



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 16, 2011

Pew Study Shows U.S. Marriages at an All-Time Low

A new study by the Pew Research Center has found that only 51 percent of adults in the U.S. are married, an all-time low for matrimony in America. The recent numbers pale in comparison to a high in 1960, when 72 percent of adults 18 and older were married, and represent a trend that is similar to that witnessed in other “advanced post-industrial societies,” says Pew.



“If current trends continue, the share of adults who are currently married will drop to below half within a few years,” wrote the study’s authors, who noted that alternative “adult living arrangements — including cohabitation, single-person households, and single parenthood — have all grown more prevalent in recent decades.”

According to statistics, the study found, since 1960 the numbers of adults who have never married has nearly doubled, from 15 percent to 28 percent, and the median age of those marrying for the first time has increased from 20.3 to 26.5 for women, and from 22.8 to 28.7 for men.

There is a mixed bag of attitudes about marriage, the authors noted, citing a [2010 Pew survey](#) that found nearly four in ten Americans saying marriage is becoming obsolete. Nevertheless, the authors added, “the same survey found that most people who have never married (61%) would like to do so someday.” In fact, in spite of an epidemic of divorce and an increase in couples choosing cohabitation over matrimony, 95 percent of single Americans under 30 said they would like to marry.

The earlier Pew survey found that even as it declines among all demographics, marriage “remains the norm for adults with a college education and good income,” while becoming “markedly less prevalent among those on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder.” While desiring to marry, many with fewer opportunities and advantage find themselves waiting for economic security.

The latest Pew numbers appear to confirm those attitudes, finding that nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of adults with college degrees were married, but only between 47 and 48 percent of those with some college education, a high school diploma, or less.

The study found that the most dramatic decline in marriage existed among younger Americans, with only nine percent of adults between 18 and 24 being married in 2010, compared to 45 percent in 1960. And among adults age 25 to 34, only 44 percent were married in 2010, compared to 82 percent in 1960. Additionally, the study found, while “most Americans in their mid-30s onward are married, the proportions have declined notably since 1960.”

Among the three predominating racial/ethnic groups in America, the study found more than half (55 percent) of white adults were married, a decline from 74 percent in 1960; 48 percent of Hispanics, compared with 72 percent in 1960; and 31 percent of blacks, compared with 61 percent in 1960.



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The study's authors note that America "is by no means the only nation where marriage has been losing 'market share' for the past half century. The same trend has taken hold in most other advanced post-industrial societies, and these long-term declines appear to be largely unrelated to the business cycle. The declines have persisted through good economic times and bad."



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