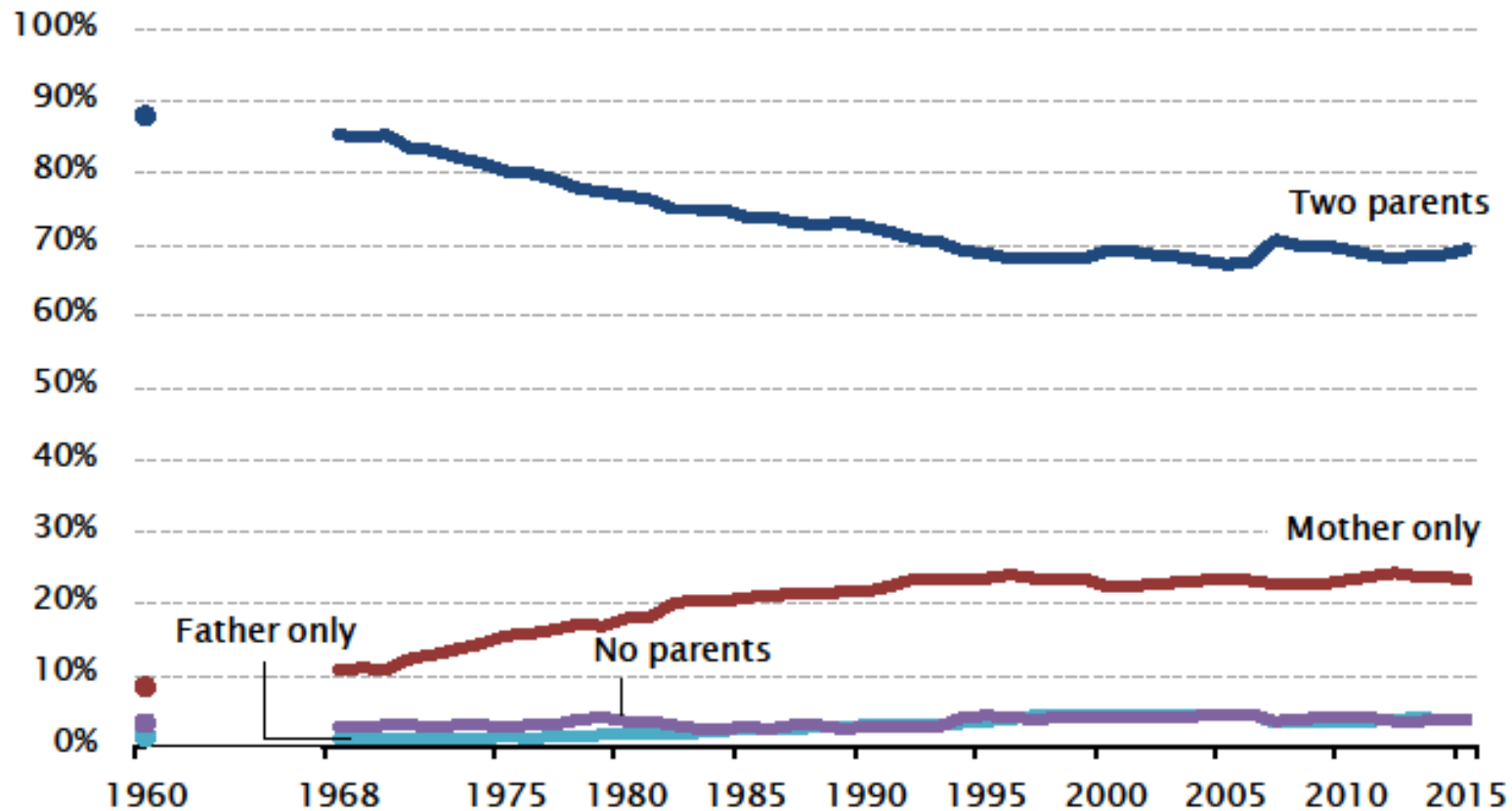
Child Trends
DATABANK

The Share of All Births by Relationship/Union Context at Birth, 1980-1984 to 2009-2013
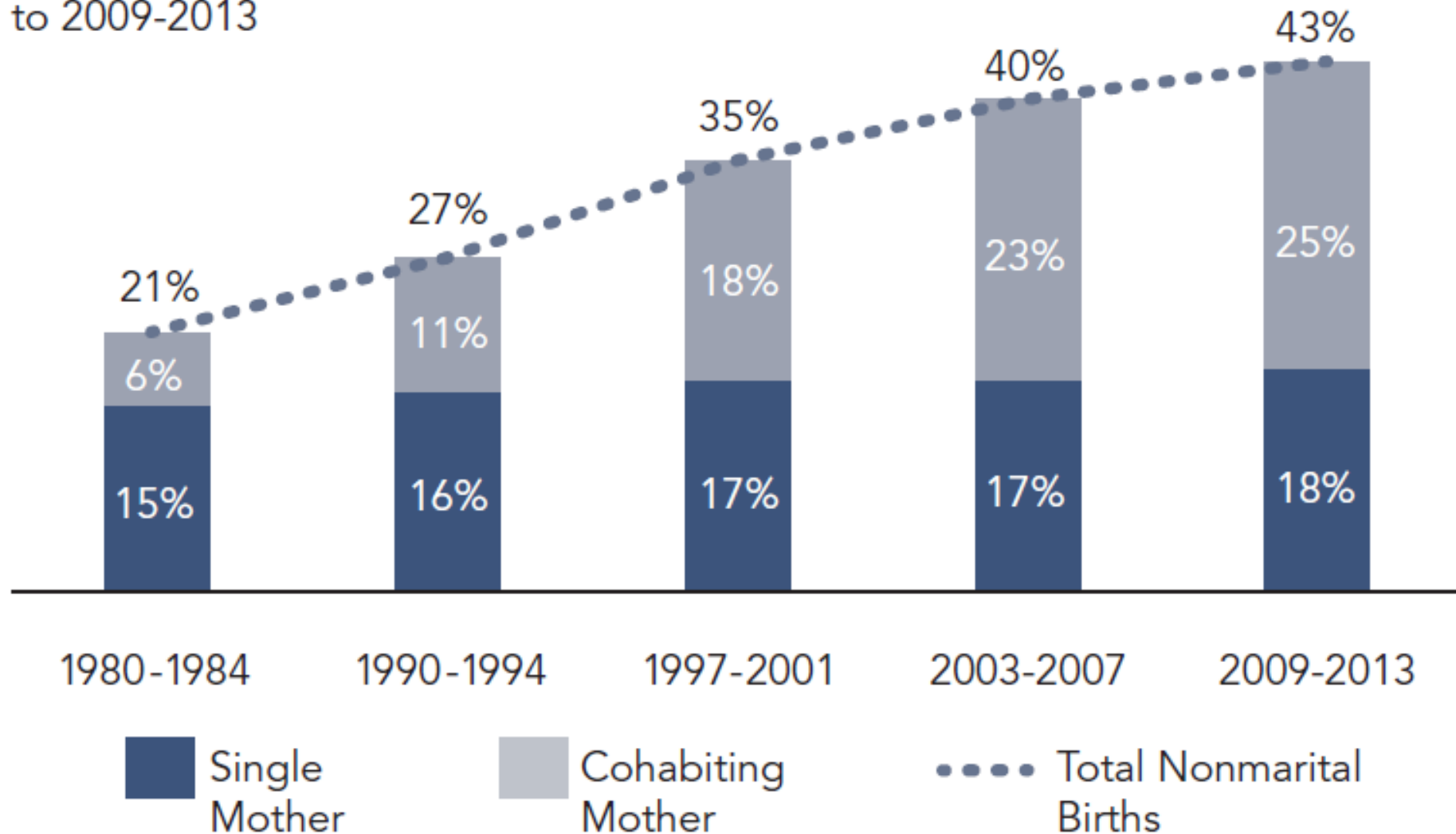
Source: Vanorman and Scommegna (2016)

4. Living Arrangements of Children

Figure CH–1.
Living arrangements of children: 1960 to present

Two parents

Mother only

Father only

No parents

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2015.

Note: Direct identification of both parents began in 2007, resulting in the ability to identify children living with two unmarried parents.

Figure CH-5.
Children under 18 living with their mother only
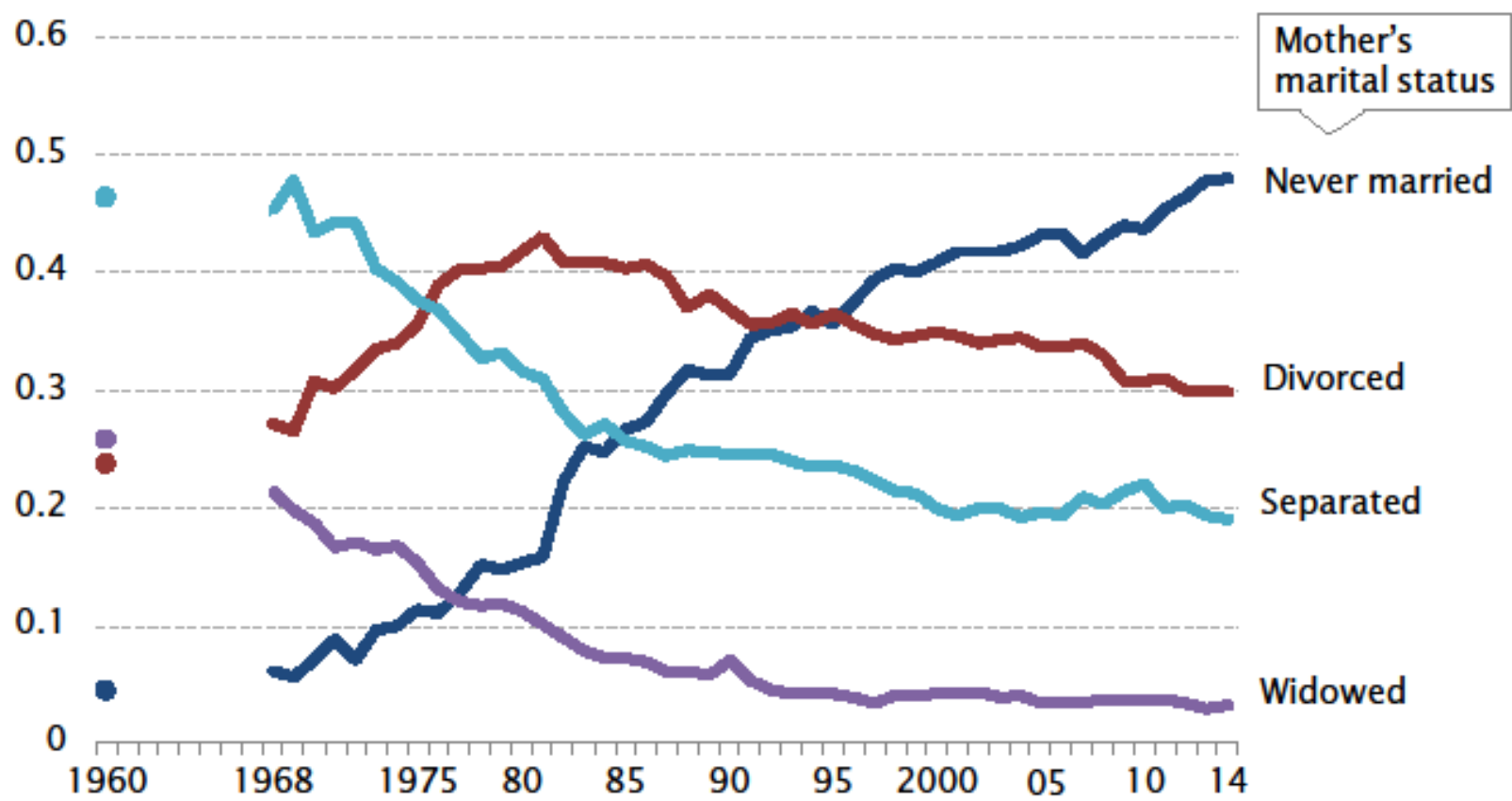
Mother's marital status

Never married

Divorced

Separated

Widowed

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2014.

Note: Separated includes married spouse absent. Direct identification of both parents began in 2007, resulting in the ability to identify children living with 2 unmarried parents. To derive data for years after 2014, see detailed Table C3 for the year(s) of interest.

United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
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census.gov

Complexity Arrangements of America's Children

- Grandparents
- Same-sex couples
- Cohabiting couples (biological)
- Cohabiting couples (but biologically-related to only one)
- Remarriages—Stepfamilies, blended families
- Living with single-father families
- Fosterage, adoption, nonrelatives
- Joint physical custody arrangements
- Decline in stay-at-home mothers

Bottom Line: Hard to Demonstrate Big Causal Effects of TANF

- Instead, we see . . .
  - Growing family complexity
  - Diverse pathways to family formation
  - Diverse family patterns by economic status, race, and geography

Questions Going Forward

- How should welfare and social policy address questions of growing cohabitation and subsequent childbearing?

- How does welfare address today's majority-minority children, who will replace the mostly white baby-boomers over the next 25 years? They are America's future and require investments now.

- How do patterns differ across geographic space – different policies and implementation strategies that may be creating new spatial inequalities (e.g., concentrated disadvantage)?

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